

LIFEDATE



Spring 2024
from
LUTHERANS FOR LIFE



Unchanging

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**LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE**

Equipping Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life!

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Unchanging

by Pastor Michael Salemink



Only another—and greater—certainty can deliver us.

Springtime brings changes. Weather, wildlife, and wardrobe are switching. Timepieces, taxes, and athletics are shifting. Improvement? Erosion? Or just over and over again? Whichever, we rarely and barely keep up with all the moving targets.

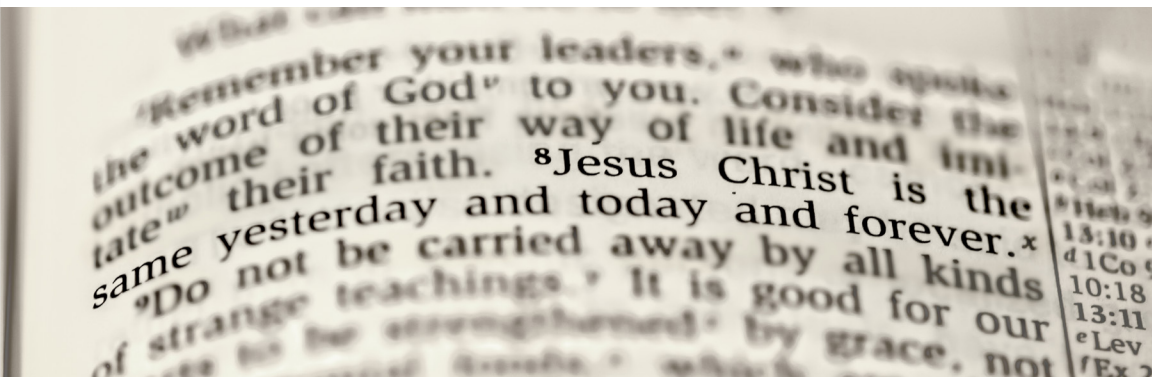
The sanctity of life has also seen its share of changes. Medical ultrasound machines arrived in the 1940s. Chemists first synthesized hormonal birth control in the 1950s. The “sexual revolution” started in the 1960s. Abortion access became mandatory in the 1970s. In vitro fertilization commenced in the 1980s. Physician-assisted suicide gained acceptance in the 1990s. Pill abortions arose in the 2000s. CRISPR genetic engineering originated in the 2010s.

Public regulations and political regimes continue to fluctuate. Novel measures using death as a solution keep emerging. As the hymnwriter memorably said, “Change and decay in all around I see.” It echoes the Apostle: “**the present form of this world is passing away**” (1 Corinthians 7:31, in a discourse directly addressing marriage and sexuality).

The whole creation convulses in the aftershocks of humankind’s fall. Since the forbidden fruit, sin and death have remained a constant of our race and our universe. Whatever our size or skills or circumstances, brokenness retains its hold. Evil may change clothes but never its core.

Only another—and greater—certainty can deliver us. The grace of Almighty God stands universal. The love of Jesus Christ still prevails as it always has and ever will. His work of creating proclaims every human life special—fact. His labor of redeeming proves every human life precious—truth. His activity of calling pronounces every human life priceless—reality. From the beginning—both the first moment of creation and the split-second of fertilization—until eternity this Gospel endures.

We speak this truth because it changes even the hardest and darkest hearts. We show this love because it saves lives in the most desperate situations and despite age, appearance, or ability. And we receive every neighbor as a gift and privilege because we delight together in a steadfast, faithful, and unchanging God.



Change vs. Unchanging

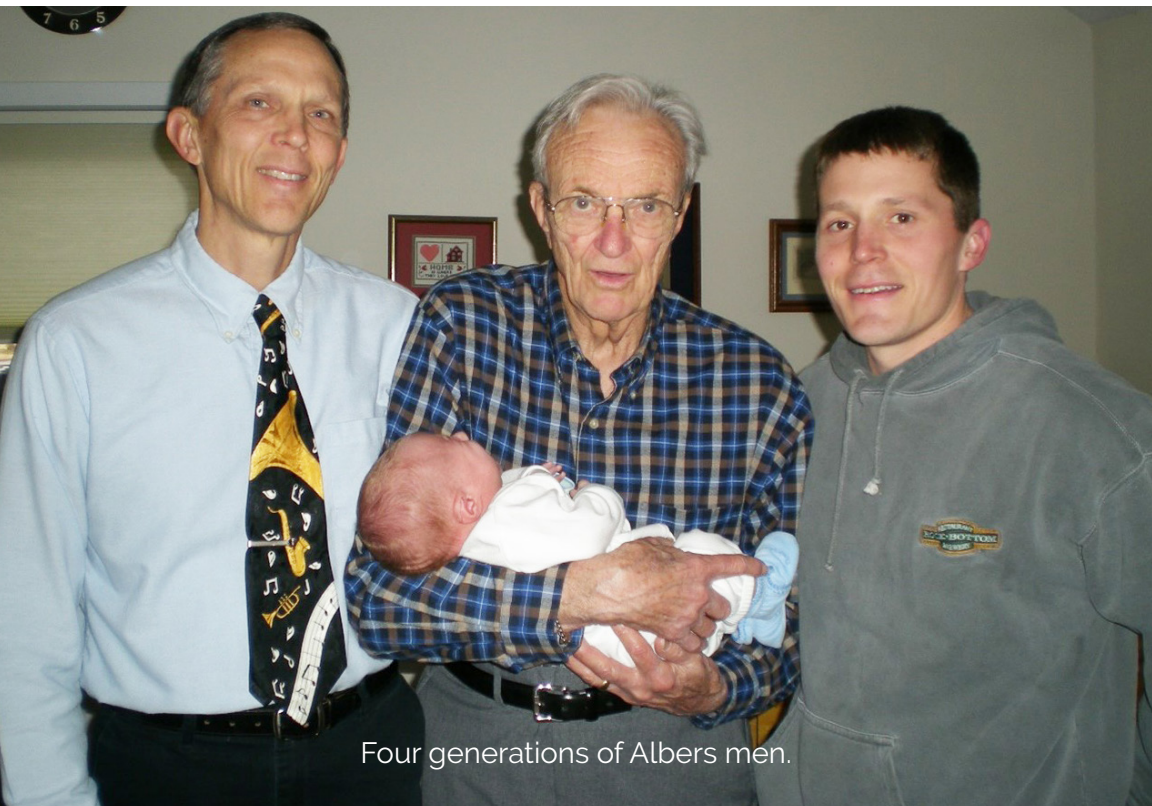
by Diane Albers, President of Lutherans For Life



Change, change. Nobody likes change, least of all Lutherans! But, of course change is inevitable. From the moment you began, you changed very quickly. By the time you were attached to your mother's uterus—a week after fertilization—you were a growing cluster of 100 cells.

After you are born, adults will constantly comment on how big you are getting as you learn to walk and talk, and soon you are off to school. You are changing and growing into your own person, and suddenly—or so it seems to the adults in your life—you are graduating from high school. The next phase is job training or college and then a job. You get married and raise a family, and, all too soon, you are the one who needs the care from a son or daughter. Change is inevitable.

For a long time abortion was illegal, but change came with *Roe v. Wade*, and it was not a good change. At first, not many people protested this change, and even some religious leaders and church bodies agreed that it was a good decision. However, some church bodies, like the Roman Catholic Church and some Lutherans became more vocal For Life. Leaders like Lutherans For Life's own Dr. Jean Garton, Nellie Gray (founder of the March for Life—there were 20,000 at the first March in 1974), Dr. Mildred Jefferson (President of National Right to Life, 1975), and Dr. Bernard Nathanson (former abortionist who produced the film *The Silent Scream* in 1984) began to educate people on preborn life.



Four generations of Albers men.

Of course, things changed with the Dobbs decision, which moved the abortion issue back to the states. We know that our work is not done. We still have to support our pregnancy help centers and work with the politicians in our state to uphold life-affirming laws. But the whole abortion issue has changed with the mobile abortion units that travel along state lines, major companies paying for abortions and travel expenses for employees, and, worst of all, chemical abortion pills that can be ordered online without a doctor involved at all.

As the For Life movement grew up, other life issues have been added: living with disabilities, adoption and foster care, infanticide, cloning, stem cell research, physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, and more. Life is being assailed from so many directions. This can be frustrating, horrifying, anger-inducing, and depressing. We want to uphold the blessings of Life that God gave us, but what can we really do to change things?

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:16-17).

We know that life with all its changes is a good and perfect gift from the Father, and nothing can change that. We know that there will always be changes in laws and politics, and we can only change that as best as we can. The comfort that we do know is that the Father does not change like shifting shadows.

In today’s world, changes are swift and inevitable, but our faith and trust in our unchanging God are the comforts that sustain us!

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

**“For you formed
my inward parts:
you knit me
together in my
mother’s womb”
(Psalm 139:13).**



Waves and Ripples

by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life



The spring rains have come. The trees are budding, and the flowers are blooming: It will be graduation season soon.

As a former teacher in Lutheran schools, the month of May carries with it waves of nostalgia for me. It's a reminder of momentous occasions—of honors nights, scholarship announcements, prom, and state runs—of moments filled with anticipation and joy, of waves that crest on triumph.

But waves have troughs, too, low points that create concern. May often rekindles memories of preparing for graduation, of wading through the excited uncertainty that is ever-present in a classroom full of high school seniors. And it brings to mind the wave of fear and anticipation that grows higher and higher weeks before graduation, a wave so powerful it threatens to wash the class overboard.

Yes, as graduation looms and their boats are readying to set sail, many youth discover they haven't quite found their sea legs yet. They're excited, but shaky. Ready for the adventure, but not quite willing to let go of the rope.

Change. It can be scary. And, at least on this side of heaven, it never ends.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus is often credited with the quip: "The only thing that is constant is change." And for the most part, we can agree. Time continues. Life goes on. Change is a constant reality. And because we cannot avoid change, we are encouraged to embrace it, seek it even.

In fact, the world would have us believe that change is inherently good. Graduation is a prime example. As youth stand on the shore of their futures and tentatively look out over the unknown depths they'll encounter, graduation cards often minimize fears. Instead, they send youth off with cheers. "Why hesitate?" they ask. "Go forth and change the world for good!"

And those well-wishes are meant to encourage. But it's a tall order—changing the world for good.

The truth is, Heraclitus missed one other constant in life, a constant Who makes all things good, even change that's fraught with worry. James 1:16-17 reminds us,

"Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Every good and perfect gift is from above—that seems to be worth repeating.

It is wonderfully ironic that only a changeless God can change the world for good, isn't it? And it's not only ironic, it's also freeing. Mother Teresa once said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." She was right of course. Human beings cannot single-handedly change the world, no matter how many graduation cards say otherwise. But our changeless God can. And He does.

That is the good news we have to share this May and always. Because of Christ's work, youth are able to sail fearlessly into their future, for God has planted their feet firmly on His deck, the Ark of Christ. They don't have to be afraid of the storms

to come, for He holds them in His hand. Youth can simply focus on sharing Christ with their neighbor. And having been upheld by God Himself, they are free to uphold the lives of others.

The same is true for you and me. Called to faith and given the redemptive gifts Christ earned for us on the cross, we not only live in our baptismal waters but also, by God's grace, make ripples of life in the world. Even more exciting? As carriers of that message in our vocations, we are able to cause ripples and waves of life in the lives of our nearest neighbors, our family and friends.

LFL has always rejoiced in the opportunity to cause ripples of life; for decades we have looked for new ways to equip Lutherans and their neighbors to uphold lives. In recent years, we've made a concerted effort to expand LFL's ministry to include youth through our **Y4Life** program, and God has blessed that program with much enthusiasm and growth.

Recently, God has opened up another horizon. And though we're still in the early stages and testing out our sea legs, we at LFL are excited about embarking on this new venture: We're setting a purposeful course to reach and support young adults in their 20's and early 30's. This new **YA For Life** program will provide Gospel-motivated responses to the unique life issues young adults face as well as provide opportunities for peer engagement. **YA For Life** will also act as a bridge, helping to connect young adults with both our **Y4Life** and **Volunteer Relations** departments.

We hope you're ready to join us on the voyage and help us, by the grace of God, make waves and ripples in the lives of young adults! If you know of anyone who might be interested in connecting with **YA For Life** or simply want more information, please reach out to me at mbauman@lutheransforlife.org or check out more at our brand-new website—yaforlife.org—today!

Thank you for being a Gospel-motivated voice For Life and for your support of our ministry. May God continue to work through YOU to create ripples of life in your family, church, community, and world!



At the 2024 March for Life

Puffins and the Good and Perfect Gift

by Barbara Lane Geistfeld, D.V.M.



God made puffins to make us laugh.

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1: 16-17).

God has truly blessed me with many “good and perfect” gifts in my 70 plus years of life. I could create a very long list that includes my faith, my family and friends, a job I loved, good health, and world travel ... endless perfect gifts! But as you might expect from the D.V.M. after my name, one of the things that tops any list is God’s incredibly beautiful and complex creation, especially the animals. The iridescent colors of the fish on a coral reef, a macaw’s brilliant feathers, a mustang stallion standing on a hill under purple storm clouds, a Horny Toad—aka the Texas Horned Lizard—all make my heart swell with awe and joy and gratitude toward my heavenly Father who has given it all to me to enjoy.



Atlantic Puffins as seen in Iceland on Flatey Island.
Photos by Barbara Lane Geistfeld, D.V.M.

God has a purpose behind these gifts of nature, behind these gifts of life. They are not random afterthoughts of a hodge-podge creation. He wants all of us to see Him for Who He is by what He has done. There is none like Him! The incredible complexity of the human body is another of the many marvels that the world ignores in their pursuit of personal freedom and their own ideologies. God says to us in His creation, “Look at yourself! You are incredibly made. How can you doubt my presence?”

“For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made ...” (Romans 1:20).

So, the “things that have been made” include the Atlantic Puffin. It’s the beak, right? Without the beak they are just another black and white bird. God made puffins to make us laugh. He made puffins to get us to take a second look at His creation. Pretty hard to ignore a puffin. He made puffins as a “good and perfect gift” to bring us pure joy. God desires us to look at all His creation with new eyes and to see the beauty He created for us because He is the Father of lights. He is unchanging in His love for us.

We desperately need our Father of lights. When life around us is dark and despairing, when troubles are real and overwhelming, when our hurts outweigh our joys, take a moment to think about God’s beautiful creation given for us as a “good and perfect gift.” Take a moment to remember that we have another Light in our world—our Lord Jesus Who is the Creator of all things and is the light of men.

“[The Word] was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:2-4).

We know that life will continue to throw bad things our way, so every so often, let us take a moment to admire God’s creation that surrounds us—and remember the puffin!



Ten Reasons Not to Take Your Own Life

by Pastor Michael Salemink



A million other great and little reasons exist that we've not enumerated.

The suicide rate in the United States has gone up almost fifty percent in twenty years. No one escapes the sufferings and sorrows—*anxiety, embarrassment, guilt, grief, loneliness, self-loathing*—that can drive to despair. Sinful nature, fallen world, and devil himself never weary of afflicting. Winter months, with their lack of daylight and outdoor activities, can prove particularly problematic. Somebody near you, if not you too, may be enduring the temptation to end this life right now.

But the Heavenly Father is at hand. And a Gracious Savior is at work. God sees, and Jesus knows. His crucifixion testifies how He is counteracting sin and pain with forgiveness. His resurrection demonstrates Who is overcoming death and hell in victory. Comfort and peace, encouragement and rest remain. Relief and healing, hope and joy prevail.

So consider these ten—of many—reasons not to take your own life:

1. It goes against God's Word and will. The Lord forbids taking life, and that includes yours. He has not designed you for destruction. Your body belongs to Him as a temple for the Holy Spirit. Almighty Maker wants you here.
2. Suicide is ultimate and irreversible. Your current state of heart and mind could be mistaken or momentary. Responding to something temporary with something permanent doesn't make sense. Your future self will regret not finding out who you are becoming.
3. It might not work. Every method has failed before, and you may survive it. You could end up increasing your misery by adding injury to it. And somebody—either you or one close to you—will have to tend to the aftermath of the act.
4. It will not solve the real problems. The pain hurting you has to get identified and confronted so that it cannot harm others. Suicide only transfers it and amplifies it by leaving the important questions unanswered.

“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.”

Psalm 34:18-19

5. It hurts others. Killing yourself could provoke somebody else—neighbors or even strangers—to do the same. Your absence will deprive loved ones of the opportunity to assist and serve (and of yours to do so for them).
6. Things are going to get better. The Lord God Almighty has an end in sight for what you're undergoing. He has confirmed it by carrying you this far through every previous difficulty. Your outlook will improve sooner than you even realize.
7. Opportunities await. Creation has abundant blessings you have not yet encountered or experienced. Another adventure lies just ahead which you simply cannot imagine. And it's going to bring discoveries and enjoyments you do not want to miss.
8. The Body of Christ abides right beside you. Jesus still cries the same tears and pleas to the Father Everlasting as you do. The brothers and sisters are also facing agonies like yours. They look forward to lifting your crosses the way that you delight in sharing theirs.
9. This distress has a purpose. Someday someone will need the wisdom you're receiving in this very predicament. You are discharging a vocation and mission that is already benefitting a weaker one of whom you are not now aware. God makes celebrations of crucifixions and is wringing you wonders.
10. You have gifts to bestow. Your Savior is offering you as somebody's answer to prayer and reason to live. That person is urgently anticipating the difference you're making, and you may not have even met. Your life comes as a gift and privilege to so many whom you never see.

A million other great and little reasons exist that we've not enumerated. You have permission to beg God reveal them. Reach out and call out also to the ones He's positioned right in front of you. You wouldn't hesitate to do it for them.

If you or someone you care about feels suicidal, please call our **Word of Hope** hotline (word-of-hope.org) at (888) 217-8679 or the **National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** at 988.



One Mind. One Heart. One Voice.

by Pastor Paul Clark, President of LFL of Michigan

Jesus said, “Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:5-7).

We stand together, one in mind and heart, and with one voice, in defense of the lives of our unborn children—**God’s precious little ones**. Yet, what we stand for is not *only* the lives of these precious unborn children, but *also* the moms, the dads, the grandmas and grandpas, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick and dying. What we stand for is the very *value*—the very *gift*—of life itself.

We continue to be a voice for the voiceless. We speak because we must, for there is a darkness over much of our nation, and a deathly shadow has fallen over the minds of many. Many bought into the lie that abortion is primarily about women’s health care. It is not. Abortion *is not and has never been* about true health care.

Dear brothers and sisters: We who are blessed to know the Lord of Life also know that in even the darkest hour, the truth still shines forth, and it shines all the brighter. God has given us life. He has redeemed us through Jesus. Life is of great value—each and every single human life. For the same Lord Jesus who said, “**Let the little children come to me**” (Matthew 19:14) is the One who brought *you* to Him as well, through those blessed and saving waters of our Holy Baptism.

By the mercy and grace of God shown to us sinners, by the baptismal washing that makes us clean, by the holy food of the Sacrament that nourishes us in body and soul, we are called and empowered to speak and defend the lives of our babies. We are called to double-down on our efforts to love and encourage and help those in turmoil, in crisis, in fear, and in despair. This we do through our prayers and our Gospel-motivated deeds of caring and love. We do this through our steady support of our pregnancy resource centers, as well as the ongoing efforts of Lutherans For Life, that we may be **Gospel-motivated voices For Life!**

Dear fellow saints: We have put on Christ; we are His own. And here is where we stand: Living under Him in His kingdom and serving Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. That is why we want to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life. We care. We care about that precious baby, but we also care about the mom. We care about that woman who is haunted by the guilt and shame of a past abortion. We care about the people of our state and the future of our nation. We care because Jesus cares for us. We love because God first loved us. And this we know! Our Lord Jesus—who died for us and took away all of our sin and guilt and shame—is risen and ascended to the Father’s throne. **JESUS LIVES! THE VICTORY’S WON!** We are His people, a new creation, called out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

Stand your ground. Continue in the battle. But do so in love and compassion and in the truth that sets us free—the truth of Christ crucified for you. For through all the darkness of sin and evil—even when it seeks to overwhelm you—there stands Jesus. The One who loves you and gave Himself for you—your **SAVIOR**, your **KING**, and your **ETERNAL HOPE** and **JOY!**



We stand together, one in mind and heart,
and with one voice, in defense of the lives of our unborn
children—**God's precious little ones.**

Clarifications

The Winter 2023 issue of *LifeDate* ("Just As ... I AM") included an article entitled, "A Statement on Determination of Death" (p. 10). It indicated that, in the context of organ donation, "Removing heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, and other essential tissues would cause death if it had not already happened prior to the procedure." This assertion refers to the donating of both lungs, both kidneys, or the entire liver, as it is possible (and ethically permissible) for one to donate one lung, one kidney, or a lobe of liver (or portions thereof) and survive.

Lutherans For Life prepared a bulletin insert for inclusion in congregational worship materials on Life Sunday 2024. Entitled, "Just As ... I AM," it affirms, in part, that "Persons undergoing surprise pregnancy, experiencing disability, or suffering terminal diagnosis matter as much as you and me." An eagle-eyed Gospel-motivated voice For Life noted that this can come across as "othering"—that those facing these circumstances "are not 'you and me.'" Of course, we intended to communicate precisely the opposite! We deeply regret any offensive exclusion or discrimination this may have implied. And we commit to continue improving our expressions to convey the honor and value with which God Himself invests every human life.

Your Ministry Partnership Matters!

Lutherans For Life cherishes your support in our education, advocacy, and life-affirming endeavors. Your faithful and unwavering partnership is making an impact in the hearts of all people and the lives of their neighbors. Listed below are examples of the many ways your financial donation might be used to assist our Gospel-motivated, life-affirming work.

Gospel Preparation – (Under \$250)

- One registration for a Y4Life Apologetics Retreat.
- Print and ship a Life Team tool kit.
- Paper for a month (office supplies).
- Translating an LFL brochure into Spanish.
- Adding close captioning to online videos.
- One Word of Hope spiritual care session.
- One Word of Hope hotline call.



LUTHERANS
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Gospel Motivation – (\$250 - \$500)

- T-shirts for Y4Life Summit participants.
- One student scholarship for Y4Life Conference.
- Develop and print one Frontline playbook.
- One student scholarship for Y4Life in Washington, D.C.
- Conduct beta testing for new and converted materials online.

Gospel Transformation – (\$500 - \$750)

- Website maintenance for six months.
- Transfer Frontline training materials to an online resource.
- Print Word of Hope brochures.

Gospel Proclamation – (Over \$750)


- Publication of a new LFL brochure or Y4Life infographic.
- Travel expenses for an LFL presentation or exhibit.
- Spotlight on Life event.
- Edit or build a Frontline video.
- One year of Microsoft Office for LFL staff.
- Word of Hope video production of online training materials.
- Mailing quarterly *LifeDate* journal.

If you would like to partner with LFL and our efforts to uphold life from fertilization to forever, please consider an online gift at lutheransforlife.org/donate or mail your donation to Lutherans For Life, 1101 5th Street, Nevada, IA 50201-1816.

And remember ... Every time you shop at any of the 1,800+ online stores in the **iGive** network, a portion of the money you spend benefits Lutherans For Life. It's a free service, and you'll never pay more when you reach a store through **iGive**. In fact, smart shoppers will enjoy **iGive**'s repository of coupons, free shipping deals, and sales. To get started, just create your free **iGive** account. Start iGiving at: www.iGive.com/LFL.



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Chats 4 Life – Offering high school and college youth an opportunity to learn about contemporary life topics from expert guest speakers. Held every first and third Thursday at 7:00 p.m. CT/8:00 p.m. ET.

What about ... Mondays? – On the second Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. CT/7:00 p.m. ET, students gather to talk about life issues and to find hope-filled, Gospel-motivated answers.

For Life Conversations – Recorded 5-15 minute interviews on life topics shared on our Facebook page and website.

JOIN
US
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LFL

Spotlight on



LIFE

Spotlight on Life brings awareness of life issues through brief locally hosted events. From abortion to euthanasia, human trafficking or disabilities, sexuality and gender, or marriage and family, we work with you to find the right expert speaker and set up for your life event needs.



Help your life event shine!

Willing to host a brief event in your church to promote life?

Contact us for more information info+spotlight@lutheransforlife.org.

NEW

I praise you because ...



... I am fearfully and wonderfully made

I Praise You ... – This beautiful 14" x 36" fold-out brochure highlights the fetal development of Jesus in the womb.
Item LFL101B. \$1.00 ea.

LFL

NEW

*Psalm 23
for Grandparents*

Psalm 23 for Grandparents – One of the greatest gifts given to us from the Bible is Psalm 23 ... It defines our Lord and renews our faith in a few short verses. You are invited to read through this psalm written by King David, contemplate its meaning, and pray for the grandchild you now adore.
Item 309B. \$3.00 ea.



Prayers for Life Series



Order LFL Resources at cph.org or 800.325.3040. Shipping/handling applies to all orders. Quantity pricing on select resources.

NEW

Ministering to the Victims of Alzheimer's Disease and Their Families

by Theodore W. Barthels



NEW

Miscarriages: An Empty Cradle and a Full Hope



Ministering to the Victims of Alzheimer's Disease and Their Families – Thoughts on ministering at a critical time. *Item LFL1605. \$1.00 ea.*

Miscarriages: An Empty Cradle and a Full Hope – The author writes, "We grieve, but not as those who have no hope." *Item 412B. \$0.50 ea.*



LIFE SHINES IN DARKNESS



Find Y4Life infographic fold-out brochures at lutheransforlife.org/resources/store.

2024 LFL Regional Conferences *Join Us! Life Shines in Darkness*

September 14, 2024
Regional Conference Northeast
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Bristol, Connecticut (Hartford area)

October 12, 2024
Regional Conference Midwest
Hope Lutheran Church and School
Shawnee, Kansas (Kansas City area)

November 9, 2024
Regional Conference Southeast
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
Winter Garden, Florida (Orlando area)



**LUTHERANS
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Available in App Stores



Share the For Life message all year long with **Life Quotes!**

Life Quotes are quotations on life issues—many from LFL resources and publications—for use in weekly congregational bulletins. You are also free to use the quotations in your monthly newsletter.

lutheransforlife.org/resources/life-quotes



Do you know a family in your congregation who is having its fourth or more child? Fill out the form at the link below, and the Miami Valley Life Chapter will send a blanket made with love directly to this expectant mother (in the continental United States). No strings attached! lutheransforlife.org/article/lambs-lutherans-assembling-mercy-blankets



Buying or selling a home or commercial property? Support Lutherans For Life at the same time! Call 877.543.3871 or email proliferealestate@yahoo.com for more information. realestateforlife.org
lutheransforlife.org/real-estate-for-life



Frontline Call – For all LFL Frontline volunteers! Monday, April 8, 2024 – 7:00 p.m. CT/8:00 p.m. ET. There will be a devotion, activity update, life project ideas, guest speakers, and Q & A. **For topics, speakers, and Zoom links, go to the LFL homepage calendar.**



For those who have had an abortion, a Word of Hope ... 888.217.8679
word-of-hope.org
info@word-of-hope.org



Find Lutherans For **Life** on ...



Help ensure the future of **CHRISTIAN ADOPTION**



FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS
ESTHER 4:14



LUTHERAN ADOPTION CONFERENCE

APR 10-11, 2024 | HOUSTON, TX

Urgently calling to attend: faith leaders, life advocates & ministries, lay leaders, policy makers, adoption experts, and those passionate about increasing Biblically-based adoption



**MARK
SCHULTZ**

Keynote
Musician &
Adoptee



**REV. MICHAEL
SALEMINK**

Executive Director
Lutherans
For Life



**REV. MAX
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REGISTER



REGISTER TODAY  **LUTHERANSADOPT.ORG**

Did you know more than 114,000 children in the U.S. are currently awaiting an adoptive home? Did you know that almost 153 million little ones live as orphans right now worldwide? And did you know that Lutherans can't wait to do something about it?

Acting in Love or Judgment?

by Virginia J. Flo, Director of Volunteer Relations



“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

The mission of Lutherans For Life is to “equip Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life.” As you are equipping, how are you doing it? Does it get frustrating at times, especially when you don’t see the results you are looking for? What then?

It’s easy to stray from using your voice in a Gospel-motivated way to becoming judgmental. It becomes frustrating when we see how the world continues to defy God’s Word and dishonor the sanctity of life. We want to do something to change things quickly, on our own timeline. The dreaded silence we often hear is deafening because we want to hear and see results. Now.

Are people silent out of fear of being chastised or ridiculed, or are they simply in agreement but don’t know how to express it? Being silent is safe. Yet, the results we want to see aren’t showing, and we want to know how we are doing. We want to personally see people having an open change of heart from something we have said or done.

Seeing how the world is content to live in a culture of death makes you want to shout out, “You sinners, stop what you are doing!” Maybe you want to make a list of all the commandments being broken and publish them for the world to see, especially when you see the terrible laws being passed in many states that not only allow but encourage the killing of babies through abortion and the sick and elderly through assisted suicide. Maybe you’d like to pull out those pictures of aborted babies torn apart through the evil act of abortion and put them on display also for the world to see. Do you feel it would be good to shock people into changing their thinking about a particular life issue?

Perhaps that practice might work on a few people, but for how long, and does that really bring them closer to God? Those practices are singularly Law focused. And without the Gospel, we might even push people farther away from our Savior. Is that what we want for a woman or man struggling with the guilt of having had or participated in an abortion? Are we really trying to change hearts through the Gospel or simply trying to do something to make people wake up? Then what? (Yes, we need the Law, but without the Gospel, the results will be minimal.)

So, when we talk one on one, make public statements in a presentation, write a newspaper article, or some other form of communication, what should be our approach? Scripture is full of heart-changing truths that are there for us to share. Using God’s Word may seem like a longer path to bring back sinners, but they are the exact words they need to hear. (We do, too!)

When those of us that are part of our Lutherans For Life family present ourselves as those fire-breathing dragons that tear people down, filling them with fear, what do you think will be accomplished? Announcing that you are a member of Lutherans For Life and because of that, people need to listen to you surely doesn’t hold the

weight of God's Word. We want our results to be a change of hearts for those supporting abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and the like outside of God's will. In doing so, the best path forward is through the Gospel message. Am I saying we never point out that abortion is a sin and other means of death are not in line with God's plan For Life? No. Of course, we must use the Law in order to point to the need for the Gospel. But when we do this in a manner that avoids sharing God's love For Life, it might just be that we sin through our judgment.

May we never forget that our role is to plant the seeds of truth, and God is the one that nourishes and grows the life-affirming message He has sown throughout Scripture. If we expect to be the one to change hearts by sowing seeds of judgment rather than love, we are changing the mission we are sent to fulfill. Please use your Gospel-motivated voice For Life in love and may God bless your efforts! In Jesus' name we pray!

"What then is Apollos?
What is Paul?
Servants through
whom you believed,
as the Lord assigned
to each. 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 3:5-7



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Changing Hearts

by Pastor Robert Fleischmann

For 35 years, I have traveled throughout North America giving presentations and Bible classes on life issues. Invariably, attendees try to pin me down on political issues. I always respond, “None of the political parties understand original sin.” Their strategies are inherently flawed.

We see this sad reality in a recent *Wall Street Journal* article that reported abortions have risen since the Dobbs ruling on June 24, 2022* (“Procedures on Rise Since Court Voided *Roe v. Wade*,” Oct. 25, 2023). Two weeks later another headline announced that one more state had codified abortion rights into its constitution (“Ohio Voters Enshrine Right to Abortion,” *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 8, 2023).

The jubilation in the streets from the pro-life community on the day of the Dobbs decision reflected the natural relief that comes from accomplishing a 49-year goal. Unfortunately, many people forgot that the decision addressed a symptom of a deeper problem.

Historically, humans have trouble taking direction. A rebellious streak in all of us surfaces each time we are told what we should or should not do (Genesis 8:21; Romans 8:7). “Don’t eat of the tree” was God’s command in Eden. And they ate of the tree. “Jonah, go to Ninevah,” was the command. And he went in the opposite direction. I think some of this is at work regarding abortion.

Advocates of abortion rights are taught not to argue for abortion but for reproductive freedom and choice because they are popular and compelling topics. Abortion rights advocates don’t want to talk about fetal heartbeats, fetal pain, detectable brain waves, unique fingerprints, and chromosomal makeup. They do not want humanity or personhood to be part of the conversation. Instead, they have successfully made abortion a reproductive rights issue, regardless of what happens in an abortion.

Original sin is that persistent desire, even within God’s people, to challenge God. It is what the Apostle Paul talked about when he said, “**I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing**” (Romans 7:19).

There are ideologues on both sides of the issue. Those who favor abortion don’t care that a life is lost. Bowing to no other authority but their own, they argue



Humans bent on challenging God find a way to do it.

Ultimately, though, changed hearts provide the alternative of eternal hope when despair and desperation tempt us to do bad things.

that some lives are expendable. That is a position rooted in original sin. Pro-life ideologues quickly forget that legalistic measures do not solve the problem.

A changed heart is the goal. A heart equipped with faith, driven by the Holy Spirit, fights our sinful inclination to do wrong and focuses on honoring God with words and actions.

In 1979, WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) adopted a resolution that condemned abortion with two pertinent resolves:

- that we encourage our membership to express their concern and compassion for distressed pregnant women by supporting the development of alternatives to abortion programs which are consistent with God's Word; and
- that we more zealously preach the Gospel of Christ which alone can change the wicked hearts of men and turn them from sin to righteousness.

We need pro-life laws and alternative-to-abortion options to provide bridges and buy time for us to share the Gospel of salvation in Christ. Yet we cannot settle for a favorable court ruling, a strong piece of legislation, or a life-favoring politician. Humans bent on challenging God find a way to do it. Ultimately, though, changed hearts provide the alternative of eternal hope when despair and desperation tempt us to do bad things.

**Roe v. Wade is the 1973 US Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion across the nation. With the Dobbs decision, the Supreme Court held that the US Constitution does not confer any right to abortion. This decision does not abolish abortion in the United States. Instead, each state now decides for itself whether abortion should be legal in its state and, if so, to what degree.*

Rev. Robert Fleischmann is national director for Christian Life Resources. Article used by permission.

Abortion Was the Leading Cause of Death Worldwide in 2023, Killing 73 Million People

More human beings died from abortions than any other cause of death in 2023. A heartbreaking reminder about the prevalence of abortion, statistics compiled by Worldometers indicate that there were over 73 million abortions worldwide in 2023. The independent site collects data from governments and other organizations and then reports the data, along with estimates and projections, based on those numbers.

Worldometers bases its daily abortion figures on a fact sheet from the World Health Organization, which estimates an even higher figure for abortions per year than Worldometers. "Around 73 million induced abortions take place worldwide each year," the WHO says.

Abortion is also the leading cause of death in the United States.

Source: www.lifenews.com/2024/01/02/abortion-was-the-leading-cause-of-death-worldwide-in-2023-killing-73-million-people/

An Unexpected Chapel Talk

by Mike Albers, President of Lutherans For Life of Missouri

One task expected of us as called educators was to lead chapel devotions every so often. For one of the chapels I led, I had this on the screen at the beginning:

A _ O _ TION

I stated that today's chapel would be about this topic. At that point one of my colleagues who had me "figured out" stated, loudly, "Abortion!" (He and I had previously had "life" discussions; he actually came to be a fully committed "Lifer," rethinking some of the "population" issues he had—and yes, he was a social studies instructor)


At that point, I put up the next screen: aDoPtion. Most of the kids and teachers had a reaction, as they too expected an abortion chapel—again.

Two of my students were adopted and agreed to participate by speaking about their lives. Kristin was the eldest daughter of our pregnancy help center director at the time. She was/is vivacious and did a marvelous job sharing her story in support of adoption. The other student was a daughter of one of our teachers. This family had adopted three children from Asia, plus having a natural child of their own. Ali not only made a great impression, as the kids all knew her, too, but also did a great job supporting life via adoption. The Spirit was very much at work during that chapel time. All I had left to do was close with prayer.

A family of five (now six), the third child being adopted a few years ago, recently adopted another baby, a boy. They had to travel to Arizona to pick him up and bring him home to Cape Girardeau, Missouri. This is a very expensive sacrifice they were willing to make. The dad is a pastor, and his wife is a teacher (both members in the LCMS). They needed much help financially.

They applied to Lifesong and received matching grants. One of these grants was from our own adoption fund, sponsored by Lutherans For Life of Missouri. (Find out more about this fund in the newsletters at the LFL of Missouri website: www.lfolfmo.org.) They still had to raise money themselves to receive a match for whatever amount they obtained, up to the limit that our board of directors had passed. This is collected through Lifesong (lifesong.org).

Perhaps this is something you can set up through your own Life Team, Life Chapter, State Federation, or congregation. (You can also learn much more about adoption at the Lutheran Adoption Conference coming up in April. See page 19.)



“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).



Getting ready for the 2024 March for Life in Washington, D.C.

Together again! For our winter retreat, February 7-8, the Lutherans For Life staff gathered in person (as well as virtually) from around the country at the wonderful Afton House Inn in Afton, Minnesota.



Lucy, a Lover of Life in Bulgaria

by Linda Phillips, *Helping Hands Eastern European Ministries*

Beautiful Bulgaria lies to the north of Greece. It is famous for extraordinary roses, world-class wines, cozy inns scattered among the many mountains, and sunny beaches on the Black Sea. Recently, it has gained notoriety for having one of the highest rates of abortion of any country in the European Union. For 2022, the abortion rate was just under 20% (One in five pregnancies ended in abortion). What led to this dismal situation?

Many Communist leaders consider religion either foolishness or a threat to their control of the people. Ludmilla (“Lucy”) Popova was born in Bulgaria while the Communists ruled. Her mother, Bogdona, had been told that she had a weak heart and was pushed to abort her first two children. When Lucy was a teenager, her father, Slavcho, took a job in Cuba. While living there, Lucy learned Cuban Spanish.

During her early adult years, Lucy was drawn to a church by the beautiful music she heard. She became a believer. Her husband, an attorney, also came to faith when he was young. Lutcho Popov helped many churches become registered in Bulgaria during the early years after the fall of Communism. He has also worked hard to promote rule of law in other countries.

Years ago, Lucy heard some Lutheran pro-life speakers give a presentation. She started her own pro-life education and counseling organization. Her ministry includes counseling women who have had an abortion and suffer from the consequences of it. While working on her doctorate, Lucy wrote a book on abortion. She has given talks throughout Bulgaria on abortion and pornography, including one at a large high school in northwestern Bulgaria.



The economy in Bulgaria the last few decades has also led to more abortions. Most women do not want their children to go into an orphanage and think abortion is a better solution.

Lucy has given talks in Serbia, Germany, and England. She would like to go to Cuba and give pro-life talks there. Sadly, Cuba has the highest abortion rate in the world, with almost half of all pregnancies there being terminated.

Throughout her years as a pro-life worker, Lucy has found that her greatest encouragement is from the children saved from abortion after their mother heard one of her talks. Here are some of the verses Lucy uses in her pro-life work: Genesis 9:6; Psalm 139:13-16; and Jeremiah 1:5.

Although Lucy wanted a law to be passed in Bulgaria requiring all women requesting an abortion to see their baby on an ultrasound, the European Union will not allow it. Please pray for Lucy and her very important ministry.

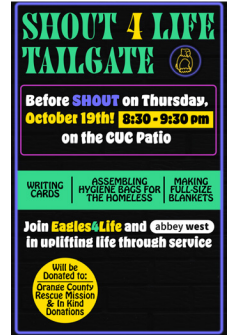
SHOUT! for Life

by Eagles4Life

As representatives of Christ who made all human life with inherent and eternal value, Concordia Irvine's **Eagles4Life** seeks to be for life through education, service, and outreach.

To fulfill this mission statement, **Eagles4Life** collaborated with Abbey West, Concordia Irvine's on-campus ministry department, to focus on the life issue of homelessness. Every Thursday evening, Abbey West regularly hosts **SHOUT!**, a student-led worship with testimonial-style devotions. On October 19, **SHOUT!** became **SHOUT! for Life**. Warmed with hot chocolate and filled with cookies, attending students served by knotting blankets and packing bags full of daily necessities, such as toothbrushes and wet wipes. These items were then packaged to send to the Orange County Rescue Mission and InKind Donations in Orange County, two organizations dedicated to helping the homeless. Additionally, **Eagles4Life** set up a table containing **Y4Life** pamphlets to educate about other life issues. After the bags and blankets were finished, students headed inside the chapel building to worship and listen to a devotion from **Eagles4Life** president Madison Zuniga.

Being a recently established club, **Eagles4Life** did not have many resources or people available to it. **SHOUT! for Life** was **Eagles4Life's** first collaboration with a larger established organization on campus, and it was a great experience that allowed students with overlapping Gospel-oriented and Christ-centered vision to work together to aid the community.



SHOUT 4 LIFE TAILGATE

Before **SHOUT!** on Thursday,
October 19th! 8:30 - 9:30 pm
on the CUC Patio

WRITING CARDS ASSEMBLING HYGIENE BAGS FOR THE HOMELESS MAKING FULL-SIZE BLANKETS

Join **Eagles4Life** and **abbey west**
in uplifting life through service

Will be Donated to:
Orange County
Rescue Mission
& InKind
Donations



Life Thoughts in the Church Year

Based on appointed readings from Lutheran Service Book

April 7 – Easter II – How remarkable that our Lord’s beloved Apostle St. John describes the Gospel of Jesus Christ as “the Word of Life” (1 John 1:2). He also declares all believers qualify as “little children” (2:1). And he proclaims that God has given His Son to redeem “the whole world” – every member of the human race, no matter what age, appearance, or ability. Even personal choice or political controversy can’t keep us quiet about it!

April 14 – Easter III – With St. Peter and the Pentecost Apostles, we confess Jesus Christ alone as “Author of life” (Acts 3:15). This means no one else has right or responsibility to decide what kind of life a neighbor may have or when any human life ought to end. Rather, we rejoice to repeat the message of repentance and forgiveness (Luke 24:47) for every sinner and every sin – abortion and assisted suicide included.

April 21 – Easter IV – The Gracious Savior brings a delightful clarity to life-and-death issues and situations. Killing and destroying belongs entirely to the work of the devil (John 10:11). The people of God advocate and extend abundant, everlasting life to the Lord’s every last little lamb. Unto all our neighbors, with both our voice and our goods (1 John 3:17), may we “come that they may have life and have it abundantly!”

April 28 – Easter V – It is anxiety and fright that drive folks to pursue abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and other measures that view death as a solution. Fear likewise bullies the sanctity of life into silence. But the Lord’s perfect love puts all fear to flight (1 John 4:18). In surprise pregnancy and terminal diagnosis, we and our neighbors need not independence and empowerment but the presence, promises, and compassion of the Father Almighty.

May 5 – Easter VI – Surprise pregnancy does involve difficulties too great for our abilities. Terminal diagnosis indeed comes with insurmountable obstacles. Taking life-and-death matters into one’s own hands only compounds the problems. Instead, trust the Son of God to overcome and deliver out of every threat (1 John 5:4). Cry out to Jesus in repentance and prayer, for the Father above will not fail to supply immediate and eternal salvation (John 15:16).

May 12 – Easter VII/Mother’s Day – The world ridicules motherhood as hindrance. It complains that children get in the way of education, career, income, gratification, and even climate. But the testimony of God is greater than the testimony of men (1 John 5:9). Real life and full life come in Christ Jesus, His Son, who shows us the joy of loving and keeping every daughter and son the Holy Father gives (John 17:11-12).

May 19 – Pentecost – The Holy Spirit means to make a dwelling place of every human body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The Scriptures explicitly apply this mission to old and young, male or female (Acts 2:17), and even the unborn (Psalm 139:13). We have the invitation and commission to proclaim this prophetic message to a

Life Thoughts in the Church Year

Find One-Year Lectionary files at lutheransforlife.org/resources/life-thoughts

culture that beholds some neighbors as lifeless bones (Ezekiel 37:2-3). Let His precious breath of life (Genesis 2:7) inspire us all!

May 26 – Holy Trinity – The truth of Father, Son, and Spirit proves that God loves relationship, family, and community. He gives these blessings no matter how young or old (John 3:4-5), even inhabiting the womb or entering the tomb. The One who creates, redeems, and calls every human being reigns as Lord over life and death (Acts 2:36). Abortion and assisted suicide are idolatrous, and Jesus has come to save from it (John 3:17).

June 2 – Pentecost II (Proper 4B) – Abortion and euthanasia aim to avoid disabilities by eliminating the persons who have them. The Christian community, on the other hand, regards persons with disabilities as reasons for rejoicing. Even the most fragile human bodies testify to the goodness of the God who created and sustains them (2 Corinthians 4:7-11). Let us declare and demonstrate how the life of Jesus manifests in every neighbor!

June 9 – Pentecost III (Proper 5B) – We believe Almighty God creates human beings in His own image, and so we also speak (2 Corinthians 4:13) against using death as a solution. We believe He redeems each one through His beloved Son, and so we also speak it despite political opposition or popular opinion. We believe He calls them all by His very Spirit, and so we also speak the sanctity of every human life!

June 16 – Pentecost IV (Proper 6B)/Father's Day – Fathers embody how much difference the little things make. What seems just a personal choice at first quickly affects everyone around with its repercussions. The devil uses privacy and independence as deceptions. But salvation also only starts small (Mark 4:30-32). An embryo soon grows into the Savior of the universe, and one word spoken in courage and compassion changes untold hearts and saves countless lives.

June 23 – Pentecost V (Proper 7B) – “Widen your hearts,” the Apostle exhorts his Corinthian companions (2 Corinthians 6:13). He has just instructed them how God’s grace prevails to make life worthwhile without regard to anyone’s size, skills, or circumstances. Doesn’t His love expand our imaginations and affections to receive every human life as a gift and privilege? Won’t our voices offer the same opportunities to neighbors in surprise pregnancy and terminal diagnosis?

June 30 – Pentecost VI (Proper 8B) – “Silence.” “Dust.” “Strikes.” “Insults.” “Grief.” Lamentations knows right where it hurts. And this Word of the Lord gives us a God who comforts just how each needs: “steadfast love,” “mercies,” “faithfulness,” “salvation,” “compassion,” and “abundance.” Let us diagnose abortion by naming it sinfulness, so that we may directly dispense the healing that the hearts it has broken long for.

Step Up 4 Life 2024!

by Dave Probst, Director of Development



"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"
(1 Corinthians 10:31).

Our third annual **Step Up 4 Life** appeal is right around the corner, and we are excited to share with you some exciting updates for our 2024 campaign!

- Individuals and teams can once again track steps, fundraise for LFL, and compete for the most steps taken during **Step Up 4 Life 2024!**
- **Step Up 4 Life** will take place from May 12 (Mother's Day) through June 24 (the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*)!
- Our campaign goal is to raise \$80,000 for our Lutherans For Life ministry needs.
- Need help with your **Step Up 4 Life** planning? Our free **Step Up 4 Life** kits are returning and will be available in April!
- Find **Step Up 4 Life** at: stepup4life.org/2024!
- Registration for **Step Up 4 Life 2024** will open on April 1. Start working on setting up your walking team, congregational event, or fundraising ideas!
- Congregations are encouraged to lead a one-day Life Celebration event at your church. A list of Life Celebration ideas can be found at stepup4life.org/2024!

We are profoundly grateful for your impactful ministry partnership and assistance in our efforts to save lives and share the Good News of Jesus Christ with a world that so desperately needs it. Together, we are not just defending life but celebrating it in all its stages. Let's all **Step Up 4 Life** in 2024 with hope, courage, and unwavering faith. To learn more about our **Step Up 4 Life 2024** campaign and discover ways you can partner with us, go to stepup4life.org/2024.

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE PRESENTS:

Step Up 4 Life

MAY 12 - JUNE 24, 2024

SIGN UP AT:
STEPUP4LIFE.ORG/2024



Lutherans For Life ...

- **Applies God's Word**, both His Law and His Gospel, to all the life issues—abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia, sexual purity and bio-technology.
- **Assists For Life Christians** in offering the hope and help of the Good News of Jesus Christ to all, whatever their circumstances.
- **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!**
- **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 presentations, printed resources, Life Sunday materials, Bible studies, curricula, audio and video, and through lutheransforlife.org.
- **Equips** local congregations to speak out on life issues in their communities through Life Chapters and Life Teams, or as a Life Advocate. LFL State Federations, Life Chapters, and Life Teams also support a variety of compassionate, caring pregnancy and post-abortion ministries (including our own Word of Hope) that offer pre- and post-natal counseling, parenting skills workshops, and lifestyle counsel.
- Is a **Recognized Service Organization** (RSO) of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
- Is a **ministry partner** of the North American Lutheran Church.
- Is not subsidized by any church body.
- Is supported entirely by individual donations and grants.



**LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE**

Equipping Lutherans and
their neighbors to be Gospel-
motivated voices For Life!

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

Our Vision ... Every Lutheran, both individually and in community, 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 a Gospel-motivated witness to the Church and society on these and other related issues, such as chastity, post-abortion healing, and family living. We will call God's people to compassionate action and foster life-affirming alternatives for those facing difficult situations.

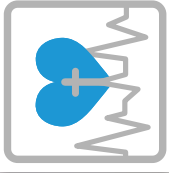
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64,443,118 babies have been killed in abortions since Roe v. Wade in 1973
www.lifenews.com/2023/01/09/64443118-babies-have-been-killed-in-abortions-since-roe-v-wade-in-1973