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Stories of Women and Families

Dr. Tiller's specialty was caring for those who learned mid-pregnancy that their baby's condition was not compatible with life (about 250-300 families per year). These situations are largely misunderstood. Since his murder, people are telling their stories. We compiled these from public sources.

Rabbi David N. Young: "My wife and I spent a week with Dr. Tiller. She was 34 weeks pregnant, and we discovered that the baby had microcephaly and lissencephaly, the head was too small, and the brain was not developing. The first, second, and third opinions all told us the same thing. Our baby would not live outside the womb... There with three other couples, all going through the same thing, for different reasons. Dr. Tiller and his staff guided us gently and honestly through this incredibly painful process. He personified the value of *pikuach nefesh*, saving a life, putting his own life at risk every day in order to fulfill this value."

Phillip Wood: Amniocentesis revealed a disease of the placenta. Both twins were dying. With his wife in the back of a van, he drove from Missouri to a hospital in Florida for a procedure that might save one of the twins. The Catholic hospital told them neither twin would survive; she was at risk of a ruptured uterus that would make her infertile and could threaten her life. They offered no information as to who could help but said, find an abortion. Next they went to Illinois where doctors turned them away. Finally they found Dr. Tiller.

Mary: "I am disheartened that the news media has covered Dr. Tiller's murder without any insight into the services he provided women who were faced with the heartbreaking choice of terminating due to severe fetal anomalies and where there would be irreparable harm to the mother. I am one of those women. I was very excited to go to my OB for my 26-week ultrasound (beginning of 3rd trimester) but something was very wrong - the baby measured 18 weeks. A high resolution

ultrasound confirmed the diagnosis, the most severe form of osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone disease). My poor little one had broken bones throughout his body and was underdeveloped. I was told if I went through live labor, I would most likely kill him as he passed through the birth canal. My OB arranged for us to fly to Kansas. We felt like fugitives having to leave our own state and could only use a certain travel agent, hotel and cab service because of the "pro-lifers" stalking Dr. Tiller's patients. *We could not have been treated with more dignity, compassion, love, respect and caring by Dr. Tiller and his staff.* As part of the healing process he showed me my angel boy and why he wouldn't have been able to live on this earth. I held my baby and remember his tiny little feet and mop of black hair."

Laura's Mom: "Happily anticipating the birth of my second child, a routine ultrasound turned my world upside down. The radiologist noticed something, a bubble. My doctor said not to worry, come back in two weeks. The next ultrasound revealed a rare defect of the lungs, cystic masses instead of a functioning organ that were crushing the baby's heart. Two more perinatologists confirmed the diagnosis and told me I could wait until nature took

its course with my baby dying in utero or during birth, or end the pregnancy. Dr. Tiller and his staff treated my husband and me with the utmost care and respect. He listened while I cried and held my hand. *I truly feel I received more compassion from him than any of the medical doctors I had seen in the previous weeks. Dr. Tiller will be missed and I want to share my story in honor of his memory.*"

George Tiller MD



"I chose to become an abortion doctor because abortion is the single greatest issue of civil rights and personal freedom for women."

THESE STORIES offer a glimpse inside Dr. Tiller's world; but, he also provided the far more common abortions that occur earlier in pregnancy. In fact, **one in three** American women will have an abortion in her lifetime, because she decides it is the best way to deal with an unplanned pregnancy.

As the nation watches Judge Sonia Sotomayor's confirmation hearings for U.S. Supreme Court, our thoughts turn to the *Roe v Wade* decision of 1973 that legalized abortion nationwide.

Back then, Justice Harry Blackmun, plus six other members of the high Court wanted to *protect doctors' ability to care for their patients.* They determined that viability, the time when the baby can survive outside the woman's body, was the time beyond which abortion could be restricted.

Today the question for the Supreme Court is: Do women give up their civil rights when they become pregnant?

abortion is a blessing

Let's be very clear about this: when a woman finds herself pregnant due to violence and chooses an abortion, it is the violence that is the tragedy; the abortion is a blessing.

When a woman finds that the fetus she is carrying has anomalies incompatible with life, that it will not live and that she requires an abortion often a late-term abortion to protect her life, her health, or her fertility, it is the shattering of her hopes and dreams for that pregnancy that is the tragedy; the abortion is a blessing.

When a woman wants a child but can't afford one because she hasn't the education necessary for a sustainable job, or access to health care, or day care, or adequate food, it is the abysmal priorities of our nation, the lack of social supports, the absence of justice that are the tragedies; the abortion is a blessing.

And when a woman becomes pregnant within a loving, supportive, respectful relationship; has every option open to her; decides she does not wish to bear a child; and has access to a safe, affordable abortion there is not a tragedy in sight only blessing. The ability to enjoy God's good gift of sexuality without compromising one's education, life's work, or ability to put to use God's gifts and call is simply blessing.

—Rev Katherine Ragsdale, President, Episcopal Divinity School

Tributes to Tiller...

BLOG ENTRY: "Crazy Horse. Martin Luther King Jr. Malcolm X. Harvey Milk. George Tiller. Our heroes reflect the best in us. Our strength. Our passion. Our ability to see the heart of the issue and speak to that heart. Our willingness to risk everything to fight for what is right. When those heroes are murdered, it's as though that which is best in us dies with them. George Tiller was to abortion providers, what Harvey Milk was to the gay community or Malcolm X to the black community."

DONORS: Dr. Tiller knew the challenges poor women faced. To overcome financial barriers, he supported the National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF), of which Cedar River Clinics Women In Need (WIN) fund is a part. NNAF established a new Dr. Tiller memorial fund to assist future women like those he cared for. The first donation came from Dr. Tiller: he mailed \$500 the week before the shooting. Thank you to those who sent WIN Fund contributions in Tiller's name.

In memory and honor of Dr. George Tiller, here's my contribution to help ensure abortion access at Cedar River Clinics, now and in the future.

\$30 \$50 \$80 \$100 \$250 \$500 other: \$ _____

Optional designation:

- Women In Need Building Futures capital campaign
 Clinic Security General Support (unrestricted)

Enclosed is my check.

Charge my credit card for amount above. Security Code _____
number _____ Exp _____
name on card _____
signature _____

I pledge \$ _____ monthly quarterly on the ____ day of month.
 Please charge my credit card.
 Send me donation envelopes.

_____ name(s)

_____ address

_____ city state zip

_____ phone

_____ e-mail

_____ comments

Please let _____ know about my donation since they encouraged me to give.