



## Stop the excuses and go to church

By Dan Nixon  
First UMC, Butler

In this time of resolutions and promises being made to one's self concerning the New Year, I thought this tidbit from my email files would be appropriate.

**NO EXCUSE SUNDAY: DEDICATED TO MISSING CHURCH MEMBERS!**

To make it possible for everyone to attend church next Sunday, we are going to have a spe-

cial "No Excuse Sunday." Cots will be placed in the foyer for those who say, "Sunday is my only day to sleep in." There will be a special section with lounge chairs for those who feel that our pews are too hard. Eye drops will be available for those with tired eyes from watching TV late Saturday night. We will have steel helmets for those who say, "The roof would cave in if I ever came to church." Blankets will be furnished for those who

think the church is too cold, and fans for those who say it is too hot. Scorecards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites present. Relatives and friends will be in attendance for those who can't go to church and cook dinner, too. We will distribute "Stamp out Stewardship" buttons for those that feel the church is always asking for money. One section will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to seek

God in nature. Doctors and nurses will be in attendance for those who plan to be sick on Sunday. The sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who never have seen the church without them. We will provide hearing aids for those who can't hear the preacher and cotton for those who can't hope to see you there!

What excuses for not going to church have you been using lately? Sev-

eral years ago I ran across a very profound statement. "An excuse is like a sausage, it is nothing but the skin of the truth stuffed with a lie." Why make excuses when it would be more honest to say "I didn't go to church today because I didn't want to." People do what they really want to do. If someone really wanted to go to church, they would find a way. There are countless numbers of sick, handicapped, and encumbered people

who make it to church every Sunday. Do not misunderstand; there are sometimes legitimate reasons for missing church, just as there are legitimate reasons for missing work.

Stop making excuses. At least be honest with yourself and with those around you. Perhaps by admitting to yourself that you really don't want to go to church may help you resolve issues that are keeping you away from church.

## Removing the Splinter

By Dee Ann Campbell  
The Choctaw Sun

"Look at me, Mama!" I heard Kristen's 6-year-old voice from across the yard. Without turning toward her, I knew where she was. I knew my youngest child well enough to know where to find her. Kristen was in a tree.

Since she grew tall enough to reach the lowest limb, Kristen had loved to climb trees. And the trees in our backyard were just right for her little arms to reach as she pulled herself up. She spent much time in those trees when she was younger, but I didn't worry. Even at her highest point, she was never very far from the ground.

And so, as I watched her that afternoon, I knew that there was no danger of her getting hurt if she should fall. All in all, I considered my child fairly safe as she sat in the fork of that tree.

"Watch me get down, Mama!" she had called as I turned toward her. She slid down easily from her perch. But as she got closer to me, I noticed that she was holding out the palm of her hand. With brow furrowed and a frown on her little face, Kristen showed me her problem.

There was, indeed, a danger in climbing those small trees. There was one horrible, dreaded, worse-than-death thing that could happen to a little girl who climbed trees.....splinters!

Kristen wrinkled her nose and pouted as she showed me the splinter in the palm of her hand. It was not your ordinary little splinter. No, indeed! It was a full-fledged, inch-long, hard-to-get-out splinter. And I knew from the looks of it that this was one of those splinters that required a special little tool with which to extract it. This was definitely a needle-requiring splinter.

As I looked at that little piece of tree bark in my child's right hand, I knew that there was going to be trouble. I knew that she was going to hate the treatment even more than the splinter itself. And I was fairly sure that, if given the choice, she would choose to keep the splinter.

"Kristen," I told her gently. "You have a splinter. And we are going to have to get it out."

"Wh—what?" Her voice quivered with doubt and fear. I could almost see the wheels turning in her little head as she considered what "getting it out" might consist of. "How are you gonna get it out?"

"I don't know," I stalled for time. "We might have to get a needle."

Immediately, Kristen jerked her hand away and hid it behind her back. Her eyes were wide as saucers and her feet were poised and ready to run. Yes, I had been right. We were in for trouble.

Over the next few hours, I tried coaxing. I tried pleading. I tried

holding her down. I tried threatening. I tried stories about her hand getting infected and rotting off. But to no avail. Kristen went to bed that night with a splinter in her hand.

As I got ready for bed, I thought about Kristen and that splinter. I considered how like her we all are about certain things that we encounter in life. I thought of all the "splinters" I had gotten in my hands over the years. And how I had often fought against what it took to get them out. I knew that, like Kristen, I had often rather keep the "splinter" than face the needle that was required to get rid of it.

There was the "splinter" of selfishness and the "splinter" of pride. There was the "splinter" of racial prejudice and the "splinter" of self-reliance. There have been many unChristlike attitudes and sinful traits of my character that were within me simply because I am human.

All of these things were in my heart, as they are with almost everyone who has ever lived. And it has often taken quite a big "needle" for the Lord to get them out. Many times, the Lord has chosen to put me through painful trials to teach me lessons about what it really means to be His servant. Often, He has allowed me to suffer through hard times and difficult circumstances in order to teach me a valuable lesson about living as His child.

But after the trial was over, after the "needle" had done its job, I knew the answer. When He showed me the end result, I knew that it was all worthwhile. For I realized that, the best-learned lessons in life, the lessons that make the most lasting changes within me, are the ones that I learned through the most difficult trials.

As I went to sleep that night after failing to remove Kristen's splinter, I vowed that tomorrow, somehow, some way, I would get that splinter out of my baby's hand. And, with some more gentle but firm insistence (and a threatened trip to the doctor), Kristen finally allowed me to remove that splinter.

"I'm never, never, never climbing trees again!" she vowed as she wiped her tears.

But just days later, as I looked out the window to check on the kids, I saw something that made me smile and chuckle to myself. I saw my baby, legs swinging, sitting confidently on the limb of a tree.

She may get a splinter again. And I may have to use my needle again. But maybe next time she will remember that, although it hurts to get a splinter out, the end result makes it worth the pain.

*Thank you, Father, for Your patience, for Your steadfast love, and for continuing to correct me when I am wrong. And, even though it often hurts, I thank You for Your needle that removes from me those things that keep me from being like You.*

## Sanctity of Life Sunday to be observed on January 21st

### Area crisis pregnancy centers need donations of baby items

By Dee Ann Campbell  
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTTOWN — On January 21, churches, individuals and pro-life organizations throughout the country will be observing the annual Sanctity of Life Sunday. The observance marks the anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe vs. Wade* that effectively legalized abortions in the United States.

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that human babies are not persons 'in the whole sense' at any time before birth. The court ruled that during the first three months of pregnancy a state may make no laws regulating abortion.

Three years later, on July 1, 1976, the Court extended its original decision and ruled that abortions may be performed on minor daughters without the knowledge or consent of their parents. The ruling also stated that a woman, whether married or unmarried, may obtain an abortion without the knowledge or consent of the father.

Since that time, the numbers of reported abortions have climbed in the U.S. From just over 770,000 in 1973 to more than 1.5 million per year in recent years, the incidence of abortion has grown, and with that growth has come intensified efforts by pro-life organizations and churches to find ways to curb it.

Through national and local observances like Sanctity of Life Sunday, as well as an increasingly vocal stance in the legislative, pro-life advocates have made some strides in their efforts.

Although states differ in their laws about abortions, many have passed similar bills of restriction in recent years. In February, 1989 the Supreme Court broadened restrictions that could be put on the use of tax money to pay for abortions. It also approved a requirement in the state of Missouri that after 20 weeks, the abortionist must do viability testing on pre-born babies prior to aborting them.

During the 1980s, Congress passed a law forbidding federal funding for Medicaid abortions through the Hyde amendment. The

statute meant that abortion funding would be withheld from federal employees' health insurance, the military, public health, Peace Corps and other areas administered by the federal government. Funding was withheld by executive order from overseas organizations that promoted abortion. Funding was also cut off from the United Nations Fund for Population Activity, which promoted the use of abortion to curb population growth.

Most of the states followed the Congress' move by passing their own laws restricting taxpayer-funded abortions.

In June, 1992 in "Planned Parenthood of Southeast Pennsylvania vs. Casey", the Supreme Court reversed some of its earlier decisions, ruling that certain reasonable regulations of abortion could be enacted by states. These included parental notification of a minor daughter's scheduled abortion, informed consent, a 24-hour waiting period, and confidential reporting. It struck down a spousal notification clause, however.

After the Casey decision, many states passed laws that included requiring abortion clinic regulations, limiting fetal experimentation, providing aid for adoption, and requiring parental notification for the abortion of a minor daughter.

By Alabama law, if a minor under the age of 18 wishes to obtain an abortion, she must obtain written consent from one parent or a legal guardian. A minor may obtain an abortion without parental consent if she obtains a court order exempting her from the requirement.

In 1995, the state of Ohio passed a law banning partial birth abortions, or any abortion after 24 weeks. The law also required viability testing after 22 weeks. The law was challenged in the federal courts.

But six months later, the U.S. Congress passed a similar law forbidding partial birth abortions. The bill was vetoed by President Clinton, and in late 1996, an attempt to override the veto failed.

President George W. Bush would eventually sign the bill in 2003. But the ban continued to be challenged in court, with some federal courts ruling it unconstitutional.

In response to the somewhat increase in violence against abortionists and abortion facilities, Congress passed the Freedom of Access to Clinics Act. In addition the Supreme Court ruled that the RICO (Anti-Racketeering Act) did apply to peaceful abortion protesters.

The Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, which President Bush signed into law in August 2003, helped to protect infants born alive, including those who survive abortion.

More restrictive abor-

Drop-off diapers and baby wipes at The Choctaw Sun in Butler or Gilberttown to be given to Alpha Pregnancy Testing Center, Jackson, Ala., and the Center for Pregnancy Choices in Meridian.

tion laws throughout the country have resulted in somewhat fewer reported abortions. But pro-life advocates are still fighting the battle, on national, state, and local levels.

According to a Gallup Poll, the number of Americans who consider themselves pro-life is climbing. Their numbers rose from 33% to 43% in the past 5 years, and people who considered themselves to be pro-choice declined from 56% to 48%.

Much of the pro-life effort involves offering assistance, counseling, and other outreaches to give women in crisis pregnancies another option outside of abortion.

In observance of Sanctity of Life Sunday, churches throughout the country will hold special services to pray for the women and babies affected by abortion. Services may include sermons on the topic, discussions of means of assistance, and intense prayer gatherings on behalf of the unborn.

The observance of Sanctity of Life Sunday coincides with local efforts to curb the incidence of abortion by offering such alternatives and assistance. Alpha Pregnancy Testing Center

in Jackson, Ala., and in Meridian, Miss. Are launching a Diaper and Baby Wipe Drive to provide needed items for mothers who opt to keep their babies.

Local residents who would like to show their support for crisis pregnancy programs can do so by purchasing newborn, size 1 or 2 diapers and baby wipes and drop them off at Alpha's local drop-off center at the Choctaw Sun offices in Butler or Gilberttown. Donations will be accepted through January 29.

In addition to the current drive, the centers are in need of other assistance including volunteers, funds and donations. The centers can be contacted at:

- Center for Pregnancy Choices, 4905-B Poplar Springs Drive, Meridian, MS, 39305; by phone at (601) 482-1230; on the web at [www.cpcfmeridian.org](http://www.cpcfmeridian.org); by email at [cpcfmeridian@bellsouth.net](mailto:cpcfmeridian@bellsouth.net)
- Alpha Pregnancy Testing Center, P.O. Box 582, Jackson, AL 36545; by phone at (251) 246-7750, or at [alphasal@bellsouth.net](mailto:alphasal@bellsouth.net)

If you do not have a church home, we welcome you at  
**Black Creek Baptist Church.**

We are located four miles east of the 4-way stop at Silas, just 1/4 mile north of U.S. Hwy. 84 on CR 6. Sunday School is at 10 a.m. and morning worship at 11 a.m.

For all of your Timber needs give us a call!

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