

PRESS RELEASE: THE CENTER FOR BIO-ETHICAL REFORM

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

Contact Gregg Cunningham, 949-206-0600 or 714-240-6976, for print media interviews.

Contact Michael Schrimsher, 407-810-3515, for broadcast media interviews.

Between the hours of 8:00AM and 1:00PM on Sunday, March 8, 2009, the Lake Forest, California-based Center For Bio-Ethical Reform (CBR), www.AbortionNO.org, will display large photographs of aborted babies on the sidewalks surrounding Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA, near the entrances on Portola Parkway and on El Toro Road. We will also circle the church with large billboard trucks, on whose sides and backs we will display photos linking abortion to the policies of President Barack Obama. Overhead we will use aircraft to tow aerial billboards with still larger aborted baby photographs. Sample signs can be seen on our website.

We are coming to Saddleback Church in large measure because Pastor Rick Warren cares about abortion. He has expressed the opinion that abortion violates scripture and he has done so in both sectarian and secular forums. Saddleback supports crisis pregnancy ministry. The church also reaches out to those who have been wounded by abortion. All of this is necessary but we do not believe that it is sufficient. What we are calling into question is not only a matter of approach, but an issue of proportionality. Pastor Warren hasn't said that he merely aspires to involve Christians in areas of global need; he says his targets are the "areas of *greatest* global need." We are urging him to do more in his own church but also to make abortion part of the agenda he promotes to other churches. We have very specific proposals in mind and we will return to Saddleback, Sunday after Sunday, with the goal of Pastor Warren fighting abortion with the same inspiring determination with which he battles AIDS. We have sent him a letter requesting a meeting, which can also be read on our website.

By what authority do we question the sufficiency of Pastor Warren's response to abortion? By the same authority on which he might rely to question Barack Obama's response to abortion, or the response of the global church to the global AIDS crisis. Hebrews 10:24-25 directs that we "... stir up one another to love and good works." And of course, when Pastor Warren strives to influence others (as we are thankful he does) Pastor Warren is tacitly licensing others, including CBR, to attempt to influence him.

Our broader goal in this demonstration is to stimulate an international dialogue concerning the adequacy of the response of the Christian church, collectively, to the global abortion crisis. We believe that Saddleback Church should lead an honest examination of this question because Pastor Rick Warren has trained 400,000 pastors worldwide, and Christian leaders in 162 countries use his ministry resources. Approximately 189,000 church leaders also subscribe to his "Ministry Toolbox" literature. He has sold a world-record forty million books and The Barna Group reports that the two books most often listed by pastors as the most influential volumes they have read during the last three years are Pastor Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* and *Purpose Driven Church*.

Pastor Warren is unquestionably one of the most generous and influential Christian leaders in the world and not surprisingly, his congregation is among the most compassionate in all of Christendom. Last year Saddleback Church sent more than 7,000 volunteers overseas to fight AIDS and comparably pressing

problems in 68 countries. Already this year, Saddleback has filled a warehouse with donated food from which they have given away 13,000 bags of groceries to needy families. They have also donated 6 tons of food to a local food bank. This is truly a church which cares.

We believe in the power of shocking pictures to inspire this great church because Kay Warren, Executive Director of the HIV/AIDS Initiative at Saddleback and the wife of Pastor Rick Warren, credits horrifying pictures of AIDS children with first breaking her heart over the AIDS crisis. On December 10, 2007 ABCNews.com reported:

‘I picked up a news magazine on my dining room table,’ Kay said on ‘Good Morning America’ today. ‘It had an article on AIDS in Africa, and I didn’t care. I thought it was a gay man’s disease; therefore, I didn’t have to care. I was ignorant and hardhearted.’

But Warren said the sight of helpless children captured in the magazine’s heart-wrenching pictures left her in tears and ignited a passion in her that made her want to help.

‘The pictures were so horrible. I tried to reduce the horror by looking in the smallest way, but I couldn’t escape it,’ Kay said. ‘Once I couldn’t escape it, I was toast.’

Horrifying pictures convinced her that she had to persuade Pastor Warren to enlist Saddleback in the global battle against AIDS. We are confident that heart-wrenching pictures of equally helpless children, slaughtered by abortion, can have the same transformational effect. But no one is going to see aborted children in any news magazine, so it is up to us to bring these pictures to the church.

We thank God for Saddleback’s leadership in urging the Body of Christ to fight AIDS and we urge the Warrens to also use their enormous influence to fight abortion. In the January 2008 issue of *Church Executive* magazine, Mrs. Warren wrote an article titled “Why your church should join the battle against AIDS.” She quotes a pastor who says of the AIDS pandemic, “If it is indeed the greatest catastrophe of human history, then it follows too that it is the greatest opportunity of human history.” But by any reasonable standard, AIDS is not the “greatest catastrophe of human history.” The 25 million to 40 million people killed by AIDS in all the years since the pandemic began are an unspeakable tragedy but only a fraction of the number of abortion deaths which occur globally *every year*. U.S. abortion totals alone have passed 40 million babies killed since 1973 and the Guttmacher Institute estimates that 42 million preborn children are killed by abortion, worldwide, *every twelve months*. The World Health Organization estimated that there were 50 million abortions, globally, in 2001 alone.

Saddleback has shown encouraging flexibility in broadening its ministry to accommodate a variety of new concerns. We are thankful, for instance, that Pastor Warren has expanded Saddleback’s Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan to include racial reconciliation. *Christianity Today*, July 2008, reports:

[Pastor] Warren has inserted ‘Promote reconciliation’ in place of ‘Plant churches.’ This is a welcome change for Bryan Crute, senior pastor of Destiny Metro Worship Church, a black megachurch in Atlanta.

* * *

[Pastor] Crute said church leaders should view racism as just one aspect of reconciliation. He said reconciliation is about bridging the gap between God and man, resolving economic injustice and poverty and healing broken homes.

But what home could be more “broken” than a home in which parents kill their children? What about “reconciling” black parents with the preborn children they would otherwise kill? The Centers for Disease Control report that approximately 36% of all U.S. abortions are performed on black women. The Guttmacher Institute says African Americans have abortions “at five times the rate of white women” (*Los Angeles Times*, “...report cites racial disparity,” September 23, 2008). Day Gardner, founder and president of the National Black Pro-Life Union, said, “This is a silent killer among us.” Of the 40 million American abortions since 1973, 14.4 million would, therefore, have killed black babies. The church’s responsibility to help save African babies from AIDS is undeniable but no less compelling than its duty to save the even greater numbers of African American babies being killed by abortion.

Saddleback has also made a new priority of climate related issues. But while encouraging Christian concern for the environment is also commendable, should it take precedence over concern for the preborn children whose slaughter Pastor Warren has called a “Holocaust”? (Beliefnet.com, August 18, 2008) If we accept as valid the most contentious assumptions made by those who warn of problematic “climate change,” there are 150,000 more deaths each year which could be attributed to “global warming.” These same scientists estimate that that death rate could double in twenty-five years to 300,000. But as lamentable as those numbers may be and as arguably urgent as the need for action might be, there are 300,000 preborn babies being killed every ninety days in America and 300,000 aborted globally roughly every 2.5 days. And unlike “climate change,” there is no disputing the assumptions relied upon to derive abortion statistics.

In 2006, Mrs. Warren told *Newsweek* (“Christians and AIDS,” newsweek.com) “I’ve had breast cancer and people ask why I don’t advocate for breast cancer and I say because there’s no stigma.” In this same regard, SaddlebackFamily.com, under the section titled “HIV/AIDS Initiative,” quotes Mrs. Warren saying, “No one ever gets banished from her village because she’s infected with tuberculosis. No one loses his job simply because of malaria. Husbands don’t beat or divorce their wives for developing the flu, diabetes, or cancer. No relatives refuse to care for children whose parents were killed in an accident.” She adds, “Not only does HIV carry stigma and shame, but it is preventable.”

She is right, of course, about the stigma associated with AIDS but countless women have also been oppressed by the stigma of unplanned pregnancy. Fear of having to leave their communities and places of work and schools are common justifications for abortion. And all too many married women have been beaten and even killed because they refused to abort a pregnancy which threatened their husbands’ lifestyles. Who even knows how many men have threatened their teenage daughters with eviction unless they terminate a pregnancy which would embarrass the family? Who can calculate the number of mothers who have told their pregnant teenage daughter, “You have this child and you will take care of it yourself”? And it is not uncommon for men to threaten to abandon the girlfriends they don’t want to marry if these girls refuse to kill a baby for whom the boyfriend does not want to pay child support. Of course, after the abortion, these men almost always abandon the mothers of their now-dead children, anyway.

Abortion nearly always involves stigma and coercion and persecution. The February 17, 2009 issue of the *Orange County Register* featured a front-page story (“Her Living Breathing Secret”) describing a teenager who was threatened by her boyfriend when he discovered her pregnancy. She hid from him for months after conceiving because he had warned her that if she ever became pregnant, “Something would have to be done.” The article added that “He told me if I kept it, he’d never marry me.” The teenager placed her baby for adoption and forty-nine years later, when mother and daughter were finally reunited, the daughter told her mother thank you for giving me “the gift of life.” All of this is at least as preventable as the suffering associated with AIDS.

We bring our aborted baby photos to the door of the church in the same spirit in which the friends of Lazarus the beggar brought him to the gates of the rich man in Christ’s story in Luke 16:19-21. We love Saddleback Church and this weekly visit will not be a protest. It will be a “cry for help.” Lazarus’ friends brought him to the gate of the rich man’s home so his disturbing cry for help could not go unnoticed. When believers stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10) to give an account of their response to abortion, the bloodiest mass murder in all of human history, we want to ensure that none will be able to fairly say “we didn’t know” (Proverbs 24:12).

Saddleback is doing marvelous work in a myriad of ways but in Revelation 3:1-2 we read the words of Christ criticizing the ministry of a church which was also doing many good works; but Jesus said their agenda still wasn’t broad enough: “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but ... I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of God.” In Revelation 3:13-22, Jesus again says, “I know your deeds So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” These were not churches which were doing nothing. They were churches which weren’t doing enough and/or enough of the right things. Lukewarm almost perfectly describes the opposition most churches mount against abortion. In Matthew 24:12, Jesus told us that we could expect the End Times when “the love of most grows cold.” The church’s love for the preborn may not have grown “cold” but it has certainly cooled to a temperature which offers only cold comfort to the preborn. That could all change if Saddleback could find room for abortion in the Global P.E.A.C.E. Plan whose scope the church is already expanding.

During Pastor Warren’s August 2008 interview with Beliefnet.com, he announced his intention to discuss his differences concerning abortion with his friend President Obama “privately,” because Pastor Warren said it was not his preference to “protest out on the street.” He added that he preferred “to work one-on-one as rational people” and that he “have this discussion with civility.” He also said “we don’t demonize someone you disagree with even on a life and death issue.” But Pastor Warren obviously doesn’t have to protest in front of the White House to get Mr. Obama’s attention. He can merely pick up the phone and the president will take his call. And Pastor Warren may not have “demonized” us but he does seem to be marginalizing us. Since he has not responded to our request for a meeting, we are placed in the awkward position of trying to communicate with Saddleback from the sidewalk, or abandoning all hope of mobilizing the church against abortion, at least at the same level at which Pastor Warren is mobilizing the church against AIDS.

Not only does Pastor Warren’s disapproval of “protesting out on the streets” suggest a tacit judgment that pro-life demonstrations are categorically “irrational” and “uncivil” but he also seems to be expressing disapproval of exactly the same activity which was the foundation of Martin Luther King's fight for racial

equality. The May 2006 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine (“Fearing the Worst”) reports that the protests which landed Dr. King in the Birmingham Jail involved, “... demonstrators [who] faced down fire hoses and police dogs and inspired President Kennedy to introduce federal legislation outlawing segregation.” Demonstrations should never be the alternative of first resort but when all else fails, Dr. King proved that they can sometimes change the world.

We pray that Pastor Warren will one day be moved to meet with us but if our presence with aborted baby photos outside Saddleback Church convinces even one pregnant woman not to kill her child, the project will be a success and worth any persecution or division which might result. With more than 20,000 people attending services at Saddleback every week, and given the fact that many of them are uncommitted seekers, nominal believers and casual attenders, there could easily be multiple abortions occurring in the congregation every week. People who haven’t seen abortion are more apt to mistakenly believe that it is evil but perhaps the “lesser of two evils” – precisely because they don’t realize how evil it actually is. The pictures often convince mothers to choose life. A twenty-three-year-old woman recently wrote us to say:

I had an abortion about 3 years ago. I was raised in a Christian family. I considered myself a Christian. I got pregnant and I had a choice to make. I was scared and I didn't know what to do. I was not in a relationship and I knew it would kill my parents if they knew. So, I decided to ignore my Christian upbringing and go through with it. I figured once it was over everything would be back to normal. I couldn't have been more wrong. I wish I knew then what I know now. The pictures, the images, the pain.

If our presence with aborted baby photos outside Saddleback Church convinces one post-abortive woman (or one man who forced his wife, girlfriend or daughter to abort) to stop rationalizing this sin and confess and repent so they can be forgiven and healed, the project will be a success and worth any persecution or division which might result. At least one in every three American women will reportedly have an elective abortion by age forty-five (Guttmacher Institute). Given the heterogeneous nature of the Saddleback congregation, there could be several thousand women and men there who are oppressed by unresolved abortion guilt. Abortion is a secret sin. Many people “choose” abortion to cover up sexual sin, as David shed innocent blood to cover up sexual sin with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:1-15). Concealment can impede recovery and widespread, unresolved guilt can cripple a church’s potential for defending life. The pictures often convict viewers of this failure to repent. The Centers for Disease Control report that some 45% of abortions are performed on women who have already had a previous abortion. It may be post-abortive women who are at greatest risk of aborting and it could be they who are, therefore, in greatest need of education regarding abortion. A twenty-two-year-old woman recently wrote us to say:

I was never informed [about] the cruelty involved in the abortion procedures. The images that I have just seen broke my heart, and made me beg the Lord for forgiveness for my ignorance in having one done when I was 18. I wish that information was available when I needed advice on this matter.

If our presence with aborted baby photos outside of Saddleback Church convinces one apathetic, pro-life Christian to become seriously involved in the defense of life, the project will be a success and worth any

persecution or division which might result. Week after week, many thousands of the kind-hearted, prolife Christians who attend Saddleback are doing little or nothing to stop the killing. There is a high potential for these terrible pictures to motivate significant percentages to become active and save large numbers of lives. These pictures frequently convict viewers of their apathy. An eighteen-year-old recently wrote us to say:

Before I saw this website, I was pro-life. However, I was only moderately involved. After having seen your display ... and then coming to this website, I will work harder than ever before. It sickens me, and the genocide references give me a new argument. Also, I showed this website to a friend who was convinced she was going to abort her unborn child. She has now decided ... [against abortion].

In conclusion, we are urging the news media to publish and broadcast notice of our plans to display these very disturbing abortion photos at Saddleback Church, in part, because despite the advance notice we provided the leadership at Saddleback, the church chose to withhold notice of our project from the congregation. We are concerned that thousands of parents of young children should be given an opportunity to go elsewhere Sunday morning if they believe it is important to shield their children from these images. In a further attempt to address this concern, we are erecting large, bright orange, warning signs along all avenues of approach to the church, at locations which will afford motorists an opportunity to choose a different route.

On December 10, 2008, Pastor Warren told USAToday.com (“Saddleback founder Warren driven to expand his reach”) “What I am not is a fundamentalist. You become a fundamentalist when you stop listening.” We pray that Pastor Warren has not become a “fundamentalist” on abortion. In that same article, a theology professor at Duke University’s Divinity School said Pastor Warren is “willing to work with anyone without an ideological litmus test” as long as he isn’t asked to give up his “own convictions.” On December 22, 2008, in *USA Today’s* Faith & Reason section (“Rick Warren and Barack Obama’s inaugural address”) columnist Cathy Lynn Grossman echoed that assessment:

...[Pastor] Warren and I talked about some of his new ventures, such as a publishing and social network venture with The Readers Digest, and about his critics. Warren told me he would work with anyone – of any faith or politics – if they were going to put their talents and treasure to defeating disease, poverty and illiteracy. ‘But some folks won’t work with me,’ he said.

We know just how Pastor Warren feels. If Pastor Warren will work to stop AIDS with people who agree with him on almost nothing, why wouldn’t he work to stop abortion with people who agree with him on almost everything? Do we offend him with our public display of awful abortion pictures?

Eisenhowermemorial.org says the following concerning awful Holocaust pictures:

General Eisenhower understood that many people would be unable to comprehend the full scope of this horror. He also understood that any human deeds that were so utterly evil might eventually be challenged or even denied as being literally unbelievable. For these reasons he ordered that all the civilian news media and military combat camera units be required to visit the camps and record their observations in print, pictures and film. As he explained to General Marshall, ‘I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in

a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to “propaganda.””

Most Americans, many of them who claim the name of Christ, mistakenly believe that it is “propaganda” to call abortion a “Holocaust.” Many of them, however, change their minds when we show them the same kinds of pictures General Eisenhower thought were so important. The only difference is that he could command the news media to record and report the truth. We are reduced to holding our low-tech signs in front of churches whose pastors ignore us.

On the Holocaust, Pastor Warren told Beliefnet’s Steve Waldman (“Steve Waldman Interviews Rick Warren,” December 2008):

‘Yes, the Holocaust, we wanted it to end. But Schindler was pulling people out. That’s a good thing even though he couldn’t end the whole thing. So if I can save a few lives that’s a good thing.’

‘That’s [Obama’s “abortion reduction” strategy] like saying on the Holocaust well maybe we could save 20% of the Jewish people in Poland and Germany and get them out and we should be satisfied with that. I’m not satisfied with that. I want the Holocaust ended.’

We think he really means it. We think he wants the abortion Holocaust ended. But why, then, does this man of such enormous vision on AIDS fight abortion as though he is satisfied with “saving just a few lives”?

Perhaps the answer can be found in something Pastor Warren said to *New York Magazine* columnist John Heilemann (May 28, 2007) on the topic of prolife activism:

Whereas Falwell bemoaned the emerging strain of Evangelical environmentalism as ‘Satan’s attempt to redirect the church’s primary focus,’ Warren declares, ‘The environment is a moral issue.’ And regarding his pro-life stance, Warren says, ‘I’m just not rabid about it.’

The problem is that we are fighting people like Barack Obama, who *is* rabid about it. The September 15, 2008 issue of *National Review* magazine (“The Week”) documents then-state Senator Obama’s infanticidal opposition to medical care for infants who survive failed abortions. We pray that our horrifying abortion photos will help Pastor Warren become at least as rabid as is our president on the issue of baby-killing.

We greatly respect and admire Pastor Warren and Saddleback Church. We believe that they are entreatable. And we are going to entreat them. Luke 11:8 says, “I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.” Luke 18:5 adds, “... [Y]et because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.””

In *Time* magazine's "The TIME 100" article, June 14, 1999, Pastor Billy Graham, with whom Pastor Warren is often compared, says his "... one regret is that he didn't join the battle for civil rights more forcefully." He said, "... I think I made a mistake when I didn't go to Selma' with many clergy who joined the Alabama civil rights march led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 'I would like to have done more.'" It is important to note that Pastor Graham had not done nothing to promote racial justice; he simply hadn't done enough. Many pastors are also likely to look back on the prolife movement and regret "not having done more" for the unborn. We pray that Pastor Warren won't be among them.