



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 1, 2010

Conviction Comes Quickly for Killer of Abortionist

It took just 37 minutes for a jury in Wichita, Kansas, to find anti-abortion activist Scott Roeder guilty of murdering later-term abortionist George Tiller.

The 51-year-old Kansas native admitted to walking into Reformation Lutheran Church on May 31, 2009, stepping up to Tiller, who served as an usher in the church, and shooting him in the head. Roeder's defense team had hoped that his own testimony about his motive behind the killing might convince Judge Warren Wilbert to allow the jury to consider a lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter, which Kansas state law defines as "an unreasonable but honest belief that circumstances existed that justified deadly force."



But while Wilbert had originally said he would consider the plausibility of such a defense, he ultimately ruled that Roeder's personal beliefs against abortion did not justify his use of deadly force to stop Tiller, and he directed the jury only to rule on the defendant's guilt or innocence to a charge of murder.

During the trial Roeder was asked why he had killed Tiller, who operated one of the nation's only clinics performing late-term abortions. "The lives of those children were in imminent danger if someone did not stop George Tiller," Roeder testified. "He was going to continue as he had done for 36 years prior to that time."

Roeder, a native of Kansas City and a long-time pro-life activist, admitted that he had been considering killing Tiller for more than a decade. "There was nothing being done, and the legal process had been exhausted, and these babies were dying every day," he told the jury. "I felt that if someone did not do something, he was going to continue."

Roeder is scheduled to be sentenced on March 9, and faces life in prison with a possibility of parole after 25 years. Had he been convicted of manslaughter, he could have been freed after serving just five years.

Although Roeder considers himself a born-again Christian, his actions were aggressively condemned by both Christian leaders as well as mainstream pro-life groups. Dr. Albert Mohler, a prominent leader in the Southern Baptist Convention and a board member of Focus on the Family, said that violence done to stop abortion is "horribly harmful to the pro-life cause. The horror of abortion cannot be rightly confronted, much less corrected, by means of violence and acts outside the law and lawful means of remedy."

Similarly, Father Frank Pavone of Priests for Life condemned Tiller's murder, calling such violence "antithetical to the pro-life movement." Likewise, the National Right to Life Committee condemned all violence committed in the name of the pro-life movement, and Operation Rescue pledged to engage only



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in peaceful protests “free of any actions or words that would appear violent or hateful.”

Nonetheless, abortion advocates have eagerly used Tiller’s murder as a cause célèbre to push for greater federal restrictions on pro-life activities. After Tiller’s murder, Gloria Feldt, a past president of Planned Parenthood, called on President Obama to “outline an action plan to increase federal protection for providers and clinics and call for stringent enforcement of the Federal Access to Clinic Entrances Act.”

Some pro-abortion activists have pointed to Roeder’s claim that before killing Tiller he had spoken with others about killing abortionists, and Vicki Saporta, president of the National Abortion Federation, claimed that after Tiller’s death her group noticed a rise in anti-abortion violence.

Nancy Northup of the Center for Reproductive Rights took things a step further, warning of a possible larger conspiracy against abortion providers. “To see each murder as an isolated attack by one individual misses the fact there are these connections,” she said. “It’s of extreme concern that some anti-choice fanatics will want to see themselves martyred in similar ways.”

But Father Pavone of Priests for Life pointed out that violence isn’t a crime exclusive to anti-abortion extremists. Noting the inherently violent nature of the abortion procedure itself, “which kills real people in the womb every day,” he added that “abortion advocates have done numerous acts of violence against pro-life people, and I receive death threats several times a month.”



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