

## The best gifts may not be immediately visible



by Marie Bowen, Executive Director of Presbyterians Pro-Life

*One Christmas gift from my Dad stands out—not as much for the gift itself, although it was great—but more for the enduring nature of its lessons that continue to teach after more than 50 years.*

*I* was a big box in a plain brown wrapper with a tag

for the three oldest children in our large family. We couldn't have been more excited! We tore into the wrapping only to find another box and another. Crumpled newspapers stuffing each box flew in all directions as we eagerly sought to find the gift inside. Somewhat deflated we finally came upon a *really small* box with a folded note inside. *A note is what we are getting for Christmas?* I swallowed my disappointment and hoped that the note would lead us outside to something *really big* that couldn't be wrapped. I don't remember the exact words, but the note informed us that we could choose one male calf from the barn, raise it for a year, and then sell it at auction and buy bicycles with the money. Oh. Oh!

### Dad's gift was genius. We learned so many things that year.

Immediately in front of us was the need to choose the right calf. Dad explained that there was no way to know which calf would remain healthy, grow fat, and bring a good price. We went with a black Angus that turned into a nice fat steer. We had to wait and carry through on the responsibility of feeding and caring for the steer for what seemed like a terribly long time. We sat through the excruciating emotions of anxiety, expectation, and high hopes as the auction took place. We said goodbye to a steer for whom we gained a certain fondness. The steer sold for top dollar and we were able to buy three top-of-the-line Schwinn bicycles in the colors of our own choosing. Those bikes saw years of wear and tear and took us places we could not go on foot. We each gained a sense of independence, hours of fun, and grew strong and healthy. Dad's gift grew over time and was oh so much better than anything we imagined to be in the big box.

### During Advent we celebrate another 'hidden' gift

God's gift of the Savior, Jesus, Messiah, came as a tiny cell packaged in the womb of Mary. Mary was given a word by the angel Gabriel, a promise that he would "save his people from their sins." But in that moment, I'm sure she had no imagina-

tion for the greatness of the gift. Certainly those around her had no understanding that the Messiah, for whom they waited and hoped and prayed, had already come! For Mary, God's gift required time for the baby Jesus to develop and grow. She grew heavy with child and just when her belly was huge and movement became difficult she and Joseph were called to go to Bethlehem. She persevered through labor and delivery in primitive surroundings. Surely she must have experienced some deflation of her dreams about the moment of his birth. Mary's steadfast faith is a model for us. Her humble trust from the first was expressed in her response to the angel, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38 ESV).

### There are lessons to be learned from the giving of gifts.

The lessons we learn from Christmas gifts have application for moms and dads feeling desperate in an unplanned or difficult pregnancy and for individuals facing the end of life and their families. Some of those things that apply include:

- ★ We ought to pay attention to the choices we make.
- ★ We ought never to assume we know the

*continued on back*

*Our Christmas prayer for you is that you will know all the Blessings God has unwrapped for you in the gift of his Son, Our Savior, Jesus the Christ.*



The best gifts... from page 1

end of a thing or imagine the fullness of the glory God has in mind for us.

★ We ought to trust in the love of the Giver and his heart toward us.

Time, labor and perseverance are faithful responses that yield more blessing that we can imagine.

God's gift of the Savior requires faith in the midst of darkness. We are called to the light of expectation and hope. God's gift calls for us to persevere and trust his promise in the face of emptiness, trust in his fulfillment of things yet unseen. God's word has been given and we are called to believe what is written of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection and Jesus' own promises that he will return. Advent calls the faithful to wait while the full meaning of God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ continues to break over us like the dawn, layer by layer, year by year, ever increasing in its wonder and glory. 🍎

# Dark Side of Christmas Narrative Reverberates in Roe v. Wade

By Tadashi Agari

Stockton, CA, December 2, 2015

Today is the first day of December, and we are heading into the Christmas season culminating in the celebration of the birth of Christ. Luke 2 is often read concerning the Christmas narrative. There is a darker side to this story that is often overlooked. The Wise Men came from the East to worship the Christ Child. King Herod asked these Wise Men to notify him when they found the Promised Child. The Wise Men found the Messiah and worshiped then left the land through another route. When King Herod found out that he was tricked, He became enraged and ordered the slaying of all male children two years and under. Herod the king is paralleled in our time by the abortion-

ist. Many innocent children were killed because of him. Many innocent pre born children are killed by abortion today.

Herod did not want to have anything to do with The First Noel in contrast to the Wise Men who sought Him. In the same way, the woman who aborts the child God has created in her womb rejects the life of her child. God was calling the Wise Men from the East, and they responded to His call. In Southern Baptist terminology, the Wise Men responded to the "Altar Call"

that lasted about 3 months by going "forward." In this case they went sideways (from east to west).

This narrative is the dark side of the Christmas story, but none-the-less still part of the story. Herod issued his decree of infanticide as an executive order. This season let us remember the plight of the unborn as a result of the court decree known as 'Roe v Wade'.



## Medical Directives can reflect faith in Christ

Life is unpredictable and Scripture teaches us that there is a time appointed time for each of us to die. None of us knows when that time will come. When disease or accident threaten life, families can be thrown into the emotion and stress of making life and death decisions without warning. As Christians who are 'pro-life' we are wise to provide directives for our families and doctors that honor God's ownership of our lives and give witness to our trust in His provision for us even beyond death. The principles that guide us are that we will neither hasten death or prolong life by burdensome treatments when there is no hope of recover. Always we will provide care, comfort and nutrition, Below is some guidance from Christian Life Resources:

A medical directive, regardless of when it is signed, takes effect when you are deemed unable to make or communicate your own decisions. For that reason, you don't need to wait until you are old or terminally ill to complete one. There are two types of medical directives - living wills and powers of attorney for health care (POAHC). A living will is a what document, because it attempts to describe the care or treatment that you wish. A POAHC is a who document, because it states the name of the person you want to make medical decisions on your behalf when you cannot make them yourself. At CLR, and in many medical circles, a POAHC is the preferred document. When completing a POAHC, you need to fill in the blanks that are provided in the document. For example, you need to write your name, address, and date for identification purposes. Then you must designate the person to make decisions for you if you become unable to make them on your own. This person is called your agent, proxy, or surrogate. We recommend the selection of at least one alternate to serve in that capacity in case the primary person is unable or unwilling to serve. You also need to sign the document and date it. Make sure you sign the document in the presence of two witnesses or a notary (state statutes differ as to whether you need a notary's signature). <http://www.christianliferesources.com?6855>

Download specific forms for your state including a Christian addendum at: <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=2514> (pdf)

# Perinatal Hospice aids parents in honoring life for as much time as God gives

A recent article<sup>1</sup> posted online at The Times Irish News described a tragic pregnancy. At twenty weeks gestation the mother received the news that her baby was dying of a chromosomal disorder. She described the period of waiting until the heartbeat stopped as “five weeks of torture”. The author of the article clearly meant to use the mother’s story as indication that Ireland needs to change its restrictive abortion law to allow abortion in such cases.

## Q. Are the pro life laws of Ireland responsible for this woman’s experience with her pregnancy?

Pediatrician, Dr. Patricia Lee June answers the question this way:

A. How sad – not just that the baby had a lethal condition, but that the mom got no support after the diagnosis. Yes, in that the pro-life laws of Ireland would have prohibited abortion.<sup>2</sup> Is it “medically necessary” to carry the baby to term? No, though having an abortion would increase the mom’s risk of breast cancer and of premature deliveries in the future and I would consider those relative contra-indications to actively killing the child (aside from the moral issues involved).

Now let’s talk about what should have been done. I don’t know what chromosomal abnormality she was talking about, but there are conditions, most commonly anencephaly or lack of development of the brain, that can be diagnosed prenatally and for which there is no treatment, and which will result in the death of the child shortly after birth. All diagnosis carries some uncertainty and I don’t know of any that consistently result in stillbirth. I have seen one or two stillborn babies with multiple anomalies but most live about half an hour after birth. Still, the first anencephalic baby I cared for lived for 9 days and went home with his parents and died there and I have read of 1 or 2 who lived over a year. I suspect they may have had a little more brain development than most.

*I wish this mom could have been counseled to cherish and love her daughter for each of the days she had with her and to see those days as a blessing, even though they were far too few.*

## Q. What can a pastor or friend say to questions about anomalies like this, when they are used as ammunition to “protect” abortion?

A. You have a situation where the baby has been diagnosed with an abnormality which is expect to result in death either before or shortly after birth, for which there is no treatment. Do you artificially shorten the baby’s life by either abortion or by induced premature delivery? Or do you love the baby for however many days God gives her on earth, and (usually) have a little time after birth while she is still alive to say goodbye? Which is the more loving? Which is the easiest psychologically on the parents and siblings? Which is the most in accord with the gift God has given? I wish this mom could have been counseled to cherish and love her daughter for each of the days she had with her and to see those days as a blessing, even though they were far too few.

There is a program called Perinatal Hospice which helps the parents both grieve their loss and enjoy their child while they have her. You can find many testimonies from parents who are thankful that they did not abort their children with terminal diagnoses. <http://www.perinatalhospice.org/>

See also: <http://www.alexandrashouse.com/>

1 Coyne, Ellen, “I had to wait for my baby to die inside me” <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/irishnews/article4624048.ece?shareToken=a12cc4ea8d10e8c5dc6492d460acf6b0>

2 Abortion is illegal in Ireland except in extremely limited circumstances, which do not include fatal foetal abnormalities.

## A word from PPL about the Colorado Springs shooting

Presbyterians Pro-Life deplors the violent crime outside the Planned Parenthood in Colorado Springs, CO that left three people dead and nine injured on November 27, 2015. We grieve with and pray for the families of those who have died. PPL denounces violence against all innocents or as a means of protest.

PPL exists to educate, promote thoughtful and theological discussion of life issues, and affirm life at all stages from conception to natural death. For our part we seek always to provide a peaceful and loving response to abortion, caring for both woman and child, and holding truth and love together with grace.

December 2nd, fourteen people were killed in another violent shooting at a social services center for individuals with special needs in San Bernardino, CA. There is truth in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s words that “violence begets violence.” Jesus said it in slightly different words: “Put your sword back in its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). Nothing is more violent than dismembering a developing infant in the womb. Is it any wonder our society is increasingly violence-prone outside the womb?



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, . . . the zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:6-7

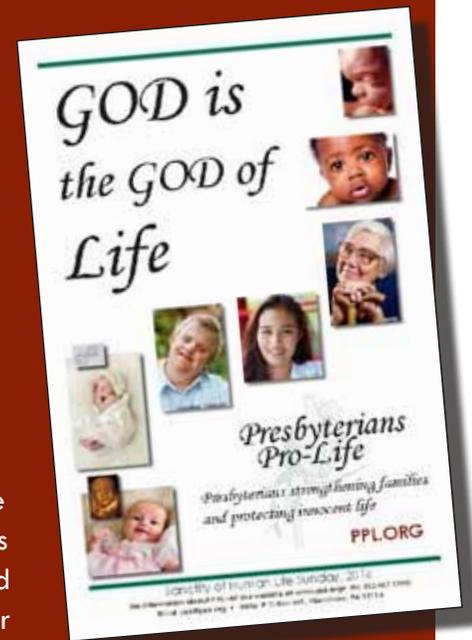
# PPL Inserts for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (SOHLS)

PPL invites your church to join PPL in raising a distinctively Presbyterian and Reformed voice for life on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, January 17, 2016. PPL's 2016 bulletin insert proclaims, "God is the Lord of Life!"

You can download and print bulletin inserts FREE from the PPL website! Go to [www.ppl.org](http://www.ppl.org). Click on the Ministry Equipping tab, pull down to worship resources and select SOHLS. PDF files for full color and black and white versions of the 2016 Sanctity of Human Life Sunday Bulletin Insert are available for you to download and print. Also on the SOHLS page are links to samples for a SOHLS worship service, a memorial service for pre born babies, and sermons. Also posted there are links to ideas for children's ministry and other ways to involve your church in a celebration of life. Printed copies of the bulletin inserts may be ordered from the PPL Office by calling 412-487-1990. A donation of \$13/per 100 is suggested to help PPL cover costs of printing and mailing.

Every year in January, many churches set aside one Sunday to observe the sanctity of human life. It is important for Christians to raise a voice that defends and celebrates life close to the anniversary of Roe v. Wade which falls on January 22nd. More than 57 million babies have been aborted in our country since that 1973 court decision. The Christian church has a better answer to unwanted pregnancy than abortion. We are called to respond with love, support, and life affirming action to alleviate the desperation and sense of being trapped that often leads women to choose abortion.

PPL has resources including a Bible Study and an adult curriculum to assist churches in promoting the sanctity of human life in January, or to be used any time of the year. Please contact us for additional information and ideas on giving witness to the sanctity of human life in your church.



## Conferences & Worship Events enhance March for Life in D.C.

The annual **March for Life** will be held on the National Mall in Washington D.C. on January 22nd following a rally on the Mall at noon. For information go to: [marchforlife.org](http://marchforlife.org)

Tony Melendez<sup>1</sup> will perform at the **National Prayer Service** on Friday, January 22, 8:30-10:30 am at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. The service is sponsored annually by the National Pro-Life Religious Council. Tony Melendez, Singer, Song-writer and Composer will be the musical guest and also Governor Sam Brownback of Kansas, who will be honored for making Kansas the first State to ban dismemberment abortion. See [NationalPrayerService.com](http://NationalPrayerService.com) for information.

**Evangelicals for Life Conference** - Join The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and Focus on the Family for "the first ever major pro-life conference for evangelicals in conjunction with the March for Life." Evangelicals will gather in Washington DC Jan 21-22 to be inspired and equipped by top speakers including Russell Moore and Jim Daly. Simulcast for local showings of the event is available for churches. For information and to register go to: <http://evangelicals.life/>

<sup>1</sup>Tony Melendez has promotional videos at - <http://www.tonymelendez.com/English/Videos.html>