



A quarterly journal of news and commentary from Lutherans For Life

Here We Stand



“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason ... I am bound by the Scriptures ... and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.

“I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.

“I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen.”

Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, 1521

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Lutherans For Life

Equipping Lutherans to be Gospel-
motivated voices For Life.

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Still Standing but Not Standing Still

by Rev. Michael W. Salemink

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it” (Matthew 7:24-27).

The storms will come—with hurricane force.

Jesus guarantees that **“In the world you will have tribulation”** (John 16:33). **“[T]hey will lay their hands on you and persecute you ...”** (Luke 21:12a). The clouds will swell, and the thunder will roll. The lightning will strike and frighten. The rains will fall, and the floods will rush and rise. The wind will blow and beat against us, no matter where or how we hide, whether on rock and in sand. We cannot avoid or outrun sin and death because it resides inside us. We have fallen, and the whole world broke long ago.

Yet the Rock won’t move. The Rock does not move. He does not change or fail. Our all-knowing Architect has spread around and over us a shelter that will not fall, not even at the shaking and shouting of the weakened and weeping ones within. The stricken Cornerstone streams perpetual waters of atonement, absolution, and acceptance. Having already swallowed death down along with humankind’s guilt and buried it beneath His resurrection, Jesus Christ has no death left in Him and allows none near His own. Bravely and gratefully we keep sharing what He continues showing us, that all persons are worth it despite the cost and opposition, every one precious for His grace’s sake and not dependent upon appearance or age or ability. The Rock holds, and His house prevails.

He has christened this ark of ours for filling with neighbors instead of animals. Here we stand, not to look down on but to reach out to. For those around us whose foundations have flushed away, we get to shine light. We will fling Gospel doors open and invite in those drowning in deception, dread, and regret. Let us tear back all shades and throw up every window that anyone endangered by sin’s grip and death’s threats may be saved—and loved.



ELECTION 2016

After the Election

by Rev. Michael W. Salemink

Good government, devout rulers, and faithful leaders—at any level—are always gifts from God. In our nation, elected representatives and public servants serve us as His blessing and on His behalf. One of the primary responsibilities of civil government is respecting and protecting human life. We thank our heavenly Father for a peaceable and lawful voting process on November 8, especially where it has resulted in offices being occupied by advocates for affirming every human being's God-given value.

We commend all Christians who put their faith and vocation into practice by exercising the precious right to participate in cooperative democracy that is free and fair for everyone.

Please join us in praying for those who make, administer, and judge our laws to reflect the truth, love, and life of our Lord Jesus Christ in their policies and actions until the Savior returns to bring our redemption and resurrection to fulfillment in new creation and everlasting kingdom.

Check Out New Life Team Tools!



www.lutheransforlife.org/about/life-chapters-and-life-teams

Life Team Leader Conference Call!

SAVE THE DATE:

December 20. This is a one-hour call to give For Life leaders “strength for their journey.”

The call will be led by Pastor Doug Merkey and will include a biblical devotional, leadership coaching, idea sharing, and prayer. Find out more:

www.lutheransforlife.org/about/life-chapters-and-life-teams



Automatic Withdrawal of Your bills—and LFL, Too?

Go to www.lutheransforlife.org and click “Give.” Then look for “**Automatic Monthly Debit from Your Checking or Savings Account (ACH).**” Right below this is the link: Download ACH Contribution Form. Click on that and follow the instructions, and your automatic gift withdrawal will be in place. If you have any questions or need help, feel free to contact our office at 888.364.LIFE or info@lutheransforlife.org.

Many thanks in Christ! – *John Hawkins*

Owen’s Mission

The goal of this project is to honor Jesus by presenting a set of Touch of Life fetal models to every Lutheran elementary and high school in the country. We want students to understand the God-given value of each life from the moment of conception. Over 41,000 students have now heard about Owen’s Mission!



www.lutheransforlife.org/about/owens-mission

Life 360°

We're taking a 360° look at life!



Join LCMS Life Ministry as we proclaim God’s truth that all life is sacred — from the very beginning until the natural end.

**2017 LIFE CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
JAN. 27-29, 2017**

LCMS LIFE CONFERENCE
2017
lcms.org/lifeconference

Here We Stand with a Word of Hope

by Diane E. Schroeder

The world would have you believe that abortion is normal—a mere medical procedure that helps women.

“For too many years, certainly for my generation, all issues about sex and sexuality were stigmatized. Abortion was, homosexuality was. And the exciting thing to me now is that young people are telling their stories and they are living out loud. More women are telling their abortion stories, and I told mine. I think once we get out of the shadows, and I think the LGBT movement has led the way in this, it normalizes what should be an open and honest conversation.”

Cecile Richards, Planned Parenthood CEO

In our culture, truth has been suppressed and the reality of abortion transformed into “reproductive freedom” and even “women’s health.” But, as Christians, we know the truth.

- **Here We Stand** – Abortion is not normal. It turns a mother against her own child.
- **Here We Stand** – Abortion is a tragedy that takes the life of an unborn baby and traumatizes a mother.
- **Here We Stand** – Abortion is bad for women and forces them to carry the weight of grief and guilt.
- **Here We Stand** – Abortion is a sin like any other sin for which Christ died.

Word of Hope is a ministry of Lutherans For Life that exists to help women and men heal from their abortion experience. **Word of Hope** counsels women and men, helping them understand the depth of God’s love for them and the reality of forgiveness through the sacrifice of God’s own Son, Jesus, for the sins of the entire world, including their sin of abortion. **Word of Hope** helps them deal with their grief and guilt and overcome behavioral symptoms triggered by the abortion. There are so many people in our neighborhoods, families, and churches that are dealing with the loss of a child or children through abortion—mothers, fathers, grandparents, friends. Statistically you can assume one in three people you meet on the street and one in four people in your congregation have been affected by an abortion decision. What can you do to help these women and men?

First, be compassionate and try to understand why women choose abortion. In my career, I have been blessed to work at a crisis pregnancy center. When I started working there I was a “good LFLer.” I could speak truth with the best of them. I knew what God’s Word said about life. I knew when life began. But at CareNet, I saw something new—real people trying to cope with the reality of an unplanned pregnancy. I saw women abandoned by their families and made homeless if they chose to carry that pregnancy. I saw women under enormous pressure from men in their lives who wanted

out. I saw women who wanted to carry their pregnancy but were overwhelmed with financial problems and lack of support from their family and community. I talked to women who were so afraid of shaming their Christian parents that, somehow, abortion seemed their only choice.

Second, promote **Word of Hope** in your congregation. You can help someone find healing.

- Establish a link on your church's website for **Word of Hope** so people can find it easily (www.word-of-hope.org).
- Place bulletin announcements in your church bulletin (especially on Sundays many find difficult, such as Mother's Day or Life Sunday).
Go to www.lutheransforlife.org/media/downloads.
- If your church has other healing ministries, sponsor a group for post-abortion healing. Contact a local crisis pregnancy center to see if they can help.
- Put **Word of Hope** brochures in the women's bathroom or stalls at your church. They are available from Concordia Publishing House (www.cph.org).
- Educate your congregation on the issue of post abortion by using resources available from LFL (www.lutheransforlife.org/life-issues/after-the-abortion).

Let's do everything we can to help families who bought the lie that abortion is "normal." Most of us may not have sinned by having an abortion, but all of us have sinned horrifically and are in need of the blood of Christ to cleanse us from our sins.

"[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Word of Hope



If you or someone you know would like to speak to a loving, caring counselor, call or e-mail Grace.



630.990.0909 or 888.217.8679

help@word-of-hope.org

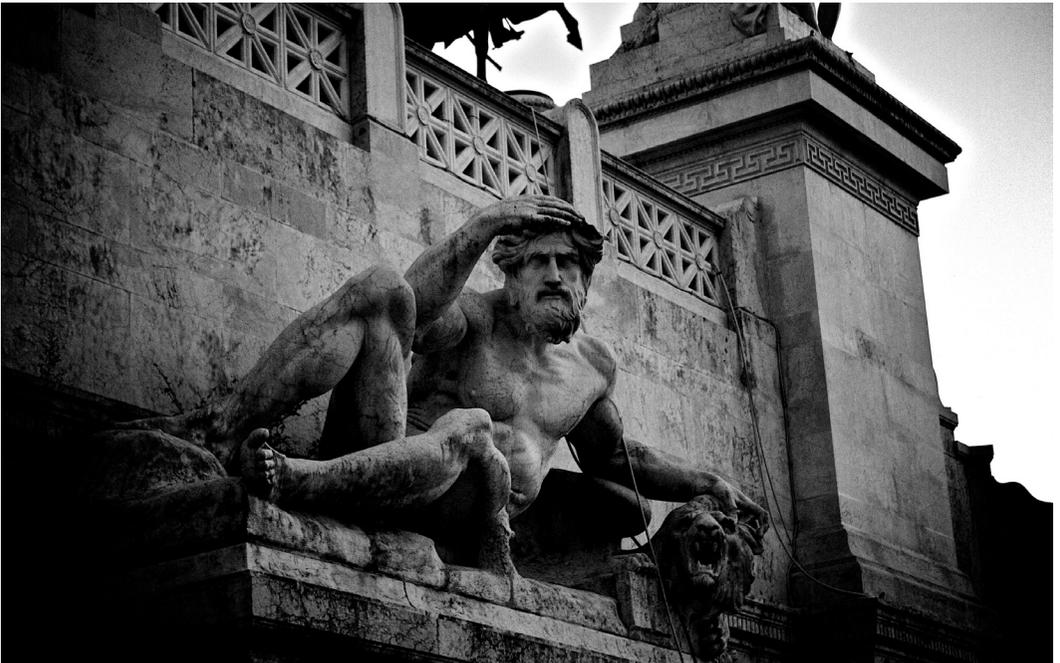
www.word-of-hope.org

Twice Upon a Time

by Rev. Michael W. Salemink

Twice upon a time. Twice upon a time Christianity literally changed the world. Twice upon a time Christianity saved the world. Twice upon a time life-affirming Gospel compassion overcame the culture of death. Of course, it doesn't surprise us. We see frequently how through His Word and Church, Jesus asserts His crucified authority over sin and establishes His resurrected victory over death. He protects from danger, provides for needs, frees consciences, cheers hearts, and heals bodies every day. But for those who keep count, it's twice worldwide already—so far.

The ancient pagan world before Christianity regularly disposed of lives deemed unproductive. Greeks and Romans routinely abandoned babies to exposure, disowned and drowned unwanted infants—especially the impaired or female ones. In addition, they persistently pursued fresh and more effective methods for aborting pregnancies—surgically and chemically—as had every Mesopotamian empire that preceded them. Popular demand for amusement pressed slaves, condemned criminals, and prisoners of war into service as blood-sport gladiators. The thrill-seeking public forced them to fight each other or wild animals to the death (popular not only with Romans but also in Greece, Syria, and Asia Minor). Human sacrifices—particularly newborns and captives—were often offered to heathen idols by Canaanites, Irish, and other predecessors of present-day European peoples, as well as Meso-American Aztecs and Mayans prior to the arrival of Christian influence. Classical philosophers popularized suicide in Greco-Roman civilization, not only accepting but encouraging it through instruction and example. Women were denied basic freedoms and deprived of human dignities such as property, employment, monogamy, and mobility—even among the Hebrews.



Early Christians opposed it all. As individuals and as an institution, they intervened. The Creator who incarnated Himself as gracious Savior inspired them to defend and support every human life He made, redeemed, and summoned into ongoing communion with the same love He embodied toward His own. From Jesus' first followers onward, Christians disputed abandoning and killing infants, disapproved of all forms of abortion, spoke against gladiatorial games, protested human sacrifice, fought against acceptance of suicide, and implored culture and government to do the same. Their efforts met success, and in time all such practices became illegal and nearly ceased in the Roman Empire and other areas significantly swayed by the Gospel worldview.

The emerging churches integrated women alongside men in worship and work, discouraged polygamy, and honored widows. They standardized medical care; established the world's first hospitals, nursing homes, and orphanages; and invented therapeutic nursing and care for the mentally ill. In contrast to the quid-pro-quo "charity" Romans and Greeks occasionally offered to able-bodied beneficiaries for presumed payback, the Church gave freely and abundantly to the poor, the ailing, and the dying. And beginning in her infancy, she protested slavery—in many cases freeing slaves with her own funds—so that by the Middle Ages this systemic oppression was almost extinct across Christian Europe.

What the Gospel accomplished in the Old World, it soon extended to the whole world. Its next conquest claimed human life for Christ via missionary endeavors. Abortion, abandonment, and outright infanticide ran as rampant in pre-Columbian America, tribal Africa, the Far East, and the South Pacific as it once had in imperial lands. Ritual human sacrifice and slave trading predominated nearly universally in these cultures as well. Women and children, along with ailing, impoverished, and aged people, faced prevalent neglect, if not absolute contempt. Hindus, Scandinavians, Chinese, Maori, and some Native American communities cremated widows alive in their husbands' funeral pyres. Euthanasia and cannibalism commonly occurred.

Nevertheless, a succession of Christian missionaries caring for life as well as heart and treating body along with soul brought life-giving, life-saving acceptance; forgiveness; and sanctity even into the farthest and darkest corners of the earth. Living out their own experience of the Reformation message that Jesus Christ justifies each person's life by God's grace and not one's own works, in language and action they affirmed the absolute value of every human being in every state and every stage, no matter what she had done or what he could not do. Patiently but relentlessly they reformed entire societies so that practices once pervasive and acceptable have become unlawful and unthinkable practically everywhere.

So here we stand. We've been here before. We've done this already - twice. The God of the Gospel of grace remains undefeated. The message of life for free and for all in Christ Jesus has a history of achieving both just what we are putting it to work on and all that we hope it will. May it do so also among us and through us.

Alvin J. Schmidt, in Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization, and George Grant, in Third Time Around: A History of the Pro-Life Movement from the First Century to the Present, detail the history of these developments.

Standing Firm in Silence

by Virginia Flo, regional director of Minnesota and national conference director

Stand firm in your faith. Hold your ground. Never give in to things that go against Scripture. Use your voices so your beliefs will not be stamped out due to lack of being heard.

We live in an uncertain world that is on shaky ground. It's like an earthquake challenging our ability to stay on our feet and not get sucked into the wide-open crevasses of anti-Christian ideology. The world's challenge to Scripture seems logical to some as *our* freedom and *our* rights become the core of the discussions—making Christian positions seem out of date and no longer relevant to the world we live in now.

Life issues are often right in the center of any discussion regarding freedom and rights. Yet the world, while focusing on personal rights, puts the most vulnerable at both ends of life's spectrum at risk by failing to acknowledge the most fundamental of all human rights—the right to life!

How can we remain silent when life itself is in question? Standing firm and trusting in Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior of life, and being willing to use our voices to speak up and share the truth about the value of human life is so very important as the world crumbles around us.

In this culture that ridicules our core beliefs, we tend to fall back when the fighting gets tough. Let's remember what Martin Luther said: He could do nothing other than to stand firm and not go against his conscience and the clear teachings of Scripture.

But is simply standing firm in our beliefs but keeping it to ourselves enough? We surely can stand firm silently. That's fairly easy. But there are things going on around us today that we cannot discount or ignore, things like God's creation in the womb being disparaged and killed. Nor can we close our eyes to the danger of minimizing the value of human life at life's end. Using "quality of life" as the value system by arbitrarily measuring who deserves to live and who should die is a pure and simple act of the devil.



It reminds me of John 10:10: **“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”** Jesus overcame death, yet the world is so anxious to use death as a solution to life’s problems.

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (Ephesians 6:13).

This is our 2017 Life Sunday theme verse. From it we know Jesus is the whole armor of God, and we can lean on Him to avoid any fears we have of speaking up. We, as Christians, were given a voice, and yet we often are afraid to use our voice for fear of offending someone or being labeled as a radical or nonconformist. We are all guilty of not wanting to be unpopular, so we keep silent. Offending someone should never be our goal but rather speaking the truth in a loving and caring manner—that’s how we use our voices For Life.

Arguments from some about when life begins, which inexcusably focus on eliminating the rights of the baby in the womb, are a perfect opportunity to speak the truth in love. We need to do this because this is not an abstract issue. It is a matter of life and death. For example, Planned Parenthood’s harvesting and selling of baby parts in order to use them in research is totally acceptable to many. These babies are valuable because of who made them—not just for their “parts.” How can we not be outraged at the very thought of ripping apart babies so small and so vulnerable?

My heart goes out to those struggling with guilt from the secret sin of abortion—a burden carried by millions. These women and men should not be deprived of the forgiveness Jesus earned for them when they have a repentant heart. We need to speak up and let them know they can have the forgiveness Jesus bought for them through His life, death, and resurrection.

And, when the end of life is near, may we be willing to speak up for those who are the most vulnerable here as well. States across this nation are considering legalizing assisted suicide. We have a voice. We need to use it! Do not let the voice of the evil one be the most vocal. Be voices For Life!



Standing Firm as a Follower

by Lynette Auch, president of Lutherans For Life

I don't believe there could be a more appropriate theme than "Here We Stand"—based on Ephesians 6:13—as we step into the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation: **“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”** It reflects our human struggles as described in the prior verse in Ephesians: **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”** (6:12 NIV).

These struggles drove Martin Luther to search for answers from Scripture for the hopeless, broken, and sinful state of humanity. Luther's conclusion was that we have a “righteousness that God gives freely by His grace to people who don't have righteousness of their own.”* This is the foundation of the Christian church today.

I was blessed to have Christian parents who brought me to be baptized and shared with me the faith that Luther speaks of. Neither of my parents had the opportunity to study beyond eighth grade—despite both having had dreams of being in the medical profession. But that did not stop them from becoming leaders as a husband, wife, farmer, mother, father, church, and community member. My mother, especially, was a pillar of the faith!

I was inspired and intrigued by the thoughts of Mike Donehey, lead singer of the Christian group Tenth Avenue North, who noted that Jesus did not ask anyone to be a “leader.” Curious, I did some research. I found numerous examples when Jesus invites individuals of the Bible to “follow me”—but with no mention of being a “leader.” Even Jesus didn't consider Himself a leader. **“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does”** (John 5:19 NIV).

With that in mind, that leaves us with only One leader: Our Heavenly Father. We are all followers.

“For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10 NIV).



We are “God’s handiwork” (or “handmade” by God) with work already prepared for us to do. Let us say “yes” to the opportunities before us and say **Here I Stand ...**

- to speak the truth, reflecting the love of God.
- in defense and protection of the precious, vulnerable, human lives—that are each “hand-made” by God—from the moment of conception to natural death.
- to teach our children and grandchildren who they are and WHOSE they are. Scripture reminds us that we are NOT our own. We were **created** by God in His image, fully human, male and female, as spiritual beings—body, mind, and soul. We belong to Him. Losing our way in sin, we were bought back—**redeemed**—by the blood of Christ Jesus and **called** to love and glorify Him by living holy and honorable lives.
- in defense of marriage as God designed it between one man and one woman and remembering sex is a gift from God to be shared within the marriage bed only.
- in obedience to God and His commandments as the “great Leader.”

“[Jesus] said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’ ... And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39b).

My mother was the leader she was because she was a follower of Jesus Christ—the ultimate Follower of His heavenly Father.

With Jesus as the example, I prefer to be a follower rather than a leader. It takes the pressure and focus off me and my shortcomings and places the focus on the heavenly Father and His will for my life. Leadership is simply the byproduct of being a follower of the heavenly Father.

As followers of Christ Jesus, we will **“be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might ... Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”** (Ephesians 6:10, 13).

Yes, the days are evil, so we pray:

Lord, take my hand and lead me upon life’s way;
 Direct, protect, and feed me from day to day.
 Without Your grace and favor I go astray;
 So take my hand, O Saviour, and lead the way.

Lord, when the tempest rages, I need not fear,
 For You, the Rock of Ages, are always near.
 Close by Your side abiding, I fear no foe,
 For when Your hand is guiding, in peace I go.
 (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, 1978, Text: Public domain)

Amen. Here I stand, serving the Lord of Life!

*@Ligonier. “Justification by Faith Alone: Martin Luther and Romans 1:17.” Ligonier Ministries. N.p., 3 May 2016. Web.

Assisted Suicide Is Not Real Compassion

by Virginia Flo, regional director of Minnesota and national conference director

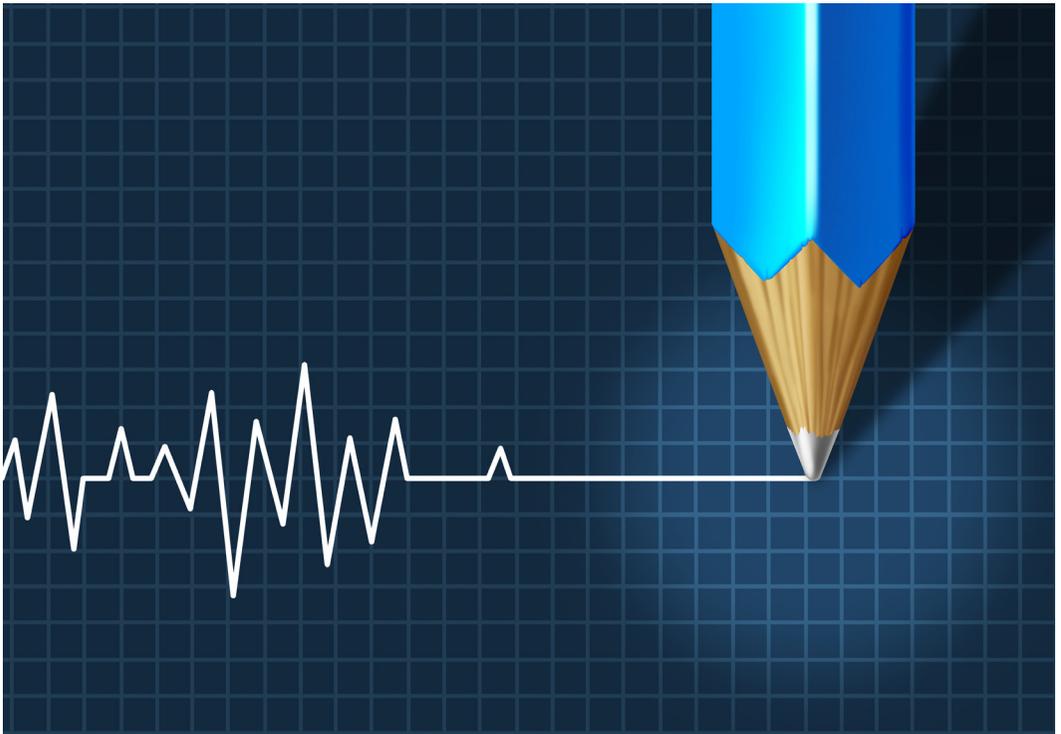
Proponents of assisted suicide argue that helping someone end their life is a compassionate act. In fact, many of them contend that this lethal, risky practice is consistent with the ethical teachings of the world's great faiths, which call each of us to care for those who are suffering.

But although those pushing to legalize assisted suicide may have good intentions, the practice for which they advocate could not be more unlike the compassion that our Christian faith asks us to show to our brothers and sisters.

Compassion, at its root, is about accompanying others through trying times. It does not ignore the reality of death or the fact of human suffering. Instead, it underscores that even in someone's darkest days, people of faith are not allowed to abandon them. We must provide love and accompany them each step of the way.

As a Lutheran, I can see this clearly modeled in the ministry of Jesus, most notably in how He engaged with those who were suffering. He did not send the sick and afflicted away; instead He said, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28 NIV). The relief that Jesus offers includes, but is beyond, physical healing. It is a peace that comes from being loved and comforted. Christians are called to follow His example.

But assisted suicide is the direct opposite of loving care and companionship. Instead of providing both the medical and personal attention that those near the end of life need and deserve, this practice sends them home with a vial of pills to die alone.



This is apparent in the legislation that proponents of assisted suicide are offering in Minnesota; a bill to legalize the practice that was considered this past March had no requirement that family members be notified if a loved one requested drugs to commit suicide. How can we call this a “compassionate” choice?

Thank goodness this flawed bill never made it out of committee. Its advocates, however, have promised to be back again in 2017 and will again make the contention that assisted suicide is necessary to relieve the pain of suffering people.

But this itself is misleading. Evidence from states where assisted suicide is legal, such as Oregon and Washington, shows that the vast majority of those who choose assisted suicide are not motivated by a desire to relieve pain.¹ Instead they cite other reasons for ending their life, such as the worry that they would be a burden on their loved ones if kept alive. This is not “compassion.” Instead, legalized assisted suicide perpetuates the tragic myth that the elderly and infirmed are “burdens” to be dealt with instead of human beings deserving of love and care.

Furthermore, the latest advances in palliative care and end-of-life treatment have made pain-based arguments for assisted suicide unnecessary. Pain can be managed, and our lawmakers and healthcare system should focus on continuing to advance real care options, not hastening death. This is the opinion of over 500 Minnesota medical professionals² who recently signed a petition urging the Minnesota Medical Association to maintain its long-standing opposition to this dangerous, harmful practice.

Finally, legalizing assisted suicide cannot be considered compassionate given the adverse impact it will likely have on the poor and vulnerable to whom people of faith are called to give special care. Given the economic dynamics of the healthcare industry and the fact that ending life will likely be cheaper than ongoing care, assisted suicide could be pushed on disadvantaged people. It will also likely disincentivize efforts to expand affordable and accessible care for all. In fact, we’ve already seen evidence of this: a mother of four in California was denied treatment for her cancer,³ but her insurance company said they could provide her with suicide drugs instead. Is this the type of “compassion” proponents of assisted suicide have in mind? And how can we have real “choice” when medical options are being limited instead of expanded?

The stark truth is that assisted suicide is not a compassionate practice; it amounts to abandonment of those who need us most, perpetuates dangerous views that the sick and elderly are “burdens,” and will unjustly prevent the poor and vulnerable from receiving the care they deserve. Assisted suicide is entirely inconsistent with the values that people of faith hold dear.

It is also inconsistent with who we are as Americans. In a country that prides itself on exceptional healthcare and communities that stick together, let’s commit ourselves to advancing real care, not hastening death.

Lutherans For Life is an alliance partner of the newly formed MN Alliance for Ethical Healthcare, a diverse group of Minnesotans opposed to assisted suicide.

1. @khnews. “Terminally Ill Patients Don’t Use Aid-In-Dying Laws To Relieve Pain.” Kaiser Health News. N.p., 26 Oct. 2016. Web.
2. “Minnesota Medical Professionals Urge MMA to Remain Opposed to Assisted Suicide.” Petition. N.p., n.d. Web.
3. Peyser, Andrea. “Terminally Ill Mom Denied Treatment Coverage — but Gets Suicide Drug Approved.” New York Post. N.p., 24 Oct. 2016.

Our New Christmas Bulletin Insert

As we move toward the joyous celebration of Christmas, remember that Jesus existed as a real little God-person known and loved by His heavenly Father nine months before He was actually born.



Indeed, the miracle of the incarnation of our Lord did not happen in Bethlehem at His birth but in Nazareth at His conception.



The great joy of Christmas is multiplied when we realize our Savior, at His birth, had already humbled Himself for nine months because of His unparalleled love for all humanity from the moment of conception.

We pray that you continue to see the lowly Jesus of the manger in the lowliness of the unborn, the despairing, the infirm, and the dying. We pray that you do unto them as you would do unto Him so that they in turn would see in you the love and hope and help of Jesus, and together we would join the angels and sing, "Glory to God in the highest."



Lutherans
For Life

Equipping Lutherans to be
Gospel-motivated voices For Life.

www.lutheransforlife.org • info@lutheransforlife.org
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Word of Hope ... after an abortion

For those who have had an abortion,
there is a need for a Word of Hope.

888.217.8679/www.word-of-hope.org

The Joy of Christmas – Item LFL1636BI. \$0.10 ea.

Other Christmas inserts also available (find out more at www.cph.org)

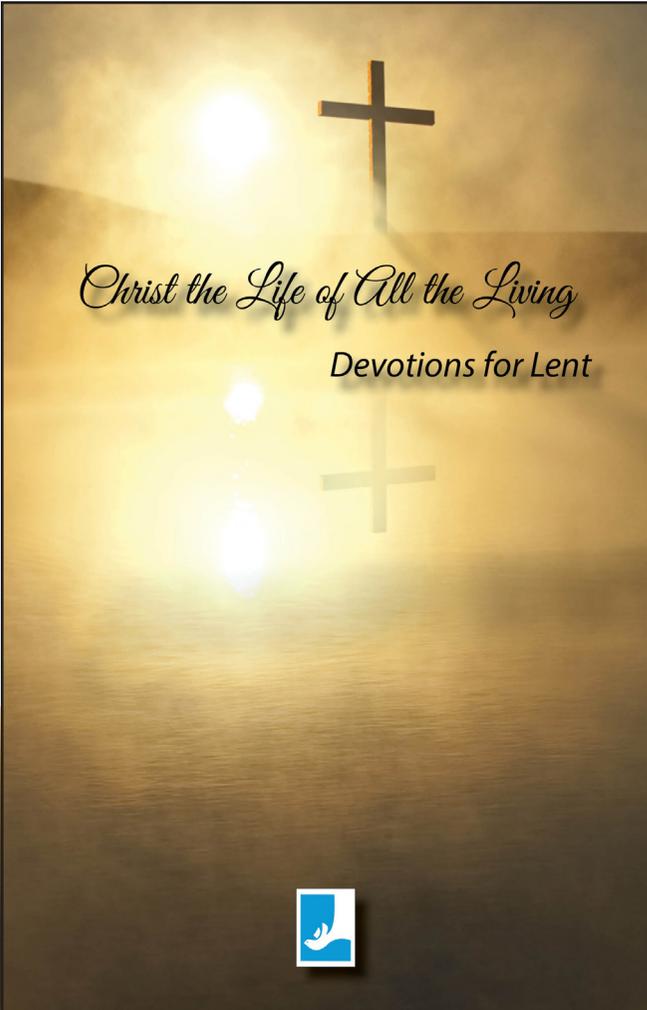
The Time Came – Item LFL6134BI. \$0.10 ea.

Do Not Be Afraid – Item LFL1633BI. \$0.10 ea.

Fear Not! – Item LFL1631BI. \$0.10 ea. • The Touch of Life – Item LFL1627BI. \$0.10 ea.

Best Way to Order LFL Resources: At www.cph.org or 800.325.3040. Shipping/handling applies to all orders. Quantity pricing on select resources.

**A new devotional booklet From
Lutherans For Life for Lent ...**



Christ the Life of All the Living
Devotions for Lent

“As we approach Good Friday, the 40 days of Lent are a time of self-discipline. These devotions aim to help us discipline our minds so that when we see the struggles in our own lives, we see the life of Christ working all to good; so that when we see our neighbor, no matter his skin color or gender or level of development, we see the life of Christ, Savior of the nations; so that when we see the boasting of death, we see the life of Christ, triumphant in resurrection.” Contributors include Rev. Michael Salemink, Executive Director, Lutherans For Life. *Item LFL1637. \$1.99 ea.*



Be sure to like/follow LFL on social media! See links below:

- www.facebook.com/LutheransForLife
- <https://twitter.com/ForLifers>
- www.instagram.com/lfly4life



Also see:

- www.youtube.com/user/LutheransForLife
- <https://vimeo.com/user4132928>



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Shipping/handling applies to all orders. Quantity pricing on select resources.

Life Thoughts in the Church Year

(Based on appointed readings from *Lutheran Service Book*)

January 1 – Circumcision and Name of Jesus – By His incarnation Jesus shined the face of Lord God Almighty and put His name upon all people (Numbers 6:27). His circumcision consecrates every human being from infancy, and His name claims the whole human race from conception (Luke 2:21). The Gospel of gracious salvation leaves no room for discrimination due to age, appearance, or ability (Galatians 3:28). *Holy Savior, by Your unconditional devotion to us, stir us to treat our neighbors with impartial compassion. Amen.*

January 8 – Baptism of Our Lord – Our Creator’s kindness declares even lives impaired by frailty (Isaiah 42:3) or compromised by failure (Matthew 3:5-6) to be precious. He who has given each one breath (Isaiah 42:5) assures them in Christ Jesus, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights” (Isaiah 42:1), and “This is my beloved [child], with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Their mistakes and mortality do not define them (Romans 6:4, 11). *Heavenly Father, order our minds and our lives according to Your forgiveness. Amen.*

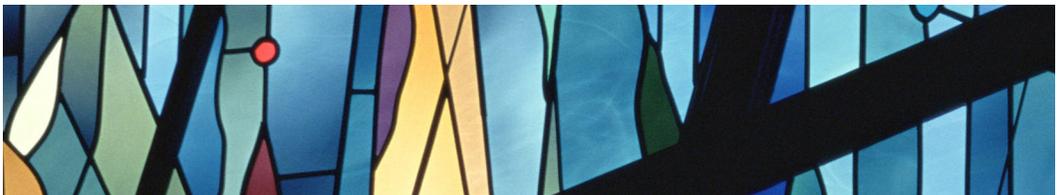
January 15 – Second Sunday after Epiphany – With divine value also comes a vocation from above. Holy Trinity gives a purpose when He makes a person (John 1:31, 42). By the life of Jesus among us He not only calls His human creatures into being, He also calls us all into belonging and belovedness (John 1:39), from the very beginning (Isaiah 49:1, 5), whether or not we perceive it. *Good Shepherd, make us know and obey Your voice, and open our ears and hearts to the cries of Your people. Amen.*

January 22 – Third Sunday after Epiphany – Deep grief and dense guilt have descended upon our people like a darkness (Isaiah 9:2) because death is viewed and used as a solution. Only the Gospel that Jesus Christ has come with a kingdom of forgiving grace (Matthew 4:17) can break any gloom’s grip. Faith in His ways may feel ineffective, old-fashioned, and foolish (1 Corinthians 1:17-18), but even through our clumsy conversations and awkward interactions, God’s love heals every disease and affliction (Matthew 4:23). *Lord Jesus Christ, enlighten our land’s darkensses by bringing Your Spirit among us through Your Word. Amen.*

January 29 – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – Sacrificing relatives or slaughtering rivals—either for their own good or for ours—results in no righteousness (Micah 6:6-7). God has chosen those we are tempted to treat as disposable for demonstrating the depths of His blessings (1 Corinthians 1:26-30). Patiently awaiting His salvation as humble companions reaps the great reward (Matthew 5:9-12). *Lamb of God, gather me in together with all Your little ones. Amen.*

February 5 – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – Jesus has brought love to fullness for us (Matthew 5:17-18) by giving Himself freely to us (1 Corinthians 2:2, 12) as Lord and Savior. Including the vulnerable ones around us in this abundant life (Isaiah 58:6-7) imparts shades and tastes of heaven (Matthew 5:13-14) that exceed whatever aggression and apathy can offer (Matthew 5:19-20). *Almighty God, grant us the joy of sharing in Your self-giving. Amen.*

February 12 – Sixth Sunday after Epiphany – Comparing and preferring one person to another (1 Corinthians 3:3-4) amounts to idolatry (Deuteronomy 30:17-18) and leads to suffering and



death for all (Matthew 5:22). Instead, our Father has reconciled humankind to Himself by the offering (Matthew 5:24) of His Son Jesus Christ, and He gives life and growth when and how it pleases Him (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). Real peace and true joy trusts this justification for oneself and everyone else. *Mighty Redeemer, overcome all our competition with Your unconditional acceptance. Amen.*

February 19 – Seventh Sunday after Epiphany – God has designated every human person to be a holy dwelling for His Spirit (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). He makes each His own not by punishment or putting us to death – though we deserve it – but by loving us as He loves Himself (Leviticus 19:18). Sheltering our neighbors with the same respect and protection, whether we regard them worthy or unworthy, reflects the Creator’s perfected purpose. *Maker and Giver of all good, let Your love overflow in our service to each other. Amen.*

February 26 – Transfiguration of Our Lord – What glory Almighty God lent to humankind by transfiguring His Son as He inhabited our flesh! Jesus not only shows us this everlasting Fatherhood and Sonship, but He bestows it upon us, wretched as we are! Perhaps our greatest honor consists in likewise using our privileges and resources to exalt the lowliest of persons into this majesty. *O Light Everlasting, keep us mindful that all humankind is made for Your favor as much as we ourselves are. Amen.*

March 5 – First Sunday in Lent – Even private choices eventually have unintended consequences (Genesis 3:16-19). Every individual’s decisions inevitably involve and affect others (Romans 5:12). But failures to perform as expected or produce as requested cannot undercut anyone’s preciousness (Matthew 5:3-4). Jesus Christ grants God’s life to all human beings as His free gift (Romans 5:17-18). *Great Deliverer, let none among us be deceived by Satan’s lies but trust in Your loving promises. Amen.*

March 12 – Second Sunday in Lent – The nation’s God blesses through Abraham’s offspring (Genesis 12:3), and the world He loves by Christ’s sacrifice (John 3:16) includes the whole human race – whether old or in the womb (John 3:4) or anywhere between. God-given blessings of being human (including life!) belong to every human being, and each life displays His pleasure and His power. *Life-giving Father, Son, and Spirit, by our neighbors’ needs remind us of Your bountiful goodness. Amen.*

March 19 – Third Sunday in Lent – God our Father can draw water from rock (Exodus 17:6), reconcile His own enemies (Romans 5:10), and salvage the powerless (Romans 5:6). Surely He will overhaul the hopeless circumstances and lost causes our pains and mistakes have brought about (John 4:17-18). Indeed, we not only witness it but participate in it as well (Exodus 17:5). *Keeper of our souls, work faith in us and those we serve to await great transformation at Your hand. Amen.*

March 26 – Fourth Sunday in Lent – The God who is Jesus Christ displays His miraculous compassion especially amid ailments and inabilities (John 9:2-3). Though we occupy evil days (Ephesians 5:16), we ought not give up on anybody before God does (Isaiah 42:16). After all, He never forsakes us (Ephesians 5:8)! *Merciful Master, teach us and lead us to walk with Your children in light. Amen.*



A Canadian nurse faces first-degree murder charges in the deaths of eight assisted-living facility residents at two southwestern Ontario homes between 2007 and 2014, Canadian police said in a news conference in October. Elizabeth Wettlaufer, 49, of Woodstock faces eight murder counts in what is being described as possibly the worst case of a serial killer in Canadian history. No motive for the deaths was given. Ontario police were first alerted to the deaths in late September. The residents ranged in age from 75 to 90 years. (*Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, 10/25/16; CLR LifeWire, 10/27, 2016*)

In the Netherlands, a proposed law would allow people who are not suffering from a medical condition to seek assisted suicide if they feel they have “completed life”—even if they are not terminally ill. The Dutch ministry of Health and Justice in a letter to the country’s Parliament want people who “have a well-considered opinion that their life is complete, must, under strict and careful criteria, be allowed to finish that life in a manner dignified for them.” The law is expected to be drafted by the end of 2017. No age threshold was specified in the letter for those requesting assisted suicide. Netherlands legalized euthanasia in 2002 and was the first country in the world to do so. Since its implementation, euthanasia requests have continued to rise. In 2015, 5,516 deaths in the Netherlands were attributed to euthanasia, accounting for nearly four percent of all deaths nationwide. (*www.christianconcern.com, 10/14/16; CLR LifeWire, 10/20/16*)

Until recently, the accepted beginning point of a baby’s first heartbeat was around day 21. Now a new study published in eLife, a peer-reviewed, open-access scientific journal, finds a baby’s first heartbeat begins even earlier: 16 days. A team funded by the British Heart Foundation [BHF] at the University of Oxford discovered that in mice, the heart muscle started to contract as soon as it formed the cardiac crescent—an early stage in heart development—rather than the later stage when the heart appears as a linear tube. In mice, this crescent appears at 7.5 days after conception, which is equivalent to day 16 in a human unborn baby. Scientists hope this discovery can help in understanding and treating congenital heart disease. (*NRL News Today, 10/12/16; CLR LifeWire, 10/13/16*)

October 27 marked the 49th anniversary of the Abortion Act in Great Britain. The bill that decriminalized abortion under certain grounds received Royal Assent on October 27, 1967 ... Reflecting on the anniversary, John Smeaton, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children’s chief executive, said: “All unborn children and their mothers must be protected from the violence and injustice of abortion. According to the latest government statistics, 8,525,974 babies have been killed by abortion since 1967. Not only does this go far beyond what the supporters of the act intended, it shows that when abortion is made acceptable in even limited circumstances, the defense against killing any unborn child is torn away. This anniversary shows that the only lasting protection for society’s weakest, most vulnerable human beings, ultimately, is moral absolutes. Our aim must be to stop abortion completely whilst offering positive support to women in crisis. We need to make the idea of abortion being completely illegal normal—because it really is normal not to kill children.”

To learn about the international outreach of Lutherans For Life, go to www.lutheransforlife.org/about/international.

Welcome Hilary Murray

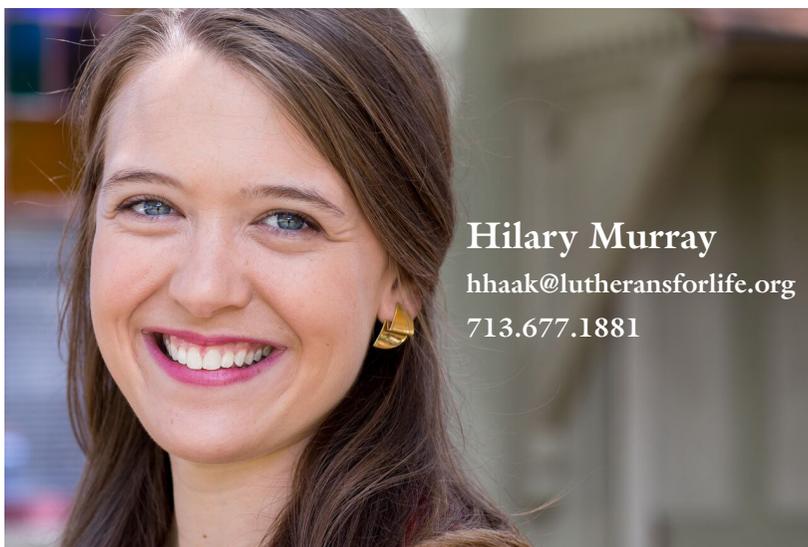
Hilary Murray began serving as mission and ministry director of Lutherans For Life in October! Please welcome her. She would love to hear from you.

Greetings in the name of the Lord! Lutherans For Life is the best organization in the world! I am overjoyed and humbled by the opportunity to serve as mission and ministry director.

I was born to Rev. Dr. Scott Murray and Mrs. Maryann Murray in Gretna, Louisiana, in 1992. Shortly thereafter, my father took a call to Memorial Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas, where I was raised. I attended Memorial Lutheran School through eighth grade and graduated from Lutheran High North in Houston in 2010. The stellar choral department and challenging music program of Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska, were my life until I graduated in 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts in Music with an emphasis in choral conducting. Music, however, was not the only passion that took up my time in college.

In January of 2013 I attended the first-ever LCMS Life Conference (after some convincing words from my pastor). That conference taught me that I had been terrifyingly ignorant of the awful reality of abortion in this country. Through founding Bulldogs For the Unborn (now Bulldogs For Life), attending the March for Life—the largest annual peaceful protest in the country—three times, witnessing women driving into Planned Parenthood clinics alone, working with crisis pregnancy centers, and attending various other conferences, I have learned that there are many more issues at large in the life arena that are just as frightening and as pressing as abortion.

The most valuable information I have learned is that these issues desperately need to be talked about and addressed within our own Lutheran churches. Praise be to the Father who sends the Holy Spirit to work through His Word. I pray that the Holy Spirit continues His work of equipping Lutherans to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life through me in the coming years.



Hilary Murray

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Planned Parenthood a Year Later (and Some Other Things)

by John Hawkins, director of development for Lutherans For Life

It's been over a year since the Planned Parenthood "body parts" photos hit the media. Of course, much of the religious and secular world gasped when this happened. Members and supporters of LFL didn't, however. We've known all along what horrors are involved in "terminating a pregnancy." What happens afterwards, as was revealed, shouldn't have surprised anyone.

Like many sensational stories, however, it looks like the "shock" of what was published has begun to fade. This is only to be expected as new stories fill the airwaves.

Of course, nothing's changed at Planned Parenthood. They're not going anywhere. They continue to perform abortion on demand and, for all we know, continue to sell body parts.

This remains an unspeakable tragedy. However, there's also a part of this which isn't talked about very much (and it removes any doubt as to whether Lutherans For Life remains as important as ever!). Namely, each year many Lutherans go to Planned Parenthood or other providers for abortions (and I'm talking about Lutherans in pro-life church bodies and associations, not pro-"choice" ones!).

Please stay with me.

We know this first because of anecdotal evidence and second, because of statistics. Some studies show that in the pro-life Christian community, the percentage is probably around 20%. Now, no hard studies have been done (and, indeed, we don't know how we'd do one), but we know from literally thousands of conversations that LFL staff and volunteers have had with pastors, lay folks, and others over 35-years-plus that the rate for Lutherans is probably even higher. Yes, this is anecdotal, but we think it's close.



Secondly, we have some hard data in one specific area. As you are probably aware, LFL operates the only Lutheran post-abortion counseling hotline in the country—Word of Hope (www.lutheransforlife.org/about/word-of-hope). A few years ago, a survey of those calling the hotline was taken for one year, and it included a question about the caller's religious affiliation. Of the approximately 300 calls that were received monthly, 70% were from persons who were either Lutheran or had a Lutheran connection. As things stand now, we have every reason to think this percentage is still accurate.

What does this mean? Like many others in the population, a percentage of Lutherans continues to have abortions. Since Planned Parenthood is still the largest provider of abortions in the country, Lutherans are undoubtedly going there, too. Should we be surprised at this?

No.

Why? While great progress has been made in recent years, we know (and yes, this is anecdotal too!) there are still hundreds of thousands of Lutherans who have *never heard* a message of life affirmation and/or have *not embraced* it if they have. In short, many Lutherans are not pro-life or even aware that they should be.

Which is why Lutherans For Life has never been more important. Because, with the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we offer a solution!

LFL's number one objective is to reach *our own people* not only with a pro-life message but one that is Gospel-centered. LFL not only exists, therefore, to reach our folks but is the *only* nationwide ministry equipped to do so. Indeed, help for Lutheran congregations, pastors, and laypeople is just an email, phone call, social media message, or download away.

It's also true that LFL wouldn't be here without your financial support. About 95% of our funding comes from your gifts and offerings. Unlike some ministries, we have no fees, tuition, or third-party reimbursement that we can rely on for the majority of our budget. That is why we deeply appreciate and say thank you in Christ for your help!

As we go to press, we still need to raise about \$293,000 to reach our goal by December 31, 2016. (We are also \$29,000 behind where we were last year at this time.) That is why if you haven't yet made a donation or filled out your sponsor form, we hope you will do so today.

Yes, Planned Parenthood is still with us, "serving" the public—including Christians and even Lutherans. The good news is that Lutherans For Life is here too—and by the grace of God will continue to be.

Many thanks and may the Lord bless you and your family this Advent and Christmas season.



Buying or selling a home or commercial property? You can support Lutherans For Life at no cost to you by taking advantage of the Real Estate for Life program. Call 877.543.3871 or email proliferealestate@yahoo.com for more information.

www.realestateforlife.org
www.lutheransforlife.org/real-estate-for-life

Here We Stand – 2016 LFL National Conference

Over 200 Lutherans gathered October 21-22 at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minnesota, from across the United States, Canada, and Latvia for the 2016 Lutherans For Life National Conference. The theme: **Here We Stand**.

In her welcome to the conference, LFL President Lynette Auch said, "Could there possibly be a more appropriate conference theme than 'Here We Stand' as we step into the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation or a more appropriate verse than Ephesians 6:13: 'Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm'? There is no doubt that the days are evil and 'every one of us is in need of the righteousness that God gives freely by His grace to people who don't have righteousness of their own,' as [Martin] Luther came to understand. We need to put on the whole armor of God to stand firm in that faith ... So, let us say yes to the opportunities before us that God has prepared for us to do! To say 'Here We Stand' ... in defense and protection of the precious and vulnerable human lives that are the handiwork of God from the moment of conception to natural death ... to teach our children and grandchildren who they are and WHOSE they are. Scripture reminds us that we are NOT our own ... in defense of marriage as God designed it between one man and one woman and sex as a gift from God to be shared within the marriage bed only ... Your presence here means that you support the life-affirming ministry of Lutherans For Life. May God bless you and challenge you as 'Here We Stand' For Life!"

Focusing on the conference theme in his opening worship service sermon, Rev. Michael W. Salemink, executive director of Lutherans For Life, said, "You cannot slip beyond the reaches of the long arm of the Lord God Almighty ... We carry grief so heavy and guilt so haunting that we believe it a freedom to end our own lives. We haul fear so chilling and failure so choking that we tolerate terminating our sons and daughters and advocate euthanizing our mothers and fathers. We hold hearts so broken and divided that we accept lust rather than aspire to love. We drag underbellies so vulnerable and blind sides so exposed that we separate children from marriage. We lug spines so stiffened and skin so hardened that we settle for human rights instead of insisting on heaven's gifts ... We should know better ... We all require armor, a Savior, deliverance, redemption. We all crave compassion, forgiveness, mercy, grace. Here we stand. We do not stand alone. We never stand alone. You do not get to stand alone, but you do not have to stand alone. Another One stands in your place ... Jesus Christ is the armor of God, the whole armor of God, for you and for us all. He shelters, sustains, protects, and defends any who have not and cannot do so for ourselves ... Here we stand, neither stampeding nor strutting. Here we stand in joy and not out of anger, in hope and not out of fear, because we stand to forgive and not compare, to save and not compete. Here we stand to relieve and release, not to accuse. Here we stand to listen, assist, accompany, embrace, and befriend, not to attack. Here we stand speaking truth and sharing love because we stand overcoming sin and selfishness, death



Here We Stand

and the devil, and not against one another. Here we stand firm but gentle, strong but humble, even after so long and before such odds. Here we stand, Gospel-motivated voices, Lutherans For Life, because we can do no other, God help us.”

In his keynote address, actor Frank Runyeon, who starred opposite Meg Ryan on the CBS soap opera *As the World Turns* and has appeared in more than 1,000 television episodes and movies along with hosting his own comedy radio show, spoke on “Hollywood vs. Faith – The Struggle to Live Faithfully in the Media Age.” He focused on some of the biggest “funhouse mirror” distortions that Hollywood presents as truth but which are, in reality, lies, including the idea that buying more and more things can make one happy and having the perfect body will bring contentment. He shared how it is very hard for the Church to share the Gospel message in a culture saturated with self-centeredness and indiscriminate sex and violence but encouraged Lutherans For Life to continue to reach out, stay faithful, and focus on the gift of positive relationships with each other and with God.

In her plenary address, co-founder and former president of Lutherans For Life, Dr. Jean Garton, said “I’m going to make sure I’m with the right group ... If you read the media, they’ll tell you that people who are ‘anti-choice’ are rabid, rigid, ranting, raging, radical rebels. But I know that you are patient, pious, peaceful, prayerful, passionate patriots. That’s you ... The naysayers have tried to bury us many times. But the truth is that this great pro-life movement of which Lutherans For Life has been a part since the very beginning, this great movement is alive and well and growing. But with our public, persistent pursuit of protection for the unborn and now, increasingly, the ‘long-born,’ there is a price to pay—and no surprise about that. When Jesus sent out His disciples ... He said He was sending them out like sheep among the wolves. And not much has changed ... We need to be prepared for the incredible battle ahead.” She thanked those in attendance for the “natural, needful work that all of you do.”

Dr. Garton was also the recipient of the newly revived *Dominus Vitae* award now given to a Lutheran who has made notable and significant contributions to the For Life movement. In presenting the award, LFL President Lynette Auch said, “At 88 years of age, Dr. Garton still travels hundreds and thousands of miles from home for speaking engagements and has devoted 47 years of her life to the pro-life movement. Why? She is quoted as saying ... ‘I am always fishing for brothers and sisters in the faith that we might strengthen one another and share our joy in the Lord,’ and because ‘in the pro-life movement, I have the opportunity to meet the finest people throughout the world ... I do what I do because I cannot NOT do it.’”





Here We Stand

Pre-conference events included a pastors' luncheon featuring a talk by Col. John Eidsmoe on "Preachers, Politics, and the Two Kingdoms: What Does the IRS Allow?" as well as workshops on "Helping Your Church Stand For Life" with Rev. Doug Merkey and "Giving 'Unusual' Gifts to Ministry" with John Hawkins, and a tour of the City Life Center in Minneapolis. (*Editor's note: The City Life Center tour included a prayer walk past a local abortion facility. On the Sunday night after the conference, Callie Highby (10)—shown here with City Life Director Betty McGuire—read from The Story Bible, then read the prayer, and added, among other petitions, that "the abortion center would close ... because we don't want any of Your children to die." Callie was on the City Life Tour.*)



Other plenary speakers included Jánis Diekonts of LFL of Latvia and Rev. Don Richman, LFL's international representative, who spoke on what is happening in Russia and Latvia with life issues.

The two winners of the national essay contest sponsored by the Council of Federation Presidents (COFP) shared their winning essays on Friday night. Brooke Fandrich is an eighth-grade student and member of St. John's Lutheran School and Church in Portage, Wisconsin. She is the daughter of David and Jessica Fandrich. Her essay was titled "Many Shapes and Sizes." Amanda Dressel is the high-school-category winner and is a sophomore at Watertown-Mayer High School. She is the daughter of Robert and Melanie Dressel and is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Watertown, Minnesota. Amanda's winning essay is titled "The Truth Behind Abortion of the Handicapped: What Our Society Isn't Seeing."

In 2017, Lutherans For Life will be having four regional conferences (instead of one national conference). The next national conference will be in 2018. Watch for more details at a later date.

Hope For Life



2017 Lutherans For Life Regional Conferences

Ft. Wayne, Indiana • New Braunfels, Texas • Lincoln, Nebraska • Pekin, Illinois



2016 LFL
National
Conference
October 21-22
Bloomington,
Minnesota

Here We Stand



Lutherans For Life? Please Explain ...

by Rev. Michael W. Salemink

Think of us as an arms dealer.

I'm often offered the opportunity to explain Lutherans For Life with questions like these: "What kind of organization are you?" "What do you do?" "Do you operate pregnancy centers and maternity homes?" "Do you give financial assistance? Do you arrange adoptions?" "Do you endorse and oppose politicians?" "Do you lobby legislation?" "Do you conduct funding campaigns?" "Do you publish research?" "Do you picket and protest?"

We certainly support all of the above. We hope our labors lead to each of them happening. However, our mission is more of a message. Our business is best defined as delivering a message: Lutherans For Life equips Lutherans to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life. We connect the Christian Scriptures and Lutheran doctrine to our society's life issues—in this culture which uses death as a solution or views it as a salvation. We explore and educate how the Gospel of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection brings unconditional grace, absolute forgiveness, immortality, and purpose to human beings at every stage and in every state, especially under life-and-death circumstances. We serve as squires and attendants who support the communion of saints by outfitting them to be the operatives that engage these situations in the field and on the front lines.

We do not measure our success in lives saved. We do not evaluate victory in terms of tallying dollars, tracking publications, computing participants, or counting hours. In fact, we cannot appraise our own effectiveness at all. Only our Savior and Lord does that, in His time, according to His good and gracious will, and not always visibly or comprehensibly.

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how" (Mark 4:26-27).

"[F]or it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13), **"[a]nd I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ"** (Philippians 1:6).

Salvation, whether ours or anyone else's, remains Father-Son-and-Spirit's work. He regularly hides this miracle and mystery in human hearts and masks it beneath earthly elements and otherwise ordinary, even apparently contrary, means. If He left the objective to us, we would not only fail but ruin it. We ourselves, simple and selfish and sinful, stand in need of the very salvation we are relaying. But since we do not produce this redeeming relationship with our God and Father, we likewise cannot destroy it. He who has already assumed responsibility for all shortcomings—and He alone—creates, continues, and culminates all successes.

God's involvement doesn't make ours somehow unnecessary though. If anything, He consecrates and elevates our activities. It takes no less than a sword to set souls free unto eternity. Nothing else than God Himself incarnate, crucified and risen again, proclaimed and performed, plunders a person out of death's clutches and places that person among the company of heaven's household.

"[T]hey have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace" (Ezekiel 13:10a).

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:11-12).

Nevertheless, we arm with implements of the surgeon's variety, not the soldier's. We supply sharp blades, but they are scalpels for medicine and needles for healing, not daggers for aggression or spears for defeating. We furnish the Lutheran community to liberate prisoners rather than to lacerate opponents. We slip almost-invisible weapons—conversations and relationships—inside the minds and mouths of regular folks like you, so that what our country increasingly declares contraband you can smuggle behind enemy lines and defend the preciousness of every human being, especially the one right in front of you. We aren't the soldiers or the smith; we're just the supplier.

Think of us as your arms dealer.



*We connect the Christian
Scriptures and Lutheran
doctrine to our society's
life issues.*

Please Collect an Offering for Lutherans For Life at Your Church on Life Sunday

When Lutherans For Life lost Thrivent funding a couple of years ago, financial support from churches became more important than ever to the ministry. Many congregations, we're pleased to say, were already helping us—and we were and remain very grateful in Christ!

Then, many more congregations came on board. In 2015, more than 400 supported LFL, or about six percent of congregations from life-affirming Lutheran church bodies. This was done by special door offerings for LFL or by including LFL in an existing offering rotation such as Lent, 5th Sunday, a monthly mission collection, Mother's Day, or Thanksgiving offering. Others helped us via their mission or stewardship boards or budgeted allocation.

One of the more popular ways to support LFL is through a special offering on Life Sunday. This next year, the official date of Life Sunday is January 15 (although it can be observed on an alternative Sunday if more convenient). Life Sunday 2017 bulletin inserts and other materials are available by going to www.lutheransforlife.org/store-life-sunday-2017.

In addition, over 250 congregational organizations also gave last year. This included women's groups, LWML, Sunday schools and Bible classes, guilds, day-school chapel offerings, and more. To God be the glory! To see if your church or organization gave in 2015, you can check by going to www.lutheransforlife.org/2015-congregational-auxiliaries-organizations-donor-honor-roll. To see if your congregation or group has donated in 2016, go to www.lutheransforlife.org/2016-congregational-auxiliaries-organizations-donor-honor-roll.

Please encourage your church or group to give to Lutherans For Life in 2017. You will be helping to save lives and souls both in this world and the next! (It's also not too late for your church to collect a year-end offering for 2016.)

You can download a reproducible and customizable bulletin insert from our Life Sunday (see link above) and Give pages (www.lutheransforlife.org/give).

Gifts and offerings can be sent to Lutherans For Life at 1101 5th Street, Nevada, IA, 50201-1816. You can also contact me for more information at 888.364.LIFE (5433) or jhawkins@lutheransforlife.org.

Many thanks and may the Lord Bless you this Advent and Christmas!

John Hawkins



Lutherans For Life

Equipping Lutherans to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life.

www.lutheransforlife.org • info@lutheransforlife.org • 888.364.LIFE

Lutherans For Life (LFL) provides unique Gospel-centered, life issue educational resources, audio/video, and Life Team and Life Chapter training from a Lutheran perspective. LFL seeks to "equip Lutherans to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life." LFL makes resources available to thousands of Lutheran congregations and parishioners all year long. Through our Word of Hope outreach, we offer the love, hope, and healing power of Jesus Christ to post-abortive men and women.

In 2017, we are focusing on the theme **Here We Stand**—declaring and defending the precious value of every human being and celebrating the many blessings of abundant and everlasting life for every human life, at each stage, in any state—no matter what she's done, no matter what he can't do.



Here We Stand

To do all this, LFL relies on financial support from congregations and other dedicated friends to make its work possible.

To assist LFL at this time, a special offering will be taken for Lutherans For Life. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact John Hawkins at 512.468.9777 or jhawkins@lutheransforlife.org. More information is also available at www.lutheransforlife.org.

A special offering will be taken for Lutherans For Life today.

Lutherans For Life ...

- **Applies God's Word**, both His Law and His Gospel, to all the life issues—abortion, chastity, assisted suicide and euthanasia, and bio-technology.
- **Assists For Life Christians** in offering the hope and help of the Good News of Jesus Christ to: women with an untimely pregnancy; women, men, and families suffering under the guilt of an abortion; young people with questions and concerns about sexuality; and the elderly and those with disabilities or terminal illnesses.
- **Believes God gives the gift of life to all people**—from the moment of conception until natural death.
- **Needs your support to continue to encourage, educate, and uplift with a Gospel-centered, Word-based message of hope, forgiveness, and new life!**

Lutherans For Life ...

Witnesses to the sanctity of human life through education based on the Word of God.

Serves through individuals who volunteer at pregnancy care centers, with hospice, through prayer, and in a wide variety of caring activities.

Educates and Encourages through conferences and workshops, printed resources (including our *LifeDate* journal, *Life News*, *Life Quotes*, and *Directions*), Life Sunday materials and Bible studies, curricula (including Teaching For Life®), video, and through www.lutheransforlife.org.

Equips local congregations to speak out on life issues in their communities through Life Chapters and Life Teams. Many Lutherans For Life State Federations and Life Chapters also support a variety of compassionate, caring pregnancy and post-abortion ministries that offer pre- and post-natal counseling, parenting skills workshops, and lifestyle counsel.

Share the Life Message All Through the Year!

Lutherans For Life offers several easy ways to keep the life message before your congregation!

Order **LifeDate** in bulk quantities at no charge. (Donations for shipping cost will gladly be accepted.) Call 888.364.LIFE.

Download **Life News**, our monthly bulletin insert with life-issue news and more!

Sign up for **Life Notes**, our weekly email update.

Share **Life Quotes** and **Life Thoughts in the Church Year** in weekly congregational bulletins (or monthly newsletters).



Our Mission ... Equipping Lutherans to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life

Our Vision ... Every Lutheran congregation upholding the God-given value of human life and influencing society to do the same

Our Philosophy ... Lutherans For Life believes that the Church is compelled by God's Word to speak and act on behalf of those who are vulnerable and defenseless. The crisis of our times is the repudiation of biblical truth manifested in the wanton destruction of innocent human life through legalized abortion-on-demand and the growing threat to the lives of others through legalized assisted suicide and euthanasia. Therefore, as Lutherans For Life, we will strive to give witness, from a biblical perspective, to the Church and society on these and other related issues such as chastity, post-abortion healing, and family living.

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LFL has 11 State Federations, 93 Life Chapters, 110 Life Ministry Coordinators, and 103 Life Teams in the US.

LifeDate

Lutherans
For Life

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Life Sunday 2017
resource flyer inside!
Here We Stand



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