



**An Orthodox Christian Initiative**

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# God Loves Babies

*Fr. Andrew Harmon, St. Matthew Orthodox Church*

Abortion is not a modern invention. It, and infanticide (the killing of a baby after birth), were very common in the ancient pagan societies. Life was seen by many as cheap and expendable. And then change came beginning in the 300's A.D. Society's beliefs about abortion and infanticide started changing. And the laws were changed, too. Both abortion and infanticide were outlawed. Sure, some still took place — not everyone obeys the law! But the numbers went down. Many, many more babies got a chance at life.

So who was responsible for this change, for outlawing abortion and infanticide about 1700 years ago? We were. By saying "We were", I obviously don't mean us literally — we weren't around! By "we", I mean our Orthodox Church. Our Church taught against all that killing, struggled against it, and once our Church brought the Roman Empire to Christ, the laws were changed. Thank God for our spiritual ancestors!

But now abortion is back bigger than ever before. And even infanticide is getting more accepted — witness the horrible sight of standing ovations in some state legislatures as they recently legalized it in some circumstances.

Yes, society has changed and laws have changed. But God's law and truth haven't changed. So our beliefs are still the same today as they were back 1700 years ago.

Because our beliefs are strong and clear, this leads to several obligations for Orthodox believers —

First — We should strongly uphold our beliefs and make sure all of our people are aware of them. And make sure the world knows what we believe. That includes doing all we can to change the laws, just as our Church successfully did 1700 years ago.

Second — We need to help women in tough pregnancy situations to choose life instead of death. We need to give them moral support, friendship, financial help.

Third — We need to help the children after birth as well ... food, clothing, money. Whatever is needed. And we should strive to have adoption seen as a good option.

Fourth — We need to help and support women who have had abortions, stressing to them that there is forgiveness from God. As St. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote — "Add up your sins and they are smaller than God's mercy." God forgives ... and so we must also forgive. And we as parishes, and through ZOE for Life!, must do all we can to help women who have had abortions realize they can find forgiveness from God and peace and joy in that forgiveness.

Sometimes it seems the world is getting darker and darker. So we, followers of the light of the world, Jesus Christ, must shine more brightly. Like a candle in a dark room, drawing people to the light of God.

God used our Orthodox Church long ago to change the world concerning abortion and infanticide. But things don't stay the same ... and now the world needs changing all over again! May God help us to be the world changers one more time. And to save the babies.



# ZOE for Life! Chapter Start-ups.

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## Atlanta Chapter

My name is Tara Freeman and I reside in Cummings, GA. I attend St. James Antiochian Orthodox Mission in Buford, GA. I have felt strongly about serving in the pro life community for a long time but was unable to do much actively because of homeschooling my children. I was perfectly fine with that, because I felt that being pro life also meant nurturing our own children that God has blessed us with. Now that my kids are a bit older, I am able to do more actively and am very excited about the prospect of helping women facing difficult decisions.

I, along with some other women from my church, recently attended the Pro Life Women's Conference in New Orleans. We were very moved by all the work so many people do to help the unborn as well as their mothers. I knew of only one Orthodox pregnancy center, and that was ZOE for Life! I reached out and was met with such kindness and encouragement and feel that becoming a Chapter here around the Atlanta area would be a huge blessing to our community. We have many Orthodox Churches around Atlanta, which I plan to reach out to for prayers and support.

Please pray over our efforts, and if you are in the area, join us as we embark on this journey! You can contact me at 706-266-4448.

## Binghamton Chapter



An enthusiastic group of Orthodox clergy and lay people met on Tuesday, June 4, 2019, to discuss founding a ZOE for Life! branch in the Binghamton, NY, area. The attendees, including Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky, Marilyn Brady, Alexandra Zona, Fr. Jim Dutko, Fr. Jason Kappanadze, Matushka Marge Kappanadze, and Paul Komatinsky,

met at Dormition of the Virgin Mary Church, and enjoyed a potluck meal while they discussed the feasibility of a ZOE for Life! chapter.

The group decided to move ahead with forming a branch that they will call ZOE for Life! Southern Tier (Upstate New York's counties that extend from east to west along the Pennsylvania border). They concluded that there is a crucial need for teaching about life issues among Orthodox and non-Orthodox people, and hope to find opportunities to educate people of all ages. First steps will include scheduling presentations at area parishes to raise awareness and expand their membership, and creating a list of area organizations, resources, and professionals that could serve people faced with crisis pregnancies.

ZOE for Life! Southern Tier is making contact with crisis pregnancy organizations in their area, and looking forward to a visit from Paula Kappos and Kathy Kovalak, and to scheduling events such as baby showers in the fall. For more information, contact Matushka Marge at [mkappanadze@gmail.com](mailto:mkappanadze@gmail.com).

## Pittsburgh Chapter

During several meetings of the Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh, the desire was expressed to create an Orthodox ministry which would provide assistance to women who are pregnant and to support and encourage them to continue to nurture their unborn child. To explore the establishment of such a ministry in the Greater Pittsburgh area, a group of Orthodox clergy and laity visited the ZOE House in Parma, Ohio. The purpose of the visit was to gain a more complete understanding of the ministry that the staff of ZOE House have been engaged in for over 20 years. The exploratory committee was graced with a very informative and inspiring visit, and our hosts offered much appreciated insight into the various ministries offered by ZOE for Life!. We were given a tour of the various areas of the facility which gave us a "first hand" perspective of what is needed to facilitate the work of ZOE.

During our visit, the staff and volunteers of ZOE for Life! were invited to make a presentation of their vision and work at an informational meeting hosted by St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Bridgeville, PA. This meeting took place on Saturday, May 11, 2019. During



the presentation, they shared their personal witness to the outstanding work of ZOE for Life! and offered their insights into the holy ministry of Our Lord in protecting the life of mother and child. Following the presentations and lunch, participants gathered in groups to discuss the various aspects of this ministry and shared ideas for the establishment of a ministry in the Pittsburgh area. Thankfully a group of clergy and laity have offered their time and God-given talents to make this ministry a reality. Our initial goal is to bring an awareness of the need of this type of ministry to the churches in the Greater Pittsburgh area and to begin an informational campaign in and through a variety of venues.

We respectfully request that you keep everyone at ZOE for Life! in the greater Cleveland area, its various chapters, as well as the upcoming Pittsburgh chapter, in your prayers. If your heart is urging you to get involved in the Pittsburgh Chapter, please call me at 412-260-5447. I'll look forward to hearing from you.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to the volunteers for their prayerful support and hospitality. In Christ Jesus,

Fr. Jason DelVitto, Ph.D., President of the Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh, Pastor St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church  
3230 Washington Pike, Bridgeville, PA 15017

## **Southeastern Michigan Chapter**

A group of women from the Ann Arbor, Michigan area have formed an official board for ZOE for Life!

Southeastern Michigan Chapter! During 2018, a steering committee—comprised of members of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church—have been meeting at St. Nicholas in Ann Arbor to work towards creating a board, creating by-laws, and discussing the collaboration with St. Vladimir's next door in Dexter, Michigan. The board is currently working to set up our chapter so that we can begin our outreach work in 2019. It has been a long journey, and we still have a long way to go! Both churches are excited to work with each other for the same philanthropic goal, and hopefully we can roll out our presence to all the area churches in Southeastern Michigan soon.

What started off as a small aspiration from our Parish Priests has turned into an official existing chapter! St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church had been working with the Livonia ZOE for Life! Chapter before it dissolved. The Livonia Chapter had decided to fold, and offered valuable information to help start our own ZOE for Life! Chapter. Father Nick Kotsis at St. Nicholas Kotsis and Father Gregory Joyce at St. Vladimir together discussed a future collaboration for a ZOE for Life! chapter. From there a group of women from both St. Nicholas and St. Vladimir churches met as a steering committee, put together an informational retreat, and eventually formed the board. St. Vladimir has the ability to offer storage space for storing baby clothing and layette items that were donated from the Livonia Chapter. St. Nicholas has the ability to offer meeting space. Together our churches have formed an organization, as well as a new bond between Orthodox churches, and new friendships!

Our chapter is currently working towards functional operations in 2019, being realistic in the services we can offer with our resources. We have been blessed to acquire social workers, medical professionals, business professionals, and women of action and passion. We plan to launch an informative website and a ZOE for Life! hotline number and text service in 2019. We will work towards outlining services that we can provide, or be a conduit to area services that can be useful to a mother in need. We will be looking for patrons to join our efforts and will share more information at our first annual patron meeting in the first quarter of 2019. Patrons are not exclusive to our two parishes. While our first goal is to work on our internal structure, in order for ZOE for Life! Southeastern Michigan to be a sustainable



## ZOE for Life! Chapter Start-ups. *cont.*

organization, we will need to grow in numbers and spread out our arms to hold hands, from church to church, encompassing all of our southeastern Orthodox brothers and sisters in Christ.

We have learned many lessons from the process of creating our ZOE for Life! chapter. We have learned to move slowly and think things through. We have learned to ask, listen, and research all that we can. We have been blessed to receive both solicited and unsolicited advice from our mentors. We have learned that walking instead of running results in realistic expectations. We have learned that we can't do it all, but if everyone does a little, we are left holding an enormous gift that is light as a feather. We hope someday we will be there to help

when you want to open a chapter, but in the meantime we seek your support. Please keep an eye out for our future growth, and hopefully our hand will reach your parish soon.

ZOE for Life!Southeastern Michigan is accepting monetary donations. Please make your checks payable to ZOE for Life! and mail to:

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church c/o ZOE for Life!  
3109 Scio Church Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103

If you would like more information, contact Erica Foster via email at [elpetha@gmail.com](mailto:elpetha@gmail.com)

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## ZOE for Life! 2019 Parish Life Conference *San Diego, CA*

From July 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup>, ZOE for Life! was well represented in beautiful San Diego at the Antiochian Orthodox Church's Parish Life Conference (PLC) of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West. Promoting ZOE for Life!'s ministry were George Chala, Sr. and Lorinda Fortuin. There were over 1,000 attendees from parishes in Alaska all the way down to Arizona. Lorinda and George were able to hand out many fliers and share the mission of ZOE for Life!

PLC attendees expressed appreciation that there is an Orthodox Christian ministry meeting the needs of women facing crisis pregnancies. George is a member of St. Mark's Parish in Irvine and has been a long time volunteer and supporter of ZOE for Life! Lorinda is a member of St. Anthony the Great, which was the host parish of this year's PLC. She has a great passion for pro-life work and is blessed to lead her parish's Orthodox Christians for Life ministry and volunteer at Fallbrook's Pregnancy Resource Center in North County San Diego as a Mommy Mentor in the Earn While You Learn Program. Her desire is to be part of starting a ZOE for Life! Chapter in the San Diego area. Please pray for guidance, wisdom and support to make this a reality.

The PLC of the West had a great Fourth of July celebration, commemorating the freedoms we hold dear

We look forward to the day when our pre-born brothers and sisters will also be afforded the same rights and privileges that we all are fortunate enough to enjoy.

Contact Lorinda to get involved and make what can be the crucial difference, at [lorindafortuin@gmail.com](mailto:lorindafortuin@gmail.com).



*ZOE for Life! display table at Parish Life Conference.*

# Let Light Shine in the Darkness

When we are in love with someone, do we think of them only once a week, or on special occasions, or are they always on our mind, never far from our thoughts? Do we spend time wondering what we can do for them, how we can please them or do something to make them happy?

How do we react when we see them? Do we rush to greet them with a joy that fills our heart, with an eager embrace, perhaps a kiss?

Do we truly love the Lord? How do we act when we see Christ in an icon? Are we happy, do we rejoice to greet Him? How often do we think of Him in a day? In a week? His Love?

He bestowed the Holy Spirit upon each of us at our baptism, as He taught: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* Matthew 28:19 From that instant onward, for the rest of our lives, we bear that part of God in our hearts and in our minds. He asks for a return of His Love - that portion of His Holy Spirit that He granted us at our baptism, he longs have returned to Him! God created this intimacy with us, gave us this piece of Him, so that our yearning to be close to Him, may in some small way reflect His longing to be close to us. That's right, reader, He longs to be close to you!

How can we strengthen our relationship with God? How can we become more intimate with Him?

Jesus chastised the Pharisees for their 'long prayers' for

all to see, (Matt 6:5); and the Pharisee who 'prayed' congratulating himself for not being like the tax collector, (Luke 18: 9-14). He wants so much more from His children than the 'show' of prayer.

Our prayers are the power He has granted us to be heard by Him. They are the most powerful thing we can do for ourselves, for those we love, and for the world around us. When tragedy strikes, we ask, "What can we do?" Our prayers to our Father are an irresistible call to the very throne of God for His Mercy, when we pray with our whole selves.

Don't be deceived into thinking that He is ever 'too busy' to be there for us, or that our problems are 'too insignificant' to bother Him with. Never think that He has too many other important things to do than to listen to us, to comfort and guide us. That reduces His Divine capacity to the limit of human thought.

Our prayers reach Him when we open our hearts to Him; when we share our pains and sufferings with Him; when we offer our secret hopes and dreams to Him. They reach Him when we pray from our hearts, with our entire selves. He hears us when we pray as if we were trying to prevent the crucifixion of His Christ!

The days we are living in are grave indeed. Isaiah foretold these times in 5:20, and Timothy warns of these days in his second epistle; 3:1-4. Our prayers are our best defense against the evils and darkness that surround us. Through our intimate and insistent prayers to Him, we can cut through the darkness that enshrouds the world, and usher in a return of His Light!





## Join Our Bottles for Babies Campaign

*We want to send you a baby bottle, and ask you to fill it with loose change. What could be simpler? Simply empty your change into the bottle every day. When it is full, take it to the bank and send the cash to ZOE. Reuse and repeat! Contact at [cgbod@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cgbod@sbcglobal.net).*



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## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*"ZOE for Life! is a Christian ministry which affirms the value of all life by helping women in a confidential manner during and after crisis pregnancies. We are committed to providing care, support and education to empower women to make decisions everyone can live with."*

## Lifting the Veil of Darkness

In order to reach women in what so often is their darkest hour, ZOE for Life! offers ZOE Women's Center to bridge the gap between unbridled panic and calm. As an oasis of peace in a hurricane of emotions, it will avail women who come to us with reliable medical information provided in a loving and confidential environment with no agenda to financially gain from this interaction. Will we cover ZOE Women's Center with the love of Christ through daily prayer to the One Who heals? Yes. Will we share His Love with every client who walks through our door? Yes. Will we ever refer a client for abortion? No.

At ZOE Women's Center, we seek to reach out to women with His Divine Love in our hands. It is a fearsome task, however, and specialized training and resources are needed. New programming is being developed to enable us to network expectant parents with others walking a similar path; for healing from the myriad kinds of neglect and abuse women may have suffered, as well as abortions; for healing sexual brokenness that has affected women for so many years; for good parenting skills and nutrition for families on a limited income. There is so much work to be done, but by initiating each conversation with His Love, His Prayers, and His Mercy, nothing is impossible.

People of every background live under the heavy veil of darkness that surrounds us. The evil one uses every conceivable medium to convince the world that he doesn't exist; that everything is acceptable. The Lord has taught us otherwise. The temptations of this life obscure the truth. We become blind to the reality of how very far we are from God. Added to this, for families living in poverty or on its edge, there are mountains of disappointment, brokenness and loneliness they deal with every day. These conditions can often bring women to seek love outside of marriage. Pregnancies occurring in these circumstances can be alienating, devastating and are always life altering, whichever way they turn.



By partnering with us, you have the opportunity to join in this life affirming and saving ministry. In offering the gifts He has given you, we will work together to glorify Our Father. What better purpose for the gifts He has granted us?