

Editorial: Beyond the politics of abortion

Since the election of Donald Trump in November 2016, several surveys have indicated that the American people have turned more strongly pro-life – and other surveys have shown that the American people have become more supportive of the “right” to an abortion.

It might be tempting to dismiss these dueling surveys with a wave of a hand and a quotation from Mark Twain – “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics” – but the seeming discontinuity reveals a deeper truth: On abortion, as on so many other matters, the American people are more divided today than ever before.

That divide, though, exists almost entirely in the political arena. Supporters of abortion accuse pro-lifers of believing in the sanctity of all human life only until the child is born. Pro-lifers respond that those who promote abortion care about the lives of women – right up until the procedure is finished or the last dose of Plan B takes effect.

Meanwhile, across the country, staff and volunteers at what were once called “crisis pregnancy centers” but now are more commonly referred to as “pregnancy care centers” avoid the shouting and the finger-pointing – and, yes, often even political activity – and instead focus on saving the lives of children and their mothers.

There are more pregnancy care centers in the United States today than there are abortuaries. Dozens exist in states that now have only one or two abortion clinics. Unlike those clinics, they never charge for their services – and the services they offer continue to expand.

Many now offer post-abortion counseling, not just to women who

come in for the first time after they have had an abortion, but for those who have come in while pregnant, discussed their options with a counselor, and then chosen to abort anyway. They are welcomed back with open arms, not with judgment; the best way to prevent another abortion down the road is to embrace the post-abortive woman with the arms of Christ.

Many pregnancy care centers offer rape counseling – again, not just as a means to save the innocent child whose life resulted from the rape, but because the experience can scar a woman so badly that she may no longer believe that anyone could love her. An increasing number offer testing for sexually transmitted diseases, both to women who are pregnant and to those who aren't. And in addition to providing clothes and food for babies and their mothers – a service of pregnancy care centers from the very beginning – some are now employing caseworkers who help pregnant women and mothers of newborns apply for public benefits, navigate the healthcare system, make alternative arrangements for education and find employment.

These aren't the kinds of activities that the most vocal supporters of abortion would expect to find at pregnancy care centers – and they're also not the kinds of activities that pro-lifers who are focused only on national politics may realize are happening in their hometowns. They are, though, the types of services that will continue to be necessary in a hypothetical future in which *Roe v. Wade* is overturned and each state, once again, crafts its own laws concerning abortion.

And they are the types of services that Christians have long provided, because they were imitating Christ. In the ancient world, abortion and infanticide were more common than most people realize today; but as the Roman Empire embraced Christianity, they disappeared – not because new laws were passed forbidding these practices, but because Christians embraced the way of life for themselves and modeled the love

of Christ for others.

With the changes to the U.S. Supreme Court and the lower federal courts since January 2017, the possibility that *Roe* may be overturned – or at least that significant restrictions may be placed on abortion rights – is no longer a pro-life pipe dream. Still, the courts cannot heal a divided nation, but the love of Christ exhibited by pregnancy care centers can.

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