



Above: A happy Mum who chose life at a Bedford Square Vigil. Inset: Mum and baby back home with Dad.

ABORTION SERVICE **CLOSES**

BPAS Ends Abortions in Bedford Square

BPAS recently confirmed that its centre in Bedford Square will no longer perform abortions (though the centre itself will remain open for vasectomies and consultations). **Lucy Underwood**, who helped man the Saturday vigil there for many years gives her memories of the vigil and her reactions to the news.

When the news reached me through the Catholic pro-life grapevine that a certain abortion centre in Bloomsbury was closing down, a strange mixture of thoughts was awakened. It's a little while since I was a regular participant at the Bedford Square prayer vigil (I've been out of the country and the other end of the country for the best part of a year, and before that I was finishing a

The Pro-Life Presence in Bedford Square

- Inspired by Monsignor Reilly and the Helpers of God's Precious Infants (www.hgpi.co.uk) pro-lifers started a Saturday vigil at Bedford Square at least as far back as the late 1990's.
- In 2005 Good Counsel held a nine day novena of prayer at Bedford Square. Bishop Longley attended on behalf of Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor. 21 priests attended the vigil. Fr George Roth FMI gave Benediction in front of BPAS on the final Sunday.
- In 2011, "40 Days for Life" held a Vigil lasting 40 Days in Bedford Square and continued to do so twice a year up to Lent 2013. The Guardian and other pro-abortion groups made Bedford Square a landmark in the abortion debate.
- Also in 2011 Daniel Blackman organised two vigils at Bedford Square involving an Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
- Good Counsel organised a weekday vigil which was run by the Holy Family Sisters of the Needy.
- In 2012 Bishop Alan Hopes attended the "40 Days for Life" vigil and led the prayers to the background of the anti-life and anti-catholic chants of 300 protestors.
- Also in 2012 The Catholic GK Chesterton society started a campaign of prayer for the closure of one UK abortion "clinic".
- June 2013 following the Lenten "40 Days for Life" vigil BPAS announces that it will no longer provide abortions in Bedford Square.

doctorate...). So the news was like a voice out of my own past, reminding me of that sometimes chilly, sometimes sweltering, sometimes objectively beautiful corner of London. Of buses and trains taken to get there. Of the people we met (everything from angry escorts of pregnant women to tourists looking for the British Museum). Of the mothers who turned around, and the two humbling, wonderful occasions when I met children

De Profundis

Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord; Lord hear my voice. Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it? For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness, and by reason of Thy law, I have waited for Thee, O Lord. My soul has relied on His word, my soul hath hoped in the Lord. From the morning watch even until night, let Israel hope in the Lord. Because with the Lord there is mercy; and with Him plentiful redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

who had once been headed for BPAS' clinical waste bins. Of the generous people with whom I prayed the vigil; and of the ever-present, bitter tragedy of the children whose lives were taken away behind those doors.

I remember occasions when, walking doggedly up Tottenham Court Road *far* too early on a Saturday morning, Jennifer and I would fantasize... 'Maybe it won't be there. Maybe we'll get there and the abortion "clinic" just *won't be there anymore*. Maybe then we could go to the British Museum instead!' But it always was. Until now.

The closure of one abortion service – 'amalgamating' with their new branch in Stratford, according to BPAS – does not mean the end of abortion, or even (that we know of) fewer abortions. Nor does it bring back to life the children who died at 26 Bedford Square, nor back to happiness the mothers who now mourn them. But that abortions will no longer take place on this site is a source of relief, and joy, and – whatever the human reasons for the closure/amalgamation – it is a blessing from God.

Looking back, I think the main thing which strikes me is the number of different people whose prayers and sacrifices at different times have (I am sure) contributed to this result. I remember the three students who were running the vigil when I first went; the Italian engineering student Tim; the dedicated Marie; the young father who attended for about two years and returned years later to pray for the half-hours he had spare while his son was in First Communion class round the corner; Jennifer, who was battling personal hardship of a sort most of us never have to face and *still* responded to the physical and emotional challenge of the pro-life vigil for the sake of saving others; Carol, praying next to me in the snow after night shifts at work; Christine, a pavement counsellor of astounding empathy, who has been known to wait in Bedford Square until 4pm for a mother she'd been talking to emerge from BPAS consultation. When, after a

time away, I returned to the vigil on a fortnightly basis, I found that a young Australian, another young man and his mother had taken up the torch. That was Saturdays; meanwhile, another vigil was started on Tuesday and Wednesdays through the Good Counsel Network, who for the last couple of years have been maintaining (through the efforts of their legendary interns) prayer vigils at two abortion centres.

None of these people, myself included, attended absolutely solidly for thirteen years. People's circumstances change, they move away, the way in which God gives grace to each of us and what he calls us to also changes. But through the co-operation of all of us, each a little bit for a little while, the grace of God works. And will continue to work.

Finally, I think of the lost lives. At the end of every vigil, we used to pray Psalm 130, the *De Profundis*, the prayer for the dead, for these our brothers and sisters who have no grave, no funeral, no death certificate. Now the killing at this particular place seems to be over, it is time not only to give thanks for lives saved and prayers granted, to remember in prayer in a special way those who died at Bedford Square, and those who still grieve for them.

Lucy is a former Chastity Speaker and Intern with Good Counsel.

[Read more about Bedford Square on our blog, MariaStopsAbortion.blogspot.com](http://MariaStopsAbortion.blogspot.com)

Tales From the Trenches

Mother Chooses Life & Father Receives the Grace to Take on His Responsibilities.

I met Alice alone and panic-stricken outside an abortion centre. Alice was in a very difficult situation – her husband no longer lived with her and their three children and did not support her, her family lived in a different country and couldn't help, and during her last pregnancy she had spent three months in hospital with chronic morning sickness. She was terrified that if she got so ill again no-one would be there to look after her three young children. Her husband had dropped her off to have the abortion but had then left her alone. When I showed her the model of the developmental stage of her baby, she had to grab the railings to stop herself from falling over. She tried to go into the centre but the door wouldn't open. She turned and said "Maybe it's a sign from God?". She spoke to her husband who told her to try again so she refused to come back to the Good Counsel and went into the abortion centre, although not before giving me her phone number.

Despite having booked the abortion, the next day she and her husband agreed to come and see what help we could offer them. God was already working – her husband was beginning to take some responsibility! Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and volunteers, we were able to promise that if she became ill during the course of the pregnancy, we would ensure that her children were looked after – for the whole length of her sickness if necessary. We also encouraged her husband to continue supporting them more actively.

Thanks be to God her illness was not as bad as it had been previously, although she still felt very unwell for several months. She couldn't travel to the Good Counsel office, so for a long time the only contact that we had with her was by telephone. Despite this, every time the counsellor spoke to her she thanked them again and again for all that we had done for her. She only occasionally needed someone to help her with the children and housework because her husband began taking care of her and the children and doing the shopping and cooking for them all, so what she was thanking us for was not



My mum chose life & got the help she needed from Good Counsel.

necessarily the practical support but the hope and faith that she had allowed back into her life as a result of deciding to let her baby live. The destructive nature of abortion was pulling them further apart, but this new baby to care for was once again uniting them as husband and wife.

When she reached 24 weeks of pregnancy she had a hospital scan which showed that her baby has a hole in his heart. She was once again panicked, but now knows that she's not alone.

Although when he's born it's possible that he may need surgery, the doctors seem confident that her baby boy will be alright. Alice has asked for prayers for the family and, that if it is necessary, the surgery will be successful, so please do pray for them all. Her husband spoke to us on the phone and said that the medical staff had suggested that she have an abortion "but we could never do that now – we know that it's all in God's hands and we have to trust God!".

By Annabel Osborn

Intern Experience: Jessica Almeida

I have been amazed to find that nearly every day a woman outside an abortion clinic turns and chooses to take up our offer of help instead of going in for an abortion.

Moving from the countryside to busy London was a shock to the system, especially the daily commute.

The work with the Good Counsel itself is fascinating and very different to the work I am used to doing as a junior doctor in a hospital. In hospital, I had seen first-hand how little information is given to women seeking abortion – how little consideration is given to the reasons that a woman seeks abortion, the development of the baby and what other possible solutions there are in her situation. In no way was a woman making an informed choice.

The Good Counsel take a loving but truthful approach to pregnant women. Explaining the development of the baby, what abortion is and what the risks are. The reality is far from the easy way out that many people think. Plenty of time is given to understanding the woman's situation and women receive dedicated practical support that offers a real option to continue with the pregnancy in her situation.

Standing outside an abortion clinic praying and offering this help, you can see the hope in the eyes of the women. It is only when hope is lost that in desperation and fear women end up at private abortion clinics. I have been amazed to find that nearly every day a woman outside an abortion clinic turns and chooses to take up our offer of help instead of going in for an abortion.

Seeing the mothers and babies that have been helped, when they visit the centre for ongoing support or even to help others themselves, is a wonderful confirmation of the value and success of this work.



Intern Experience: Martyn McGettigan

I now know that doing nothing will never be an option again.

The most daunting thing, as a new intern, is obviously the front-line work at the clinics themselves. This is especially true if, like me, you hadn't done anything of the sort before. Many hours are spent outside the clinics, sometimes in very unfavourable weather, and, on top of that, you have to stay alert and be ready to offer help to any women who might come along. Actually speaking to complete strangers about such serious matters is the most daunting part of it all. It's amazing, though, how quickly it becomes easier and you are given training and advice by experienced pavement counsellors before you start. There are quiet times, too, when you can pray and prepare yourself. I found that, provided you keep focussed on why you're there, it isn't too difficult just to do your part as well as you can and allow God to do the rest.

On training days at the office you get to learn all about the work that Good Counsel does, the history and current situation of the pro-life movement and much more besides. You have the opportunity to be involved in many aspects of what the Good Counsel Network does. While I was there the Lenten "40 Days for Life" Campaign took place and it was a great privilege to be involved in and help organise it.

One thing which I certainly got from the experience was a much greater awareness of how various aspects of Church teaching fit together. During my internship I saw first-hand exactly how the breakdown of the traditional family, the culture of contraception, secular materialism and abortion are all connected. I believe it has done me a lot of good to see this and I now know that doing nothing about the issue will never be an option again.

There are many more things I could write about, such as the people I met and made friends with or the advantages of working in an office that has its own chapel with daily Mass and Adoration but, if I did, this would become too long. I will finish by saying: The Good Counsel Internship is the best thing I have done and I'd strongly recommend applying for it.

Read Martyn's full article and more Intern blogs at: MariaStopsAbortion.blogspot.com



Sponsored Events

Support or join The Good Counsel Network's **Wandsworth to Wapping Sponsored Walk** on Saturday 20th July see www.goodcounselnetwork.com or call us for details.

The 3rd Annual G.K.Chesterton Pilgrimage will take place on Tues 30th July. For details see catholicgkchestertonociety.co.uk. Stuart is raising money for GCN through this walk, to join or to sponsor him go to www.justgiving.com/Stuart-McCullough1 or send us a donation.

Witness

The Helpers of God's Precious Infants hold weekly prayer vigils outside several abortuaries across England every Saturday. For more details call them on 020 8252 3109 or email them at info@hgpi.co.uk

National Days of Prayer and Fasting for Life

We ask you to fast on bread and water or to fast from **whatever you can fast from** and pray a Rosary or any extra prayers, in reparation for sins against the sanctity of human life, and to intercede for assistance in overturning pro-death laws and defeating proposals for further attacks on human life. We hold a **Day of Prayer and Fasting each month**. The upcoming dates are: Wednesday **24th July**, Tuesday **13th August**, Saturday **28th September**. Send us a mobile number or an email address where we can SMS or email you details of each day as they come up. Or call us.

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I will pray and fast on the National Days of prayer and Fasting for Life. Please send me a reminder by email or text.

Volunteer

I will come and pray at an abortion centre. Please contact me with details.

Now please fill in your contact details:-

Name: _____ Tel No.: _____

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Many thanks. Please return to The Guild of Our Lady of Good Counsel, P.O. Box 46679, LONDON, NW9 8ZT

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