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Winter 2008-2009 ACTION Newsletter

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God's Indescribable Gift by Dwight Addington



It was a challenging time. It was a scary time for the people of God. It was a very uncertain time that God the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah lived from about 740 BC to 680 BC, and he lived in the southern part of Israel, during a time when the northern part of Israel was being chewed up and assimilated by the Assyrians.

But God had a plan - as God always has a plan. Even though God's plan wasn't going to happen for some time, God wanted his people to have a word of hope. So 700 years beforehand, God foretold the Christmas story by choosing a prophet named Isaiah to tell the world about an amazing baby who would be born the Prince of Peace.

The words are very familiar to us - words that George Frederic Handel made even more famous by immortalizing them in his famous Hallelujah chorus. "For unto us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

Names are considered important by most people. During the time that scripture was written, there was a purpose behind the name that one was given.

He would be Emmanuel - God with us! God with us during the great times of life and God with us when our world was falling apart! God with us when we were "up" and God with us when we were "down"! Every saint of God needs to draw deep comfort, strength and hope from the fact that Emmanuel has come!

One of the four names God told Isaiah that this baby would be known by was "Prince of Peace". He would come to bridge the gap that separated God from man. He would come to bring peace to the heart of God's creation. He would come to help make peace possible between warring factions - and between neighbors.

Yes, God had a plan! His plan still works for those who will embrace the One who was sent! And Emmanuel will help us during times of uncertainty! He will never err, He will never lack the power He needs. He will never need a bailout and He will be reliable to each and every generation!

As you celebrate this Christmas season, be sure to contemplate the One whom came... and then thank God for His indescribable gift!

Dwight Addington serves as the pastor of Crossroads Wesleyan Church and is a board member of LCA.

*"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."
Edmund Burke*



Against All Odds by Michael Geer

Family Policy Councils Lead Marriage Amendment Efforts

The day before Election Day, the Associated Press ran a story with the headline, “Half of Americans Will be Disappointed on Wednesday.”

It didn’t take a lot of deep analysis to come to that conclusion, given that in recent presidential elections, the nation has been close to evenly split.

Whatever your thoughts about the outcome of the presidential or congressional elections, pro-family voters here in Pennsylvania and nationally have to be greatly pleased with the Marriage Protection Amendment victories in Arizona, Florida and California. I certainly am.

And those victories now bring to 30 the number of states with constitutional amendments protecting marriage. Pennsylvania is not yet among them.

I am especially proud of my colleagues for the leadership they brought in winning these most recent amendment battles. All three were fighting against the odds, in places they said it could not be done, and yet they prevailed.

The Sunshine State. In Florida, my counterpart John Stemberger of the Florida Family Council and the marriage coalition faced huge challenges. They gathered more than 92,000 signatures on petitions to even get the amendment on the ballot.

An even bigger hurdle was Florida’s requirement that constitutional amendments pass by a supermajority. They needed at least 60 percent of the vote for ratification.

I must admit, I had my doubts, especially because same-sex “marriages” advocates in other states had successfully scared senior citizens into believing that marriage amendments would somehow hurt them. Seniors vote, and Florida has a huge senior citizen population.

But when the numbers came in on election night, marriage prevailed, and by a 62 percent to 38 percent margin. Florida voters said “yes” to a Marriage Protection Amendment.

Bouncing Back. In Arizona, my colleague Cathi Herrod at the Center for Arizona Policy never wavered in her efforts to protect marriage in her state.

After suffering a very close loss on an amendment battle in 2006, Herrod led an against-the-odds battle in the Arizona legislature, with many ups and downs, to get the Marriage Protection Amendment back on the ballot for 2008.

Many thought it was a futile effort, but with much prayer, the strong involvement of pastors and churches, and effective messaging and leadership, Arizona voters said “yes” to protecting marriage by a 56 percent to 44 percent margin.

California, Here We Come. Thanks to a strong petition effort, a Marriage Protection Amendment was scheduled for a vote on the November 2008 ballot, even before the California Supreme Court ordered the legalization of same-sex “marriage.”

Ron Prentice of the California Family Council and chairman of the “Yes on 8” campaign knew the battle would be tough. He began early to raise a funding base to counter the big money that would come from Hollywood. His team worked with pastors and churches and crafted a message detailing the effects on families, education and religious liberty.

Notable is the overwhelming support for the Marriage Protection Amendment from African-American voters, whose turnout was enhanced by the Obama candidacy. Exit polls indicated that more than 70 percent of these voters supported the marriage amendment - a margin perhaps sufficient to have put it over the top. It passed 52 percent to 48 percent.

And with that, some of those disappointed on Wednesday morning, November 5, can take some solace in a good election night outcome. We here in Pennsylvania need to keep our resolve that we, too, can protect marriage, despite the odds.

Michael Geer is president of the Pennsylvania Family Institute and an Advisor to LCA.

Lancaster County ACTION Quarterly Breakfast Meeting

Saturday, January 10, 2009

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Leola Restaurant, 365 West Main St, Leola



Speaker: Jeff Coleman

Topic: Grace & Truth: Essentials in Christian Activism

Jeff Coleman is the president of Churchill Strategies, a creative communications firm in Harrisburg. The son of missionary parents and a graduate of Liberty University, Jeff is a former member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. He and his wife Rebecca attend Westminster Presbyterian Church in Lancaster and live in Hershey with their daughter, Anna Grace. For more information visit their website at www.churchhillmedia.org

Please reserve your seat at the quarterly breakfast by calling the ACTION office (717-569-0148) by Wednesday, January 7, 2009. The cost is \$10.00 per person. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged.

A Message from the Treasurer - Is Your Membership Current?

Please take a moment to make certain that your membership is current, by looking at the mailing label on this newsletter to see if your dues are up-to-date. The number "2009" should appear in the parenthesis on the label. If it does not, please fill out the form below and mail to:

Lancaster County ACTION, Office of the Treasurer, 1939 Marietta Avenue, Lancaster, PA 17603

clip and send

I would like to begin/renew (\$20.00 per household) my membership in Lancaster County ACTION.
(Please make check payable to **Lancaster County ACTION.**)

I'd like to volunteer for the following ACTION Committee(s):

- Church Contact/Prayer Fund Raising Legislative Issues Newsletter School District Coordinator
- Education Growth/Membership Library Quarterly Breakfast Voter Guides

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

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Most of Life is NOT Government! by Thomas J. Shaheen

Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. - Psalm 146:3 (ESV)

The day after the elections, my wife read this on a blog: "Today reminds me that most of life has nothing to do with government. ... Most of life is not government, and most Americans put little trust in our 'princes.'" (John Mark Reynolds at www.scriptoriumdaily.com).

And that's so true! We all woke up the morning after the election, still in Pennsylvania, with our lives and our families relatively unchanged.

But it's also true that we are to pray for our government because laws can affect our ability to live "quiet and peaceable lives ..." (I Timothy 2:2) This fact is especially true closer to home, at the state and local levels.

Thanks to our Voter's Guide, I trust that our readers were not surprised to find the less publicized "down ticket" races on their ballots when they entered the voting booth.

In addition to a new president, we also elected 19 congressional representatives to send to Washington, plus 203 representatives to the Pennsylvania House and 25 (of 50) state senators to make laws in our state capitol.

Of Pennsylvania's congressional delegation, several incumbents faced stiff challenges - including a nationally watched race between controversial incumbent, Rep. John Murtha, D - Johnstown, and newcomer, Lt. Col. Bill Russell (USAR ret.).

However, only one congressman lost his seat: Phil English, R - Erie. Interestingly, the winner was Kathy Dahlkemper, who campaigned as a pro-life, pro-gun-rights Democrat.

On that state level, the balance of power has not changed much in our Pennsylvania General Assembly, although we will see some new faces due to retirement and some incumbents losing their seats.

Senate Republicans will increase their majority (30-20) by one in 2009 after picking up the open Beaver County seat of retiring Democrat Gerald LaValle.

One of those 30 seats is that of recently deceased Sen. James Rhoades, R-Schuylkill, for which a special election must be held to elect a new senator for the district. After the Rhoades' seat is decided, the state Senate will have eight new faces.

Democrats retain control of the state House and increased their majority to make it 104-99. Some 27 new members will be in the state House because of 22 open seats and five incumbent defeats on Election Day.

What do any of these numbers mean for you, your family and your church? What does it mean for the Pennsylvania Family Institute's priority issues?

Good family policies are advanced or blocked at the committee level. Conversely, laws that are harmful to families or liberty can live or die at the committee stage.

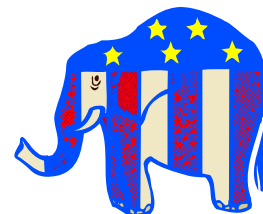
The majority party appoints the powerful committee chairmen. Thus, we will likely see little change in House committee chairmen because Democrats still hold the majority.

In the 2007-2008 session, this setup was bad news for Pennsylvanians who wanted a chance to vote on a marriage amendment, as 30 states have done.

Did you get a new state representative or state senator? Introduce yourself to them. Reintroduce yourself to your returning legislators. As for us, we will continue to work to protect life, family and religious liberty - with your help.

"Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king." (I Peter 2:17).

Thomas J. Shaheen is vice president for policy of the Pennsylvania Family Institute.



A Step Obama Should Not Take *Lancaster New Era, Editorial*

“Well, the first thing I’d do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act. That’s the first thing I’d do.” – Barack Obama, July 17, 2007, to a meeting of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund

That’s one promise President elect Obama should not keep.

In his victory speech on Nov. 5, Obama said the Democratic Party would take power “with a measure of humility and determination to heal the divides that have held back our progress.”

Later in the speech, he said, “To those Americans whose support I have yet to earn ... I hear your voices, I need your help. And I will be your president, too.”

If those words are more than rhetoric, Obama should resist calls from his party’s abortion lobby to sign the Freedom of Choice Act.

This extremist federal measure would repeal a nationwide ban on the infanticide known as partial-birth abortion. FOCA’s sponsors in House and Senate, who call it an effort to secure the Supreme Court invented right to abortion of *Roe v. Wade*, acknowledge it will do that.

What they don’t mention are similarly extremist effects inherent in the measure’s declaration of abortion as a “fundamental right,” and its mandate that no government, at any level, “interfere with a woman’s right to choose.”

Such “interferences” could well include:

- laws in Pennsylvania and 35 other states that require parental involvement in a minor’s decision to abort;
- “informed consent” laws here and in 25 other states that require providing information about fetal development to any woman considering an abortion; and
- “conscience” provisions, which permit institutions that oppose abortion to refuse to offer them. Some fear this could cause the shutdown of religious hospitals that refuse to perform abortions.

With these aspects of FOCA and the potential for an Obama executive order requiring taxpayers to fund abortions in mind, Cardinal Francis George, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, warned Obama last month not to go too far in appeasing his pro-abortion supporters.

“Aggressively pro-abortion policies, legislation and executive orders will permanently alienate tens of millions of Americans, and would be seen by many as an attack on the free exercise of their religion,” George said.

FOCA is about as aggressively pro-abortion as one can get. Signing into law, especially in a big hurry to keep an abortion-providing special interest happy, would contradict Obama’s call for a nonpartisan government.

The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, passed in October 2003, signed into law early the following November and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court last year, illustrates just how extreme a step passing FOCA would be.

The banned procedure involves puncturing a well-developed fetus’ skull before pulling it from the womb. This is why the late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an abortion-rights supporting New York Democrat, called it “too close to infanticide” and supported previous measures seeking to ban it.

It’s also why it passed 281-142 in the U.S. House of Representatives and 64-34 in the Senate, with backing from abortion rights supporters such as Pennsylvania’s Arlen Specter and Delaware’s Joe Biden, the latter now vice president-elect.

Early signing of FOCA would resemble a disastrous gaffe made early in the last Democratic president’s first term, when President Bill Clinton sought to impose a gay-friendly policy on the U.S. military.

In that case, Clinton had to retreat, but the damage was done. He no longer appeared to be the moderate Democrat he had played during his 1992 campaign and his party lost control of both the houses of Congress in the next election.

Obama should heed the warnings: Avoid extremism, particularly on social issues. Don’t sign the Freedom of Choice Act, the abortion industry’s favorite bill.

Isaiah 9:6-7

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end!” What a great passage to think about during the Christmas season and as we begin the new year. Elections will come and go, politicians will come and go, but the great thing is that thru it all, Christ’s kingdom is increasing and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

From all of us at Lancaster County ACTION, have a great Christmas season and a Prosperous New Year!

