# Dedicated to the Legacy of Dr. George Tiller who said: TRUST WOMEN

On Sunday morning, May 31, Dr. George Tiller leader was fatally shot and murdered while serving as an usher greeting parishioners at the Lutheran church in Wichita where he was a longtime member. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Jeanne, and four children, all of whom spoke at the Memorial Service attended by Cedar River Clinics staff.

Dr. Tiller was the 8th person and 5th physician murdered for working in abortion care. Over the last 30 years there have been 17 attempted murders, 41 bombings, 175 arsons, and other violent acts. (Our clinic in Everett was the site of three of those bombings, in 1983-84.)

George Tiller did not have to die. Local and state police police, FBI, state government and Federal Marshals should have done more. His death might have been prevented by enforcing existing laws. Twice in the week leading up to the murder, Scott Roeder, Dr. Tiller's assassin, was identified attempting to vandalize a Kansas City clinic. FBI and local police were notified after both incidents yet the culprint was not arrested. Years earlier, Roeder wrote an article for "Prayer and Action News," a newsletter promoting killing abortion care providers as justifiable homicide.

In April 2009, a Dept of Homeland Security report, commissioned by the Bush Administration, warned about possible violence from anti-abortion extremists. In May 2009, someone disabled Dr. Tiller's clinic's security cameras and damaged the roof, allowing rain to seep in damaging the clinic. Demonstrators routinely put crosses KKK-style on public property out front of his clinic in violation of local laws.

Frederick Clarkson, an authority on right-wing extremists, warns: "Beware the 'Lone Nut' theory. These crimes generally involve a number of people, before and after, witting or unwitting. He notes Tiller's assassination occurred on the sixth anniversary of the capture of Eric Rudolph who was convicted of bombing the Atlanta Olympics, a gay bar and two abortion clinics. Rudolph's Birmingham clinic bombing killed off duty police officer Robert Sanderson and maimed Emily Lyons RN.

In 1993, when Shelley Shannon of Oregon shot Dr. Tiller in both arms (he recovered; she is still in federal prison), the FBI discovered an Army of God manual buried in her back yard, evidence of people promoting killing abortion doctors. Appallingly, today the Army of God has a website that celebrates Tiller's murder: "The lives of innocent babies scheduled to be murdered by George Tiller are spared by the action of American hero Scott Roeder."

The federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act makes it a crime to block or damage a reproductive health care facility, or to intimidate, threaten or interfere with providing or receiving care. (Washington State also has a law against interference with health centers.) But under Pres. Bush, both criminal and civil prosecutions dropped dramatically compared to the previous Clinton years. Tiller's clinic was repeatedly vandalized; no one was charged.

To top off this perfect storm, the reckless incitement by right-wing media contributed to this deadly outcome. Bill O'Reilly of Fox devoted 29 segments of his show to demonizing "Tiller the baby killer." The anti-abortion movement created an atmosphere of hatred that allowed Dr. Tiller's death as surely as if they had pulled the trigger themselves.

We must not be silent. Women's civil and human rights are at stake. We must speak out. Murdering abortion providers is terrorism.

This great loss reminds us of the danger in the work we do. Cedar River Clinics has redoubled our security. This added expense comes at an economically challenging time for our nonprofit organization. You can help Cedar River Clinics preserve access to choice by contributing, in Dr. Tiller's name.

We mourn this tragic death and dedicate this newsletter to the paradigm he sought: Kindness, Courtesy, Justice, Love, Respect.

#### **ONE in THREE**

The circumstances quiding important life decisions such as whether or not to have an abortion or a baby, are rarely black and white. There are hundreds, maybe thousands of nuances to consider, including family, community and spiritual, making that decision difficult – or easy – or somewhere in between. Who can better reflect on and evaluate all the circumstances of her life, and include whomever she wants or needs in her decision making process, but the woman herself? Like George, Cedar River Clinics believes we can Trust Women.

-- Beverly Whipple, Executive Director

### Memorial Vigils

Over 50 vigils in 24 states honored Dr. Tiller.

BEVERLY WHIPPLE: In Yakima, Cedar River Clinics Executive Director spoke: "George Tiller was my friend. He was a rare and generous man. I was repeatedly reminded that he was on the hit-list of a brutal mob every time I gave him a hug and hugged a steel bullet proof vest. The gunman must have known George wore that vest every day because he was shot in the head... It is unfathomable that he is gone." The vigil made front page of the Yakima Herald-Republic with a photograph of Beverly. Subsequently, Joan Schrammeck, staff member, and Elisabeth Tutsch, board member, appeared on KYVE public TV.

ROSE: In Seattle, Rose recalled being a scared 17 year old rape survivor filled with pain, shame and confusion "Looking back, I remember a sense of safety, a feeling of acceptance, a sense of respect. Dr. Tiller spent an unimaginable number of hours with me over the week I was there. He was totally willing to take a sobbing 17-year-old and hold her while she cried. I never telt the least bit judged, and I think that's how my own personal healing began."

DR. EILEEN GIBBONS: "In my silence I've unknowingly allowed the anti's to be the only ones heard. I'm making a pledge today. I'm going to talk about abortion even when it's hard. Hate speech promotes violent acts. It does not promote understanding or compassion."

Trust Women.



We must not be silent. We must speak out.



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**SCLINICS** 

and clients.

■ Donations to Clinic Security help ensure the safety of doctors, clinics, staff when we are required to relocate,

Donations to Building Futures will secure our future site in South King County

meals, medications, or reduced fees for abortion.

financial barriers and covering costs of interpreters, motels, transportation, ■ **Donations** to **Women In Need** fund make abortion accessible by overcoming

fulfill their own unique potential and live healthy, whole lives. regarding their bodies, reproduction and sexuality - a world where women can ■ We have a vision of a world where all women freely make their own decisions

■ Your donation supports Cedar River Clinics to achieve reproductive freedom

education, and activism (to ensure access to care). through health services (abortion, birth control, health care), community RENTON 4300 Talbot Rd So #403 Renton, WA 98055 425 255 0471 YAKIMA 106 East "E" Street Yakima, WA 98901 509.575.6422 www.CedarRiverClinics.org info@CedarRiverClinics.org www.FWHC.org 800.572.4223

#### 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 osteogenisis 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 ithe 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

□ \$30 □ \$50 □ \$80 □ \$100 □ \$250 □ \$500 other: \$\_

## 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 heros 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.

Optional designation:  Women In Need	☐ Building Futures capital campaign	name(s)	
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