



**MARCH 2022**

**“I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb.**

**Before you were born, I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.”**

***Jeremiah 1:5***

**“Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”**

***Psalm `139:16***

Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of speaking to several of the law students at Regent University’s Center for Global Justice. Marveling in the omniscience of God, I reminded them that before any of us were formed in our mothers’ wombs, God already knew that we would be together in Virginia Beach VA on that day. I asked them to be reminiscent that, like Esther, they were born for a time such as this. To remember that, like Jeremiah, before they were born, they were set apart and appointed to their purpose by God. That, like David writes in Ps 139, we can stand amazed that God created our inmost being when He knit us together in our mothers’ wombs, that His eyes saw our unformed bodies and already then ordained our days which were written in His book.

What I didn’t reflect on was how many of the lives of others of their generation, who were also meant to be born and set apart for such a time as this, were intentionally terminated even before they were born.

The past two years we have stood in shock and disbelief every time the number of Covid deaths were published in the media. Globally, **the number of Covid-19 deaths reported to the World Health Organization by March 8, 2022, stood at 6,004,421.** Extraordinary measures have been taken globally to restrict the number of fatalities. In an unprecedented manner our lives have been altered with the likes of travel restrictions, curfews, restrictions on gatherings, and wearing of masks. Based on this overwhelming reaction to prevent Covid deaths, it can easily be adduced life is indeed regarded as very precious!

**During the same period of these past two years, according to the annual estimate of the World Health Organization, 146,000,000 induced abortions took place globally. This equates to more than twenty-four times the number of Covid deaths over the same period and twice as many deaths as those who perished in World War II.**

According to data of the US Centers for Disease Control and the Guttmacher Institute, there have been around **63 million abortions** in the USA since the US Supreme Court ruling in **Roe v Wade** in 1973.

**Were these unborn children never intended to play a role in God's kingdom agenda?** Should we simply concede that God did not also know these unborn ones before they were conceived or, did He not set them apart for His purposes before they were born?

I often wonder whether something **does not change irrevocably in the psyche and soul of a nation when abortion on demand is legalized.** We are always appalled when we hear of a small child who is abused, abandoned, or killed. We express our repulsion with words like *“barbaric, brutal, cruel, inhumane, atrocious and heartless”*. Should we really be shocked by this if only a few months or years before, the mother could legally take the life of that same child?

I have never heard a pregnant woman use the words *“I am expecting a fetus”*. Even if it is an unwanted pregnancy, she would use the word *“baby”* - thereby acknowledging that she is carrying life. **Can value and respect for life ever be upheld in a society where mothers have the free choice to terminate an inconvenient pregnancy?**

In 1998 and in 2004, I was part of team of the **Christian Lawyers Association of South Africa** who challenged different aspects of our **Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996** in Court. I have personally experienced the powerless feeling of losing both those cases on technical points before any scientific evidence could be presented to Court. When I see the **unprecedented escalation of violent crime in South Africa**, I am convicted that, by legalizing abortion on demand in 1997, our beloved country instantly lost respect for life.

Having said that, **we dare not ignore the desperate circumstances that so many women in the world find themselves in.** Before the throne of God, we may not be indifferent to the plight of women who fall pregnant in conditions which were not of their own choice. The obvious ones are pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, circumstances where the baby would have fetal birth defects or pregnancies which threaten the physical or mental well-being of the mother. According to the Guttmacher Institute these reasons make up not more than 7% of the total number of decisions to have an abortion. **The remaining 93% of abortions are thus for economic or social reasons.**

As you know, our motto at Advocates International is **“Doing Justice with Compassion”**. When it comes to abortion on demand, there are many ways in which we can be involved in **“Doing justice”**. If abortion on demand has not been legalized in your country or if it is legal only under restricted circumstances, every attempt should be made by Christian Lawyers to ensure that it remains so.

In countries where legislation allows termination of pregnancy on demand, we **should constantly endeavor to influence such legislation**. In 2021, more than 5 000 people took part in Walk for Life in Adelaide, South Australia opposing legislation permitting abortion on-demand, up until birth, for any reason that two medical professionals can agree on. Despite the legislation being passed in 2021, another Walk for Life took place in February this year. We salute our brother Mark Mudri and his fellow South Australians for not giving up!

Even if it is not possible to overturn existing legislation or decided cases in your countries, every attempt must be made to restrict the number of abortions that are taking place. This can include legislation confining abortions to only the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, restricting the category of health care workers who may perform abortions, limiting the range of drugs used in abortions and legislative protection of Christian doctors and healthcare workers who are opposed to abortion.

Equally important is to ensure that **pregnant women are enabled to make a fully informed choice** by being given all relevant information relating to the status of the development of the fetus, has access to ultrasound examinations and sufficient counselling which should include information on the long term emotional and physical risks of having an abortion. Coming from the developing world, I fully understand that there are many countries where this is simply not feasible. Unfortunately, very often foreign aid to a developing country is connected to so-called “*reproductive health*”.

As a Christian lawyer, **you are though in the best position** to know what can still be done from a legislative point of view to save the lives of the unborn in your country. **We may never give up our attempts to turn the tide in our courts and in our legislators.**

As Christian lawyers, the “**With compassion**” part is more difficult for us when it comes to a desperate woman seeking an abortion. When we focus on God’s directions as we learn them from Scripture, it is easy for us to speak judgment on all of those who fall short of His instructions. On the other hand, **if we follow Jesus’ example, we can have empathy and reach out to those facing the crisis of an unwanted pregnancy.**

No doubt there are women who fall pregnant resulting from their own reckless sexual behavior. Sometimes these women even have repeated abortions which effectively amount to a form of birth control for them. Unfortunately, while we live in this broken world, that will never change.

On the other hand, there are **millions of pregnant women globally who are already marginalized** in their communities, who often already have several children and **have meagre or no resources to bring their children up**. In many cases these women are in fact married or in long-term relationships but do not have access to birth control, or their birth control fails. Similarly, their cultural context may demand full submission from them to their husbands or partners, without being able to refuse sexual intercourse.

Like me, most of you who are reading this letter, have adequate financial and social resources to be able to bring up a child. It feels to me as if God is saying to us what He says in Haggai 1:4 ***“Is it time for you yourselves to live in your expensive paneled houses while this house of the LORD lies in ruins?”***

There are many ways in which we as **Christian lawyers, with compassion**, can use our time, treasure, and talent **to assist pregnant women who consider abortion as their only option**. We can support pregnancy resource centers, help women with child maintenance cases, provide legal help to obtain access to social grants, and give legal aid to women who are victims of domestic violence or abuse. There are millions of couples across the globe who cannot have their own children and are wanting to adopt children. Adoption needs to be actively promoted as an alternative to abortion. As Christian lawyers we should become experts in adoption laws, inform and give training to those who are in organizations who support pregnant women and even to assist the authorities to facilitate adoptions,

In all of this, **please remember that you are part of a world-wide network of Christian lawyers** who will gladly share **their experience and knowledge** with you. Our network, as well as our strategic partners, have a **wealth of material and advice** from which you can source freely. **Kindly do not hesitate to contact me if we can connect you.**

Warmly in Christ



Teresa Conradie  
President and CEO, Advocates International

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