

Pro-life Voters Differ on Value of Abortion Laws

A recent survey found that most of Barack Obama's pro-life supporters don't think legislation reduces abortion.



[] Exit polls show that a majority of evangelicals who backed Barack Obama during the presidential election don't believe pro-life legislation reduces abortion.

A survey conducted by found that 86.7 percent of pro-life voters who supported Obama believed the best way to curb abortion is by preventing unintended pregnancy through education and contraception, and assisting pregnant women financially. Only 10.9 percent believed legal restriction was most effective.

Among pro-life voters who supported Sen. John McCain, 63.8 percent believed the best way to reduce abortion is through legal restriction, while 35.3 percent said prevention would be most effective.

The two groups also had different views on the impact the president would have on the abortion rate. Of Obama's evangelical supporters, 53 percent said the abortion rate was unlikely to change under either an Obama or McCain presidency, while 28 percent of McCain supporters agreed with that sentiment.

Meanwhile, 25 percent of Obama's pro-life supporters expected the abortion rate to fall during his presidency, and 59 percent of McCain supporters believed abortions would have decreased if the Arizona senator had been elected. Pro-life advocates note that nearly 40 percent of McCain's pro-life supporters didn't believe the Republican candidate would have made much impact on the abortion rate.

Steve Ertlelt, editor of , said the findings show that pro-life advocates need to do more to convince voters that pro-

life laws reduce abortion. He said states such as Mississippi, South Carolina, Michigan and Missouri, which have several laws restricting abortion, have seen abortion rates drop between 20 percent and 50 percent.

He also pointed to research conducted by Michael New, Ph.D., in association with the Family Research Council. New, a political science professor at the University of Alabama, credits pro-life legislation with reducing abortion in 12 of the last 14 years. Refuting claims that abortion had increased slightly since President Bush was inaugurated, New said the abortion rate dropped 14 percent between 1992 and 2000, but states that were active in passing pro-life laws saw even larger declines.

In its exit poll, *Beliefnet* also found that abortion was the most important issue for the majority of evangelicals who supported McCain (65 percent), while the economy topped the list for Obama's evangelical supporters (64 percent). Roughly 44 percent of McCain's evangelical supporters cited the economy as their most important issue while 10 percent of evangelicals who voted for Obama said abortion was the most significant issue. —**Adrienne S. Gaines**

Christian Ministry Profiled on ABC's Extreme Makeover

A Haitian orphanage is being featured this Sunday on the hit TV show as part of an effort to feed and clothe the poor.



[] The producers of ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* have shipped a truckload of merchandise to Haiti's poorest children

via an Orlando, Christian ministry to Haitian orphans.

This Sunday night, Danita's Children: Hope for Haiti ministry will be featured on ABC's popular home-makeover program at 8 p.m. . alongside the Frisch family from Toledo, Ohio, who have 11 children, five of whom are adopted from Haiti.

"The [Frisch] family was so blessed to be receiving a home from ABC that they decided they wanted to use the opportunity to give back to Haiti, a place to which they feel very connected," said Amy Porter, development coordinator for Danita's Children.

Combined with the enormous TV exposure it's receiving, Danita's Children—which runs an orphanage, school and feeding program in Ouanaminthe, Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere—began a 30-day food drive earlier this month, collecting rice, beans and cornmeal at drop-off points throughout central Florida.

"We feel very privileged to be a part of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, and we hope the show will bring greater awareness to the needs of the children in Haiti," said Sheree Beresford, the ministry's director of U.S. operations.

In the wake of deadly storms in Haiti last summer, which left hundreds of thousands of children homeless and hungry, Danita's Children has provided housing and education for hundreds of orphans, and is serving nearly 17,000 meals a month. "For the 450,000 orphans in Haiti, life and death are often determined by one meal," Beresford said.

Before the Kirsch's home makeover in September, Diane Korman, *Extreme Makeover's* senior producer, encouraged people in the Toledo area to drop off new or slightly used clothing, canned goods, toiletries or school supplies to help aid the Haitian poor, according to the *Toledo Blade*.

The Kirsch family flew to Orlando in September and presented that shipment to Danita Estrella, founder of Danita's Children. A large truckload of food, clothing and Christmas

gifts arrived in Haiti on Thursday. Estrella was in the country to receive the truckload alongside her cheering orphans and students.

Said Porter: "The gifts and donations that came from ABC and fans of the show could not have come at a better time. Danita's Children will be able to bless not only our children, but many more orphans and Haitian people who are in need during this extremely desperate time." **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

Earl Paulk's Church Being Sold

The Cathedral at Chapel Hill, built by Earl Paulk, is on the market for \$24.5 million.



[] The property of an Atlanta megachurch founded decades ago by Earl Paulk is on sale for \$24.5 million.

Listed this month, the campus of the Cathedral at Chapel Hill, well known for its neo-Gothic, 6,000-seat sanctuary, is one of the largest religious facilities currently available in the United States, said Matt Messier, a Florida broker and principal of CNL Real Estate Services of Orlando, Fla., according to *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

In recent years, membership at the Cathedral at Chapel Hill has declined from 10,000 regular attendees to roughly 1,000 after a series of sexual misconduct allegations against Paulk, 81. Current pastor D.E. Paulk, who grew up believing Earl Paulk was his uncle but recently learned he was his biological father, said the sale was triggered in part by the church's

evolving mission to be inclusive of people of diverse religions and sexual orientations.

“As we have become a ‘radically inclusive’ church our need for space has lessened considerably ... If we were to preach an exclusive message we would need more space,” D.E. Paulk told *Charisma*. “The mission of the Cathedral has not changed, only expanded to include all of God's creation—Christian, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, gay, straight, etc.”

D.E. Paulk, who also leads a group called the Pro-Love Organization, has advocated for gay rights in recent years and is an associate of the controversial preacher Carlton Pearson, who teaches that all people, not just Christians, are saved. In his comments to *Charisma*, D.E. Paulk also alluded to universalism, saying the Cathedral does not seek to convert but to “convince everyone of Christ’s love.”

“We believe that Christ was successful, not a failure,” D.E. Paulk said. “Christ came to ‘reconcile the world to God,’ and we confess that Christ succeeded and ‘finished’ this work. If Christ was successful then the world was converted at Calvary. Salvation, then, becomes an awakening to God's free gift—not a conversion.”

Brandi Paulk, wife of D.E. Paulk and a pastor at the Cathedral, said the church property was valued at \$31 million two years ago, but the price was lowered because of the economic downturn. She told the *Journal-Constitution* that the facilities were not being sold to pay legal expenses related to civil actions involving Earl Paulk, who has been hounded by claims of sexual misconduct since he was accused of committing adultery in 1960.

In February, a judge dismissed the most recent action against Earl Paulk. The lawsuit filed by Mona Brewer and her husband, Bobby, alleged that Paulk coerced the woman into a 14-year affair. The couple and their attorney were ordered to pay more than \$1 million in legal fees. They are appealing the decision.

Although Earl Paulk remains archbishop of the church, he is not active in its daily operations.— **Adrienne S. Gaines**

New Prayer Effort for Obama Begins

The Presidential Prayer Team piloted by John Lind has launched a 77-day campaign for Barack Obama and the nation leading up to Inauguration Day.



[] The leader of an Arizona-based ministry is asking Christians to commit themselves to praying for a smooth transition for Barack Obama, the nation's first African-American president-elect.

More than 40,000 people have signed up so far for 77 Days of Prayer for Our New President, a post-election e-mail initiative that sends participants a scripture and prayer point each day through Inauguration Day on Jan. 20.

"I hope that each person who participates in our 77-day initiative develops a passionate heart of prayer for Barack Obama and his administration, whether they voted for him or not, regardless of political affiliation," said John Lind, president of the Presidential Prayer Team (PPT).

"Our responsibility as Christians is ... to pray for those God has placed in authority over us, interceding for their wisdom, insight and protection," he said. "It is our joy and honor before God to do this. We have been preparing for a new administration for more than two years and are excited to lead our members into a new season of prayer."

The 77-day effort comes on the heels of the PPT's 40 Days to

Pray the Vote, which also eschewed partisanship in order to pray for both presidential candidates and their campaigns.

The PPT Web site states that the main concern for those participating in the current initiative should be first “worship of our Holy God” and then intercession for the specified prayer point.

On Monday, day six of the prayer campaign, believers were urged to pray for President-elect Obama to be “genuinely humbled before God as he faces the daunting task of leading our nation for the next four years.”

“Today, we ask that You would empower our new president to revere You,” the prayer stated, “putting aside all pride and self-centeredness as he acknowledges who You are and what You wish to accomplish through him. Show him that for him to be honored, he must humble himself before You.”

Lind told *Charisma* he believes America is moving into a new chapter of history and requires prayer now more than ever. “We need to understand this,” he said. “We’re building a new, exciting track of prayer for President-elect Obama and Vice President-elect Biden and all who will be a part of their administration.”

In addition to praying “appropriately and caringly” for President-elect Obama, Lind said prayer would also faithfully continue for President George W. Bush until he leaves office.

“This is [an] excellent time to be people of prayer ... during this critical time of transition—not only for the White House, but for our country,” he said.

“There is a need for unity in our country, and it’s been my experience that the chasm of division is bridged by prayer.”

-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli

Christians Assist Victims of Congo Violence

Churches and Christian aid organizations are responding to what is being called a humanitarian catastrophe in the war-torn African nation.



[] As violence between government and rebel troops escalates in the Democratic Republic of Congo, churches and Christian organizations are rushing humanitarian aid into the east African nation to assist victims.

“We’re in the midst of assessing suitable temporary settlement sites for people who are in urgent need of food and non-food items, shelter, water and sanitation,” said World Vision aid worker Michelle Rice.

Since August, when a peacekeeping deal between Congo’s government and rebel forces failed, reports of widespread rapes and murders have increased in and around the eastern city of Goma, on the Rwandan border. “We learned of one shocking case in which armed men raped three women from the same family—an elderly grandmother, her daughter and her granddaughter,” Rice said.

At least 250,000 people have been displaced, with some estimating that more than 1 million people have fled their homes and villages. Last week alone, thousands of people escaped to Tanzania and other neighboring nations, reported World Relief, the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals.

“It is like the Bible says ... the people are harassed and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd,” said Maurice Omollo, director of World Relief’s programs in the Congo. “We are working in a very unstable environment in which many of the people have been uprooted by war and the infrastructure has been destroyed.”

Many of the displaced wander in search of safety while others gather in makeshift refugee camps, some without food or water, reported missionary Steven Todd, who was in the Congo during the recent outbreak of violence.

Todd, who trains pastors inside refugee camps through Alabama-based Africa Ministries Network, said in the midst of the turmoil, Congolese Christians have planted more than 1,000 churches in three of the massive U.N. refugee camps in nearby Tanzania. "It would seem time for the Western church to arise and find effective and creative ways to come alongside these courageous brothers and sisters in their time of need," he said.

At least 1,000 cases of cholera have been reported since October, the Associated Press reported, and the World Health Organization has warned that a cholera epidemic could break out if people continue to live in makeshift camps without adequate sanitation.

World leaders have unilaterally called for a cease-fire so humanitarian aid can reach those in need, including at least 100,000 people trapped Tuesday by rebel fighters.

Many of the churches in the eastern part of the nation are taking in as many refugees as they can manage, despite their meager resources. "Due to this violence, my people have no source of income, therefore they cannot tithe, and the churches have no money to help these refugees," an independent charismatic pastor from Goma, a few miles from the recent attacks, told Todd. "We are trusting God, but have little else we can do."

The fighting stems from longstanding ethnic tension left over from the 1994 slaughter of at least 500,000 Tutsis in neighboring Rwanda. Professing to be a born-again Christian, rebel leader Laurent Nkunda claims to be on a mission to protect the Tutsi minority from Rwandan Hutu militants who participated in the slaughter of 500,000 Tutsis before escaping to Congo.

The U.N. has been urged to increase the number of peacekeepers in eastern Congo from 17,000 to roughly 20,000 to help protect civilians.

World Relief expected to work with local churches to assist 3,000 displaced families in Goma, while World Vision hoped to expand its aid distribution if the situation were stable enough. "Without some semblance of stability, relief efforts are extremely difficult," Rice said. **-Adrienne S. Gaines**

Without Walls Faces Foreclosure

Pastor Randy White promised to fight the proceedings, saying his Florida megachurch has never been late making mortgage payments.



[] A California-based Christian bank filed foreclosure proceedings against Without Walls International Church Nov. 4, demanding immediate repayment of a \$1 million line of credit and a \$12 million loan on its property in Tampa, Fla.

During a worship service Sunday, Without Walls pastor Randy White promised to fight the foreclosure proceedings, saying church leaders had shown the Evangelical Christian Credit Union (ECCU), which holds the church's mortgage, a signed contract from the sale of its property in Lakeland, Fla., proving it could more than pay off its line of credit.

But the negotiation fell through when White refused to sign the modified version of the loan agreement under the advice of lawyers, who said the changes gave all property, furnishings

and intellectual rights to the bank.

"I could've signed the modification agreement, everything would've gone away, but if we hiccup they would've owned it all," White told his congregation Sunday.

The ECCU also began foreclosure proceedings on church property in Lakeland, where Without Walls' satellite congregation meets. Both the Tampa and Lakeland properties have been for sale since March.

Bank spokesman Jac Le Tour said the ECCU worked with Without Walls for several months before attempting to foreclose on the church. "We worked with them for a number of months to reach an agreement," Le Tour said. "When that process was unsuccessful, we had to file foreclosure. It wasn't a quick decision."

White said the credit union initiated the action because of its own financial struggles. He claims the ECCU decided to confiscate the Tampa property after learning the church had a waiting buyer who was paying \$33 million.

"I truly emphatically believe that they were under such intense financial pressure that they saw they could foreclose on us and accept the developer's contract and make money," White told *Charisma*. "I believe that's the root of all this."

La Tour denied White's allegation and said his company seeks to help ministries, not sell real estate, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported.

White said the church has not been late making payments in seven and a half years. "We have not violated any covenants," White said. "We are not in any way shape or form in default. This is merely strictly greed on the part of a bank that is taking advantage of a ministry."

White admitted that 2008 had been a tough year for him, with his public divorce from ex-wife Paula White, the loss of his daughter to brain cancer and a 30 percent decline in church

membership. But he said Without Walls would survive.

“We’re not going under, and we’re not going away,” he told church members. “I promise you this: I will handcuff myself to that column right there because right is right and wrong is wrong. We are a great church, and the devil has tried to take us out every single way that he can.”

Soccer Superstar Shares Jesus on National TV

Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite, affectionately known around the world as

“Kaká,” recently shared his faith with millions of prime time TV viewers in Brazil.



[] During prime time viewing last Thursday night, millions of Brazilians watched their TV screens transfixed as their national sports hero talked intimately about his hope and faith in Jesus Christ.

Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite, commonly known as Kaká, is a world-renowned midfielder who plays for a premier club in Italy and on the Brazilian national team during World Cups. He played a lead role in kicking off “Minha Esperança Brasil,” My Hope Brazil—a three-night, TV-based outreach sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) and reportedly one of the largest evangelistic crusades ever.

“I truly cannot imagine my life without Christ,” said Kaká on national TV, as translated from the Portuguese language by Brazilian BGEA representatives.

“Everything I’ve accomplished, everything that God has done in

my life ... was because God has a plan and purpose for my life," he said. "The Bible says that he will do more than we ever thought or imagined, and this is truly how it has been. If God wasn't in my life, then my life certainly would not be like this."

BGEA organizers praised Brazilian believers for networking nearly 50,000 churches nationwide to participate in the initiative and for providing more than 850,000 homes to host the evangelism effort on their TV sets.

Ministry leaders said Christians involved at the local level, or "Matthews," were trained to share their own testimonies after the TV program and invite others to accept Christ.

"The churches in Brazil have put an enormous amount of time and energy into reaching their loved ones with the Gospel of Jesus Christ," said Bill Conard, vice president of international ministries at BGEA.

We know God performed "powerful things through their faithful efforts," he added.

National reports included accounts of demonic deliverances, prisoners coming to Christ, freedom from drugs and alcohol, thousands of conversions and even the story of a former priestess of the voodoo cult Macumba, who recently accepted Christ and held My Hope Brazil meetings on the site where she once practiced Macumba.

For his magical footwork on the field Kaká has won many international awards, including last year's prestigious Ballon d'Or [Golden Ball] trophy from France as well as FIFA's World Player of the Year.

This year, Kaká was among *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in the section titled: "Heroes and Pioneers."

Last Thursday, Kaká told a national audience however that nothing in the world compared with the peace of knowing and serving Christ. "In 2007 I was named best soccer player in the

world," he said. "This for me was a great honor. But the greatest honor in my life is serving Jesus Christ, because he gives me hope."

After a championship game in Europe last year, Kaká tore off his jersey to reveal a white T-shirt that bore his personal devotion to Christ. It read: "I Belong To Jesus."

Following the three-day event last weekend—which included Kaká's testimony, messages from BGEA founder Billy Graham and his son, Franklin, and an evangelistic film called *A Vow to Cherish*—organizers said Brazilian church leaders repeatedly thanked the Graham's for helping them reach so many millions with the gospel via the São Paulo-based Rede Bandeirantes (Bandeirantes TV Network).

The BGEA also purchased time on local TV stations where the Bandeirantes Network has limited coverage, even pre-distributing thousands of DVD's of the program to remote villagers by sending teams carrying projectors in canoes on Amazon jungle rivers and on trucks to remote cattle plains.

BGEA's Web site indicates that more than 9 million commitments for Christ have been recorded worldwide since 2002, when the My Hope initiative launched in Latin America and has since appeared in many other nations, including India, Belarus and Russia.

My Hope Singapore takes place in mid-December and church leaders from Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and Thailand have expressed an interest in participating, according to the BGEA. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

Soldiers Find Faith on the Front Lines

Though some disagree with America's involvement in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Christian U.S. military officers have witnessed God's miraculous intervention.



[] The idea of Christians enlisting in the military poses a dilemma for some people. After all, if Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, how can anyone who claims to follow Him enter a profession in which killing people is an obligation? As a born-again believer in Christ for 24 years and the father of two young Christian men who serve in the armed forces, I certainly sympathize with those pondering this question. I know Jesus is the only source of lasting peace. And as a believer I am sure God takes no pleasure in war.

Yet the U.S. military is full of Christians. And the faith of these warriors has been brightly displayed in recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. You may not have heard their testimonies on the evening news, but I can assure you that many people in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard have witnessed God's miraculous intervention in recent days.

I have heard some of the miracles from my own two sons. David is a Marine and Nathan is in the Army. David is a combat veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan. Nathan is still in training, but he will at some point be called upon to fight in the current global war on terror.

David decided while in high school that he wanted to enlist. Several times during his senior year, before June 2001, I felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to encourage him to prepare for battle.

He was scheduled to leave for boot camp in August 2001. As our family laid hands on him the night before he left, the Holy Spirit spoke to him through me in prophecy. God said David would see combat and that He would protect him and cause him to prosper in difficult times if he followed the Lord fully. Little did we know how soon tragic events would unfold.

The next month, the September 11 attacks made David's calling clear: He and his fellow Marine recruits would be trained to wage war against Osama bin Laden and those who supported his terrorist army.

David joined dozens of other Marines in April 2002 as they rotated into one of America's more storied Marine battalions: the 2nd Battalion of the 8th Marine Regiment, or 2/8 for short, based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

A Special Mission

The 2/8 is known as "America's Battalion." Several of the soldiers who became close friends with David were committed Christians and represented a cross section of this country—coming from more than seven states. We soon learned that almost every senior officer in this battalion served Christ.

From the time Lt. Col. Royal Mortenson took command of 2/8 in December 2001, he had a strong conviction that he would be leading the battalion into combat. He helped pull together what would prove to be a superb group of senior staff officers, company commanders, and senior noncommissioned officers—the company and platoon sergeants who get the job done. He developed a rigorous training schedule to prepare the 900 Marines under his command.

Amazingly, many of the Marines of 2/8 had been prepared for the war against Saddam Hussein long before Operation Iraqi Freedom began in March 2003. Col. Ronald Bailey was the commanding officer of the 2nd Marine Regiment, under which 2/8 would be placed as part of Regimental Combat Team 2 (RCT-2), a major ground unit during Operation Iraqi Freedom. More than a year before taking command of the 2nd Marines in July 2002, before the 9/11 attacks, the Holy Spirit showed Bailey that he would be called to lead his unit into combat in Iraq.

Capt. Brian Ross, the commanding officer of Golf Rifle Company within 2/8, had a similar experience. "I knew even before I checked into 2/8 that the battalion would see combat," he says.

By late 2002, David was receiving clear instructions from the Holy Spirit. From his prayer time he sensed the Lord leading him to mentally focus on three key skills during the training: fire and movement, urban warfare skills and knowledge of his weapon system.

As 2002 came to an end, the political situation with Saddam Hussein in Iraq was heating up. The Holy Spirit began leading my wife and me to pray daily for the entire U.S. military, from President Bush down to my son David and his buddies in 2/8. Protection, wisdom and courage were our primary requests.

God also instructed us to pray for the protection of the Iraqi people. We also asked God to help them understand that the United States was there to help them by removing Saddam Hussein. Sure enough, in early January 2003, the 2/8 battalion was alerted. They scrambled to prepare for deployment.

As the American military assembled in allied Middle East countries, the Holy Spirit continued to direct many churches to pray. In our home church near Buffalo, New York, on February 9, 2003, more than a month before hostilities started, two prophecies proved to be

accurate.

The first said there would be a war with Saddam Hussein, believers would help bring about the will of God through prayer and believers should not trust in military strength but in the power of intercession. The second word said that in the coming weeks God would wake up Christians in the night hours to pray and that He would cause Iraqi terrorists to become confused, fearful and ineffective.

What many of the Marines of 2/8 had believed for a long time was now becoming clear to us at home: The United States would fight a war against Saddam Hussein, and it would be a just cause.

Spirit-Directed Intercession

With the deployment, 2/8 Marines and their wives, families and friends began praying in earnest. God almost immediately began answering prayers while leading believers into deeper and bolder petitions.

The battalion had not been selected to have an embedded news reporter, so communications with the families back home would be infrequent at best. But several wives of 2/8 Marines launched an organized prayer effort and asked God to provide a way for the families to receive news and to remove the barriers preventing regular communications. These prayers were answered in mid-March, shortly before the start of the offensive, when Kerry Sanders of NBC News

hooked up with Mortenson.

Sanders' team had the necessary satellite communications equipment to work with a forward unit, but they had not yet been assigned to a battalion. From their position with the 2/8, he and his crew provided daily reports and some of the best news coverage of the war.

Prayers also affected the commander. Don Rogers, the chaplain for 2/8, requested one-on-one time with Mortenson in his stateroom to pray for him. "I've never done this before, but I am your chaplain," Rogers told Mortenson. They met about once a week and continued this practice later while in Kuwait until combat began.

At home, people began to post the names and pictures of their loved ones in 2/8 on prayer boards. It was not uncommon for service personnel to have four or five different churches praying for them by name.

My son David's picture was on the prayer boards and lists of at least five churches in western New York. The senior pastor of Lovejoy Gospel Church, Ron Burgio, added David's name and those of the other deployed military personnel from the church to his prayer list—which was prayed over by 70 intercessors. These people prayed for David's protection daily.

At the 2/8 base in Kuwait, chaplains from RCT-2 and 2/8 improvised to create a church for worship services. Using a large chow-hall tent, chaplains ran two Sunday services, both Catholic and Protestant. More than 600 Marines attended the packed meetings.

As war became imminent, Marines penned what they thought might be their final letters to their families. In a letter dated March 7, David wrote us: "Not everyone is given the opportunity to do what we are doing for our country. ... I'm so thankful to be part of this. The Lord is consuming me with joy and happiness. May He do the same in your lives."

As parents, we remembered the prophetic words spoken over David in August 2001. This gave us amazing confidence. We knew God would protect him.

The Lord added another important prayer to our requests. He led us to ask Him to give David, his buddies, and the men of his battalion supernatural strength and endurance just as the prophet Elijah received in 1 Kings 18 when he outran Ahab's chariot.

The implication for the men of 2/8 was clear. They would need supernatural endurance in order to succeed in this conflict. This bold "Elijah prayer" became our daily request.

Miracles in War

Operation Iraqi Freedom began on March 19, 2003, and 2/8 was scheduled to launch into Iraq the next morning. Shortly before launch,

Capt. Seth MacCutcheon, a Christian and commander of the Combined

Anti-Armor Tank platoon (or CAAT platoon)—which consisted of 16

Humvees loaded with rockets, grenade launchers and heavy machine

guns—asked Chaplain Rogers to pray over his vehicles.

The job of the CAAT platoon was to find and destroy enemy armor

before the enemy could attack the battalion. Rogers understood the

seriousness of MacCutcheon's request.

“When Seth asked me to pray, I laid hands on every vehicle in 2/8—more than 70 Humvees and trucks—praying that the vehicles would

not be hit and for safety of the men who would ride in them,” Rogers

says. “I prayed about 20 seconds over each one.”

The start of the conflict unified Christians across the nation with an urgency to pray. Echo Rifle Company Capt. Kevin Yeo's family

was one example of this. Yeo's wife, Andrea, and seven other women

began to intercede.

Andrea prayed every night. During the course of the war she became the focal point within Echo Company for numerous prayers for the

wives and families of her husband's Marines. Of roughly 150 men in

Echo, Andrea was in direct contact with more than 50 families. Parents and wives called her or sent e-mails to say, "Our church is praying for Kevin, Echo and 2/8."

A Catholic, Andrea found comfort in asking God to send a guardian angel to protect her husband. Another woman, Patricia Williams, enlisted business associates and even a group of nuns to pray. Andrea and Patricia contacted two cousins who are priests in Argentina who reported back that they had coordinated prayers at many churches.

We now believe that, by a conservative estimate, more than 50 churches and 2,000 believers prayed for these soldiers regularly. And we know God answered!

God's answers began almost as soon as the offensive started. I am aware of more than 40 specific answers to prayers and 35 miracles of protection. The Marines of 2/8 readily credit God with sparing lives. In each case Marines would normally have died.

Amazingly, not one 2/8 Marine died during the offensive, despite the fact that they saw some of the heaviest fighting of the war. Furthermore, not one Marine lost an eye, limb, finger or toe, or was otherwise disabled.

A total of 40 Marines from 2/8 were wounded during Operation Iraqi Freedom—mostly from shrapnel. But all of them recovered. Here's

a small sampling of other testimonies of God's miraculous protection
that members of the battalion witnessed:

1. On the afternoon of March 21, in Washington, D.C. (about 9 p.m. in Iraq), Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced during a press conference that the Iraqi leaders were becoming increasingly "confused." This was the first reported confirmation of an answer to specific prayers that God had led His people to pray.
2. While fighting off an ambush on March 24, Golf Company suffered no casualties. This was miraculous because my son David's squad had rushed across a distance of two football fields while exposed to Iraqi machine-gun fire. The Iraqis fired at the Marines at point-blank range yet always missed their targets.
3. The Fox Rifle Company was the target of a major Iraqi attack on March 24. Five Marines were blown up to 30 feet through the air from enemy rounds, yet they walked away. An incoming mortar round hit and broke an overhead power line instead of landing on a four-man mortar crew situated directly beneath the line.
4. On March 23 the 2/8 battalion captured enemy prisoners of war who provided the first evidence of missing U.S. Army Pfc. Jessica

Lynch's whereabouts. These Marines went on to provide much of the intelligence that led to her rescue.

5. The Iraqis were using a hospital to fire upon 2/8. Meanwhile the family of Marine John Cain prayed fervently back in Oklahoma and Arizona for hours throughout the day of March 25. Just in time, God provided a sandstorm to cover the attack of Fox Company that captured the hospital. The company had to cross a huge open field into the face of Iraqi fire, but no Marines were hit crossing the field because of the unusual weather pattern.
6. The Lord caused the sandstorms to cease with a torrential downpour the night of March 25. The rain turned hard, sunbaked ground into soft mud. The next night, Iraqis attacked the logistical rear area of 2/8, which contained ammunition, fuel and food. Instead of Iraqi mortar rounds exploding on contact—which would have sent a lot of deadly shrapnel flying everywhere—the rounds sunk into the mud and exploded underground, preventing dozens of injuries and saving lives.
7. When the Iraqi forces were whipped badly after just a few days in An-Nasiriyah, from March 23-26, the remaining Iraqis ran and hid in fear. The battalion began to capture scores of Iraqis who

otherwise would have been killed or wounded.

8. No Marines were killed or wounded while riding in any 2/8 vehicle. Furthermore, no CAAT platoon Humvee was lost because of enemy fire. God answered Chaplain Rogers' prayers.

9. God provided supernatural stamina and endurance to these warriors, just as we had prayed. They received the strength of Elijah.

My son David slept only 45 hours over the 31 days of the heaviest

fighting. That's an average of 1-1/2 hours per night. Later he testified: "It was weird. I always had energy, and I knew it was from

the Lord. I was always volunteering for patrols and guard duty. Just

like Elijah in 1 Kings, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me. I got so

used to it, I didn't think about it."

I realize that these testimonies are only a fraction of the amazing stories that are emerging from the Iraq war. The same miracles

that happened among the soldiers of the 2/8 battalion were repeated in

countless other regiments.

One of the greatest miracles, of course, became obvious in late

January 2005 when the world watched Iraqi citizens participate in a

free election. I am sure that many American soldiers gave thanks to God

that day when they saw these liberated people brave the threats of

terrorism to move one step closer to democracy.

I hope all Christians in the United States will continue to pray for our men and women in uniform. If we will allow the Holy Spirit

to energize and direct our intercession, we will see fewer casualties

of American soldiers and civilians and a swifter end to this conflict.

“The calming effect of prayer and faith works wonders for your nerves.

It is as if the Lord provides a shield of protection. During the

fighting God looked out for me and dozens of other Marines by preventing some artillery shells from bursting near our fighting

positions.”

Glenn Thomas is the author of *God Saw Them Through* (Creation House), an account of the 2nd Marine Battalion's experiences

in Iraq. He lives in Buffalo, New York. For more information about his

ministry, e-mail him at gathomas57@.

Israel's Crackdown on Christian Workers

Christian organizations are downsizing in the wake of a government crackdown on visas for foreign volunteers.



[] Several Christian organizations founded to assist Israel are being forced to downsize and revamp their services and some are in danger of closing altogether due to a new enforcement of government policy.

Christian ministries in Israel are bolstered by a foreign volunteer staff that had been allowed to serve for up to five years.

But recently Israel's Ministry of Interior began enforcing a rule requiring volunteers to leave the country after 27 months, a move that cuts some staffs by 50 percent or more as visas come due.

"It is shrinking the key Christian ministries and Christian communities in Israel," said Sharon Sanders, co-founder and director of Christian Friends of Israel (CFI). "We all are feeling the crunch."

As a result of the crackdown, CFI's staff will drop from 50 to about a dozen volunteers and paid staff in the coming months.

The decision to uphold this policy came without warning, and it already has forced many volunteers to leave the country. "It takes two years for people to get to know the country and be able to function in Israel," said Rick Ridings, director of Succat Hallel, a 24/7 house of prayer that has already lost key administrative staff.

Sabine Haddad, Interior Ministry spokeswoman, said volunteers can return for another 27-month term but must get their visas in their home countries prior to reentry. The law of entry demands that from now

on even first-time volunteers get a visa issued in their own nations before they arrive, a bureaucratic process that could deter new volunteers.

Due to the uncertainty, several volunteers have already decided not to return. "We are [Israel's] best friends in the world, so why this is happening?" Sanders asked. "We love Israel, but this is not a way to treat your friends."

The ruling isn't specifically aimed at Christians, but Yuval Yerushalmi, attorney for some of the Christian organizations, admitted, "All this is definitely making our lives more difficult."

Certain religious officials have long opposed Christian influence in Israel, accusing the organizations of trying to convert Jews to Christianity. In recent years rabbis have ruled that it is "not kosher" to take money from Christian donors or co-sponsor conferences with them.

The heat has been turned up on Messianic Jews as well. A reporter for Israel's largest daily newspaper spent two months posing as a Jewish believer in Jesus at two Israeli congregations and published a scathing, eight-page article about what she called the "cult" of Messianic Judaism.

Although the report cast Messianic Judaism in a negative light,

the exposure inspired nationwide interest in the small community, comprised of roughly 15,000 Israelis. "We have had a lot of opportunity to share the gospel," said Jacob Damkani, who runs the evangelistic Trumpet of Salvation ministry in Tel Aviv and was targeted in the article. "Now, also, a lot of Israelis who keep silent are being asked about their beliefs by their neighbors."

Damkani is using the publicity to address Israelis who visit his Web site, answering several questions raised in the article.

The report followed a series of events that thrust Messianic Judaism into the spotlight. In March, a bomb sent in a holiday gift package by Orthodox Jews was meant to kill David Ortiz, a Messianic Jew who openly shares the gospel.

Soon after, New Testaments were burned in Or Yehuda in an organized campaign by a city official, and in May religious officials opposed the participation of a Messianic teenage girl in the international Bible quiz.

"The Lord is doing something to raise up Yeshua," Damkani said.

"These events, one after the other, no one could put it together but God Himself."

-Nicole Schiavi in Israel

Pro-Life Measures Defeated at Polls

Advocates prepare for uphill battle to end abortion under pro-choice president.



[] Pro-life advocates say they will continue working to end abortion despite defeats on ballot measures in South Dakota, Colorado and California.

“We will continue working at both the state and federal levels in the days ahead to advance the culture of life,” said Charmaine Yoest, president and CEO of Americans United for Life (AUL) in a statement Wednesday.

“These results do not square with an American electorate that is increasingly pro-life,” she added. “The life movement will reassess and regroup for the next election cycle with new ways to communicate, that even the weakest amongst us should be welcomed in life and defended in law.”

In Colorado, 73 percent of voters rejected an amendment that would have defined a fertilized human egg as a person, making abortion the legal equivalent of murder. From the start, the measure faced challenges even from abortion opponents, who said the amendment’s passage wouldn’t end abortion but rather lead to a legal challenge that would result in a reaffirmation of abortion rights.

And for the third time in six years, Proposition 4 failed to pass in California, with 52 percent of voters opposing the measure. Also known as “Sarah’s Law,” the measure would have required parental notification at least 48 hours before performing an abortion on a minor.

Hours after its defeat, supporters were expecting to launch a fourth ballot attempt, the *Los Angeles Times* reported. "The only questions are exactly when, exactly where and exactly how," said Don Sebastiani, a former California lawmaker and one of the measure's leading proponents.

By far the most ambitious measure was in South Dakota, where 55 percent of voters opposed an initiative that would have banned abortion in all cases except those involving rape, incest or the mother's health. Initiated Measure 11 was expected to spark a court battle leading to the Supreme Court.

"Although ultimately unsuccessful, Initiated Measure 11 furthered the debate over the impact of abortion on women, the unborn and our nation," said AUL Senior Counsel Clarke Forsythe. "Given the mounting evidence of the negative impact of abortion, this is a discussion that we must continue to pursue in the days ahead."

In addition to losing on ballots in South Dakota, Colorado and California, the pro-life community suffered defeats on initiatives elsewhere. Voters in Washington approved Initiative 1000 to become the second state after Oregon to legalize physician-assisted suicide while in Michigan, voters approved Proposal 2, an amendment that will allow government funding for research on human embryos produced in fertility clinics.

Pro-life leaders are preparing for an uphill battle as they face what they are calling one of the most pro-choice administrations in recent history. During the campaign, President-elect Barack Obama expressed his support for the Freedom of Choice Act, which would codify *Roe v. Wade*'s protections and guarantee abortion access even if the landmark Supreme Court decision were ever overturned.

"It is the most radical piece of legislation on the pro-choice agenda," said Mathew Staver, president of legal advocacy group Liberty Counsel, which supported the South Dakota ballot measure. "If passed, that would wipe away almost every restriction on abortion, including parental notification ... and

it would create a cause of action for someone who interferes with a person exercising their right [to abortion].

“I think what we have to do is work to stifle that kind of immoral legislation that would come from Barack Obama,” he continued. “That will be a huge [task] over the next four years. On the good side of things, we’ve got 111th Congress which is probably more liberal than the 110th but still not as liberal as Barack Obama.”

Staver said the pro-life movement was outspent by pro-choice advocates during the 2008 election season. Yet he is optimistic about the future of the pro-life cause. “I think the good news for life is that a younger generation is coming up that is more pro-life than older generations,” Staver said.

-Adrienne S. Gaines