

# Network reaffirms call for ‘culture of life’

October 27, 2006

Posted: 10/27/06

## Network reaffirms call for ‘culture of life’

**By Adelle Banks**

*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A network of evangelical and Catholic leaders, reaffirming its call to build up a “culture of life,” has issued a new statement that links the biblical principle of loving one’s neighbor to care for the unborn, the frail and the dying.

“The direct and intentional taking of innocent human life in abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide and embryonic research is rightly understood as murder,” declares the new statement, [“That They May Have Life” from Evangelicals and Catholics Together](#).

Despite the strong language, the group rejected charges that they want to establish a “theocracy” or impose their convictions on other Americans.

The statement was published in the October issue of the Catholic magazine *First Things* and announced in this month’s issue of the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*.

Richard John Neuhaus, editor-in-chief of *First Things*, said there was “intense” debate over whether to describe abortion as “murder.”

“But we tried to be very precise, namely that any direct and deliberate taking of innocent human life is in ordinary language—and certainly in the language of the Western moral tradition—properly called murder,” he said.

The statement marks the sixth time that evangelical and Catholic leaders in the network have issued a joint document. It comes at a time when conservative Protestants and Catholics have overcome theological differences in an effort to work together on causes of mutual concern, such as opposition to same-sex marriage and assisted suicide.

Previous statements have addressed abortion, pornography and the need for “marginal Christians” to be more active in church. The newest document seeks to find room for civil discussion in the midst of what many call an ongoing “culture war.”

*Christianity Today* Editor David Neff, who wrote an essay on the statement in the October issue of his magazine, said in an interview that he welcomes the latest document from the network.

“I like the emphasis on the tone, on the way in which to address polarization in our society on this while holding firm to a strong, certain commitment to what we see as an essential of Christian ethics,” Neff said.

Evangelical signers include Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship; Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.; and Thomas Oden, professor emeritus of Drew University in New Jersey.

Additional evangelical endorsers included National Association of Evangelicals President Ted Haggard, author and megachurch pastor Rick Warren and Family Research Council President Tony Perkins.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention ( SBC ) and around the world.