

# Light

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN

BAPTIST CONVENTION

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1987

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL

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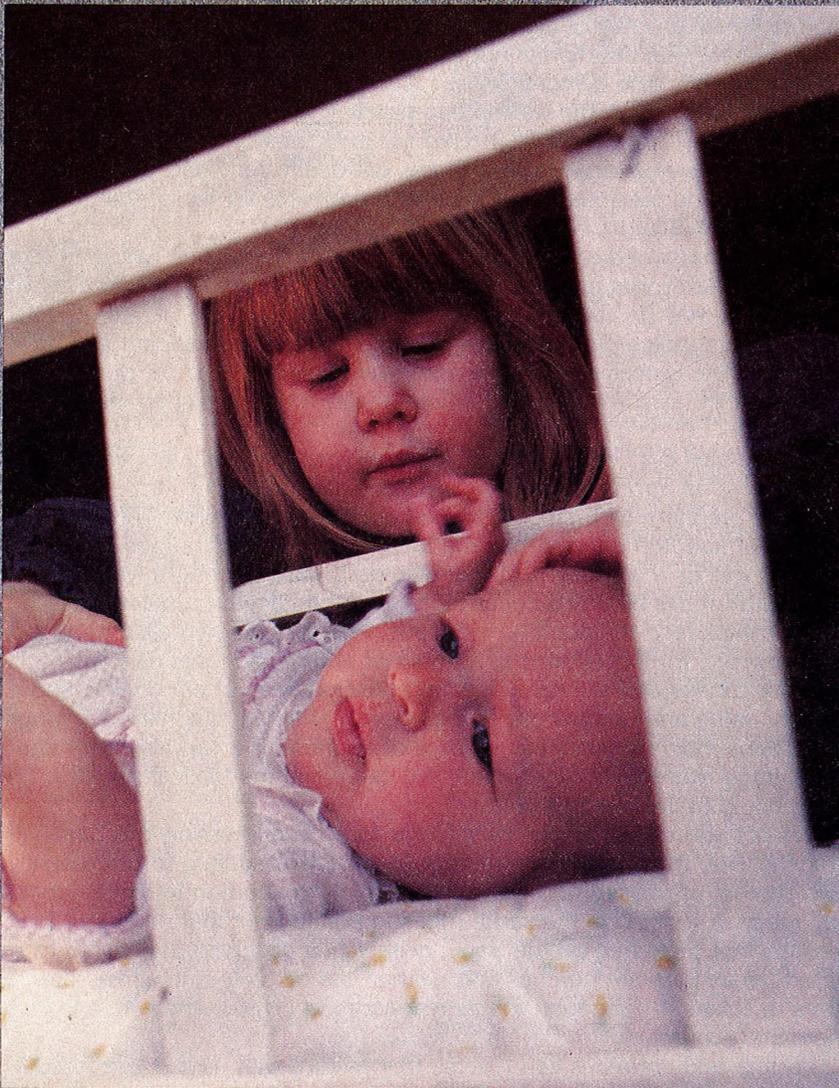
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## CELEBRATE LIFE

(1 Samuel 1:27-28)

Hannah longed for a child. At times she was so full of sadness she "wept and would not eat" (1 Samuel 1:7). At other times she was "deeply distressed" and "wept bitterly" (1:10). But year after year Hannah remained barren.



**OBSERVE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY**  
January 17, 1988

One day while she sat "on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple," Eli, the priest, accused her of being drunk. Hannah replied that she was not drunk, but "pouring out" her soul before the Lord (1:15). When Eli learned of her prayer, he told her to "go in peace" with confidence that God would grant her petition.

When Hannah could not conceive she made a commitment to God: "I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life" (1:11). After she gave birth she kept her word: "I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord" (1:28).

Hannah's story is a model for how we ought to anticipate, to celebrate and to dedicate our own children. Yet the regrettable truth is that our culture often does not eagerly anticipate the birth of children. Sometimes pregnancy is viewed as a stumbling block to our careers, as a threat to our economic security, or even as an embarrassment. The result in such situations is often abortion.

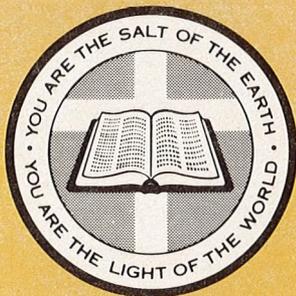
Abortion is the ending of human life. It is a grave act with tragic spiritual, emotional, physical and social consequences. It calls upon us to speak out against abortion on demand and to encourage alternatives to abortion. It also beckons us to be compassionate agents of God's grace in nurturing human life and in taking God's grace to those caught in the tragedy of abortion.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, set on the Southern Baptist Convention calendar for January 17, 1988, is a time for each of us to celebrate the children we have and to dedicate ourselves to creating a society where all children are welcomed. ■

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## Reflections

Abortion in America is a moral problem that is growing and cannot be ignored. Annually 1.3 million abortions are performed in this country.

What do the numbers mean? Comparisons may help one grasp the magnitude of the problem. Those figures represent:

- one abortion every 24 seconds around the clock.
- abortions in 1/4 to 1/3 of all pregnancies in the United States each year.
- abortions greater in number than the populations of areas such as Nashville, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, San Antonio and Sacramento.
- a loss of human life greater than the total lost in military combat from the American Revolution to the Vietnam war.



Abortion is not new. However, it has become increasingly acceptable to our society and increasingly is practiced by individuals within our society.

Those factors have contributed to this blight on our national life. Those factors create a sense of alarm in many believers.

We believe that abortion is not simply or only a medical procedure. We believe that it is also a moral issue.

We are alarmed by the widespread practice! We address the issue because we believe that life is a gift from God. He is its creator, sustainer, redeemer. The God of the Bible is the God of life, not death. As God's people, we are stewards of the precious gift of life and responsible for its safekeeping and proper treatment.

We are concerned about abortion because of the unique nature of fetal life. There never was nor ever will be other fetal tissue identical to that which is or which may be aborted. Fetal life is different from the parent organisms. Fetal life embodies the potential—the likelihood—of developing into an individual like ourselves. Thus, to take fetal life lightly is to fail or to refuse to view such life as a valuable and unique reality to be cherished, nurtured and protected.

We are also concerned about the sexual irresponsibility that contributes to the practice of abortion. Only women have abortions. But women do not become pregnant by themselves; men are also responsible. Thus, prior to the act of abortion often stands the irresponsible use of human sexuality by a man as well as a woman. A causal attitude toward sex and a wanton disregard for the biblical standard for sexual practice and male-female relationships feed the abortion epidemic. Men and women alike must face responsibility for the escalating number of abortions in this nation.

What can we do? We can raise the consciousness of our society about the dignity, value and uniqueness of the unborn. We can attack the full range of conditions that nourishes the practice of abortion. We can also offer and encourage alternatives to abortion. We can teach the biblical sex ethic and call people to the practice of it.

Pastors and churches can be a major force in addressing this national tragedy. But, many are silent, passive and uninvolved. In a forum recently, two pastors expressed their strong opposition to abortion in highly emotional language. A layman in the same meeting pointed out that neither of the pastors had preached on the issue, neither had observed Sanctity of Human Life Sunday in their churches and neither had acted to encourage alternatives to abortion—although the largest abortion clinic in their state is located near both churches.

Pastors and churches can reverse that pattern with regard to abortion. In speaking out, educating and acting we can stem the tide of abortions in this nation.

*Larry Baker*

## ABORTION CONFERENCE EXPLORES ANSWERS

by Tim Fields

More than 150 participants from 19 states recently attended a two-day Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission conference on abortion and explored ways to work together in combatting the problem and in ministering to the millions of persons traumatized by the issue.

Participants heard eight major addresses which explored biblical truths related to abortion, traced the history of the issue from the early church to the present and challenged Southern Baptists to become proactive on the issue.

Workshops offered help in preaching on sanctity of human life, educating children about sex, establishing crisis pregnancy centers, working through public policy, caring for persons facing crisis pregnancies and supporting state convention homes for children.

Bob Terry, editor of *Word and Way*, the newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention, delivered the opening address on the Bible's witness to life.

"The Bible begins by introducing God who is creator of life and the maker of mankind in his own image," Terry began. "If God's nature is the giver of life, to refuse that gift is to strike at the heart of God. Abortion is the refusal to accept God's gift of life. The Bible views life as beginning at conception," he said.

A variety of Old Testament passages indicates "God was at work in the creative process" and supports the position that God "forms" people in their mothers' wombs, Terry noted. He added that Jewish law also supports life, although the Old Testament does not explicitly prohibit abortion. "Perhaps it was unnecessary," he surmised.

Turning to the New Testament,

Terry said: "While it is true that no verse in the New Testament explicitly prohibits abortion, the direction of the New Testament as a book of life is clear . . . . The Christian's responsibility is to help the helpless, to befriend the friendless, to defend the defenseless, to aid them in coming to God. Abortion is antithetical to such actions, for abortion kills."

While noting "the witness of the Christian community continues to be a witness to life," Terry acknowledged

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### Abortion is fueled by widespread promiscuity prevalent in today's society.

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Southern Baptists are not unanimous in their views of abortion, particularly regarding exceptions to an outright prohibition against abortion.

Paul Jones, executive director of the Mississippi Christian Action Commission, traced beliefs of the early church on abortion and cited numerous early church documents that spoke out on abortion. "In these writings abortion was unthinkable," he said.

Fred Loper, a national missionary for medical missions with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, said while Southern Baptists "stagger under the revelation that millions of women choose to abort their babies each year," those numbers represent only the "visible tip of the iceberg." Abortion is fueled by widespread promiscuity prevalent in today's society:

"It is here that our numbers quit giving us adequate insight into our times. They [numbers] tell us eloquently of the massive quantity of the sexual problem, yet they fail miserably to tell us the why of the

problem."

Loper noted nearly 55 million abortions are performed yearly worldwide, and he estimated there will be about 1.5 million abortions in the United States alone this year.

Yet, despite the vastness of the numbers, Christians must avoid dealing with abortion merely by figures, Loper contended.

"We cannot treat it [abortion] as an isolated phenomenon separate from teenage pregnancy or promiscuity or AIDS or the giant lack of sex education in our homes and churches. We must be perceptive and creative and fill in the gaps left by our abundant statistics," he said.

Other evangelical groups face the same problem as Southern Baptists when it comes to agreement on abortion, a Southern Baptist seminary professor told participants.

Joe E. Trull, associate professor of Christian ethics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, reviewed the positions of six evangelical theologians on abortion.

He noted evangelicals are against abortion on demand, yet are willing to justify abortion if the mother's life is in danger.

After these points, evangelicals, like Southern Baptists, have differing opinions about whether abortion can be justified in situations such as rape and incest, Trull said.

Robert Parham, an associate director of the Christian Life Commission responsible for abortion-related concerns, traced resolutions on abortion passed by the Southern Baptist Convention and state conventions between 1971 and 1987.

"SBC resolutions have changed over time. They have narrowed the exceptions for abortion from four in 1971 to one in 1980. They have broadened their focus from strict concern about abortion on demand in 1980 to concern about child abuse, infanticide, euthanasia, care for unwed mothers, and alternatives to abortion in 1982 and 1984. They have also moved away from a largely polemical posture in the 1970s and early 1980s to a pro-active posture in 1987, reflecting more interest in acting than in arguing, Parham said.

"For the most part, state resolu-

(Continued on page 16)

# ABORTION: A Challenge for Baptists

By N. Larry Baker

Some years ago I read about two men who lived in a houseboat that stayed tied up at a waterfront dock. One night while they slept a storm came up. The boat broke from its moorings and drifted out to sea. Next morning one of them got up early and went out on the deck. He could hardly believe what he saw. Rushing to rouse his friend, he cried, "Wake up! Wake up! We're not here anymore."

How well we know that feeling. The familiar has gone for most of us. The scenery around us these days is different—and, in many respects, different bad not different good. We find ourselves overwhelmed by changes and problems that come at us thicker and faster than we can handle.

Our plight is demonstrated graphically when we face the issue of abortion. Today, huge sectors of our society claim abortion as the right of any pregnant woman. Many contend that abortion is both inevitable and necessary in our society and that we must therefore make abortion legal and safe so women can have control over their own bodies. In one day, the Supreme Court decision erased every line of abortion legislation in America. Suddenly the United States had the most liberal abortion laws in our world. There was an immediate open season on the unborn.

Almost fifteen years later, we see the consequences and live among the tragic results. There was a time when a mother's womb was the safest place to be in this country; that is no longer true! There was a time when we cherished, prized, and valued life from its very beginning and at every stage; that is no longer true! There was a time when abortion was viewed as a terrible evil—done usually with great anguish; that is no longer true! There was a time when we were horrified by the thought that a pregnant woman would abort the growing life within her body; that is no longer true!

Today, thousands of girls barely in their teens are having abortions, often without telling their parents, sometimes at their parents' insistence. Young adult women, too, are getting abortions by the thousands. Wives with unplanned, unwanted pregnancies choose to end them. Fathers of the unborn are often relieved when the preborn are destroyed. One-fourth to one-third of all pregnancies end in abortion. In 1983 alone, 1.5 million abortions were performed in the United States.

Nationally, we have plunged into an attitude and have been caught up in a practice that either fails or refuses to see life as a gift from God, to be prized, celebrated, guarded, nurtured, and cherished.

Many of us and many of our people feel helpless in the face of this tragedy. Some feel that the evil is too great, the problems are too large and the issues are too complex. Some feel they do not have the resources with which to respond.

Jesus' disciples felt that way on one occasion. When a crowd gathered around Jesus as mealtime drew near, the disciples said, "Send them away!" It was apparent to the disciples that there were more people than they could handle.

Andrew was a bit more hopeful. He had discovered at least some meager resources. He said,

There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many? (John 6:9).

The two, Phillip and Andrew, sized up the situation and drew a conclusion: Because they couldn't do everything, they couldn't do anything. They wanted to distance themselves and send the crowd away.

Some have done that with the issue of abortion. They have deliberately put distance between themselves and this dark and brutal side of life.

On a hillside in Galilee, Jesus' closest followers said, "Send them away!" Jesus said, "No, give ye them

to eat." In doing so, he called them and us to give ourselves to God and those in need about us—even when we think that we're powerless to address the need.

Make no mistake! We, too, are under mandate to act—with courage, commitment, and the confidence that God will bless our efforts.

We Southern Baptists have before us a challenge. It comes in the form of a medical procedure which we call abortion. We believe that it is not simply or only a medical procedure. We believe that it is also a moral issue—that it has consequences and implications that have to do with right and wrong; that it has to do with the good, the true, and the beautiful; that it has to do with that which is acceptable and appropriate in the balances of God's judgment, and in light of his standards for life and living.

We can say that we are challenged *by* abortion, the practice and the issues involved in it. But we can also say that we are a challenge *to* abortion, the practice and the issues involved in it. We can talk about the challenge that the issue presents for our lives as believers. We can also talk about the ways in which we can confront and challenge, address and deal with the issue. Both are appropriate. Both are necessary.

Consider, first, the need for clear, strong declaration.

With clarity and forcefulness, with vigor and urgency, we need to sound the alarm concerning abortion. We have done that in our resolutions during the Southern Baptist Conventions and in state conventions. We did that again during our consultation in St. Louis in late May. But those words and resolutions must be translated into the arena that leads to and calls for action today. Let us speak to and with those within our churches; let us speak to and with those outside and beyond our churches.

Let the world hear us declare that we are outraged by the flippant and casual way in which this society judges the act of abortion and by the unrelenting encouragement it gives to the practice of abortion.

Let the world hear us trumpet our belief that human life from conception is sacred and must be protected

and nurtured in all its aspects.

Let the world hear us proclaim our belief that abortion at any stage of pregnancy is ending human life and is a grave act with tragic spiritual, emotional, physical, and social consequences.

Let the world hear us publish the word that God's grace, forgiveness, and healing are available to those who breach his divine ideal and do not live up to his goal for them.

Let the world hear us say: We believe that our commitment to God calls us to speak forcefully and unequivocally against abortion and to encourage alternatives to abortion with all vigor.

Let the world see us giving ourselves as compassionate, aggressive agents of God's grace as we nurture human life and take God's grace to those caught in the tragedy of abortion.

Let the world see us standing brokenhearted and weeping in the midst of a society that sees life as a plentiful commodity on a fluctuating market, as goods easily gotten and easily bartered.

Let the world see us standing distraught, brokenhearted and weeping before the conditions that contribute to the flood tide of unwanted pregnancies and that wrongly regard abortion as the quick fix for the crisis.

Let the world see us tearstained and grief-stricken, standing alongside of and suffering Christ-like with those caught up in the terrible web of decisions, events, and circumstances that feed the abortion mania in our society.

Let the world know that we worship and serve the God who is "father of the fatherless and protector of widows" (Pslam 68:5), and is constant in his concern for the defenseless.

Let us consider, also, some directions or pathways for our actions. I, this agency, these staff persons are immersed in the issue of abortion. We are involved, as you are, in the struggle with it. My mail comes from persons all across the United States and throughout the Southern Baptist Convention who see things from differing points of view. I have listened to and talked with hundreds of Southern Baptists. I believe that

we can move beyond the situation in which we minister today. Beyond the silence on the part of many. Beyond the divisiveness that separates many. Beyond the confusion that marks others. I offer six suggestions.

**First, Southern Baptists can move beyond words to actions.**

During thirty years of ministry, I have viewed a tendency among us—the tendency to act as though words are enough. Somehow, we think that a public statement about an issue or a cause is adequate. Or, we think that private expressions of opinion or conviction are all that we are called to make. But those are often left without translation into action.

I believe that God's people must move beyond words to actions.

There are many ways to act. An editor writes an editorial. A pastor preaches a sermon. A church opens a crisis pregnancy center. A family

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**We can move beyond polarization to a united assault on the forces of death . . .**

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takes a woman with a crisis pregnancy into its home. A layperson writes letters. A lawyer works to change laws. A group organizes to influence legislation. A denominational staff person designs material that seeks to inform, sensitize, and activate Christians for the struggle.

**Second, Southern Baptists can say "yes" to the Kingdom way and "no" to secular political agendas.**

We need to rescue the abortion issue from captivity to any secular political agenda. Paul's plea is applicable: "Be not conformed to the world," or as Phillips translates the verse, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold" (Romans 12:2).

The sanctity of human life is not a conservative political concern; it is a Christian concern. The concern for women, their needs, and their rights is not a liberal political concern; it is a biblical concern. The concern about and horror over the rampant practice of ending prenatal life is not a conservative political concern; it is a Christian concern.

The concern about the rising number of children bearing children is not a liberal political concern; it is a biblical concern. God's plan for Christian involvement in the needs of hurting humanity does not conform to any political social agenda. God's people can stem the tide of abortions if we refuse to be people of the political right, the political left or the political middle. We can stem the tide as we think, speak, and act as people of the Kingdom.

**Third, Southern Baptists can say "yes" to partnership and "no" to polarization.** We attempt to address the issue of abortion and carry out our ministry in a highly charged atmosphere. Abortion is a controversial issue. People have opposing views and differing positions.

In those circumstances, we can become polarized. We can react. We can adopt pro-con, for-against, them-us attitudes. In those circumstances, we can adopt win-lose strategies and approaches. In those circumstances, we can label people and put "tags" on them and we can caricature them. But in doing so we can expend precious energy, divert valuable resources, and lose precious opportunities to act aggressively and cooperatively for the good.

We can focus our attention on goals, aims, ends. We can focus on our common commitments and common concerns. We can move beyond polarization to a united assault on the forces of death, to unified opposition to the principalities and powers that would disturb and destroy life, and to partnership in pursuit of life. We can refuse the enticing words of contemporary Absaloms who would set us against each other for their own gain. We can heed Paul's warning about "men [who] will arise, speaking perversions of the truth, trying to draw away the disciples and make them followers of themselves" (Acts 20:39 Phillips).

Concern and alarm about the flood tide of abortions aren't the exclusive property of so-called "pro-life" persons. Neither are sensitivity and concern for persons the hallmark of so-called "moderates." Concern about abortion and concern for the persons involved with it know neither ideological lines nor partisan

identity. Those committed to speak and to act defy easy labeling.

We fight against a common enemy and for a common cause. As we move beyond polarization to partnership, we can stem the tide of abortions in our country.

**Fourth, we Southern Baptists can say "yes" to understanding and "no" to slogans.** Sometime ago Bernard Nathanson (*Aborting America*) wrote,

Our attempt to sort out the [abortion] problem is complicated by all-too-clear sloganeering, by sloppy use of medical data and terminology, and by the way in which perfectly functional words have become loaded through emotionalized usage in the political wars.

In that process, truth is the first casualty. Almost 15 years after *Roe vs. Wade*, propaganda machines run at peak capacity. For them slogans, cliches, and war cries are enough.

But followers of the One who is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6) have a better way. We worship the God who says that "love rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). We serve a God who "delights in men who are truthful" (Proverbs 12:22). And, we live with the confidence that "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost . . . shall teach [us] all things . . . and will guide [us] into all truth" (John 14:26; 16:13).

We embrace the truth, no matter the cost. We listen carefully and attentively to the concerns of others, even as we express our own convictions. As we listen to one another and open our hearts to one another, we move beyond slogans to understanding. As we understand one another, we can find ways to care for the needs of women in crisis, families in crisis, and children in crisis. As we choose to move beyond slogans to understanding, we can stem the tide of abortions in this country.

**Fifth, we Southern Baptists can move beyond a single focus to a many-faceted strategy.** Abortion is not a single issue; it is many issues. It has to do not only with a pregnancy and its possible termination; it has also to do with sexual morality and family. It has to do with the person and the

stewardship of self. It has to do with God's will for human beings and personal accountability. It has to do with the human family and the individual's responsibility to it and within it. It has to do with church and it has to do with community. It has to do with social class and it has to do with economics.

It isn't enough to speak out against abortion, although we must do that clearly, firmly, passionately and often. It isn't enough to be guardians of biological life, although we must raise our voices in protest against a nonchalant attitude toward the value of fetal life. We must also address the many issues that are

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**Abortion is not an issue in the abstract. It always comes packaged in persons . . .**

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related to abortion and contribute to its easy acceptance in our society. We must also deal with the implications of our anti-abortion stance for the lives of individuals and churches and society.

Shall we speak to the impact of abortion on the sensitivities of our society? Shall we speak to the irresponsible use of human sexuality that leads to unwanted pregnancies? Shall we address the need for a Christian sex education for our young that will guide them as they live in a promiscuous society? Shall we address the social and economic conditions that contribute to the prevalence of abortion in this society? Shall we grapple with the economic impact of our anti-abortion stance on the structures of our society? Shall we address the economic realities of the abortion industry? Shall we speak to the economics of the baby market in this nation?

Shall we call into question a male chauvinism that manipulates and uses women for sexual gratification and abandons them when something "goes wrong?" Shall we deal with the hardship of raising children as a single parent, without adequate education or sufficient income? Shall we grapple with the meaning of growing up poor and deprived, an illegitimate child, in a single-parent

family? Shall we deal with the emotional dynamics of being an "illegitimate" child, given up for adoption at birth, and separated for life from natural parents?

As we move beyond preoccupation with a single issue to engagement with the many issues, we will stem the tide of abortion in our nation.

**Sixth, we Southern Baptists can couple our opposition to an evil with ministry to hurting persons.** Our concern is focused on abortion. We are opposed to abortion, let there be no mistake about that. But our concern goes beyond that. We are concerned about human beings, born and unborn alike.

For most women who seek abortion, an unwanted pregnancy is not an inconvenience; it is a catastrophe. That is why we talk about crisis pregnancy centers. Many find themselves abandoned by the men responsible for their pregnancies. Others are thrown out of their homes by enraged parents. Some face poverty and the fear of not being able to care for a baby. Many face the stigma of unwed motherhood. Panic, helplessness, shame, dread, and worry terrorize their emotions and inflame the abortion decision. All of this is part and parcel of the tragedy of abortion. How do we respond to the needs of these women?

Scores of women have chosen abortion and struggled with devastating guilt and grief in the aftermath. Like the unborn who died within them, these women are valuable human beings, victims of a predatory society. These women need the care of the church. They need the healing and forgiveness of God. How do we respond to their needs?

Abortion is not an issue in the abstract. It always comes packaged in persons, with names and faces, hopes and fears, pains and problems that are very human and very personal. We must see beyond a point to be argued to a person to be cared for. We must see beyond statistics to be cited to persons needing love and assistance. We must see beyond a cause to be championed to women with problems and hurts and rights—not the moral right to

(Continued on page 16)

# TEN WAYS TO OBSERVE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY

Messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention in 1985 voted overwhelmingly to set aside a special day on the denomination's calendar to pray and to think about the sacredness of human life, especially life of the unborn. For the third consecutive year, Southern Baptists are encouraged to observe Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Here are ten action suggestions for what churches and church members can do:

- ◆ **1. Pray** on a daily basis during the week leading up to January 17, 1988 for the wisdom to act on the abortion issue as an agent of God's grace.
- ◆ **2. Study** what the Bible has to say about the value of children and the eagerness with which children were anticipated in biblical times (Samuel, John the Baptist and Jesus).
- ◆ **3. Read** a book about the abortion issue during the first weeks of January. Here are three suggestions: Michael J. Gorman, *Abortion and the Early Church*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1982; John Stott, *Involve-ment: Social and Sexual Relationships in the Modern World*, Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1984; and Ronald J. Sider, *Completely Pro-Life*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1987.
- ◆ **4. Host** a Sunday luncheon for those in your community addressing the problem of teenage pregnancy, caring for infants with profound health problems, serving as hospice volunteers and working with the mentally retarded. Let these people know of your church's appreciation for them.
- ◆ **5. Purchase** a Christian Life Commission pamphlet rack, displaying material related to abortion. Also stock it with pamphlets such as "The Bible Speaks on Family," "The Bible Speaks on Sex," and "Issues and Answers: Bio-medical Ethics."
- ◆ **6. Write** your state Representative and Senators asking them about the issue of parental consent. Urge them to restrict the right of teenagers to obtain abortions without parental consent.
- ◆ **7. Sponsor** a mini-conference in your Baptist association on the sanctity of human life. Invite representatives from the medical and legal communities to participate.
- ◆ **8. Talk** about the issue. Talk to fellow church members about the problem of abortion and the information shared in this issue of LIGHT.
- ◆ **9. Share** material in this issue of LIGHT during the opening assembly of your church's Sunday School on January 17, 1988. A brief devotional word is appropriate.
- ◆ **10. Observe** Sanctity of Human Life Sunday with a church-wide emphasis. Plan the entire Sunday morning service around the issue of abortion and what Christians can do.

January 17, 1988 is a time to reflect on the issues of abortion and to commit ourselves to action. Join hands with the other Southern Baptist churches observing Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Remember that from a tiny acorn comes a mighty oak, from a simple Sunday observance may come reform of the social order. ■

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*Robert Parham is an associate director of the Christian Life Commission with responsibility for leadership on the issue related to the sanctity of human life.*

BY ROBERT PARHAM

# THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

A diverse group of Southern Baptists meeting in St. Louis last May adopted the following statement on the sacredness of human life designed to unite forces against abortion in the 14.7 million member Southern Baptist Convention.

◆ Human life from conception is sacred and must be protected and nurtured in all its aspects.

◆ Abortion at any stage of pregnancy is ending human life and is a grave act with tragic spiritual, emotional, physical and social consequences.

◆ In those incidents in which this divine ideal is not fulfilled, there can be redemption in God's grace. Therefore:

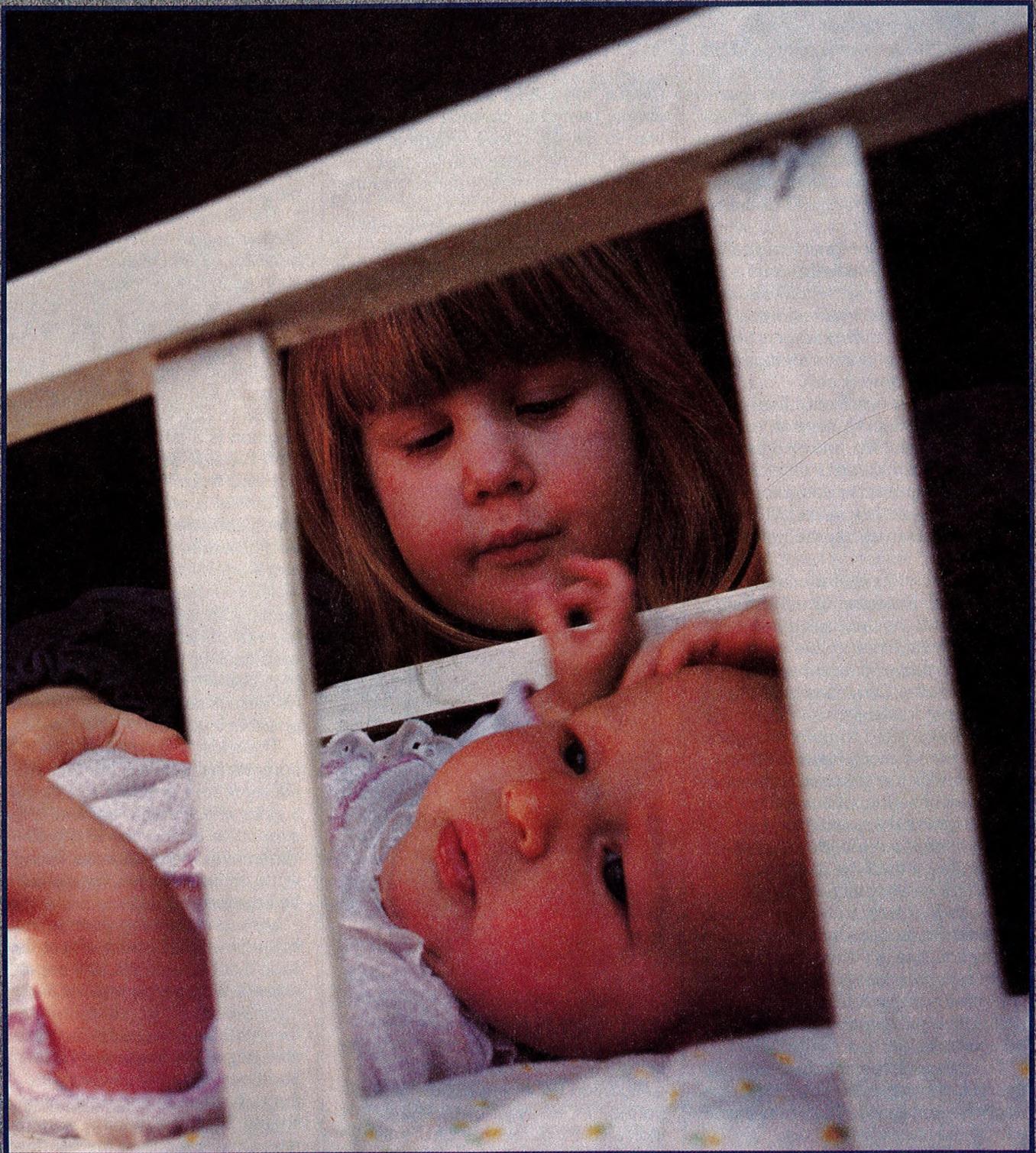
◆ Let us speak forcefully and unequivocally against abortion on demand and with all vigor encourage alternatives to abortion.

◆ Let us pledge ourselves to be compassionate, aggressive agents of God's grace in nurturing human life and in taking God's grace to those caught in the tragedy of abortion.

OBSERVE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY  
January 17, 1988

# CELEBRATE LIFE

(1 Samuel 1:27-28)



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January 17, 1988

# TEENAGERS AND ABORTION

## A Legislative Update on Parental Consent Laws

by Larry Braidfoot

America is undergoing an epidemic of teenage pregnancies. Approximately one million teenage girls become pregnant each year, and approximately 400,000 of them elect to have abortions.

Out-of-wedlock pregnancy for a teenage girl presents enormous psychological and social difficulties. The decision to have an abortion intensifies these difficulties. A short-range solution becomes a long-range psychological time bomb.

An unknown number of these teenage girls elect to have an abortion without the knowledge and support of their parents. One of the major battlegrounds related to abortion for the next few years will be the legal struggle to clarify the rights of parents.

The current state of the law is unsettled. The Supreme Court of the United States has not ruled in a case specifically addressing the issue of parental rights of consent and notification. But the Court has hinted that a state could establish certain requirements related to parental rights.

In an era when children cannot receive medicine at school without parental consent and when schools require parental approval for a school-sponsored trip, the right of parents to be involved in decisions of a medical nature such as abortions seems to be obvious.

California recently became the twenty-first state in which the legislature has passed a bill requiring some form of parental consent or notification for teenage girls seeking an abortion.

To outsiders, the action of one of the nation's more liberal legislatures might be surprising. California was one of the states which had liberalized its abortion laws prior to *Roe v. Wade*. With about 300,000 abortions annually, of which about one-third involve teenagers, California along with New York leads the nation in the number of abortions.

The California legislature passed

the bill only weeks after a Minnesota statute related to parental notification was struck down by a federal appeals court. The two state statutes represent a controversial dimension to the abortion issue, which appears headed for Supreme Court review. Indeed, many activists believe the Court will soon be in a position to clarify the right of parental involvement.

The California legislature passed the Senate by a vote of 25 to 11 and the Assembly by a vote of 46 to 28, with Governor Deukmejian indicating



*Out-of-wedlock pregnancy causes grief for teenagers and their parents.*

he will sign the bill. The issue had been debated in California since 1979, but had been stymied by legislative leaders hostile to the bill.

Abortion rights are popularly supported in California. But some polls indicated 80 percent of Californians favor parental involvement in teenage abortions.

The California statute requires the minor to receive written support from one parent. It also allows a minor to get court approval as an alternative to parental approval in certain cases.

The bill's supporters stressed the bill was primarily focused on parental consent.

The California statute likely will be challenged in court, as have most of the others. One statute which has been challenged successfully so far in court is the Minnesota statute. It required approval of both parents. It has been criticized for requiring such approval in view of the large number of teenagers living with a single parent.

The Supreme Court allows a greater degree of regulation of behavior when children are involved, such as in the definition of statutory rape or pornography. The recognition of potential harm justifies a higher degree of regulation.

Teenage access to abortion is a far more serious problem than access to pornography. Teenage abortion is a far more serious matter than teenage sexual activity, although it results from the latter.

Christians and other citizens of widely differing religious and social backgrounds should be able to rally and work for the passage of state legislation dealing with parental rights. Although the Supreme Court has not yet ruled specifically on a case dealing with parental rights, the laws passed in California and Minnesota provide some insight into possible legislation.

The most important insight is that parental rights related to teenage abortion are important to citizens in a state where public opinion is supportive of abortion in general. If citizens in other states are willing to work, as in California, legislation can be enacted.

Laws undergirding parental rights, coupled with education about the sanctity of human life, will impact rates of teenage pregnancy and abortion rates. The abortion rate in the 1980s is powered in considerable degree by those seeking repeat abortions. Parental involvement through consent and notification should lower the teenage abortion rate. During the time the Minnesota statute was in effect, the teenage pregnancy rate was reported to have dropped 40 percent. ■

*Braidfoot directs the Christian citizenship program of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.*

# 'CHOOSE LIFE'

## A Sermon for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

by Phil Lineberger

The concern of Jesus for sanctity of human life is most appropriate for us today. Matthew chapter 9, verse 35-38 says:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

The call to follow Jesus is a call to involvement in the world's sorrow and in the world's pain. The call to follow Jesus is a call to challenge the philosophy of efficient killing with the philosophy of compassionate caring. Every day in America some 4,000 or more children are killed through abortion. Every day over 40,000 children die of starvation. You may be aware that in our world today 3.5 billion people will go through another day not hearing the name of Jesus Christ. So you are aware of the mammoth task that faces us as Christians to be able to follow Christ, and to be involved in the world's pain and sorrow.

The call to involvement is a call to life. The unique message of the church is a message of life. Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." So the call to follow Jesus is a call to life. The call to the ministry of Jesus is a call to life. It is a call to minister in the name of Jesus. It is a call to choose life.

To follow Jesus is to have pro-life opinions. We need to speak out for the defenseless. For instance, in Proverbs 31:8-9 the writer says:

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and the needy.

Problems are not solved by allowing children to die. Speak up and judge fairly. The church is a powerful platform for communication, and as followers of Christ and as members of his church, we must declare the sacredness of human life. According to Genesis 1:27—and the attitude of God toward the shedding of innocent blood. Proverbs 6:17.

To follow Jesus is to have pro-life anger—not just pro-life opinions where we speak out for the defenseless, but pro-life anger where we strike out in legitimate ways against the destruction of human life. In Job 29:15-17 the writer says "I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was as father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth." Human life is priceless. Injustice toward humanity should arouse our righteous anger as Christians and as children of God. Jesus became righteously angry over the misuse of the temple facilities to perpetrate injustice in the name of religion (Matthew 21:13). The writer in Mark 3:5 tells us that Jesus became angry because some would choose senseless death over life. The Pharisees would criticize Jesus for healing a lame man on the Sabbath, and Jesus said, "Which is better, to choose to do good or choose to do evil on the Sabbath? Which is better, to choose death or to choose life?" Obviously, Jesus became angry over the perpetration of injustice and the senseless shedding of innocent blood.

Our pro-life anger must always be redemptive. Jesus did not come to search and to destroy, but to seek and to save. We must strike out at the horror of hunger and the atrocity of abortion without striking down persons made in the image of God. James tells us in James 1:19-20 and Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26 that the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God and neither

should we let the sun go down upon our anger.

Finally, to follow Jesus is to have pro-life compassion. Not only should we speak out and have an opinion, and strike out in legitimate ways in anger against senseless killing and injustice, but also we should have pro-life compassion. We should reach out to those who are defenseless and in need. The Christian has a unique approach to life. We are to demonstrate the difference between the world's love and the unconditional love of God.

The parable of the Samaritan in Luke 10 demonstrates this love.

Martin Luther King, Jr. presented a scenario like this. He said the priest and Levite said to themselves, "What will happen to me if I stop and help this man?" The Samaritan reversed the question and said, "What will happen to this man if I do not stop and help?" What will happen to the people in America? What will happen to the people around the world if the people of God do not stop and help?

Pro-life compassion moves the follower of Jesus to action.

Frederick Buechner has said that compassion is the sometimes-fatal capacity to feel what it's like to be in somebody's else's skin. Christians, of all people, should be able to sense that feeling because of what God has done in his love through Jesus Christ.

Pro-life compassion is a willingness to be involved in a redemptive way in the world's pain and sorrow. Pro-life compassion is caring as much about the lives we can see as about the lives we cannot see. Pro-life compassion is more than an opinion; it is more than anger; it is a condition of the heart which leads to a commitment of life. In Matthew 25:40, the Bible talks about the judgment at the end of time. In that picture which Jesus presents, he tells us that God will not evaluate our lives primarily by our ability to articulate fine points of doctrine or how forcefully we fought on various issues. We will finally be evaluated by how we responded to Jesus in the lives of the forgotten. ■

*Lineberger is pastor of Richardson Heights Baptist Church, Richardson, Texas.*

# BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES TO ABORTION

State Agency Name and Address	Services Available	Contact Person
<b>ALABAMA</b> <b>Baptist Children's Home</b> 6512 Grelot Road Mobile, AL 35602 Dr. Tom Collier Executive Director (205) 639-4160	Residential care Maternity home Counseling Adoption services (limited)	Carolyn Eberlein (205) 639-4160
<b>ARIZONA</b> <b>Baptist Children's Services</b> P.O. Box 27128 Phoenix, AZ 85017 Mr. C. Truett Baker Director (602) 264-3292	Family ministry counseling Foster care Resident treatment for emotionally handicapped teenagers Emergency shelter for teenage boys Independent living for boys	C. Truett Baker (602) 264-3292
<b>ARKANSAS</b> <b>Baptist Family and Child Care Service</b> <b>Arkansas Baptist Home for Children</b> P.O. Box 552 Little Rock, AR 72203 Mr. Johnny Biggs Executive Director (501) 376-4791	Residential care Group home for boys 5 area offices for counseling 5 emergency receiving homes for abused children and battered wives	Doug McWhirter (501) 376-4791
<b>WASHINGTON, D.C.</b> <b>Baptist Home for Children</b> 6391 Greentree Road Bethesda, MD 20817 Mr. Jarrett Fishpaw Executive Director (301) 365-4480	Shelter for women and children Temporary shelter for homeless women Pregnancy counseling if needed	Jean Troupe (301) 365-2190
<b>FLORIDA</b> <b>Florida Baptist Children's Home</b> P.O. Box 8190 Lakeland, FL 33802 Mr. Richard Phillips Executive Director (813) 687-8811	Adoption services Counseling Residential care Foster care Maternity care Emergency shelter Group homes	Lloyd Godwin (813) 687-6811
<b>Florida Baptist Children's Home</b> 7748 SW 95th Terrace Miami, FL 33156 Mr. Jim Soles, Director (305) 271-4121	Residential care Counseling Foster homes Adoption services Maternity services	Jim Soles (305) 271-4121

# CHILDREN'S HOMES INDEX

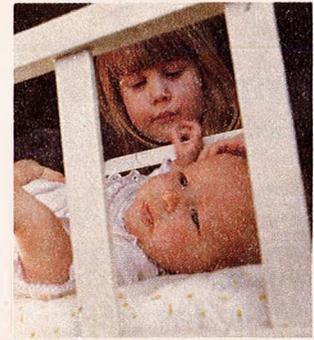
State Agency Name and Address	Services Available	Contact Person
<b>Florida Baptist Children's Home</b> North-Northwest Area 8415 Buck Lake Road Tallahassee, FL 32301 Mr. Hugh Starnes (904) 878-1458	Counseling Foster homes Adoption services Medical services Residential care	Hugh Starnes (904) 878-1458
<b>GEORGIA</b> <b>Baptist Children's Home, Inc.</b> 2930 Flowers Road, South Atlanta, GA 30341 Dr. Don Duvall Executive Director (404) 451-3596	Refer to local Baptist maternity home Adoption services Counseling Foster homes Residential care	Debbie Relyea (404) 463-3344
<b>ILLINOIS</b> <b>Baptist Children's Home, Inc.</b> P.O. Box 379 Carmi, IL 62821 Mr. Leon Talley, Director (618) 382-4164	Maternity homes Counseling Medical services Adoption services Foster homes Residential care	Karla Monroe (618) 242-4944
<b>KENTUCKY</b> <b>Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children</b> 10901 Shelbyville Road Middletown, KY 40243 Dr. Eldred Taylor Executive Director (502) 245-2101	Adoption services (limited) Counseling services (limited) Residential care	Eldred Taylor (502) 245-2101
<b>LOUISIANA</b> <b>Baptist Children's Home</b> 7102 DeSiard Road P.O. Box 4196 Monroe, LA 71201 Dr. Wade B. East Superintendent (318) 343-2244	Foster homes Residential care Counseling Adoption services	Wade B. East (318) 343-2244
<b>Sellers Children's Home</b> 2010 Penniston New Orleans, LA 70115 Mary Dan Kuhnle Administrator (504) 895-2088	Counseling Maternity home Adoption services Medical services Foster homes	Joan Yoder (504) 895-2088
<b>MISSISSIPPI</b> <b>Baptist Children's Village</b> P.O. Box 11308 Jackson, MS 39313 Mr. Paul N. Nunnery Executive Director (601) 922-2242	Maternity home Counseling Medical services Residential care	Peggy Taylor (601) 922-2242
<b>MISSOURI</b> <b>Missouri Baptist Children's Home</b> 11300 St. Charles Rock Road Bridgeton, MO 63044 Mr. Raymond Kenison Executive Director (314) 739-6811	Maternity home Counseling Medical services Residential care Adoption services Foster homes Hot line	Beverly Crowley (314) 739-6811
<b>NEW MEXICO</b> <b>Baptist Children's Home</b> P.O. Drawer 629 Portales, NM 88130 Mr. Bert Edmison, Superintendent (505) 356-4331	Residential care	

# CHILDREN'S HOMES INDEX

State Agency Name and Address	Services Available	Contact Person
<b>NORTH CAROLINA</b> <b>Baptist Children's Home, Inc.</b> Thomasville, NC 27360 Dr. Michael Blackwell President (919) 476-6183	Residential care Maternity care Counseling Medical services	Rhonda Smith (704) 254-1911
<b>OKLAHOMA</b> <b>Department of Child Care</b> 1141 North Robinson Oklahoma City, OK 73103 Dr. Lowell Milburn Executive Director (405) 236-4341	Residential care Maternity home 2 Crisis pregnancy centers Hot line Counseling Adoption services Medical services	Lowell Milburn Sam Garner (after 1-1-88)
<b>SOUTH CAROLINA</b> <b>Connie Maxwell Children's Home</b> P.O. Box 1178 Greenwood, SC 29646 Dr. J. Hayward Prince Executive Director (803) 942-1400	Counseling Referral service Residential care	Hayward Prince
<b>TENNESSEE</b> <b>Baptist Children's Home, Inc.</b> P.O. Box 748 107 Franklin Road Brentwood, TN 37024 Dr. Gerald Stow Executive Director (615) 373-5707	2 Maternity homes Foster care Counseling Residential care Medical services Adoption service	Gerald Stow (615) 373-5707
<b>TEXAS</b> <b>Buckner Baptist Benevolence</b> P.O. Box 13398 San Antonio, TX 78213 (512) 344-8351	Counseling Medical services Residential care Adoption services Foster home care Maternity dorm	Patty Villarreal (512) 344-8351
<b>Baptist Children's Home at San Antonio</b> 7404 Highway 90 West San Antonio, TX 78227 Mr. Lee Hacker (512) 674-3010	Emergency shelter care Counseling Residential care Adoption services Foster home care	Lee Hacker (512) 674-3010
<b>Baptist Children's Home</b> P.O. Box 7 Round Rock, TX 78664 Mr. Charles I. Wright Administrator (512) 255-3668	Residential care Group homes Foster care Emergency care services for single mothers and their children Adoption services Emergency group homes	Charles Wright (512) 255-3668
<b>South Texas Children's Home</b> P.O. Box 1210 Beeville, TX 78102 Dr. A. Jack Green Executive Director (512) 375-2101	Residential care Counseling Adoption services	Diane Grysells (512) 994-0940
<b>VIRGINIA</b> <b>Baptist Children's Home</b> P.O. Box 849 Salem, VA 24153 Mr. Don Bradley Assistant Executive Director (703) 389-5468	Residential care Counseling Medical services Adoption services Foster home care Placement services	Don Bradley

## Resources for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, January 17, 1988

The following resources are available from the Christian Life Commission for use in support of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday set on the Southern Baptist Denominational Calendar for January 17, 1988. These resources, designed to help Southern Baptists with the pressing moral issue of abortion, can be ordered now on the form below.



Quan.	ABORTION-RELATED RESOURCES	Price	Total
	<b>Sanctity of Human Life Bulletin Insert</b> —(undated—includes emphasis photo and theme interpretation) 5½" x 8½"	20 for \$1.00	
	<b>A Dozen Facts About Abortion</b> —5½" x 8½" (can be used as handout, study sheet, or bulletin insert)	20 for \$1.00	
	<b>Abortion and the Law</b> —3½" x 8½" pamphlet	20¢ each	
	<b>Sanctity of Human Life Sermon Outline</b> —5½" x 8½" flyer	20¢ each	
	<b>Alternatives to Abortion: Suggestions for Action</b> —3½" x 8½" pamphlet	20¢ each	
	<b>LIGHT—Sanctity of Human Life Special 16-page Issue</b> —(includes planning helps and order form)	25¢ each	
	<b>Issues and Answers: Teenage Pregnancy</b> —3½" x 8½" pamphlet	15¢ each	
	<b>Sanctity of Human Life Resource Packet</b> —(includes one copy of all seven resources listed above)	\$1.00 each	

### RESOURCES FROM NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ABORTION

Quan.	Speaker	Title	Format
	Bob Terry	The Bible: A Witness to Life	[ ] ½" VHS, \$25 each [ ] Audio Cassette, \$3 each
	Fred Loper	Abortion Following <i>Roe vs. Wade</i> : Patterns and Perspectives	[ ] ½" VHS, \$25 each [ ] Audio Cassette, \$3 each
	Paul Jones	Where Did the Early Church Stand on the Issue of Abortion?	[ ] ½" VHS, \$25 each [ ] Audio Cassette, \$3 each
	Joe Trull	Where Do Evangelicals Stand on the Issue of Abortion?	[ ] ½" VHS, \$25 each [ ] Audio Cassette, \$3 each
	Robert Parham	Where Do Southern Baptists Stand on the Issue of Abortion?	[ ] ½" VHS, \$25 each [ ] Audio Cassette, \$3 each
	Susie Hoeller	Abortion and the Law: A Review	[ ] ½" VHS, \$25 each [ ] Audio Cassette, \$3 each
	Andy Merritt and Jane Delaney	Pathways to Mission Action: Alternatives to Abortion	[ ] ½" VHS, \$25 each [ ] Audio Cassette, \$3 each
	N. Larry Baker	Choose Life: The Baptist Challenge on Abortion	[ ] ½" VHS, \$25 each [ ] Audio Cassette, \$3 each
	<b>Book of Proceedings</b> (one copy of each title listed above)—\$3.00		
	<b>Save \$24 on entire package of 8 VHS tapes at \$176.00</b> (ea. approx. 40 min.)		
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**... Conference**  
(Continued from page 3)

tions have avoided the full range of exceptions found in the 1971 SBC resolution and have resisted the pressure to limit the number of exceptions to only threat to the life of the mother," he said.

Two directors of church-sponsored crisis pregnancy centers described how their centers have provided counseling and alternatives to girls seeking abortions.

Jane Delaney, director of the crisis pregnancy center at First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, and Andy Merritt, director of the crisis pregnancy center at Edgewood Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia, ob-

served the crisis pregnancy center movement is growing because it is a ministry that works.

Delaney said she has seen how abortion "has devastated the lives of women and those around them."

Merritt urged Southern Baptists to take a greater stand and provide a voice for the "innocent who are being slaughtered" and women who are suffering as "a result of exploitation by abortionists."

Merritt told participants how his church has helped 14,000 women between the ages of 11 and 58 since 1981 and has assisted in starting more than 30 other crisis pregnancy centers.

Susie Hoeller, staff member of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board and president of the Greater Dallas Right-

to-Life Educational Foundation, presented a review of *Roe vs. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision handed down January 22, 1973.

Despite what most Americans believe, *Roe vs. Wade* allows for abortions throughout the entire nine months of pregnancy, she said. States increasingly may regulate abortions with each successive trimester, but even at the end of the term, "the mother still has the right to an abortion on the grounds of her health," she noted. ■

*Fields is director of communications for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. Also contributing to this story were Marv Knox, feature editor of Baptist Press and Lonnie Wilkey, director of communications, Education Commission, SBC.*

**... A Challenge**  
(Continued from page 6)

abort, certainly, but the right to have their needs considered along with the needs of their unborn. As we couple our opposition to the evil of abortion with ministry to hurting persons, we will stem the tide of abortions in our nation.

Here, then, is the Southern Baptist challenge—the challenge which I believe stands before us, our churches, our denomination:

To declare our opposition to abortion and to that mindset which undercuts the sanctity of human life;

To declare our commitment to be a compassionate people in the midst of a world of hurting people. I have also urged that we move beyond the situation in which we find ourselves today.

In the final analysis, the issue is a personal one. The power of the Kingdom is always transmitted through people. A hand reaching out. A word spoken. A challenge raised. A cause championed. A ministry performed. ■

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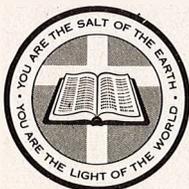
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*Baker is executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.*



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