



Special Edition—November 2022

# ABORTION RECOVERY

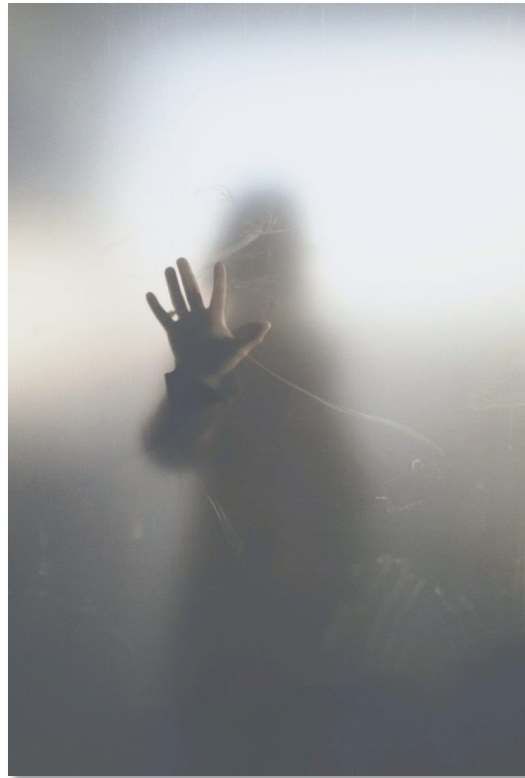


REPENT, THEN, AND TURN TO GOD,  
SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED OUT,  
THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING  
MAY COME FROM THE LORD.

ACTS 3:19

# Out of Darkness Into Light!

by PPL Board Member, Stephanie Johnson and Rev. Stan Johnson



*As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us...*  
**Psalm 103:12**

**S**cott Klusendorf, President of [Life Training Institute](#), points out that **women ages 18-24 are the most vulnerable and most likely to have an abortion**. In my life before knowing Christ, I made two of the worst decisions of my life, when, at age 18 and again at 24, I chose abortion over life.

I was 17 when I met my “first love” - a handsome Pastor’s Son. For my 18th birthday, he gave me an engagement ring, and on that same night I gave him my virginity – and got pregnant! I felt like I had no voice and no choice because no other options besides abortion were given. I was told that the baby was just a blob of tissue anyway...and I believed the lie. The abortion was performed in the hospital – even though it was 1971 and Roe v. Wade wouldn’t make abortion legal until January 1973.

Afterwards, my abortion was never talked about by my family or my boyfriend – it was as if it never happened. It caused our relationship to end, which left me heartbroken and my innocence shattered. I stuffed my feelings of anger, grief, guilt, shame and regret. These deep wounds took my life in an entirely different direction than had I done things God’s way.

As is typical in women who have had an abortion, I was not aware that I was subconsciously trying to replace the baby I had aborted. At age 24, I got pregnant again with my boyfriend of 3 years. He said marriage was not an option and angrily insisted I have an abortion. I was so ashamed to be pregnant again. I couldn’t tell anyone, especially my parents, so I agreed to it. My boyfriend dropped me off at the abortion clinic, paid for it and went to work. I had never felt so alone or so full of despair as that day. That relationship broke up shortly after the abortion as well. Broken and wounded, with no one to share my secret, I stuffed my feelings again.

A few years later, I met a very nice man who I had a lot in common with. We started dating, fell in love and then, unbelievably, I got pregnant again. This time I knew, without a doubt, that I could not have another abortion. He wanted to keep the baby also, so we chose life and marriage. We went on to have 3 beautiful children together. We were married 11 years when, tragically, he died of a massive heart attack. This was a devastating and life-altering event for my children and me.

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I was now a single, self-employed mother, supporting three young children. It was an extremely difficult time, but God provided for us. During this time, I felt the Lord pursuing me as “the hound of heaven” (Psalm 139). Finally, I surrendered, accepting Christ and believing that God truly loved me and forgave all of my past sins. He redeemed me and gave me a brand-new life in Christ! And He can do the same for all women and men who, like me, chose abortion.

Many years later, God answered my prayers and brought me the love of my life, my husband, Stan, a pastor. When we married in 2003 Stan became a “father to the fatherless” for my children – the t3 here on Earth and the 2 in Heaven. We have been blessed to serve at First Presbyterian Church for almost 20 years now. One of the most providential blessings for me was when I met the CEO of our local crisis pregnancy center, Lenna, at an event at our church in 2005. She told me about their Abortion Recovery Assistance ministry and the *Forgiven and Set Free* Bible study that they offered. Although it had been almost 35 years since my first abortion, and even though I knew in my heart that I was forgiven, for some reason I still felt “stained.” Lenna helped me realize that I needed to face my abortion wounds and allow God to *heal* me through His Word.

During the Bible study, I learned so much about who God is, who I was in Christ and about His unconditional love, grace, mercy and forgiveness. With other women who had been where I had been, I could finally grieve the loss of my two children, acknowledge their humanity and honor their lives by naming them. By the end of the course, I was truly healed and set free from the brokenness and wounds I had carried all those years.

Even though statistics tell us that more than 4 in 10 women who have had abortions were churchgoers when they ended their pregnancy... I am here to tell you there is *hope* if you or someone you know has had an abortion. You can experience as I did, the miraculous transforming power of God’s redeeming love, grace and forgiveness through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God wants those wounded by abortion to be healed and set free so they can live the abundant life He created them for! I encourage anyone who has lost a child to abortion to pursue post-abortion healing.

In his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren writes:

***“God never wastes a hurt! In fact, your greatest ministry will most likely come out of your***

***greatest hurt.... The very experience that you have resented or regretted the most in life—the ones you have wanted to hide and forget – are the experiences God wants to use to help others.”***

This is so true! Shortly after my husband was hired at our church, I realized God had placed me in a unique position. I sensed God wanted me to help others and give Him the glory by sharing my testimony at our church. Unfortunately, I gave into the fear of being judged and gossiped about. This fear is why women who’ve had an abortion in their past don’t feel that the church is a “safe place,” and what keeps them from pursuing healing and sharing their secret with a pastor. They view abortion as the “unforgiveable sin” – and that’s a lie from the pit of Hell! Many nights, my husband listened to me agonizing over why I couldn’t find the courage to obey God’s calling! But, as we know, God’s timing is ALWAYS perfect!

A few years ago, our Senior Pastor included the topic of abortion in his sermon. He showed a powerful video to our congregation called “[The Sound of Abortion.](#)” This was the moment the Holy Spirit convicted me and said, “NOW is the time!” This began the journey of God using my “greatest hurt and turning it into my greatest ministry” and calling.

In 2017 I shared my testimony at the annual fundraising banquet for Piedmont Women’s Center. What a huge mountain-top experience that was! Afterwards though, I felt a huge burden, so I prayed “God, where are you calling me now?” It soon became evident that God was at work when Lisa Van Riper - church member, elder and President of SC Citizens for Life – asked me to help start a pro-life ministry at our church. Her request confirmed that this was where God was calling me to serve. As we shared our vision with other church members, the Holy Spirit moved them to support us and join our efforts. In July 2017, the First Presbyterian Church Light and Life Ministry was formed, and we became a local chapter of [Presbyterians Protecting Life](#). Our mission statement is to speak truth, change hearts and save lives. Our vision is to bring the subject of abortion and the sanctity of human life “out of the darkness and into the light.” Matthew 5:14 says,

***You are the light of the world.  
A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”***

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# Perspective from Rev. Stan Johnson, Pastoral Liaison to the FPC Light & Life Ministry

**A**s a pastor, I see that the abortion issue is not only out there in the world, but in the church as well. Stephanie has told me that she and other women (and men) do not perceive the church as a safe place to seek help for their abortion wounds. This needs to change and NOW is the time! For this to happen, we must break the silence that surrounds abortion and bring this dark secret out into the light. *How do we do that?*

1. **Abortion is not just a woman's issue** – it affects us all – including the Church. We need to make our churches safe places where women, men and families wounded by abortion can go to feel loved, not judged - and given resources to help them.
2. **Pastors and lay leaders** – you're not alone in this daunting task! **PPL** wants to partner with you! We can provide resources and support to you and pro-life advocates in your church on how to reach out to those wounded and broken by the devastating effects of abortion. **PPL** can help your church create a **Life Team** ministry to help Pastors and congregations champion life. With **Life Teams**, the church can be on the frontline of life issues from fertilization to natural death, offering grace, compassion, tangible help, truth and protection. **Learn about Life Team ministry [here](#).**
3. **The battle for LIFE is not easy** - this is front-line Kingdom work. It is a spiritual battle between good and evil, lightness and darkness - literally a battle between LIFE and DEATH! ***"So let us not become tired of doing good, for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest."*** Galatians 6:9
4. **PRAY!** Pray for strength and guidance from the Holy Spirit, that you will have the courage to speak up for **LIFE** within your church and circles of influence. We all need to be ambassadors for Christ in winning the battle for lives and souls! ***"Be strong & courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them. For it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."*** Deut. 31:6

**To God be the Glory!**

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Stephanie Johnson and her husband, Rev. Stan Johnson, serve at First Presbyterian Church in Greenville, SC. Stephanie is the Outreach Leader of the Light and Life Ministry and Stan is the Associate Pastor of Visitation and Prayer. They have 6 adult children, 9 grandchildren and 3 rescue dogs.

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## Post Abortion Healing Resources:

***Forgiven and Set Free:** A Post-Abortion Bible Study for Women and **Healing a Father's Heart:** A Post-Abortion Bible Study for Men, both by Linda Cochrane, available at [www.ChristianBook.com](http://www.ChristianBook.com). The accompanying *Facilitating Biblical Healing Leaders Guide* is available as a digital download at [www.coastlinewomenscenter.org](http://www.coastlinewomenscenter.org)*

***Support After Abortion:** Healing, help and recovery for abortion regret and grief, [www.supportafterabortion.com](http://www.supportafterabortion.com)*

***VIALE:** 'Viable' is a one-act play about a woman who suffered from decades of post-abortion sorrow, shame, and self-condemnation until she encountered the merciful love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ – in a most unexpected and unusual way! [www.ChristianCreativeMedia.org](http://www.ChristianCreativeMedia.org)*

**Learn more about the FPC Light & Life Ministry at [www.firstpresgreenville.org/care/light-and-life](http://www.firstpresgreenville.org/care/light-and-life), or email Stephanie at [fpclightandlife@gmail.com](mailto:fpclightandlife@gmail.com)**



## Women Over 60 are Most in Need of Abortion Recovery Ministry

By PPL Executive Director, Deborah Hollifield

*Repent, then, and turn to God, that your sins may be wiped out and that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Acts 3:19*

**W**omen who were aged 18-30 in 1973 are now between the ages of 67 and 79. In 1973, we were the first ones lied to about how a fetus was “just a clump of cells.” We were the first ones to be told that sexual promiscuity was actually freedom and now that abortion was legal and readily available, there would be no consequences.

We would be able to have an affair, keep our secrets, stay in school, have a career and still wear white in our weddings, because who would know otherwise? Some of us marched for abortion or volunteered for Planned Parenthood booths on our college campuses. Others cheerfully counseled their pregnant friends that their problem could be easily – and affordably – eliminated. Some of these women had multiple abortions, until abortion became a reliable form of birth control, replacing the Pill and its side effects and the inconvenience of a condom. Still, some knew that their abortion – or at least the extramarital sex that led to pregnancy – was morally wrong, and so kept it to themselves, keeping it a secret from parents, close friends and often, their husbands.

But now, 49 years later, these same women are starting to look back on their abortions and wondering if their lifetimes of simmering emotional turmoil, depression and self-medication had its roots in that long-ago act. Some have suffered from breast cancer and have read about the link

between abortion and increased rates of breast cancer. They’ve seen the photos of the preborn in the womb. They know about prenatal surgery. They’ve had their own children later on, and stayed in school and had careers. They’ve seen their grandchildren’s 3D ultrasounds.

**They may have kept their abortions a major secret from their husbands**

**How would he react if he learned about it all these years later?** Would her betrayal lead him to abandon her in their golden years? Some of these women might be Christians, active in the same church for decades, respected by their pastors and friends. How could they find the courage to confess, and if they did, what would their reception be? Shock? Judgement? Ostracism? And as they near the end of their

earthly lives, some wonder how they will face Jesus.

**Abortion is not just “a young woman’s problem.”**

Graying congregations may be supporting a pregnancy care center, but not realizing that hurting women are in their midst. Young congregations, especially those led by young male pastors, have no idea that the grandparents among them carry the scars of a sexual past.

**How can these women be reached and helped to receive compassion without judgement and hear about and accept**



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**the forgiveness of Christ, unless churches provide safe opportunities for confession, companionship, study and healing?** Churches can partner with a local pregnancy care center and offer confidential, off-campus retreats for post-abortive women. A date is scheduled, an announcement is published, and a telephone number is provided for women to call and receive information about the location. The assurance of confidentiality is critical for these older women – some may welcome the opportunity to testify later in public, but others – after a lifetime of secrecy – may not find the courage.

Finally, one compelling program that can open the doors to conversation among older post-abortive women is the one-act play, [Viable](#). Written by Presbyterian Robert John Hoover, a member of First, Greenville, SC, this play is performed by a touring company and would be a great centerpiece for a Sanctity of Human Life week

event or a fundraiser for a pregnancy care center. The play focuses on the anger of an older post-abortive woman who comes to terms with her past, her aborted daughter, her husband and her Savior. Seeing the possibility of a positive result play out might encourage reluctant women to address their own issues.

There are a lot of women – perhaps one in four – who have experienced abortion in their lifetime. At one event I was approached by an 80 year old woman who told me she'd had *five* pre-Roe abortions at her husband's insistence. We should not turn away from them, when we have the compassion of Christ ready and available to share.



## PPL'S ABORTION RECOVERY RESOURCES

PPL's web page has resources to help women and men heal from abortion-related emotional trauma. There are links to healing retreats and book studies for both men and women. **Browse our recovery resources at [www.ppl.org/blog/tags/abortion-recovery](http://www.ppl.org/blog/tags/abortion-recovery) and our men's related resources at [www.ppl.org/mens-resources](http://www.ppl.org/mens-resources)**



## MEET PPL BOARD MEMBER, Rev. Justin L. Marple

**J**ustin and his wife, Shelby, are licensed foster parents with Niagara County in western New York. Their children include Sahara, Josiah, Arwen, Chloe, and Lilly. He is a graduate of Gettysburg College, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Westminster Theological Seminary, near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Baltimore on October 9th, 2005, at Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland. And he has served as the called and installed Pastor of Peter Creek and Shepard Memorial Presbyterian Churches in eastern Kentucky and Niagara Presbyterian Church in western New York, and recently accepted a call to be the Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Chittenango, New York, in the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse. In Western New York, Rev. Marple was twice elected as a teaching elder commissioner to the General Assembly of the PC (USA) and served as the moderator of the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. He has served on the Board of Directors of PPL since 2008 and PPL's Executive Committee since 2012.

**Read more about our other board members at [www.ppl.org/board](http://www.ppl.org/board)**



