

National Day of Prayer about Abortion, 27th October 2011

Using these guidelines

There are seven prayer points (and a conclusion) in this guide. These relate to events which have occurred since October 2010. Each section is in two parts. The first part relates the facts; the second part suggests prayer topics following from the facts.

The superscript reference numbers (eg **2010 figures¹**) refer to a list of websites given at the end of this guide which provide more information.

It is not necessary to use each one of these prayer points verbatim. They are provided as support for prayer leaders who may wish to omit some points and insert other information of their own.

A Powerpoint presentation is also available. Unlike the one produced last year, this presentation may not be run as a slide show with commentary. It will just contain bullet points as aide-memoires; these slides may be advanced manually. Prayer leaders may wish to delete some slides, change the order or add slides of their own.

You may experience problems running this presentation in some earlier versions of Powerpoint. If you do then it is possible to download a free Powerpoint viewer from Microsoft. The web page address for this viewer is:

<http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?displaylang=en&id=6>

These topical prayer points refer to specific events to inform prayer. If you would prefer to use more general guidelines, some are available on the page 6.

Prayer guidelines

Prayer point 1

2010 figures¹

Until 1967 abortion had been illegal in Britain, except to save the life of the mother.

In 1967 Parliament passed the Abortion Act, which, it was said, would allow abortion for *a few* women who were in very difficult circumstances.

In 2010, according to Government figures, 208,935 babies died by abortion in the United Kingdom. That's 17,000 a month, 4,000 a week, 600 every day.

These figures come out routinely, each year with very little change.

For England and Wales

Of the year's total, 98 per cent were so-called social abortions – those in which the desire for a termination is not related to disability, or physical danger to the child or mother. These are abortions which, according to Ann Ferudi chief executive of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), are carried out as “a necessary back-up to birth control for couples who want to plan their families.”²

Over a quarter (26%) had already had at least one abortion and 85 of these had already had *at least* seven previous abortions.

Pray

- Pray that the church and individual Christians would take a stand on the issue of abortion.
- Pray that our nation would understand the horror of these statistics and that the Lord would bring us to repentance so that He might heal us.

Prayer point 2

The disabled

In April 2011, the ProLife Alliance won the right for public access to data on women having late abortions (ie beyond 24 weeks) for a range of conditions affecting fetuses. The statistics for 2010 in England and Wales were released after the Department of Health yielded to a Freedom of Information Request from the Pro Life Alliance, following a six-year legal battle.

Abortion is outlawed in Britain after 24 weeks of pregnancy, but is allowed up to the point of birth for babies with a substantial risk of “serious” disability. However babies with treatable conditions including cleft palate and club foot have been aborted under this law.

Rev Joanna Jepson has commented, “Again and again the question was asked by those with disabilities: “Are they saying that there were good reasons to abort me?” and concluded, “It is not women whose human rights are diminished by hypocrisy, evasion, and conflict – it's the disabled.”³

One per cent of abortions in the UK were carried out because of suspected disability. However, the assumption that disabled persons cannot live meaningful and happy lives is false.

One of many examples of this is 11-year-old spin-bowler Kearan Tongue-Gibbs⁴. He was born with no hands or forearms but has still managed to impress sportsmen and has been identified as a talented young disabilities player by the England and Wales Cricket Board. His mother has said, “His disability has never held him back – I am so proud of him.”

Pray

- Having a disabled child is often a difficult burden to undertake. Pray for parents who have to make the choice between bringing up a disabled child or ending its life.
- Pray that the parents of disabled children will receive the support that they need. Pray that they will be given grace and love to bring up and enjoy their children.
- Thank God for the many people with physical or mental disability who live happy and fulfilled lives.

Prayer point 3

Parents who are advised to abort

International singing sensation Susan Boyle has revealed that she could have been aborted as a baby in her mother's womb if her mum had followed doctors' advice. But to her mother, a devout Roman Catholic, an abortion was unthinkable and she went through with the pregnancy.⁵

Here are some other examples, which have occurred this year, where the expert advice to abort was not heeded:

Victoria Webster was 21 weeks pregnant when she learned she had cancer of the blood. Doctors told her to have an abortion so she could start chemotherapy. But she refused to have an abortion and now both she and her baby daughter, Jessica, are doing well.⁶

Laura Hill ignored medical advice to abort her baby when her waters broke at 16 weeks and later gave birth to a healthy boy. She says she wants "everyone to know" about the story.⁷

Doctors said there was little chance Charley-Marie Skinner would survive her birth and advised her parents Heather and Andy, from Darwen, Lancashire, to terminate their baby. They refused, saying they would rather let her die naturally than go through the trauma of an abortion. Against the odds, Charley-Marie was born in January 2010 and has clung on to life, astounding medics.⁸

Peter Saunders, Christian Medical Fellowship, comments, "I have lost count of the number of times I have heard stories like this. Why is it that the medical profession responds in this knee-jerk fashion recommending abortion for disabilities we would make every effort to treat or correct in a baby after birth?"⁹

Pray

- Pray for wisdom for those professionals who offer advice.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment for those receiving advice.
- Thank God for the lives of the children who live because parents have ignored advice to abort.

Prayer Point 4

Amendment to Health and Social Care Bill

Two MPs (Nadine Dorries and Frank Field) have tabled abortion amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill.¹⁰ The first amendment would create a new precondition for any women having an abortion to receive advice and counselling from an organization that does not itself carry out terminations. At the time of producing these notes (a major debate is due to take place on 6th September) the Department of Health had appeared to be supporting plans for a new system of independent counselling for women before they finally commit to an abortion. However, the Prime Minister has now said that he will vote against the proposals and, in a significant change of position, a Downing Street spokesman said: "The discussions currently under way do not represent any moral shift in the Government's approach to abortion as an issue, and there are no changes to the Abortion Act involved."¹¹ The situation is volatile at the time of producing these notes.¹² More up-to-date news may be obtained from http://www.imagenet.org.uk/latest_news.html.

Pray

- Pray that those considering an abortion would all be given access to advice independent of those who carry out abortions.
- Pray that the legislation would not prevent the work of organizations such as image's Pregnancy Helpline and Care Confidential's counselling service.
- Pray that the Lord would give wisdom and strength to politicians and to those in the media who are sympathetic to the pro-life arguments.

Prayer Point 5

The value of human life

Diane Abbott, the Labour MP and Shadow Minister for Public Health, has advised that humanists “should not be fooled into thinking that those who oppose abortion do so in the interests of the unborn child.”¹³ Despite what she says, the pro-life argument *is* that it is wrong to take innocent human life and that this life begins at conception.

In order to support abortion it is necessary to rationalize this argument away. There are several ways of doing this:

1. A fetus is not a "person" possessing constitutional rights until it has reached viability, ie. the ability to survive outside the mother's womb without life support.¹⁴
2. Life in the womb does not matter. Ann Furedi, chief executive of BPAS, has said “For me the question is not: ‘When does human life begin?’, because I think we can accept the embryo is a human life of sorts. For me the question is: ‘When does human life really begin to matter?’ Obviously we couldn’t allow abortion if we accepted that fetal life had the same degree of value as born human life, and I don’t believe that it does.”¹⁵
3. Killing is the “lesser evil” compared with women losing “their right to fertility control.” According to feminist writer Antonia Senior, “The 200,000 aborted babies in the UK each year are the lesser evil, If you are willing to die for a cause, you must be prepared to kill for it, too.”¹⁶
4. “Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons.” These are the words of Peter Singer, Professor of Bioethics, Princeton University. He uses this argument to justify not only abortion but also the killing of new-born children (up to about 28 days) and of people with some forms of dementia.¹⁷ To the dismay of many abortion advocates, Singer rejects birth as a relevant dividing line between person and nonperson, agreeing with pro-life advocates that there is no significant difference between the fetus and a newborn.

The pro-life position is that none of these arguments justify the taking of human life.

Pray

- Pray that those who advocate these arguments to rationalize away the evil of killing unborn children would come to understand that the sanctity of human life is paramount.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would cause those who avoid the life issue to be confronted by it and to repent.

Prayer point 6

Advertising Abortion

In May 2010 the first ever TV commercial for abortion services in the UK was shown on Channel 4 television and continued to be shown in June despite protests. Although advertising abortion had so far been banned on British television, Marie Stopes International (MSI) was able to avoid this ban by claiming to be a non-profit making organization.¹⁸

The Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) is now consulting on whether to also relax the rules on advertising abortion services to enable commercial abortion providers to advertise on television for the first time.¹⁹

Pray

- Pray that BCAP would reconsider their position and prevent further advertisements.
- Pray that vulnerable young women would not be drawn into having an abortion as a result of advertising.

Prayer Point 7

Pro-life groups in the UK

There are many pro-life groups in the UK. Some are involved in mainly political and educational issues. Some are involved in counselling and support. Many are involved in both. Most, possibly all, of these groups rely on the support of financial donations and dedicated unpaid volunteers. The website for some of these groups are given in the references on page 7²⁰.

Pray

- Pray for the pro-life organizations, pregnancy centres and telephone helplines that they would be effective
 - in reaching mothers threatened with abortion,
 - in helping those who have suffered abortion
 - in supporting those who have chosen not to abort even though they face difficult circumstances.
- Pray for wisdom and guidance for pro-life groups who work for political change and educate in the truth about abortion.
- Pray for sufficient financial resources and sufficient numbers of volunteers to sustain pro-life groups.

Conclusion

Charles Williams says in his novel, *All Hallows Eve*, that a “cruel purpose could outspeed a vague pity.”²¹ There are powerful and influential groups in the UK who are working hard to ensure that abortion remains an accepted and easily obtainable part of our society.

Let us pray for Church leaders that they may present more than a vague pity and that the Church would provide spiritual leadership for our nation by maintaining strong opposition to abortion and support for those who have been victims of abortion.

General Prayer Guidelines

In 2010, according to Government figures, 208,935 babies died by abortion in the United Kingdom. That's 17,000 a month, 4,000 a week, 600 every day. Of the year's total for England and Wales, 98 per cent were so-called social abortions. (On the grounds of "Injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman"). 26% had already had at least one abortion and 85 of these had already had at least seven previous abortions. The Christian church is largely unconcerned. Pray the Christian church and individual Christians will take a stand on the issue.

Pray for repentance for this nation. Pray for a forsaking of wickedness, a turning to God and healing of our land.

Pray Christians will become aware of the facts concerning the development of unborn babies and the eternal truths which support pro-life convictions. Pray they will be committed to prayer and action, including reaching out to those in need.

Pray for the Government, that they will recognise they are appointed by God to represent Him in government, that they have a need before God to protect innocent human life. Pray for pro-life MPs and peers.

Pray for doctors, nurses, medical students, trainee health care workers. Pray they will stand for life.

Pray for doctors who are pro-abortion, abortion clinic owners, abortionists and abortion nurses. Pray they will come to repentance.

Pray for mothers and fathers contemplating abortion. Pray they will understand children are a gift from God, that God has a purpose for each life, that help is available. Pray babies will be saved from death today.

Pray for women who have suffered abortion. Pray they may come into contact with people who understand their pain and are able to minister forgiveness and healing.

Pray for pro-life organizations, pregnancy centres and telephone helplines. Pray for a pro-life pregnancy centre in every town.

Pray children and young people will have good role models and be reached by a positive message about the sanctity of human life and the value of chastity outside marriage.

Never doubt your prayers will make a difference.

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