

*Remembering our founder*  
*Doctor Joseph Kincaid*  
 A publication of Kalamazoo Right to Life

## Dr. Joe Kincaid Passes Away Founder of Kalamazoo Right to Life

Dr. Joseph Kincaid passed away on Friday, October 20, 2017. He had just turned 85. He is survived by his lovely wife Diane, five children and seven grandchildren. Dr. Joe was one of the earliest pro-life leaders in the state and in fact was one of the founders of Right to Life of Michigan. Long before *Roe v. Wade* made abortion on demand a constitutional right, Joe was organizing pro-life groups, writing letters to the editor opposing abortion reform, and speaking to church, school, or civic groups.

Dr. Kincaid was born in Vicksburg in 1932. His family moved to Portage when Joe was a pre-teen. He graduated from St. Augustine High School and then Western Michigan College. In 1957 he received a medical degree from the University of Michigan Medical School. After a residency in Colorado he returned to Kalamazoo and opened a practice in Internal Medicine. He was a faithful and dedicated physician for 44 years. In 1959 Joe married Diane Henneberry, a nurse from Illinois whom he met while in Denver. They were married for 58 years.

As a young physician, Joe became alarmed by the growing chorus of activists demanding reform of century-old anti-abortion laws. On July 14, 1967 he fired off the first of many letters to the editor to the *Kalamazoo Gazette*. The following is a portion of that letter. Even at this early date Joe saw the correlation between abortion and euthanasia. This was two years before he formed Kalamazoo RTL.

" One wonders why abortion is more acceptable than infanticide; perhaps it is the fact that the fetus's minute size and its hidden habitat deep in the recesses of the mother help us mentally to separate our thoughts from the fact that in each case human life is being obliterated. This wide spread advocacy of the abolishment of human life seems inconsistent when we consider to what extent our society goes to be sure that other individuals' rights are not violated, even notorious... [criminals]. However, these fetuses, earmarked for extinction, have no legal counsel or judge or jury to protect their rights or life...When we are able to implant into our reasoning that [handicapped] fetuses can be eased out of existence, the next step could easily be to expand the concept to include adults with incurable diseases, those who are mentally ill or other groups who are significantly handicapped so that they cannot enjoy life to its fullest. So the path from abortion to euthanasia or mercy killing may be easily traversed. Now is the time to reflect whether the philosophy of the taking of innocent life as incorporated in abortion, is consistent with our American way of life."



*Dr. Joe and Diane Kincaid, 2006*

## Joe Kincaid: A Pro-Life Pioneer, A Leader From the Start

In 1969 Lansing Bishop Alexander Zaleski encouraged many of his parishes to form Right to Life Committees. Kalamazoo, at that time part of the Lansing diocese joined the effort. Dr. Joseph Kincaid, already a member of the Michigan Catholic Conference's Right to Life Committee, established Kalamazoo Right to Life in the fall of 1969.

Almost immediately he recruited Dorothy Talanda and Virginia Ferrara, who were also speaking out against abortion. Dr. Joe solicited help from area Protestant churches as well. Thus KRTL's influence extended beyond its original Catholic base.

In 1970 three important pro-life groups formed. In Lansing, Barbara Radigan and Mary Randall, best friends from high school, established Michigan Right to Life Committee. Between 1970 and 1972 they established another dozen groups in the central part of the state. The second important group emerged in the Detroit area when Gloria Klein formed People Taking Action Against Abortion (PTAAA), later called Lifespan. The final group was birthed when Dr. Joe and the Lansing ladies traveled north and helped to form Grand Rapids Right to Life under the leadership of Jane Muldoon and Dr. Larry Burns.

Meanwhile, pro-abortion lawmakers tried to enact abortion reform legislation in Michigan. They tried and failed every year from 1967 to 1971. After the 1971 loss abortion reformers decided to take the issue to the voters as a ballot referendum. The proposal would legalize abortion through the 24th week with no residency requirement, a bill patterned after New York's radical 1970 bill. In March 1972, reformers had collected the required number of signatures. After another reform bill was defeated that spring, pro-abortion lawmakers and activists believed that a referendum remained their only option.

By April, about two dozen small, independent pro-life groups formed a coalition called Voice of the Unborn to defeat Proposal B. Dr. Joe, as leader of KRTL, was one of the more influential members of the coalition's steering committee.



*Dr. Joe, Diane, and Michael Kincaid, 1987*

Although many of the state's newspapers predicted Proposal B to pass, Voice of the Unborn challenged that prognosis. Pro-lifers waged an aggressive campaign to defeat the referendum. Volunteers passed out literature, made phone calls, and spoke to church or civic groups. Dr. Joe, Dorothy Talanda, Virginia Ferraro and a few others spent the better part of 1972 traveling over an eight-county area speaking and debating the issue. They spoke to high school and college classes, to church groups, and organizations. From May, 1972 up to election day this group of dedicated pro-lifers spoke to over 175 groups. Almost every night someone from KRTL was somewhere from Albion to Lake Michigan defending the right to life.

In the end, Voice of the Unborn defeated Proposal B, 61 to 39 percent, a huge victory for this upstart pro-life coalition. Tragically, *Roe v. Wade* came three months later to strip away our pro-life win.

## A Tribute to Dr. Joe Kincaid



Dr. Joe Kincaid, 1958

Have you ever met someone and, even though you have only known that person for a few minutes, just known that because of that person your life has been changed forever? Hello, I'm Cynthia Plotz, the new office manager for RTLK. On Tuesday, October 17th, I had the honor and privilege to meet Dr. Joe for the first and only time at a board meeting. And later on that night I rode with him and one of the other board members to take Dr. Joe home. I sat in the back seat and listened to the two banter back and forth about the first years of RTLK. He was asked how it got started and I sat back and soaked in the moment. He told about the birth of this great organization. I marveled. His whole life has been dedicated to saving lives, so many lives, lives that he never even knew about. He told me that he was approached by a woman who was concerned about *Roe v. Wade*. She asked him, "What are we going to do about it?" He replied, "Meet me at my house on Wednesday and I will tell you what we are going to do about it." A few days later he was approached by another woman who asked the same concerned question, and he gave her the same confident response. I asked him how old he had been, and he said with a laugh, "Let me think about it, I was..." So young, I thought, and so brave.

It wasn't till the next day that I realized I had met the man who saved my life. You see, I was an "oops", a "that wasn't supposed to happen". In 1981 abortion was the new fad. I was conceived because of a "medical mishap," and my mother, 38, and my father had been "done" having children for 16 years when I came along. The news of me came as a shock, of course. My father spent the next 9 months not talking to my mother, and my poor mom spent those 9 months being bombarded with people either telling her to abort me because it was "too dangerous" to have a baby at her age, or telling her that she should have aborted. Acquaintances filled her head with all of the things that were going to be "wrong" with me and kept warning her that she probably wasn't going to make it through childbirth, and if she did she would be in a wheelchair by the time "that baby" graduated from high school. Everyone from her mother, to her sister, to her doctor, to her friends were all trying to convince my mother that it was the "right thing to do". She even told me that the mantra at her baby shower was "I can't believe you're having this baby." My mother was raised Catholic and knew the Church teaching on such matters. Still, I could imagine how hard it must have been for her.

"What," you may ask, "does this have to do with Dr. Kincaid?" Well, my mother never met Dr. Joe or even heard of him. I don't even know if she had heard of the Right to Life movement that had started only about 50 miles from our home. But I know without a doubt that it is because of this courageous man and others like him that I am here with you today. I can tell you that Dr. Joe and the first members of RTLK were praying for my mother and for other women in her situation. And for that I will always be grateful. Oh, and don't worry. My dad took one look at me after I was born and instantly made up with my mother.

I had planned on telling Dr. Kincaid this at the end of our next board meeting, but I'll never have the chance. Dr. Joe passed away 3 days after I met him. So, I decided to tell you. I didn't really "know" this great man, and never truly will, at least not as I hoped to. And he never got to hear how he saved my life. I was hoping that the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* would happen before his passing, so that he could see his life's work completed. But it has not, so we are left to carry on his lifelong mission. I am honored to be a part of that. Even in a small way by working for RTLK, and look forward to what the future may bring for all of LIFE.

*Roe v. Wade* Memorial “Prayer for Life”  
Set for January 21, 2018

The Catholic Diocese of Kalamazoo, St. Michael’s Lutheran Church, and Kalamazoo Right to Life are sponsoring our annual event that remembers the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision of January 22, 1973. The date is **SUNDAY, JANUARY 21**. The location is **BRONSON PARK** in downtown Kalamazoo. The Prayer for Life will begin at 3 pm. and last approximately 30 minutes (depending on the weather). In case of inclement weather the alternate location for the event will be the Crowley Center connected to St. Augustine’s Elementary School. After the event everyone is welcome at the Crowley Center for cookies and hot chocolate. Not all the details have been worked out, but planners are hoping to include a children’s choir in the program. Since joining with the Catholic Diocese two years ago, we have had over 200 people attend. Be in prayer about coming this year. Now is the time to be counted.

MERRY CHRISTMAS from everyone on the KRTL Board...  
and HAPPY NEW YEAR...2018!!

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