

## Let Children Live Their Best Life

by Barbara T. Baylor  
Policy Advocate for Health and Wholeness Issues

Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2014, was the 41st anniversary of Roe vs. Wade marking the 1973 Supreme Court ruling that struck down anti-abortion laws. On this day, I witnessed my first pro-life march as thousands passed my window shouting chants and holding brightly crafted banners. As they passed by I was able to read a few of the signs: “Support the Principles of Life”, “Defend Life,” “Respect Life,” and “The Birth of a Single Child Can Change the World.” As I watched this march I could not help but think about one of the signs – “Support the Principles of Life.” I felt myself wondering what would happen if the dialogue were broadened to include how we all could support life after birth to help our children really live life and have it more abundantly. Maybe then we could really support the principles of life that truly reflect wholeness.

According to a UNICEF annual report on the State of the World’s Children, more than 1 billion children grow up hungry and unhealthy. The UNICEF report stated “*A failure by governments around the world to live up to standards outlined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child caused permanent damage to children and blocked progress toward human rights and economic advancement.*” Today 16.1 million children in America, more than 1 in 5, are poor, the majority living in working families. Over 7 million children are uninsured, and more than 500,000 pregnant women are uninsured and lack timely access to essential health services. More than 8 of every 10 Black and Hispanic fourth graders and almost 6 out of every 10 White fourth graders in our public schools cannot read at grade level. States spend about three times as much money per prisoner as per public school pupil, guaranteeing a pipeline to prison that leads to marginalized lives, imprisonment and often premature death.

More than 750,000 children each year in America are abused or neglected, one every 47 seconds. Congress failed to think about how children would live

their lives when a series of automatic spending cuts known as sequestration were passed last year. These cuts affect funding for many programs for children – Head Start, special education, access to health care and services for pregnant women, and nutrition programs to name a few. Congress recently passed legislation that restores some funding to these programs sorely needed for our children to be healthy in mind, body and spirit and to lead productive lives as adults. However, with these budget restorations there is still reason to stay focused and demand that Congress be very intentional in its decisions on how monies will be allocated and appropriated to protect children and help them live.

Dr. Scott Shannon says it all: “When we find wholeness, we enjoy inner peace, true health, and spiritual growth.” This is what I wish for all our children. Not just to be conceived, but to be born, to be whole and to LIVE their best life.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Barbara T. Baylor is a Policy Advocate for Health and Wholeness Issues for the United Church of Christ’s Justice and Witness Ministries.*

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