

# Life 'choice' should not be based solely on convenience

## FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



REV. TIMOTHY F. BARCOCK

November 19, 1997 was an historical day. The successful birth of The United States of America's first septuplets drew world-wide attention.

As of this writing, the majority of the seven have gone home, with the remaining two infants hopefully soon to follow. Countless people from every land watched and waited and prayed with the McCaughey family, and the medical teams who assisted them, and celebrated when all were born and survived.

Thousands also have reached out to support the McCaugheys in tangible ways as they undertake the awesome task of providing for this sudden growth in their family, and the care of so many babies. Hundreds of thousands rejoiced at this blessed, and extraordinary, event.

As I write this today, I hope the irony that this event has brought about is apparent. The irony is that, according to the present law of our nation, every one of these children, or any number of them could also have had their life taken from them up to the time they were born.

These children were born in the 28th week of gestation. They could still be the objects of abortion in the 28th week! Current law gave one person, their mother, the right to determine whether they would be born.

Some day, hopefully soon, we must face up to the dilemma advances in medical science have created in our abortion policy and legislation. To take the life of a child who happens to still be in a woman's womb is an exercise of "choice."

To take the life of a child of exactly the same age who now has been removed from the mother's womb, is a criminal act. This makes no sense!

This is particularly evident in the current debate over late term, or partial-birth, abortions. In these cases, the right to "choose" is extended even into the birth process itself.

The current law states that there is a difference between the child's right to life according to whether it is completely born or not. It is considered legal and appropriate to terminate the life of the child even when a portion of the child's body is left, or been removed from the mother's womb, but the child's head has not. What a difference 30 seconds can make. It makes no sense!

Statistics pertaining to abortions, and the reasons for abortions, vary. In most reported statistics, however, the majority of abortions are sought for reasons that have nothing to do with preserving the health of the mother, or with pregnancies that result from forced rape or incest (the most common reasons people support the "right" to abortion).

The majority of abortions are sought so that the lifestyle of the prospective mother will not be affected by the pregnancy, or the later presence of a child. In a very significant number of instances, abortion is seen as simply another form of birth control. The fact that one individual has the right to determine whether another individual lives on the basis of lifestyle or convenience should not be acceptable, or legal. Life should be worth more than that.

Obviously, in my opinion, the law pertaining to the termination of unborn life needs to be changed. More and more people, as they face the implications of medical progress and our ability to treat children in the womb, are coming to the same conclusion.

Hopefully, some day, this will become society's expectation, also. Events such as the birth of the McCaugheys should contribute to such a change.

In the meanwhile, to those (largely unmarried) young women who do become pregnant, please reconsider the possibility of adoption for your baby. Not only does this give the child of your child, it gives the opportunity to love and care for a child to a couple who long to do so.

We are very quickly approaching the point that we can no longer deny that life within the womb is human life. Why we do, we may only speculate, but treating this life as it deserves. This would make sense!

## BELIEFS Values

# Temple Israel marks New Year of Trees

BY RENA FULKA  
SPECIAL WRITER

A festival of nature celebrating the plants and fruits of Israel makes its debut this weekend in Oakland County as the first community-wide Tu b'Shevat Seder honors the Jewish New Year of the Trees.

As they taste the fruits and wines of their spiritual homeland, participants will join in singing hymns of peace like "Lo Yisa Goy" and songs of togetherness like "Hinei Ma Tov" as they usher in the coming of spring.

"The holiday is a celebration of springtime in Israel," explained Rabbi Joshua Bennett of West Bloomfield's Temple Israel, who is co-chairing the event. "Spring comes earlier in Israel. The celebration here is an opportunity to sing songs, eat fruits and be part of the experience. We're hoping people of all affiliations will come."

The Seder, a Jewish festive meal, begins at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 8, at the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield. The donation is \$2. Drop-ins are welcome.

The 90-minute event is sponsored through Teva, an environmentalist program of the Bloomfield Hills-based Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, and by the Southfield-based Agency for Jewish Education. Proceeds benefit environmental programs in Israel.

Tu b'Shevat is an abbreviated week of eating the 15th day of the Hebrew month Shevat, which is when the holiday is observed. Though the ancient tradition has faded somewhat through the centuries, the observance is experiencing a recent resurgence. This year it falls on February 11.

The Tu b'Shevat Seder dates back to the Israeli mystics of the 16th and 17th centuries.



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE B. MCKEE

Tree festival: Rabbi Joshua Bennett of Temple Israel in West Bloomfield is helping the group Teva celebrate the ancient traditional holiday of Tu b'Shevat, the New Year of Trees.

"These Jewish mystics in Israel in a little town called Tzfat began to explore Judaism and the holiday of Tu b'Shevat and saw it as a celebration not only of trees, but also of the plants and fruits of Israel," said Bennett, a Birmingham resident. "So they created a Seder, an exploration of the story of Tu b'Shevat, a celebration of plants and fruits and the natural world of Israel."

The fasting process symbolizes the different fruits of the world, beginning with fruits that are entirely edible, like strawberries

and raisins. Next to be sampled are fruits with an outer shell like nuts and oranges. Then, fruits with a pit like dates and carob. The four cups of wine, moving from white to pink, rose and finally red, are consumed as a symbolic representation of the changing seasons.

The celebration also calls for the planting of parsley for later use during the Passover Seder, which takes place this year in April.

"Everyone will be planting parsley," said Co-chairwoman

Stacey Hoffer of Royal Oak. "It's going to be used to visually get a sense of planting in the earth and soil and also to represent our own environmental commitments that are rooted in the experience."

The impetus for initiating Teva and the Tu b'Shevat Seder grew out of Hoffer's own first love, her faith and the environment, which struck a harmonious chord during a recent trip to her Jewish homeland.

"I first learned about Tu b'Shevat in Israel," said the education

Please see TU b'SHEVAT, B5

# Shir Tikvah fund-raiser is 'RENT to OWN'

The firm of Alan Frank and Associates located in Bloomfield Hills has been chosen as creative designers by Congregation Shir Tikvah for its fund-raiser at the Detroit Theatre on Wednesday, April 28.

Congregation Shir Tikvah is the only Jewish congregation in the Detroit metropolitan

area east of Woodward.

After years of renting space in various religious locations, it is building a permanent home at the corner of Wadsworth and Northfield Parkway in Troy.

RENT to OWN, the campaign designed by Alan Frank and Associates, promotes the benefit premiere performance

of RENT.

Winner of the 1996 Tony for best musical and the Pulitzer Prize, RENT is sold out on Broadway.

Honored for the evening will be Sam and Jean Frankel. They have been instrumental in the development of the business climate in Troy.

The RENT to OWN cam-

paign includes invitations, the program book and an ad campaign.

All proceeds from the Detroit premiere of RENT will go toward Congregation Shir Tikvah's new building.

Call the Shir Tikvah fund-raising line at (248) 706-1703 for tickets, to place an ad and for other information.

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