Making It COUNT
Evaluating Crisis Pregnancy Centers
Well, it’s about time. As the editor of Care Net Report, I owe you a long overdue explanation. What in the world is the Care Net Report (CNR) attempting to accomplish?

First of all, I want to thank you for your ongoing prayer and financial support to this pro-life ministry. Secondly, I want to take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Matthew Waters and 2007 begins my eighth year at Care Net. The bulk of my time is spent performing the fund-raising functions of our ministry. My formal title is Vice President of Public Education & Development. But in addition to development, I have the privilege of putting together the CNR and assisting our team in developing fund-raising and public policy programs for more than 1,050 pregnancy centers.

So why a Care Net magazine? The CNR, a bi-monthly publication that goes out to our supporters, has a threefold mission. The first part of our mission is to update you on the work you are helping us to accomplish. We hope that the “Option Line Report,” “Care Net News,” “Urban Initiative Report,” and “Pregnancy Center Report” provide you with up-to-date information on how we are serving men and women in crisis and saving the unborn from abortion.

The second aspect of the CNR mission is to raise public awareness and provide factual information on the complex and often tragic issues surrounding crisis pregnancies. We do this through the “Editor’s Report,” “News From North America and Around the World,” and our “Cover Story” sections.

The third component, as you can gather from some of our readers’ letters this issue, is a bit more controversial, although that is not the intent. Care Net seeks to encourage Christians in their daily walk by reviewing music, literature, and other resources that they may find valuable for the short journey here as ‘foreigners and exiles’ (I Peter 2:11).

Why this aspect of our mission? Through the CNR, we want to give back to you in a way that helps you in your faith or simply keeps you informed of resources and trends that speak to life issues, thus the sections “Movie Report,” “Book Report,” and “Music Report.”

It is not our desire or intention to promote either liberal or conservative agendas, but rather to provoke thoughtful responses based on a Biblical world view. As much as possible we aim the reviews to materials that are closely related to life and cultural issues that you as well as our pregnancy center staff and volunteers face on a daily basis.

With that, I hope we have fully explained our mission and we hope you enjoy this issue as much as we did putting it together and reporting on the various aspects of Care Net. It is an exciting time here, and we’re faced with extraordinary opportunities to reach this lost generation with the Gospel of Christ and resources to help them choose life. We hope you agree.

Matthew J. Waters
Vice President of Public Education & Development
Editor, Care Net Report
THANK YOU for helping the unborn and those to whom they have been given. In your Christmas card you quoted a statistic for 2006 of 1.2 million children [aborted annually]. It may be helpful to donors to know that this only represents the United States. Worldwide the number is between 36 and 53 million per year, as reported by Alan Guttmacher on abortionfacts.com.
– Nancy Knudtsen, Broomfield, CO

I WAS IN A MEETING when the topic of Starbucks came up. Someone strongly objected because one of their cups quoted a well known homosexual. There was a general consensus that we should boycott Starbucks. They completely overlooked the fact that Starbucks provides medical, dental, and vision insurance to anyone who works just 20 hours a week, allows employees to donate sick days to any other employee who has a severe illness, finds jobs in other locales for those displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and aids employees with adoption through financial incentives. I think that, given all the pros, in many ways, Starbucks is more “Christian” in their behavior than many other so-called Christian companies. The world is black and white in some areas, but in others we have to take the bad with the good and affirm the good.
– Danielle Hanson, Executive Director, Real Options for Women, Plano, TX

I WANT TO QUESTION your reasons, first of all, for including a movie report in Care Net Report. Secondly, why would you even be reviewing movies of this sort? Does this have anything to do with saving babies from abortion? Also, I find this whole article very one-sided. Maybe you could have reviewed a movie with the opposite view. Either way, I think it should not have been included in your magazine.
– Rose Ann MacDonald, Madison, CT

I WANTED to thank the editors of the Care Net Report for the thoughtful way they are using movie and book reviews to explore the broader context of concerns about life. From the outside, the pro-life movement is often viewed as one which cares about the unborn but not about people after they are born. As a volunteer male presence at a Care Net center, I know this is far from the mark as centers provide loving support before and after the baby is born. But in the public policy arena, sometimes the positions of some of those active in protecting the unborn on other issues affecting human life seem to lend some credence to the stereotype.

Among Roman Catholics, there has been for some time an active connection between the pro-life position on abortion and other life issues. In recent years, more evangelical Protestant leaders have been drawing attention to the same connection. These efforts are making some people who have had a knee-jerk reaction to those active against abortion begin to take a more thoughtful look at the issue. It is good to have the CNR joining the growing dialogue within the Christian community.
– Bill Samuel, President, Consistent Life, Silver Spring, MD

I WAS THOROUGHLY impressed with the “Movie Report” in the latest Care Net Report (Jan./Feb. ’07 edition). I had never heard of either movie, but I was intrigued with the descriptions of both and really liked the historical context in which they were put. You did some excellent writing. It must have taken courage to write these reviews as I’m sure many readers from very conservative “pro-war” perspectives will be skeptical of these movies and your article. Way to go!
– Marc Andreas, Director of Marketing, Bethany Christian Services, Grand Rapids, MI

I APPRECIATE the movie reviews in recent editions of the CareNet Report. Including this kind of cultural analysis in your magazine is helpful for several reasons. First, it encourages us to think about the sanctity of life in a holistic way. Pro-lifers often are portrayed as hypocrites who limit their “pro-lifeness” to fetuses. However, being pro-life includes treating our neighbors with respect, spending our money in life-affirming ways, and supporting policies that promote justice, mercy, and peace. Your reviews have touched on all of these issues and are consistent with CareNet’s mission. Second, your even-handed reviews of controversial topics (i.e., cloning, Walmart, American imperialism, etc.) strengthen CareNet’s credibility as an unflinchingly pro-life ministry that is not a slave to any political party or agenda. I’ve passed some of these articles on to others and it has sparked good discussions. Keep up the good work!
– Pastor Andrew Weaver, Pittsburgh, PA

I HAVE A REAL PROBLEM with extremely liberal people, such as Errol Morris (director of The Fog of War) getting encouraging reports in a CN magazine. I give of my money, time, and resources to help Care Net stop and reduce the number of abortions in this country. Errol Morris gives of his money, time, and resources supporting candidates and organizations that work overtime to undo all the good Care Net is doing. Do you see where I’m going with this? I’m not asking you to write a negative report about Mr. Morris, I feel we are doing more harm than good by supporting his work.
– Troy Anderson, Lacey, WA

REPLY: Our past movie commentaries covered such controversial subjects as the impact of corporate greed upon the dignity of human life and the Christian criteria for determining when war is just. The problems confronted in these films are undoubtedly multidimensional, and to conclude that such deep moral questions can be easily answered by evoking traditional liberal or conservative labels is overly simplistic.
Several readers charged that Care Net is taking a liberal political stand on the war by reviewing these movies. I can understand why this erroneous conclusion was drawn. Let me clarify: the point of the review was not to push a political agenda. I was attempting to get Christians to think outside of traditional party politics and think in terms of “What does the Bible say?” and “What does the history of the church say?” The movies chosen, in my opinion, open us up to ask ourselves those kinds of probing questions, questions Augustine and others asked centuries ago.
Sylvia Johnson served as executive director of two Care Net affiliated centers in the Houston suburbs. But she had a vision to open a facility where it was most needed: the inner city. Johnson told her dream to John Keeler, who volunteered at the centers. Keeler, a commercial real estate broker, identified a building to lease, and others lent their expertise as well. Richard Rainer, a friend from Johnson’s Bible study, oversaw the remodeling and rallied building contractors, carpenters, electricians, and plumbers to donate materials and labor.

Since the Houston Fifth Ward Pregnancy Help Center opened, about 45 abortion-minded clients change their minds and keep their babies each month. Most of them also make a Christian commitment. Before the Fifth Ward facility opened, neighborhood residents had to ride three different buses to reach the nearest pregnancy care center.

Johnson’s experience represents a new paradigm in the pro-life movement. Pregnancy care centers are opening in the inner city, staffed by volunteers from various neighborhood churches.

“We should have been here 15 years ago, but thank God we’re here now,” Johnson says.

Johnson isn’t alone in seeing a need. Two years ago, Care Net, which has helped develop 975 pregnancy centers, began identifying underserved major metropolitan areas, according to president Kurt Entsminger. Besides the center in Houston, 15 independent centers have opened with Care Net’s logistical and financial support around the nation.

“Most pregnancy centers are in the suburbs, but we need to relocate where they are most needed,” Entsminger says.

(Source: Today’s Pentecostal Evangel. Reprinted with permission.)

More on the Web:
Read more stories about how God is using Care Net at www.care-net.org
WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING...

EACH DAY, Option Line consultants help nearly 520 women in crisis who call, E-mail, or use Instant Messenger. Care Net’s Option Line web site hosted 274,655 visitors in the third quarter of 2006. Of media sources, Internet advertising remains the top contributor to our call volume at 66.5%. Yellow Pages and television advertising draw 12.4% and 5%, respectively. Instant Messenger has surpassed E-mail in monthly contact volume and continues to be the fastest growing contact channel.

The Call Center employs 30 trained phone consultants; five are bilingual. All are professing Christians. The intentional sharing of the Gospel by Option Line Consultants (where it is appropriate) and by our affiliated pregnancy centers is one of the unique features of the ministry of Care Net. In fact, we consider each one of our Option Line consultants missionaries who are reaching out to share the love of Christ with women all across North America. The Internet, our phone lines, and our state-of-the-art Call Center provide us a direct connection to thousands of women who face pregnancy-related and other crises.

Option Line operator Leah Akers shared the following Instant Message conversation with Stacey, a fourteen year old.

Leah said, “I kept thinking of Jeremiah 33:3: ‘Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.’ Glory be to God!”

Below is an excerpt of the actual instant messaging conversation as it took place while most of us are fast asleep. Leah was able to help Stacey between 2 and 3 a.m. The grammatical shorthand and errors are left intact so you can get an idea of what a typical Instant Messaging conversation looks like.

STACEY (2:15 a.m.) im thinking about being reborn, as a virgin again, im only 14

OPTION LINE even better reason to make that commitment now. imagine if you had sex with just 1 person every year starting now...by time you are 24 you will have slept with 10 people and statistically some of those people will have had an STD... thats a lot to deal with

STACEY holy s***. yeah im never having sex ever again. until im married

STACEY omg. just out of curiosity. how old are u? are u married?

OPTION LINE 23. Yep...to a wonderful man who respected my wish not to have sex until we were married

STACEY i hope i can become strong like you...im having awful teenage years.

OPTION LINE I will be honest.. i don't know if you have a relationship with God...but I could not have done it without him. Have you actually asked Jesus into your heart and asked him to forgive you?

STACEY no

OPTION LINE John 3:16 tells us that God gave his only son (Jesus) so that you and I could have eternal life. 1 John 1:9 says If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. All you have to do is ask and God will save you and you will spend forever in heaven with him.

STACEY how?

OPTION LINE Would you like to pray and ask Jesus to save you and help you with your life?

STACEY yeahh.

OPTION LINE Pray with me. Father God, I realize that I am a sinner and I am in need of a savior. I know I can't do this on my own and I need your strength and your power to overcome the temptations in my life. I acknowledge that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and God I am asking that you save me from an eternity in hell. Thank you God that my place in heaven is now secured. If you prayed that prayer and meant it God is faithful and he is rejoicing in heaven.

STACEY okay good

OPTION LINE You're now a child of the king. You can pray to him and ask him to help you with school, staying sexually pure, with your parents. whatever your struggle. do you believe that today??

STACEY yeahh

OPTION LINE Praise The Lord. Do you have a church close to you? I encourage you to tell your church that you have accepted Jesus as your savior so they can help you. I would encourage you log onto www.crosswalk.com and they have devotionals and study tools to help you get into the word of God

STACEY okay, thanks so much

OPTION LINE (3:10 a.m.) no problem...it is my pleasure

The Option Line Call Center and Website is jointly owned and operated by Care Net and Heartbeat International.
Last year over 300,000 women visited Care Net pregnancy centers. It was there that they discovered they are not alone.

By Matthew Waters

With the addition of 26 pregnancy centers during November and December 2006, the total number of Care Net pregnancy center affiliates climbed to 1061, up from 923 last January.

Centers affiliate with Care Net for many reasons. Many join because of Care Net’s uniquely evangelistic emphasis. Centers that join Care Net receive extensive training and professional assistance. Each new Care Net affiliate receives a free on-site training, a free Legal Review, and a free collection of training manuals that range from legal issues to evangelism. Care Net centers then receive ongoing training and assistance through Care Net’s national staff, 15 regional consultants, and an annual Care Net conference that features more than 150 workshop opportunities.

Centers that join Care Net also directly benefit from Care Net’s extensive television, billboard and Internet advertising campaigns. The Option Line call center receives more than 200,000 annual contacts and the Option Line web site enjoys more than 1,000,000 annual visitors. This translates into thousands and thousands of client referrals to Care Net centers.

Care Net is also pleased to release the results of extensive research documenting Care Net’s work in 2005 and ranking centers across the country according to a variety of criteria. In 2005, more than 300,000 women visited Care Net pregnancy centers. There they discovered that they are not alone. Care Net pregnancy centers offer women free pregnancy tests and information on their options, help women take advantage of free parenting classes, free diapers and formula, free maternity and baby clothes, and, in some cases, guide women through job and education training. Many Care Net centers also offer ultrasounds and STD testing.

Staff and volunteers serving at local Care Net-affiliated pregnancy centers exalt Christ, empower women, and uphold the sanctity of human life each day by listening and by speaking the truth in love. In addition, they strive to meet the spiritual, emotional, and material needs of men and women facing unplanned pregnancies in every community.

The majority of women facing unplanned pregnancies dread the thought of terminating their pregnancies. Most regret it when they do. If you would like to support one of these local centers serving in your hometown, please call Cindy Hopkins at (703) 554-8737, or email her at cindy@care-net.org. Please consider helping these new Care Net affiliates with prayer as well as volunteer and financial support.
The Top 5 Centers with Commitments for Christ
1. 443 decisions Corpus Christi Preg. Ctr., Corpus Christi, TX
2. 326 decisions Pregnancy Care Centers, Oakland, Pittsburgh, PA
3. 291 decisions Choose Life of North Alabama, Huntsville, AL
4. 205 decisions CICPC – East, Indianapolis, IN
5. 159 decisions First Choice Womens Centers, Miami, FL

The Top 5 Centers with the most Pregnancy Tests
1. 3,269 tests CICPC - East, Indianapolis, Indiana
2. 2,737 tests Care Net Pregnancy Center of Central TX, Waco, TX
3. 2,506 tests Choose Life of North Alabama, Huntsville, AL
4. 2,255 tests Pregnancy Resource Center, Gresham, OR
5. 1,923 tests Life Network, Colorado Springs PC, Colorado Springs, CO

The Top 5 Centers for Women’s Post-Abortion Support
Results indicate the number of women who received post-abortion support.
1. 262 women Preg. Res. Ctr. of Lodi, Lodi, CA
2. 136 women TLC Womens Center, Orlando, FL
3. 133 women Hope PC, University Dr., Davie, FL
4. 132 women Care Net Preg & Fam Svc of Pierce Co., Tacoma, WA
5. 118 women Akron Pregnancy Services, Akron, OH

The Top 5 Centers with the most Ultrasounds Performed
1. 638 ultrasounds Charlotte Pregnancy Care Center, Charlotte, NC
2. 523 ultrasounds Preg. Crisis Ctr. of Wichita, Inc., Wichita, KS
3. 502 ultrasounds Alpha Omega Preg. Care Ctr., St. Augustine, FL
4. 467 ultrasounds Choose Life of North Alabama, Huntsville, AL
5. 418 ultrasounds CICPC – East, Indianapolis, IN

The Top 5 Centers with the most African-American Clients
1. 1,909 African-Americans Choose Life of North Alabama, Huntsville, AL
2. 1,753 African-Americans CICPC – East, Indianapolis, IN
3. 1,079 African-Americans Charlotte Pregnancy Care Center, Charlotte, NC
4. 1,043 African-Americans CICPC – Main (West), Indianapolis, IN

The Top 5 Centers with the most Hispanic Clients
1. 1,272 Hispanics Corpus Christi Preg. Ctr., Corpus Christi, TX
2. 1,077 Hispanics Life Choices of Yakima, Yakima, WA
3. 1,004 Hispanics Your Options, Pasco PRC, Pasco, WA
4. 946 Hispanics Pregnancy Resource Center, Gresham, OR
5. 803 Hispanics Care Net Preg. Ctr. of Central TX, Waco, TX

The Top 5 Centers with the most College Student Clients
1. 334 college students Hope Preg. Ctrs. of Brazos Valley, College Station, TX
2. 316 college students Care Net Pregnancy Center of Central TX, Waco, TX
3. 331 college students Women’s Hope Medical Clinic, Auburn, Auburn, AL
4. 292 college students Life Network, Colorado Springs PC, Colorado Springs, CO
5. 248 college students Corpus Christi Preg. Ctr., Corpus Christi, TX

More on the Web: Read more stories about how God is using Care Net at www.care-net.org
Like many young couples, Ashlee and her husband found themselves facing an unplanned pregnancy early in their marriage. “We knew we weren’t financially ready for a child,” Ashlee said. “We had no means to provide all of the things that a baby needs—and boy do they need a lot!” Then Ashlee heard about “Earn While You Learn,” a unique program offered at the Care Net Pregnancy Center of Putnam County in Greencastle, Indiana.

“Earn While You Learn,” a one-of-a-kind support program offered by local pregnancy centers, allows expecting mothers to receive important material resources such as diapers, formula, baby clothes, car seats, and more, while learning essential parenting skills through books, videos, and scheduled appointments.

“When I heard about the program, I was ecstatic,” Ashlee says. “I started the classes while I was pregnant and got a brand new crib along with other items, which my husband and I had no way to buy.” And as a first-time expectant mother, she says she also benefited greatly from the guidance she received. “I learned so many things about being a parent that I never knew before.”

Ashlee is now the proud mother of a beautiful boy, Trent, and says she and her son still receive needed care and support from her local pregnancy center. “I’m so grateful for everything that Care Net has done. I can honestly say without that program I don’t know what I would have done!”

Parents-to-be can receive necessary equipment and survival skills in “Earn While You Learn” program.

More than one million women face unplanned pregnancies every year. Just like Ashlee, most of these women say that financial support is one of the most critical factors in whether they choose to carry their baby to term. The parenting and support programs offered by Care Net centers empower women with the resources and care they need to make life-affirming decisions. Additionally, these critical programs enable women and men to become confident, successful parents.

• Your financial contributions to Care Net make the development of these programs and initiatives possible and help women receive the resources and support they need to choose life for their babies.

• Investing your time as a volunteer at your local crisis pregnancy center extends this critical kingdom work within your own community.

• Intercessory prayer on behalf of those seeking help is the mission we are called to undertake.
Abortion Rights, Is Dead

Jane Hodgson, a prominent abortion rights advocate who in a highly publicized test case in 1970 became the only doctor in the United States to be convicted of illegally performing an abortion in a hospital, died on Oct. 23 at her home in Rochester, Minn. She was 91. Until January 1973, when the Supreme Court handed down its landmark decision in Roe v. Wade, abortion was illegal in most states. Among them was Minnesota, where Dr. Hodgson had a busy practice as an obstetrician and gynecologist.

In April 1970, Dr. Hodgson agreed to perform an abortion in order to challenge Minnesota law. At the time, abortion was permitted in the state only to save the woman’s life.

The patient, a married mother of three, had contracted German measles early in her fourth pregnancy. Though the woman’s life was not in danger, the disease carried a high risk for birth defects. Dr. Hodgson performed the abortion and was arrested shortly afterward. Convicted in November 1970, she was sentenced to 30 days in jail and a year’s probation.

Dr. Hodgson’s sentence was suspended pending appeal; after the Roe decision, her conviction was overturned. She served no jail time.

In later years, Dr. Hodgson remained a public champion of abortion rights, speaking widely on the subject and founding several reproductive health care clinics. She also lent her name to several abortion-related lawsuits, notably Hodgson v. Minnesota, which challenged a state law requiring both parents to be notified before a minor could have an abortion.

Ruling in the case in 1990, the United States Supreme Court upheld the Minnesota law with a 5-to-4 vote, finding it constitutional because of its provision allowing patients to seek permission from a judge instead of from their parents.

There was little in Dr. Hodgson’s background that would mark her as a crusader. For the first decades of her career, she refused to perform abortions, though a steady stream of patients begged her to in whispers. But, as she said later in interviews, she grew increasingly troubled by watching women come to her with complications from botched abortions obtained elsewhere.

Jane Elizabeth Hodgson was born on Jan. 23, 1915, in Crookston, Minn. Her father was a country doctor, and she often accompanied him on rounds. She earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Carleton College in 1934 and an M.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1939. After advanced training at the Mayo Clinic, she established her practice in St. Paul.

In 1940, Dr. Hodgson married Frank Quattlebaum, a vascular surgeon; he died in 2004. She is survived by their two daughters, Gretchen Banks of Edina, Minn., and Nancy Burke of Golden Valley, Minn.; and three grandchildren.

When she was well into her 70’s, Dr. Hodgson continued to make the 150-mile weekly trip from St. Paul to Duluth, Minn., to perform abortions at a clinic she had helped establish there.

“I think in many ways I’ve been lucky to have been part of this,” Dr. Hodgson said in the book “Doctors of Conscience” (Beacon Press, 1995) by Carole Joffe. “If I hadn’t gotten involved, I would have gone through life probably being perfectly satisfied to go to the medical society parties and it would have been very, very dull. I would have been bored silly.”

(Source: New York Times, By Margalit Fox, 11/5/06)

New York

Truth, Justice, Abortion and The New York Times Magazine

New York – The cover story on abortion in El Salvador in The New York Times Magazine on April 9 contained prominent references to an attention-grabbing fact. “A few” women, the first paragraph indicated, were serving 30-
year jail terms for having had abortions. That reference included a young woman named Carmen Climaco. The article concluded with a dramatic account of how Ms. Climaco received the sentence after her pregnancy had been aborted after 18 weeks.

It turns out, however, that trial testimony convinced a court in 2002 that Ms. Climaco’s pregnancy had resulted in a full-term live birth, and that she had strangled the “recently born.” A three-judge panel found her guilty of “aggravated homicide,” a fact the article noted. But without bothering to check the court document containing the panel’s findings and ruling, the article’s author, Jack Hitt, a freelancer, suggested that the “truth” was different.

The issues surrounding the article raise two points worth noting, both beyond another reminder to double-check information that seems especially striking. Articles on topics as sensitive as abortion need an extra level of diligence and scrutiny — “bulletproofing,” in newsroom jargon. And this case illustrates how important it is for top editors to carefully assess complaints they receive. A response drafted by top editors for the use of the office of the publisher in replying to complaints about the Hitt story asserted that there was “no reason to doubt the accuracy of the facts as reported.”

Apart from the flawed example of Ms. Climaco, Mr. Hitt’s 7,800-word cover article provided a broad and intriguing look at a nation where the penal code allows prison sentences for a woman who has an abortion, the provider of the procedure or anyone who assisted. His interviews with doctors, nurses, police officers, prosecutors, judges and both opponents and advocates of abortion offered revealing personal perspectives on the effects of the criminalization of the procedure.

Complaints about the article began arriving at the paper after an anti-abortion Web site, LifeSiteNews.com, reported on Nov. 27 that the court had found that Ms. Climaco’s pregnancy ended with a full-term live birth. The headline: “New York Times Caught in Abortion-Promoting Whopper — Infanticide Portrayed as Abortion.” Seizing on the misleading presentation of the article’s only example of a 30-year jail sentence for an abortion, the site urged viewers to complain to the publisher and the president of The Times. A few came to me.

The care taken in the reporting and editing of this example didn’t meet the magazine’s normal standards. Although Sarah H. Smith, the magazine’s editorial manager, told me that relevant court documents are “normally” reviewed, Mr. Hitt never checked the 7,600-word ruling in the Climaco case while preparing his story. And Mr. Hitt told me that no editor or fact checker ever asked him if he had checked the court document containing the panel’s decision.

The caption under Ms. Climaco’s picture was notably specific. It stated flatly that she “was given 30 years for an abortion that was ruled a homicide.”

When Times Magazine editors provided me with an English-language version of the court findings on Dec. 8, just after the translation had been completed, there was little ambiguity in the court’s findings. “We have an already-formed and independent life here,” the court said. “Therefore we are not dealing with an abortion here, as the defense has attempted to claim in the present case.”

The physician who had performed the autopsy on the “recently born” testified that it represented a “full-term” birth, which he defined as a pregnancy with a duration of “between 38 and 42 weeks,” the ruling noted. In adopting those conclusions, the court said of another autopsy finding: “Given that the lungs floated when submerged in water, also indicating that the recently-born was breathing at birth, this confirms that we are dealing with an independent life.”

Exceptional care must be taken in the reporting process on sensitive articles such as this one to avoid the slightest perception of bias. Paul Tough, the editor on the article, acknowledged in an e-mail to me that in reporting this story, Mr. Hitt used an unpaid translator who has done consulting work for Ipas, an abortion rights advocacy group, for his interviews with Ms. Climaco and D.C. This wasn’t ideal, he said, but the risk posed for sources in this situation required the use of intermediaries “to some degree.”

Ipas used The Times’s account of Ms. Climaco’s sentence to seek donations on its Web site for “identifying lawyers who could appeal her case” and to help the organization “continue critical advocacy work” across Central America. “A gift from you toward our goal of $30,000 will help Carmen and other Central American women who are suffering under extreme abortion laws,” states the Web appeal, which Ipas said it took down after I first contacted the organization on Dec. 14. An Ipas spokeswoman called the appeal “moderately successful.”

One thing is clear to me, at this point, about the key example of Carmen Climaco. Accuracy and fairness were not pursued with the vigor Times readers have a right to expect.

(Source: excerpted from New York Times, By Byron Calame, 12/31/06)
Well-known advocates for the morning-after pill have admitted that “increased access to emergency contraception pills enhance use but has not been shown to reduce unintended pregnancy rates” in a meta-analysis of studies conducted in 10 countries published this month in the Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology. They also state the drug’s effectiveness may be “substantially...overstated.”

“The same researchers who demanded the morning-after pill become non-prescription now admit that making the drug easy to get does not live up to their promises of reducing pregnancies and abortions. Due to intense pressure from them and other abortion advocates, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) caved and made it non-prescription to buyers over 18, denying women the medical counseling and testing that they need before taking this drug,” stated Wendy Wright, President of Concerned Women for America (CWA).

Authors Elizabeth Raymond and James Trussell state that “no study found an effect on pregnancy or abortion rates.” Access to the morning-after pill “is unlikely to produce a major reduction in unintended pregnancy rates no matter how often women use it” and “previous expectations that improved access could produce a direct, substantial impact on a population level may have been overly optimistic.”

They also question the morning-after pill’s effectiveness, noting that “the published efficacy figures calculated from currently available data on this regimen ... may overstate actual efficacy, possibly quite substantially. Clearly, if the method is only weakly efficacious, it is unlikely to produce a major reduction in unintended pregnancy rates no matter how often women use it.”

In 2002, Elizabeth Raymond stated, “Easier access to and wider use of emergency contraception could dramatically lower the high rates of unintended pregnancy and induced abortion in the United States.”

James Trussell stated in 1998, “We decided that making emergency contraception widely available was the most important step we could take in the United States to reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies.” For years he harshly criticized the Bush Administration and the FDA for “allowing politics to trump science.”

“Now we will see if ideology and abortion politics will trump science. Advocates should drop their demands for easy access to the ineffective morning-after pill since the science proves their claims to be wrong,” said Wendy Wright. “The authors mislead readers regarding sexually-transmitted diseases (STD). The studies they relied on, which claim that the morning-after pill does not impact STDs, included only women who were sexually active. None of their studies considered the impact of whether access to the morning-after pill encouraged women and girls to begin having sex,” noted Wendy Wright.

(Source: Concerned Women for America Press Release, 1/5/07)

The Bush administration has appointed a new chief of family-planning programs at the Department of Health and Human Services who worked at a Christian pregnancy-counseling organization that regards the distribution of contraceptives as “demeaning to women.”

Eric Keroack, medical director for A Woman’s Concern, a nonprofit group based in Dorchester, Mass., will become deputy assistant secretary for population affairs in the next two weeks, department spokeswoman Christina Pearson said.

Keroack, an obstetrician-gynecologist, will advise Secretary Mike Leavitt on matters such as reproductive health and adolescent pregnancy. He will oversee $283 million in annual family-planning grants that, according to HHS, are “designed to provide access to contraceptive supplies and information to all who want and need them with priority given to low-income persons.”

The Keroack appointment angered many family-planning advocates, who noted that A Woman’s Concern supports sexual abstinence until marriage, opposes contraception and does not distribute information promoting birth control at its six centers in eastern Massachusetts.

“A Woman’s Concern is persuaded that the crass commercialization and distribution of birth control is demeaning to women, degrading of human sexuality and adverse to human health and happiness,” the group’s Web site says.

Keroack was traveling and could not be reached for comment. John O. Agwunobi, assistant secretary for
health, said Keroack “is highly qualified and a well-respected physician...working primarily with women and girls in crisis.”

Mark Conrad, president of A Woman’s Concern, said Keroack would be able to make the transition to leading a federal program in which provision of birth control is an integral part. “I don’t think it’s going to be an issue for him,” he said.

The group helps women in unplanned pregnancies but discourages abortions, Conrad said. He said the decision is the woman’s but “we do want to give her the opportunity to have all the information and the support necessary to choose life.”

Marilyn Keefe, interim president of the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association, which represents 4,000 family-planning clinics, said Keroack’s work “seems to really be geared toward furthering anti-choice, anti-contraception policies.” She added that despite the congressional election results, the appointment “goes to show the White House and how important federal agencies are in the delivery of health services.”

The federal family-planning program, created in 1970, supports a network of 4,600 family-planning clinics that provide information and counseling to 5 million people each year. Services include patient education and counseling, breast and pelvic exams, pregnancy diagnosis and counseling, and screenings for cervical cancer, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV.

Cecile Richards, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, called Keroack’s appointment “striking proof that the Bush administration remains dramatically out of step with the nation’s priorities.”

Taken together, Keroack’s appointment, the Bolton push and the judicial renominations suggest that although Bush may work for consensus with Democrats on selected issues, he does not plan to avoid decisions simply because lawmakers will disagree, and he may in fact seek fights in some instances when he feels they may be useful politically.

Confirmation of Bolton and the judicial nominees are popular causes with Bush’s conservative base, and a family-planning chief from an organization that opposes contraceptives may appeal to disaffected social conservatives. White House spokeswoman Dana M. Perino cautioned against reading a larger pattern into the recent moves, saying, “You have to look at these things in isolation.”

She added: “The president has said we will look to reach common ground where we can find it. However, he’s not going to compromise on his principles.”

(Source: Washington Post, By Christopher Lee, 11/17/06)

China

Beijing

China Again Convicts Rights Advocate

A blind Chinese legal expert who exposed forced abortions in eastern China was convicted for the second time on charges that he destroyed property and disrupted traffic.

The case of Chen Guangcheng, the legal expert, has provoked international concern, as his defense lawyers have argued that officials in Shandong Province arrested him on baseless charges as punishment for his activism against abuses of population control policies.

Mr. Chen was convicted in August 2006 but won a rare retrial after an appeals court overturned the conviction. The retrial was held this week in Shandong, and a local judge announced the verdict on November 24, lawyers said. Mr. Chen was again found guilty and given the same sentence, of four years and three months.

The retrial has been marred by apparent official efforts at intimidation. Mr. Chen’s wife was kept under close police supervision during the trial.

(Source: New York Times, 12/1/06)
An invited audience including Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez gathered at the National Geographic Society’s auditorium in Washington, D.C., for a screening of Bella, an independently produced feature film. No mere movie, it offers hope for the beleaguered anti-abortion movement to reverse the political tide running against it.

This was the eighth such screening in Washington. With more than 100 showings nationwide, audiences reflected emotional reactions to a stunning exhibition of cinema art that unexpectedly won a Toronto International Film Festival award. It is no propaganda film, but rather a dramatic depiction of choices facing an unmarried pregnant woman.

Bella, unknown to the general public, has generated excitement and anticipation in conservative Catholic and other anti-abortion circles. The problem is getting the film in movie theaters around the country for its public premiere early next April. That is never easy for an independent film with no box office names. The problems are even more magnified when its message runs counter to the social mores of Hollywood.

Bella arrives at a time when the political environment has grown bleak for enemies of abortion. The Democrats have become so much the party of abortion rights that of 41 freshmen Democrats elected to the House only three are anti-abortion. Pro-life forces in the House suffered a net loss of 13 members. That means statutory restrictions on abortion, which must be renewed by each Congress, are now in serious jeopardy.

The loss of numerical strength on Capitol Hill reflects a public relations and political victory by the abortion lobby. Republican politicians tend to give only lip service to the issue, typified by President George W. Bush’s silence on abortion. Republican candidates have accepted support from pro-life forces—and then kept quiet about abortion, leaving the field open to pro-choice advocates.

Thus, the anti-abortion movement sees Bella as providential. Although Monday’s screening was sponsored by the National Council for Adoption, the word “adoption” is uttered only once in the film. There are no tirades against abortion. Indeed, it acknowledges a woman’s pain of carrying a baby to term only to give it up for adoption. In the end, however, the film is a heart-wrenching affirmation of life over death.

Bella was conceived by three young Mexican men—producer, director, and lead actor—who are conservative Catholics and want to make films removed from Hollywood’s movie culture of sex and violence. Bankrolled by a wealthy Catholic family from Philadelphia, they shot the film in 24 days in New York City.

The star is Eduardo Verástegui, a Mexican heartthrob who is a lead performer in TV soap operas and lives in Los Angeles. A devout Catholic, he told me he was tired of movies showing Latinos as disreputable and immoral. He has learned to speak English well enough in the last three years to play the lead role mostly in English (with subtitles over the Spanish).

It was a stretch to get Bella even shown at Toronto, much less to have it win an award. “Going into the festival,” says The Hollywood Reporter, “absolutely no one, including the team of filmmakers that made Bella, ever imagined it would capture the People’s Choice Award, voted on by festival audiences.”

Even with the Toronto prize, which in the past has led to Academy and Golden Globe Awards, it is hard to get the film in movie houses, and it may be necessary for the filmmakers to form a distribution company. The avowed reason for the difficulty is an inexperienced director and an unfamiliar cast to American moviegoers.

But the film’s producers say the same left-wing Hollywood establishment that attacked The Passion of the Christ is sniping at Bella, which lacks the support of a Mel Gibson. While audiences at the screenings were moved to tears, reactions from a commercial theater audience—including women who have chosen an abortion—could be different. The pro-life movement hopes, in the absence of effort by supposedly pro-life politicians, it will point to a different way to deal with an unwanted pregnancy.

(Source: By Robert D. Novak, 11/30/06, www.townhall.com)
LUKE RECORDS  the story of the 12-year-old Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem. It is a familiar and beloved account because it is the only Biblical glimpse we have into the childhood of our Lord. Yet, in spite of its familiarity, there is often a great deal of misunderstanding surrounding this story. Asked what Jesus was doing in the temple at 12 years of age, many will respond that he was teaching. In fact, the activities in which Jesus was engaged that day did not include teaching. However, what Jesus did do is very instructive.

We are told that it was Mary and Joseph’s yearly practice to travel to Jerusalem for the Passover and that they made the journey again when Jesus was 12-years-old. On their return to Nazareth, his parents did not think it was odd that Jesus was not with them. He was no longer a child over whom they needed to keep a constant watch. Reasoning that he was with friends and relatives in their caravan, they began to look for him, and when they could not find him, Jesus’ parents returned to Jerusalem.

After three days of searching, we are told that “they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions.” The account continues by telling us that his parents expressed to him their grave concern over him during their anxious search. Jesus’ much quoted and much debated response was, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” At this point, Luke adds that his parents did not understand what Jesus was saying to them.

Many questions have been raised about the nature of Jesus’ response to his parents in this passage. But taking into account the whole counsel of Scripture which records that Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Heb. 4:15b), it is not worth the time to debate the question of whether or not Jesus was exhibiting some sort of preteen rebellion. Of greater import and value are some things which have been obscured by such fruitless arguments.

TOWARDS WISDOM, STATURE, AND FAVOR

Jesus had been about his earthly father’s business since he was a small child. At this time in his life in which he was moving from childhood to adulthood, it is likely that the Lord was formally apprenticed in the trade of his father, Joseph. In addition, Jesus probably continued in that profession for many years after the time of this account, perhaps even up to the beginning of his ministry at 30 years of age. In his adulthood, Jesus was known not only as “the carpenter’s son” (Matt. 13:55), but also as “the carpenter” (Mk. 6:3).
This is clearly not a rejection of the authority of his earthly parents. Instead, what we have here is the first declaration of his understanding of his mature priorities. The heavenly Father’s business comes first. In his statement, Jesus expresses his ownership of the truth he would later reveal as the summation of all of Scripture—“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment” (Matt. 22:37, 38). This mature recognition takes place in the life of our Lord at the logical time developmentally—at the beginning of his maturation from childhood into adulthood.

It is not being argued that Jesus was fully adult at the age of 12. He did after all go through 18 more years of preparation before he began his ministry. But according to the traditions of God’s people, Jesus was “of age” and, by God’s design, the period of puberty is the transition from childhood to adulthood. So this was the natural progression of Jesus’ spiritual maturation as a man, and it stands as the ideal for young people in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells.

TEENAGERS ARE YOUNG ADULTS

For those of us seeking to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord, this example from the youth of Christ Jesus raises this compelling question: As our children grow from childhood into adulthood (during puberty), are they experiencing the natural spiritual progression evidenced in the example of their youthful Lord? The answer to this question will, of course, vary widely from person to person. However, in the Body of Christ as a whole, what do we see taking place?

On the one hand, we find confirmation of this God-designed spiritual development process in the observation that, historically, a vast majority (more than 75% by some accounts) of those who make professions of faith do so before the age of 18 (most of these between the ages of 11 and 14). In addition, research exists that supports the claim that those making professions of faith in childhood or in their youth are significantly more likely to maintain a strong commitment to their faith in adult life. This mature recognition takes place in the life of our Lord at the logical time developmentally—at the beginning of his maturation from childhood into adulthood.

While there is wholesale dismissal of early teens in American culture as rebellious and irresponsible by nature, this is not the picture that is revealed through observation of God’s dealings with young people. Instead, this critical developmental period may be seen a key spiritual time in the life of a child being raised in the training and instruction of the Lord.

On the other hand, developments in American culture and in the church present some significant challenges. Recent studies reveal trends that indicate that the average age of profession of faith is rising dramatically. An informal observation of the climate among youth in the church might suggest that it is more common for young people to express ownership of their faith in their early to middle twenties—if at all—rather than in their early teens as we see in the example of the Lord Jesus. The reasons for these changes are varied, and it is not the purpose of this article to suggest any one in particular. But perhaps we have bought into the developmental psychology of adolescence rather than embracing the example of Jesus Christ as a youth. Do we think that believing teens are simply embarking on the great worldly search to discover who they are, or do we believe that this is the time period for them to pursue the Truth of God’s Word and His ways and come to understand, in that light, WHOSE they are?

What difference would it make in our families and in our churches and in the world for the sake of Christ if our young people once again were challenged with the conviction in their early teens that they must be about their Father’s business? The answer to that question can be found in the lives of Joseph, Joshua, Samuel, Josiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Mary—the mother of our Lord, and countless others throughout history. Most importantly, the life of our Lord Jesus should stand as the ideal example. Our children and young people who have the Spirit of Christ in them must be challenged and encouraged to follow the example of Christ instead of yielding to the spirit of the world, the spirit of the American youth culture. How marvelous it is for them and for us that we have a record of His example not only when He was fully matured and began His life of self-sacrificing service, but also when He was young, recognizing mature spiritual priorities and declaring his understanding that he must be about his Father’s business!

Mark Travers is the head of Turning Hearts Ministries, which calls on Christian families to think intentionally about raising children to follow Christ’s example. You can visit the ministry on the Internet at turningheartsatome.org. Mark and his family are members of Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL.
“Before taking a road trip, it is a very good idea to have some idea of where you are going. Before rearing a son to be ‘masculine,’ it is equally important to have some notion of what that is. For Christians seeking to be biblical, it is important to have that definition of masculinity grounded in the teachings of Scripture.”

So begins Douglas Wilson’s excellent guide to parenting boys, a must-read for parents of both sexes and anyone else interested in issues of life, culture, marriage, and purity. Despite the title, *Future Men* should be of interest to parents of girls as well, as it sheds light on qualities to look for (and look out for!) in potential suitors.

It’s hardly headline news that men and boys play a critical role in crisis pregnancies—both causing them and ending them, in either abortion or fatherhood. The dearth of virtuous male role models is almost a cliché in inner city life, and it’s often not much better in the suburbs. A mounting consensus of those involved in the trenches of crisis pregnancy work insists that until men are willing and able to fulfill their responsibilities as husbands and fathers, little will improve for women and babies at risk for abortion.

After all, sexually abstinent, life-choosing women and healthy, bouncing babies aren’t enough. We, as a culture and as families, need men, and the right sort. And while a growing evangelical chorus calls for a vision of virtuous manhood, few books put flesh on the bones of what that looks like for parents. Enter Wilson’s *Future Men*.

On the subject of pride and responsibility: “One of the themes of this book is to reinforce the truism that the boy is father to the man. What you have young you will have more of later, old...The pattern of fending off a threat of wounded pride through excuse-making is typical of males in sin, and yet is thoroughly unmasculine...One of the things which always threatens pride is any kind of failure, and the way that insecure males deal with this is through making excuses. True masculinity accepts total responsibility, period, while false masculinity will try to accept responsibility only for success...Boys must learn to say regularly—to God, to others, and to themselves—that they were wrong when they were wrong, and that they were responsible when they were responsible...”

Wilson also challenges, to use President Bush’s phrase, “the soft bigotry of low expectations.” He writes, “The basic responsibility of all [people] is to worship the Lord. Our tendency is to say things like, ‘Oh, well, at his age you can’t really expect this.’ But this is radically unbiblical. Everything that breathes has an obligation to praise the Lord; no exceptions have been granted for teenage boys. The Bible knows nothing of a natural alienation between generations.”

Wilson is excellent on the topic of mothers and sisters: “A man must teach his sons about their future wives through teaching them to honor their mothers now...What principles should a man teach his wife about her sons? The first need is for a mother to blend the apparent contraries of respect and toughness. ‘Of course you can do this, son. It’s the right thing to do.’ And when a wise mother sees insecurity in her son, the response should not be scorn, it should not be sympathy. The right response is respect. Boys can rise to respect, when they might crater under harsh pressure or puff up in response to excessive praise.”

Other chapter topics include girls and sex, fighting idols, friends, school, sports and competition, and money paths and traps. (Wilson gives an example of the trap of frivolity—vain and pleasurable pursuits that leads to emptiness. He then explains, “Just to keep this from becoming too abstract, one common frivolous use of time and money is spending a weekend watching videos.” Later in discussing sloth, he writes, “Incidentally, a good way for young men to learn bad sleeping habits is for them to stay up until one-thirty in the morning watching the stupid videos.”)

Wilson’s theme is consistent as is his call for intentional parenting: A boy grows up to do what he learned to do as a boy. What you have as a boy, you have more of as a man.

Wilson, a well known Presbyterian pastor, has published a number of books on family, marriage, and fatherhood. This is one of his best works—humorous (readers with sons will see their boys in its pages), bitingly relevant and specific, and very politically incorrect (which is why it’s so great).

Wilson is also a subscriber to covenant theology. This is his grid for parenting and the Christian life in general, so readers looking for a simple how-to and uninterested in any sort of doctrinal truth may be disappointed. Wilson’s weakness is to oversimplify, but his failure to qualify every assertion and generalization is what keeps the book’s pace quick and the read insightful and entertaining.