

Winter 2025

I praise you, for I am
**Fearfully
and
Wonderfully
Made.**



IN THIS EDITION OF **LIFEDATE**

page 3 – Love, Compassion, and Protection by Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske

page 4 – The Poppyseed Children's Message by Diane Albers

page 6 – Sharing Jesus' Love for Life by Virginia Flo

page 8 – It's Got Fingers and Toes and Everything! by Barbara Lane Geistfeld

page 10 – Handmade with Love by Michelle Bauman

page 12 – Comparing Apples with Oysters by Rev. Paul Clark

page 20 – Owen's Mission – An Update by Michelle Bauman

page 22 – The Infinite Value of Each Human Life by Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske

page 24 – Dispel the Myth that Suffering Is Bad by Deaconess Janet Nicol

page 26 – Like Sheep – We Are Made to Praise the Lord by Erika Peterson

page 28 – Life Thoughts in the Church Year

page 30 – End of Year Appeal! by Dave Probst

lutheransforlife.org/resources/journal



**LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE**

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

LifeDate is a free, quarterly publication of Lutherans For Life (LFL). Letters to the editor, articles, and photos may be sent directly to the editor, Lowell Highby: lhighby@lutheransforlife.org.

Lutherans For Life • 1101 5th Street • Nevada, IA 50201-1816
888.364.LIFE (5433) • 515.382.2077 • info@lutheransforlife.org

National LFL Office Staff

Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske – Executive Director

Rev. Scott Licht – CFO/COO

Lowell J. Highby – Director of Communications

Michelle Bauman – Director of Y4Life

Cori Meier – Y4Life Assistant

Diana Ladislas – Y4Life Media Resource Assistant

Dave Probst – Director of Development

Jerilyn Richard – Donor Relations Director

Jan Nessa – Administrative Assistant

Virginia Flo – Director of Volunteer Relations

Michele Hartshorn – Assistant Director of Volunteer Relations

Amanda Nicks – Administrative Specialist of Volunteer Relations

Erika Peterson – Events Coordinator

Deaconess Chrissie Gillet – Director of Word of Hope

Deaconess Janet Nicol – Phone Counselor

Lorelei Humphrey – Word of Hope Assistant

Katie Friedrich – Gift Entry Specialist

Julie Kyrola – Data Assistant

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

LOVE, COMPASSION, AND PROTECTION

BY REV. DR. ARIC FENSKE



David uses an interesting illustration to describe his creation by the hands of God. He paints the picture of God knitting him together in his mother's womb as a skilled artisan would knit together a beautiful piece of clothing or a colorful tapestry. When I hear these words, I can't help but think of my grandmother, carefully and painstakingly knitting one of the blankets that were scattered throughout my childhood home.

As a young boy, I didn't fully appreciate just how special those blankets were. But now that I am older, and my grandmother is with Jesus, I understand what a treasure those blankets are. Handmade items usually are a treasure. And not because they cost more to produce. In fact, homemade items are usually cheaper than store bought items. The value of a handmade item comes from the one who made it. Hours of carefully planning and then creating a homemade project reveals not only the skill of the maker but also the love that was needed to see the project through. My grandmother would not have spent hours and hours making those blankets for us if she didn't love us dearly. Those blankets aren't simply a memento—they are a lasting snapshot of her talent and her love for us. And that is why we treasure them.

So it is with every single human being. Every person has been carefully knit together by God in their mother's womb, each with our own unique traits and personalities. And even though sin has corrupted every one of us, we can still see within every person a living revelation of the love and wisdom and skill of our God, who has fearfully and wonderfully made each and every person.

It is this loving and careful knitting together that imbues us all with an inherent value beyond our description. That value does not come from something inside of us, as if we were nothing

more than the sum of our parts. No, our value comes from the One who loved us enough to make a plan for each one of us (down to the number of hairs on our heads; see Matthew 10:30), long before He uttered the first, **"Let there be"** (Revelation 13:8).

God treasures each person from the moment He begins to knit them together, if not even long before. And so should we. From fertilization to forever, and at every stage in between, regardless of nation or race, size or ability, each person is a treasure worthy of our love, compassion, and protection.

I pray that the articles in this issue motivate and equip you to see every neighbor as the treasure they are.



THE POPPY SEED CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

BY DIANE ALBERS, PRESIDENT OF LUTHERANS FOR LIFE



I spent most of my teaching career in early childhood classrooms and have always been amazed at what small children see. When I would show them the plastic fetal model, they immediately recognized that it was a baby and would want to cuddle the baby. I enjoy showing the fetal models to my two-year-old Sunday school class and pressing their fingers on an ink pad to show them that no one has a fingerprint like theirs. They may look like Mommy or Daddy or a sibling, but they are not just the same! They are unique! *How children love that word!* They are specially made by God's own hand. Another way to show them how special God made them is to talk about their five senses.

In this edition of *LifeDate*, I am doing something different. I am going to share a children's message that originated with a friend from LFL of Illinois, Jean Heise. I've added and changed it over the years, but the original idea remains the same.

A note on this children's message: Depending on the number of children, each child could get a card with a poppy seed on it to tell their parents the story again about how God made them, loves and forgives them, and cares for them.

**"I praise you, for I am fearfully
and wonderfully made"
(Psalm 139:14a).**



The Poppy Seed Children's Message

In my hand I am holding a poppy-seed roll. See all the black seeds on it? Do you think people way in the back can see all these poppy seeds? Of course they can. But what if I took off one poppy seed, just like that, and pasted it on black paper like this? Do you think they can see this little poppy seed now? **[Ask someone halfway back from the front if they can see it.]** Does that mean that I don't have a poppy seed here? Of course not. That's silly. Just because people can't see it doesn't mean the seed isn't there.

A long time ago you were the size of this very tiny little poppy seed on this card. Then you began to grow inside your mommy. Everything about you was already part of this tiny you: the color of your hair, how big you're going to be some day, the color of your skin, whether you were a boy or a girl. All you did was grow. When you were this tiny, your mommy couldn't see you. Your daddy couldn't see you. But who could see you? God could see you! You were growing very fast. Your heart started to beat. Your bones were growing. Your brain was starting to work. And, still, Mommy couldn't see you. Daddy couldn't see you. Who was watching you grow? Yes, God was watching you grow. In fact, the Bible says that God was making you grow into you! Listen:

“For you [God] formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb” (Psalm 139:13).

Pretty soon you could bend your fingers. You could suck your thumb. You could squint your eyes, swallow, and frown. You were about this size—the size of this little plastic baby that I have in my hand. You could even do somersaults. Still, Mommy couldn't see you. Daddy couldn't see you. Who was watching you? God was watching you and making you.

You kept on growing. Pretty soon you got so big you had to move from your first home. You moved into this world, into your mother's arms. For the first time, who was able to see you? Mommy and Daddy. But who had been watching you grow ever since you were the size of this little, tiny poppy seed? God had, because He is your loving heavenly Father. In fact, He loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross to pay for every sin so that you can be forgiven!

Every one of you can know that you're very special by remembering three things:

1. God made you inside your mommy's womb.
2. God loves and forgives you.
3. God cares for you.



SHARING JESUS' LOVE FOR LIFE

BY VIRGINIA FLO, VOLUNTEER RELATIONS



“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

These words that Jesus spoke to the disciples as recorded in Matthew 28 are compelling. We have this Great Commission as our guide as we strive to do our servants’ work by sharing the Gospel message. We are all Lutherans For Life, and we know the life message is Gospel-motivated—it is our mission. As we proclaim the important life message that God gives in three special words—**Created, Redeemed, Called**—we know emphatically that from creation God gives life, He saves our sinful lives through redemption, and He calls us through Baptism to eternal life.

Right after the Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, our Volunteer Relations Team interviewed a number of Pregnancy Resource Centers (PRCs) asking if and when they share Jesus with their patients. We learned that different PRCs had different views of how to approach this. Most importantly, however, they expressed a willingness to speak about Jesus, the difference being “when.”

In reality, there are some PRCs that do not openly address the Gospel message but instead focus on the medical and physical needs of their patients. That certainly is an honorable thing they do, yet as Christians, we know there is still more. People are generally more receptive to hearing about the Lord when they are facing trials in their lives. Perhaps they were raised Christian and have fallen away and know deep within that God should be an active part of their life. Perhaps they have heard about Christianity but have never been exposed to it and are curious. Or they are willing to listen to get through their interview. Whatever the reason, what a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel message when people come for help.

In our Life Team training, we encourage building relationships with agencies in your communities that work in the life arena. That is true for Life Chapters and Life Advocates as well. Interview the agencies you may want to support and, if you decide to get closely engaged, have your pastor interview them as well. It is very important that the agencies you connect with operate in a Christian manner. Being Christian will hopefully reflect in their practices and interactions.

I have spoken about this before, so maybe it’s not new, but it is worth repeating. There are

Created | Redeemed | Called!

Frontline Call – For all LFL Frontline volunteers! Monday, January 12, 2026 – 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.**



two basic approaches to be used when the PRCs that do share the love of Jesus actually do engage in that discussion. One practice includes a question about religious affiliation on the patient form that is filled out on the first visit. That opens the door for the advocate, during the first interview, to ask permission to discuss religious affiliation, whether or not that box is checked. I was told by one advocate she even had a Muslim woman who gave permission. The message given shares that the support needed during pregnancy is like a three-legged stool, requiring all three legs to stand firmly. Those three support requirements are physical, emotional, and spiritual. At that point, the love of Jesus is introduced as the spiritual support. If the patient doesn't grant permission, the topic is not discussed. Most often permission is given.

The second approach is to wait for a supplemental visit by the pregnant woman so a relationship of trust can be built first. That certainly does keep the door open to discuss Jesus in their life at a future visit. However, it also begs the question, "What if she doesn't come back and that opportunity is lost?" I agree they do not want to scare anyone away. We must always share Jesus' love and the gift of life God has provided in a loving and caring manner to avoid upsetting anyone. I thank God there are caring and faithful people working at PRCs. We are so blessed that God cares about every single person, including that tiny life in the womb.

If you are interested in your congregation helping to support women and men dealing with an unexpected pregnancy, Lutherans For Life recently launched a program called **Congregational House of Refuge**. Through your pastor's leadership and your congregation's support, your pastor reads a public statement at worship detailing your support twice a year. Hopefully that reaches the hearts of both members and neighbors in need. When they come forward, your door is open to engage.

You can learn more at lutheransforlife.org/congregational-house-of-refuge.

As you share Jesus' love through your voice For Life and your Christian witness, may God bless your efforts. You may change or even save a life. Please be that person, as the life of the youngest and even the oldest may be the life you impact.

CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE OF REFUGE



IT'S GOT FINGERS AND TOES AND EVERYTHING!

BY BARBARA LANE GEISTFELD, D.V.M.



All over the world, men and women labor to uphold the value of God's gift of life to mankind. They believe that God's gift of life starts with fertilization and ends with natural death. They believe that *all* babies are conceived because God created that child on purpose—for a purpose. They believe with all their hearts that Psalm 139:13-14 is true:

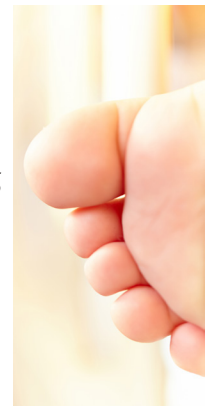
"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."

One of the places where men and women support this gift of life is at their local Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC). One of these special women, Arlene Hamlin, attends Trinity Lutheran Church in Blanco, Texas, where she is a member of the Life Team of which I am the Life Team Leader. She is a compassionate voice For Life and has shared her story with all of us as an encouragement and blessing.

"I have volunteered for over ten years at a pregnancy resource center. As a Client Advocate, I have the opportunity to listen to the fears and concerns of women who are faced with an unplanned pregnancy. Many are being influenced by their family, friends, and the father of the expected child to abort their 'problem.' They are told that all will then be fine! But will it? Many have no idea what is involved in a chemical or surgical abortion. They come to us to find out how far along they are so they will know the cost of an abortion. In their minds, this is the only option they see. Fortunately, some, especially the young girls, are confused and seeking answers. I can, in a loving atmosphere, educate them about the process and the dangers of different types of abortions.

"More importantly, I have the opportunity to question them about their reasons for wanting an abortion. When they hear themselves state their reasons for seeking an abortion, I often see them start to question if this is really what they want. I can suggest options that address their real concerns. Our center is there to provide material support for their baby if they choose to parent and to help them find emotional and spiritual support for years to come.

"This is when I put a life-sized model of a seven-week-old baby in the palm of their hand. They see a tiny baby with a head, a body, and fingers and toes. One young woman gazed at the model in awe and said, 'It's got fingers and toes and everything!' I explain that the baby has a heart that is beating and a very active brain. It is an individual with its own DNA and is *not* part of her body. Her body is supplying a safe place for the baby to grow into the child that is part of God's plan for her life. If the girl is a teenager, I share with her that I was a teenage mother. I don't sugar coat the changes it will make in her life. It's not easy, but things worth having are not always easy, and the son I gave birth to was, and is, the greatest of rewards.



"I then take the girl or woman to the nurse where she receives an ultrasound. This determines the exact weeks of pregnancy and allows her to see the movement of the baby in her womb. Most times she can hear her baby's heartbeat. This is a critical time when we trust that the Holy Spirit will open her heart and mind to the wondrous event she is experiencing.



“Working at a Christian-based organization gives me the privilege of sharing the Gospel with those who do not know Jesus Christ. I share with them the truth about God’s love for both mother and child. Except in rare cases, they accept me praying for them. *Most days* I leave the center with joy in my heart, having had the opportunity to advocate for life.

“But some days I leave not knowing what the woman will decide to do. It’s especially sad now with the widespread availability of abortion pills, even in Texas where abortion is illegal. These drugs are dangerous for the mother, and I warn her of the dangers to both herself and her baby. Then I must let her go, trusting in my heart that she and her baby are in God’s hands.”

Thank you, Arlene, for sharing your heart's ministry with us.

It gives all of us encouragement as we continue to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life.

Sharing with others that we are *all* **“fearfully and wonderfully made”** and then trusting in God to hold them and us in His hands is a ministry worth living for.



HANDMADE WITH LOVE

BY MICHELLE BAUMAN, DIRECTOR OF Y4LIFE



When I was little, my grandma taught me how to crochet. Though I'd like to think she did so because she wanted to pass along a beloved skill to her beloved granddaughter, I know, at least initially, her lessons were motivated by more practical concerns.

The lessons began when I was six. Home from school with an ear infection, I was refusing to rest. (Who could possibly rest with such entertaining brothers?) My dad was at work; my mom was managing all three of us at home alone, and we weren't making it easy. It quickly became clear that the best solution for obeying doctor's orders was to separate me from my co-conspirators and send me to Grandma's.

Grandma's rule was simple: I could do whatever I wanted to—read, watch cartoons, sing, draw, or color—as long as I was lying down on the couch. But I was bored and wanted none of those things. So, my grandma took pity on me and taught me a craft I could get behind. She found a red #5 crochet hook, gave me a yellow skein of yarn, and showed me how to create a chain.

Unskilled but fiercely independent, I forged ahead. I spent the rest of the day lying on the couch creating a chain that eventually stretched from the living room to the kitchen and around the corner into my grandma's bedroom. My stitches were lumpy and uneven, but they were mine.

My grandmother had an endless supply of yarn, and in the following months, I refined my new skill. I learned how to keep the tension steady, how to make the stitches even, how to create beautiful continuity no matter how thick the yarn.

And that was just the beginning. Over time, I learned other stitches. I discovered the joys of color and texture, the importance of counting,

and the heartbreak of having to unfurl an entire piece because I missed a stitch.

Both encourager and corrector, Grandma pushed me to pursue joy and excellence as I handmade granny squares and trivets, doilies and blankets. And over time, the pieces I made became gifts. They began to mean something—to be made for a purpose. Each one of the gifts I designed held a whole lot of love and a little bit of me in them. Each was a pleasure to give.

I often think of my childhood when I read Psalm 139. I think of the joy of crafting a special gift for someone you love. Because that's exactly what babies are—handcrafted gifts from God to us.



Psalm 139 speaks of this crafting like knitting—a close relative of crocheting. In just a few verses, we get an inside look at God’s creative process: New life isn’t thrown together quickly—it takes time. God works loop by loop and stitch by stitch to form and finish the masterpiece He has in mind.

The psalmist declares, **“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”**

It does our soul good to know this—to know that God intentionally designed each one of us as gifts for this time and place. In fact, this knowledge shapes our identity; it gives us both value and purpose.

Yes, God decides when and where to bring life into the world; His hands intimately form each human being. God’s fingers twist together each strand of DNA and shape each cell. God connects tissue and bone; He ties together each bodily system and plans both the color and texture of each strand of hair. And it is God who weaves together body and soul—a whole work of art not only beautiful but also perfectly created for the purpose it was intended.

God is the first and best gift-giver; His gifts uphold and sustain life. Handmade for the people He loves, God’s gifts mean something. They’re made with a purpose. Each one of them carries His fingerprint, His pattern, His trademark.

You are a gift from God. You are handcrafted for your family, your church, your community, and your world. You were made with a whole lot of love and given to be a blessing to others.

And because God loves to craft, He’s made gifts for you, too. Your family, your friends, your teachers and pastors and coworkers—the list goes on and on.

Each person God brings into your life has been handmade with love.

Handmade with Love

That’s the phrase written on us from the moment we came to be.

Handmade with Love

Our bodies declare the mighty works of His hands.

Handmade with Love

Each human a gift to the world.



COMPARING APPLES WITH OYSTERS

BY REV. PAUL CLARK, LFL OF MICHIGAN



- Abortion
- Capital Punishment
- Immigration Policy

It's like comparing apples with oysters.

You may be thinking, "Wait a minute, Pastor! I think you meant 'comparing apples with oranges.'" We use that phrase when comparing two things that are in different categories and should not be equated. But if you look into the origin of the phrase, you will find that it compared apples with oysters.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* says, "This metaphor for dissimilarity began as apples and oysters, which appears in John Ray's proverb collection of 1670, with the phrase 'as like as an apple to an oyster.'" It may date back to 1594 to William Shakespeare, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Tranio says, "He is my father, sir, and sooth to say, in countenance somewhat doth resemble you." To which Biondello replies, "As much as an apple doth to an oyster."

Whether apples and oysters or apples and oranges—what's my point?

This past week Pope Leo said, "Someone who says, 'I'm against abortion' but says 'I am in favor of the death penalty' is not really pro-life. Someone who says that 'I'm against abortion, but I'm in agreement with the inhuman treatment of immigrants in the United States,' I don't know if that's pro-life."

I can't let that one slide by without rebuke. He's wrong. Comparing abortion with capital punishment, or with immigration policy, is like comparing apples with oysters.

Abortion is the killing of an unborn baby, the extermination of a new life, fully human and innocent of any wrongdoing. One of the things

God hates, according to Proverbs 6:17, are **"hands that shed innocent blood."** Innocent blood certainly describes a tiny unborn child who is slaughtered before he or she has the chance to be born. That baby, whom God **"knitted together"** in the mother's womb, is **"fearfully and wonderfully made"** (Psalm 139:14). Our Lord and Savior Jesus loves the little children. He warned of great judgment against anyone who deliberately sought to harm them or who would try to prevent them from coming to Him.



Capital punishment is an act by which the governing authorities, who wield the power of the sword according to Romans 13, put to

death a guilty criminal who has taken the life of another human being, thus forfeiting his own. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod states the position that “capital punishment is in accord with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.” This is based on Holy Scripture: **“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image”** (Genesis 9:6). This is not to be an act of personal vengeance but an act of government which, in fulfilling its duty to punish the wicked and protect the innocent, may impose capital punishment. **“For he [the government] is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer”** (Romans 13:4).

So, comparing capital punishment with abortion is, indeed, like comparing apples with oysters!

But what was truly offensive about the pope’s statement was that he said that those who are against abortion but in favor of the death penalty are not *really* prolife. In doing so, he is watering down the malevolent horror of abortion by equating it with other issues over which we have the freedom within the boundaries of God’s Word to debate. *Shame on him.*

Now as Lutherans, we adhere to the teaching of Scripture Alone. We do not recognize the authority of the pope. But here is why I am particularly incensed over what he said: He is burdening those who are members of the Roman Catholic Church by telling them that they are not truly pro-life IF they do not agree with him on capital punishment, despite what Scripture says to the contrary.

I have many dear Catholic friends who I know support the right to life and are actively fighting for the lives of our innocent unborn children—but now this throws an additional weight upon their shoulders, one that is NOT backed by Holy Scripture. They are being told that they *must be* against the death penalty *or else* they are hypocrites and not truly pro-life at all.

That is abominably wrong.

Now it is true that, though the Bible *allows* capital punishment, it does not *mandate* capital punishment. It leaves it up to the State, that is, the governing authorities. In our republic, represented by those whom we the people elect to office, we have the freedom to decide, through our legislative process, whether we wish to have capital punishment or not. Unlike with abortion, which is unquestionably the willful butchery of an innocent baby, we can debate the pros and cons of capital punishment. For example, if a state does have capital punishment, we would certainly want to ensure that it is applied justly, after a fair trial and conclusive evidence, so that an innocent person might not be mistakenly convicted and put to death.

The point is not that we *MUST* have capital punishment, it is that we *CAN* have capital punishment. But abortion *IS* and *ALWAYS IS* the deliberate killing of an unborn baby human being who has done no wrong and has no opportunity to speak in his or her own defense. So, yes, you can be against abortion but still support the death penalty and be prolife.

Don’t compare apples with oysters.



What of the other part of the pope's statement, when he said, "Someone who says that 'I'm against abortion, but I'm in agreement with the inhuman treatment of immigrants in the United States,' I don't know if that's pro-life."

THAT is most emphatically comparing apples with oysters.

Think about this: **The intended result for every abortion is the death of a baby.**

Even in a botched abortion where the baby is born alive, the radical abortion advocates demand that it be abandoned and left to die.

No one—at least no one I know—advocates hunting down illegal immigrants for the purpose of killing them. We may have differing views on how to best enforce immigration law, protect our border, and deport those who have broken the laws of our nation by coming illegally in the first place, but we can reasonably disagree on the details.

But whichever position we take, the intended result is **NOT** to willfully and deliberately kill them, as it **IS** in an abortion. The **intent** is to enforce the laws, punish evildoers, and protect innocent citizens. That is what Romans 13 says that government is supposed to do. It may indeed happen that in the process of enforcing the laws of the land, people may be imprisoned or deported. The government is engaging in its God-given duty to pass and enforce laws and to punish those who break those laws.

Remember: The willful intent for every abortion is **ALWAYS** to produce a dead baby. The willful intent of enforcing immigration policy is **NOT** to produce a dead illegal immigrant but to dutifully protect the nation's citizens.

This was a bit of a different topic for me to write about, but the statement of the pope could not go unchallenged.

As President of Lutherans For Life of Michigan, as a pastor who is tied squarely to God's Word, as a prolife citizen, as an advocate for the unborn, I could not remain silent. **The pope is**

wrong. You can be against abortion and support the death penalty and still be pro-life.

You can be against abortion and yet back the closing of the border and the removal of those who have come into our country illegally—especially those who are gang members and violent offenders, rapists, child sex traffickers, and so forth.

Supporting the enforcement of immigration policy does not disqualify you from being prolife.

The foundation of our faith is Jesus Christ. Our infallible source of truth and doctrine is the Holy Word of God—*Sola Scriptura*—Scripture Alone!

It is not the fallible words of popes or the crooked and corrupt wisdom of fallen man.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word! Amen.



BECOME A CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE OF REFUGE

Shine your light internally and externally, sharing how your congregation is a safe place for pregnant mothers. Your support will give them hope to raise their baby. Walk with them should they decide adoption is their choice. During this special time you and your church are there as their child develops and they prepare for this next stage in life.



How do you do this?

- ✓ The pastor reviews the program carefully, recommending it to church leaders.
- ✓ The congregational leaders review and approve the program.
- ✓ The leaders share the program with the congregation for approval.
- ✓ The pastor submits the Congregational House of Refuge agreement.
- ✓ The pastor reads a commitment statement in worship twice a year.
- ✓ The congregation gets involved through mentoring, praying, and providing a representative to handle the program details.
- ✓ The congregation is listed on a locator map of other Lutheran congregations engaged in this program.

If you are interested in knowing more, visit
lutheransforlife.org/congregational-house-of-refuge/

Life Sunday 2026: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made



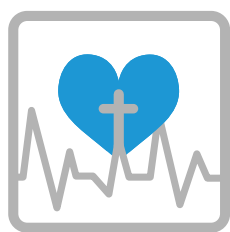
"Fearfully and Wonderfully Made" is Lutherans For Life's theme for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, which is set for **January 18, 2026**. Your congregation can observe **Sanctity of Human Life Sunday** on that date or at any time during the year. Our Life Sunday 2026 theme is based on Psalm 139:13-14: **"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."**

This Word of God reveals the care and intention that God takes in the creation of each and every human being. It teaches us that from the very first moments of our conception, God's hands are upon us, carefully and lovingly crafting each one of us through our fathers and mothers. And while each person is created by God with their own unique characteristics and personalities, the care that God takes in creating each person shows us that every person, from the moment of fertilization on, is precious to God regardless of their age, size, condition, or ability.

Use our Life Sunday resources to help unpack this theme and what it means for the For Life movement, both nationally and in your congregation and community. Our prayer is that these materials will provide valuable information and encouragement to you, your community, and the life-affirming work you are engaged in.

Bulletin Inserts • Bible Study • Children's Message • Worship Service • Sermons

lutheransforlife.org/store-life-sunday-2026



LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

Check out the Store page on the Lutherans For Life website for the latest new resources:

lutheransforlife.org/resources/store

- 2026 Life Sunday and Life Week Resources
- YA For Life Connection Kit
- Lil' Lutherans 4 Life – The Lord's Prayer
- The Soul Wound of Abortion
- Real Love Real Life (Y4Life Edition)
- C.A.L.V.A.R.Y - A Life-Affirming Approach
- Church and State: Ten For Life Reflections
- A 4Life View of IVF
- The Reality of Words
- A Creed For Life
- Life-Affirming Encouragement for Single Parents



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

2026 Lutherans For Life Essay Contest

Our 2026 LFL Essay Contest Theme: That They May Have Life

Our theme verse: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

THAT THEY MAY HAVE
LIFE

The Lutherans For Life Council of Federation Presidents sponsors an essay contest each year for students in two grade categories: 6-8 and 9-12.

- This contest is available for students in all states who attend a Lutheran school or a Lutheran church.
- State essay contests precede the national essay contest. State essay winners in the two grade categories will be entered into the national contest. Note: Individual state rules may vary slightly, so be sure to access those rules through the state links and listings below.
- Some states have LFL State Federations. If you are a student in a state without a federation, you can participate through the Non-Federation Essay Contest.

We look forward to students across the nation participating in our contest and letting their voices be heard through their life-affirming essays!

Questions? Please contact Michele Hartshorn at mhartshorn@lutheransforlife.org.

lutheransforlife.org/2026-lutherans-for-life-essay-contest

You can find out about and watch our 2025 winners at the link above.

Life Week 2026

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made



Lutherans For Life



Sunday, January 18, 2026

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made ... As God's Own *with Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske*

Focus: An overview of the created-redeemed-called Gospel motivation and practical suggestions for sharing the sanctity of life. *Join live on Zoom.*

Monday, January 19, 2026

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made ... With a God-Given Identity *with Rev. Darrell Debowey*

Focus: Exploring the creation vs. evolution debate from a Lutheran perspective and how it affects our identities as children of God in our vocations. *Prerecorded for flexible use.*

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made ... Despite the Prenatal Diagnosis *with Rev. Daniel Freeman*

Focus: Addressing prenatal testing and diagnoses, this presentation will discuss how to uphold the lives of those who have received an adverse prenatal diagnosis. *Join live on Zoom.*

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made ... For a Forever Family *with Rev. Derek & Gretchen Roberts*

Focus: The importance of both physical family and spiritual family for foster and adoptive children, as well as the issues foster and adoptive children may face as they become members of a new family. *Prerecorded for flexible use.*

Thursday, January 22, 2026

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made ... For Life *with Dr. Adam Francisco*

Focus: Affirming the value of life from the moment of fertilization and using apologetics to defend and uphold life from the beginning. *Watch on Facebook Live.*

Friday, January 23, 2026

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made ... Even When It Hurts *with Deaconess Chrissie Gillet*

Focus: Supporting those who have experienced earthly suffering and pointing them to the hope and forgiveness found in Christ Jesus. *Join live on Zoom.*

Saturday, January 24, 2026

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made ... To Serve and Be Served *with Rev. Matthew Harrison*

Focus: Leveraging one's skills and talents to serve those in the community and reminding them of the love of Christ and His desire to serve the Church through the Sacraments. *Watch on Facebook Live.*

All live presentations will be at 8:00 PM ET, with the exception of Saturday, January 24, which will be at 9:00 AM ET.

Zoom Meeting ID: 838 6206 3962

Passcode: 823940

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83862063962>

Questions?

lifeweek2026@lutheransforlife.org

Want to be a voice For Life?

Lutherans For Life can help YOU!

Serving all God's people...from the youngest to the oldest!

THREE WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN!

- † **It only takes one!** A Life Advocate works with their pastor to share God's love For Life.
- † **Grab your friends!** A Life Team is a group of life-affirming volunteers at church creating meaningful and fun ways to support life.
- † **Strength in numbers!** A Life Chapter is one or more churches working together to impact their communities.



**LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE**

lutheransforlife.org/volunteer-relations/

...from fertilization to forever

OWEN'S MISSION – AN UPDATE

BY MICHELLE BAUMAN, DIRECTOR OF Y4LIFE



As you know, Lutherans For Life has been boldly proclaiming a Gospel-motivated message in response to contemporary life issues for more than 45 years. We have been blessed with the opportunity to educate and equip thousands of Lutheran churches and tens of thousands of adults and youth across the nation during this time. And that equipping has led to countless Gospel-motivated, for-life voices in our churches, schools, communities, and world.

One of the ways we've been teaching children, in particular, about the sanctity of life is through our **Owen's Mission** program. Born out of personal tragedy, this special initiative honored the death of Dr. Lamb's grandson Owen. Dr. Lamb and his family, alongside LFL, raised money to purchase and provide a fetal model set for each Lutheran school across America.

Our efforts and your contributions have indeed been a blessing! Initial fundraising came in

at just under \$200,000 dollars, and in honor of Owen, Lutherans For Life contributed an additional \$100,000 toward this valuable initiative.

Thanks to your generous donations, Lutherans For Life has been able to present a set of babies to more than 435 Lutheran schools in the last twelve years, and through those presentations, we've reached over 58,700 youth! Praise be to God that each child in attendance at an **Owen's Mission** presentation heard the life-affirming message that they were fearfully and wonderfully made by a loving God, redeemed by His Son, Jesus, and called to faith through the work of the Holy Spirit. Each child learned that his or her value was and is established by God, and that value, no matter what happens in life, never changes.

Your generous support of LFL's **Owen's Mission** project, whether through volunteer hours or financial donations, has changed tens of thousands of lives for good.

At this time, **Owen's Mission** funds have been depleted, and it is time to let our babies rest. We are thankful for the schools across the nation that have been open to receiving, caring for, and sharing them with students, and we are certain the **Owen's Mission** babies will continue to impact children for generations to come.

Even though the **Owen's Mission** initiative has ended, our work as Gospel-motivated voices is not done! There are many more initiatives in progress at LFL, and some soon to come, and we hope you're just as excited about sharing them!

Schools have been inquiring for years about materials for younger students, and **Y4Life** is working to meet that need. We've already begun building materials that directly serve children from preschool through second grade through our Lil' Lutherans initiative, and new resources



for youth in grades three through eight are now published under our brand new Y4Life Jr. logo.

For high school and college youth, Y4Life has not only produced numerous infographics, lesson plans, and kits in the last few years, but also offers valuable in-person events like Y4Life in Washington, D.C., the Y4Life Summit, the Y4Life Apologetics Retreat, a one-day From Fertilization to Forever conference, and high school and college leadership retreats. Find out more about these resources and events at y4life.org.

And we have also started serving young adults, those between the ages of 20 and 35, through our new YA For Life programs. If you'd like to learn more about Lil' Lutherans, Y4Life Jr., or YA For Life, please visit yaforlife.org.



In addition to initiatives serving youth, our **Volunteer Relations** department just launched our new **House of Refuge** program—a program your entire congregation can take part in to make it clear that you support LIFE. And **Word of Hope** is hosting Christian mindfulness classes and a new abortion recovery retreat even as the department gears up for the production of a suicide awareness program.

God still has good work to do though you and through LFL's many initiatives!

If you'd like to support our work or find out how you can be a Gospel-motivated voice for life, we welcome your partnership.

Reach out to us at info@lutheransforlife.org or visit lutheransforlife.org today!



THE INFINITE VALUE OF EACH HUMAN BEING

BY REV. DR. ARIC FENSKE



When we use the words of Psalm 139:14, **“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,”** in regard to the sanctity of every human life, chances are that you are thinking of the creation of each human being in the image of God. That certainly is a worthy reason to believe that every single human life is precious to God and therefore worthy of being loved, cared for, protected, and treated with dignity.

However, the Scriptures remind us there is something else that God has fearfully and wonderfully made. It is a different kind of body, although still created in God’s image. And this creation also, if not more so, provides us with the motivation to hold that every single human life is sacred and precious to God. That body is the Church of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Read what St. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians.



“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

“For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

You are the body of Christ, and He is the head. And whereas Adam was made from the dust of the ground, this body was made from the very blood of Jesus. Much like Eve who was taken

from the side of sleeping Adam, the Church is born only by the death of Christ, whose side was pierced that we sinners might have everlasting life (John 19:34).

By faith in Christ, and through Baptism into Him, you belong to a body that is comprised of millions of different people, from every nation and race, of every different age and size, of varying degrees of knowledge and ability or disability. And we are united so closely with them all, that when one of them suffers, we all suffer together.

Therefore, while the creation of our physical bodies gives us ample reason to sanctify each human life, the creation of Christ's body, the Church, also gives us every reason to grant dignity and love to every other human being, inside the womb and outside. First, because the other members of this body are one with us. We should grant them the same care and concern that we would expect for ourselves (Matthew 22:39), knowing that when any one of them suffers, we suffer, too.

But more broadly ...

The creation of the Church shows us what Jesus was willing to pay to make us a part of His body.

Jesus laid aside His glory, was conceived and grew in Mary's womb, was born, lived, suffered, and died so that every person, from the least to the greatest, could be united to Him in His body.

And even though there are people who choose to live outside of Christ's body, we know that Jesus still lived, suffered, and died because He wanted them to be.

There is nothing else that reveals the inherent and infinite value of each human being than this!



DISPEL THE MYTH THAT SUFFERING IS BAD

BY DEACONESS JANET NICOL



A young woman dreams of expanding her family, even as she navigates physical health challenges, a demanding full-time job, and the daily joys and trials of raising a toddler.

A successful, career-driven woman in her forties quietly wrestles with the absence of marriage and children in her life—milestones her siblings and friends have reached—as the years continue their steady march.

A midlife professional, devoted wife, and mother confronts the lingering shadows of past trauma, including the pain of an abortion she did not choose.

A woman in her sixties endures chronic health struggles while carrying the profound grief of losing her only son, her grandson, and several other beloved family members.

An elderly woman tenderly cares for her husband as he battles the slow decline of Parkinson's disease.

Another, having lost two children, two husbands, and the mother she lovingly cared for, now faces the quiet ache of loneliness and the search for purpose.

I know these women. Perhaps you do too—or versions of them.

Each carries a unique story of resilience threaded with sorrow, strength, and the silent weight of mental anguish. We know that at times that mental anguish can get the better part of us.

The statistics detailing mental anguish and depression are staggering, and as the Church, we are uniquely positioned to minister to the broken-hearted. For Psalm 34:18 tells us:

“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”

And again, in Psalm 147:1-3: **“Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”**

Yet, while mental health has become a widely discussed topic, spiritual care remains elusive. Mental health is in vogue in our society, while spiritual well-being seems overlooked. What sets them apart?

We typically define mental health as a state in which one recognizes personal abilities, manages everyday stress, works productively, and contributes positively to the community. In contrast, spiritual well-being is reflected in a profound contentment—a steady hope and comfort that sustains us through life's trials. But how do we separate mental well-being from spiritual health? This is where my heart wrestles.

I firmly believe that true mental health cannot flourish without spiritual health. Even the secular world, albeit with different terminology, admits that inner spirituality is essential. I recall a secular psychologist who studies despair and cynicism drawing a clear distinction between optimism and hope. He explained, “Optimism is the belief that things will be better,” and then added, “Hope is the notion that things could get better.”¹ His further reflection—seeing hope as a radical, fiery emotion that inspires us to challenge destructive forces—resonates deeply.

When I hear him speak, I sense his reliance on hope as a catalyst for change. For me, optimism is inseparable from hope—a hope anchored not in transient emotion but in the undeniable truth of Jesus and the Cross. Without that assurance, our mental health initiatives risk becoming mere band-aids rather than pathways to genuine healing.

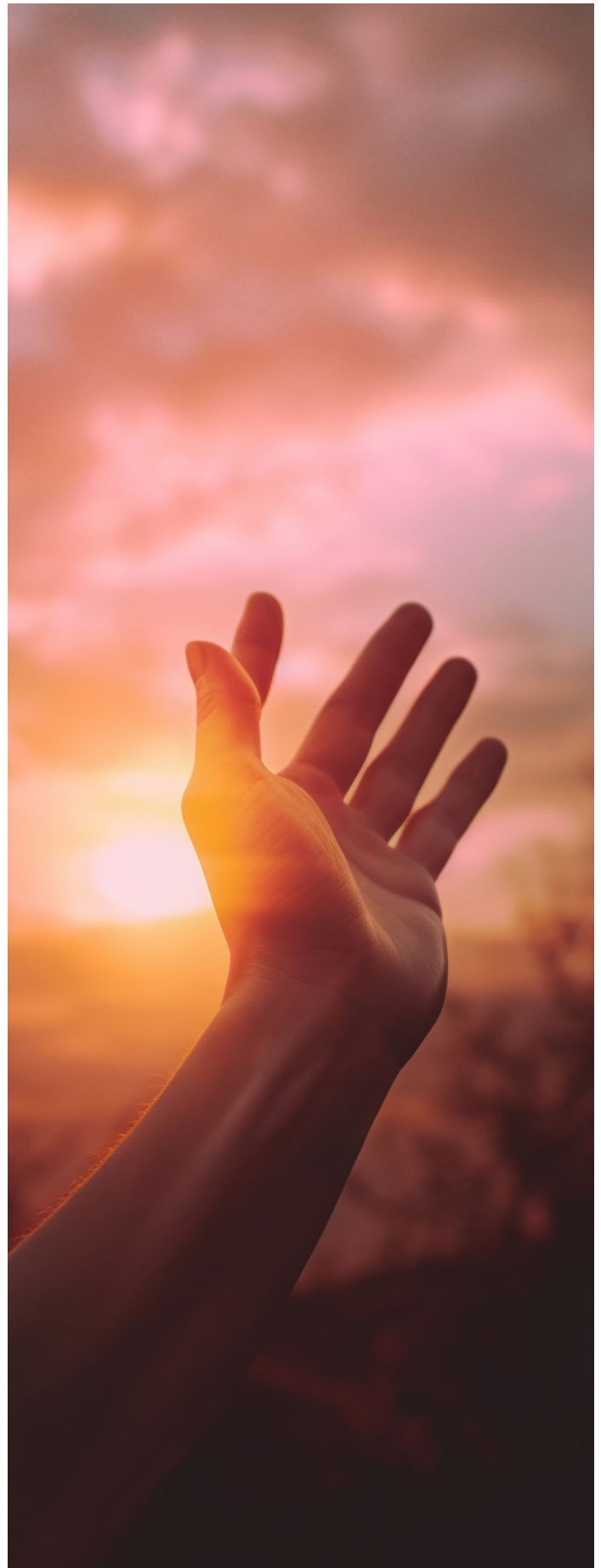
As Christians, our hope is solidly placed in Christ. Yet this raises another question: Does our hope equate to a complete cure for our afflictions? It depends on how we define a cure. A cure implies that the ailment is entirely eradicated. But in our human experience, suffering is a constant companion. When we grieve, the pain never vanishes—it transforms and becomes part of our story. It doesn't define us, but it refines us. Whether it comes in the form of illness, physical limitation, addiction, depression, or anxiety, suffering can deepen our relationship with God as we lean into the redemption offered by Jesus, who lived and died for us and now offers us eternal life and forgiveness.

In this light, suffering need not be seen only as something to be eliminated. Rather, it can be embraced as part of our journey—an experience that, while painful, also shapes and molds us into vessels for God's grace. This perspective does not preclude seeking medical help for mental illness; we are both physical and spiritual beings, and each aspect deserves care. What I propose is that we reject the myth that suffering is intrinsically bad. Suffering is interwoven with our human reality, particularly as Christians. Though we do not seek it out, when suffering arrives, we can accept it as a gift, a means by which God equips us with everything we need to endure and grow.

Let us share this hope with those around us. As Psalm 27:13-14 proclaims, **"I believe I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"**

In embracing this hope, we acknowledge that suffering, while inevitable, is not our ultimate enemy—it is the backdrop against which God's redeeming love shines most brilliantly.

1. From *Hidden Brain: You 2.0: Fighting Despair*, Sep 16, 2024, Apple Podcasts.



LIKE SHEEP – WE ARE MADE TO PRAISE THE LORD

BY ERIKA PETERSON, EVENTS COORDINATOR



In Psalm 139:14, we often focus on the wonder of our Father's creative work as He intricately designs each person in his or her mother's womb. And rightfully so! Yet, an often-overlooked portion of this verse is **"I praise you."**

David's reflection on the wonderful works of the Lord, including the developing child in utero, leads him to praise our Heavenly Father.

Like David praising God, sheep are meant to praise the Lord, and so are we.

Before King David ascended to the throne, he spent years shepherding sheep to green pastures and beside still waters. While we often romanticize the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, raising flocks was serious business. It was the livelihood for the shepherd and his family.

In addition to providing food and fiber for God's people, sheep were raised to be sacrificed as offerings to the Lord.

The first direct reference to sheep in Scripture was an act of worship. In Genesis 4:4, Abel brings the firstborn of his flock as a sacrifice, and **"the Lord has regard for Abel and his offering."**

A bit later, in Genesis 22, in an act of obedience and worship, Abraham ascends the mountain to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Mercifully, in place of Isaac, and foreshadowing our Lord Jesus who takes our place, the Lord provided a ram for Abraham to offer as a sacrifice.

Moving ahead, in Leviticus, sheep were prescribed for a variety of offerings: sin offerings, peace offerings, dedications, Passover, etc.

Based on rough calculations, it is estimated that at least 500,000 Passover lambs were used annually when the Hebrews were wandering

in the desert with Moses. This does not include those required for daily offerings by the priests or for any needed personal atonement.

During King David's reign, that number jumped up to around 1,000,000 lambs annually, for Passover rituals alone.

If you consider the additional religious requirements of the sacrificial lambs, such as being unblemished, male or female, a year old, etc., millions of extra sheep would have been needed to offer the proper selection to satisfy the religious requirements.

Raising and tending sheep was essential for the prescribed worship of the Lord. Given to us by the Lord in creation for us to offer back to Him, sheep were part of praising the Lord from the beginning.

If sheep were created to be offered in worship, how does that apply to us? Throughout scripture, God's people are referred to as sheep. It is understandable we prefer not to think of ourselves as the humble ruminant, perceived to be weak, dumb, dependent, vulnerable, etc.

However, the Lord chose that image intentionally. Like the sheep of Moses and David's day, the Lord's flocks today, His Church, are meant to be available to serve Him—whether for our wool for clothing (sheltering and serving others), our lives for food (given daily in service to the Church and our families), or as a sacrifice on the altar (worship and ministry).

While it's painful to think of ourselves as such a meek animal, we are invited to accept this delightful image our Good Shepherd has chosen for us. Not only does He give us the image to understand ourselves within His Kingdom, but more critically to understand Him and His Divine relationship to us.

Sheep need a shepherd. We are vulnerable without one! He guides us and keeps us from predators who seek to steal, kill, and destroy us. We know His voice, He gathers us in His arms; He seeks us when we are lost.

We, as sheep, are on the receiving end of the Good Shepherd's grace!

Nowhere is that grace seen more clearly than when Jesus takes on the image of the sheep Himself as the Lamb of God given for the life of the world. Jesus Himself fulfills the image of the sacrificial lamb from the beginning.

Foreshadowed in Abel's sacrifice, in Abraham's offering of His one and only son, in Isaac's substitutionary ram, and in the blood of every unblemished Passover lamb offered for the life of God's people, Jesus is the one true Lamb of God, whose sacrifice accomplished what all the others before could not—freeing us from our sins to live with and for Him.

The Lord Himself, as the Lamb of God, was the full and final offering for our sins so we can be united to God now and for eternity!

So, like sheep, we daily offer our lives to worship the Lord. We bring a sacrifice of praise to Him and in His service to our neighbors.

For Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for us, we praise Him.

For His wonderful works, we praise Him.

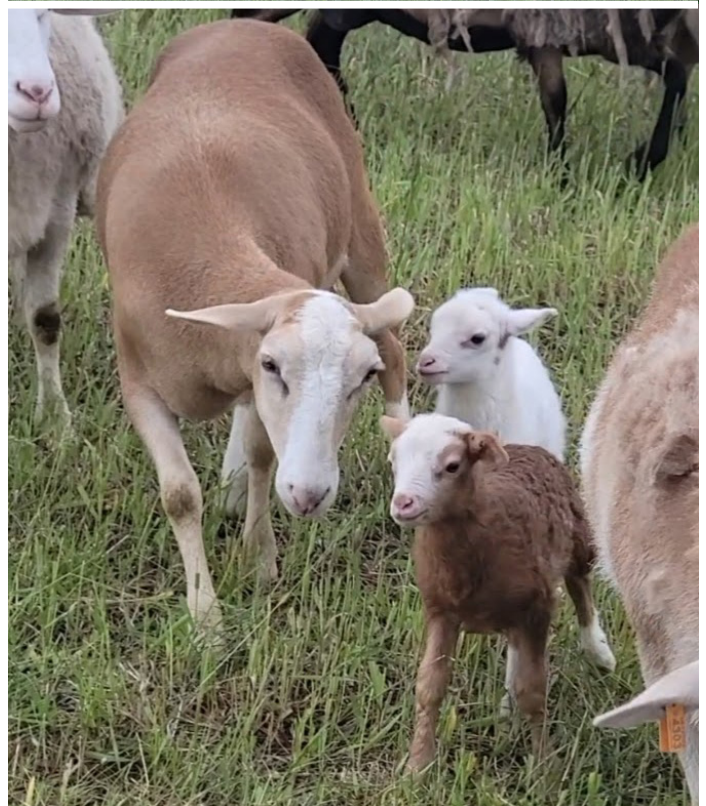
For likening us to tender lambs and stubborn sheep that need His mercy and protection, we praise Him.

For creating us in His image and likeness, we praise Him.

For fearfully and wonderfully knitting us together in our mother's womb, we praise Him.

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well" (Psalm 139:14).

Note: Erika has sheep on her hobby farm, and all images are from her and used with permission.



Life Thoughts in the Church Year

Based on appointed readings from Lutheran Service Book

January 4 (Christmas 2) – God used Joseph, who adopted Jesus as his own son (Luke 2:41), to care for our Lord as He (Jesus) mysteriously lived a perfectly human life as our substitute. Through Jesus, God has now adopted us as His own children and has promised us an eternal inheritance in His kingdom (Ephesians 1:5, 11). Christians should be encouraged to likewise consider and promote adoption as a godly way to preserve and care for the lives of God's precious children and bring them into His kingdom.

January 11 (Baptism of our Lord) – Jesus was baptized to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15), that all whom God created and gave breath to (Isaiah 42:5) might be baptized into His death and resurrection and have everlasting life (Romans 6:4-5). Living in that new life in Christ and dying to sin (Romans 6:7-8) means that we are to cherish all life the way God does, caring about our neighbor's physical life and wellbeing, as well as their everlasting life in Christ.

January 18 (Epiphany 2) – Life issues (abortion, suicide, sexual identity, physician-assisted suicide to name a few) can often be the result of a person trying to solve their own problems or fulfill their own needs instead of relying upon the Lord to help them. The appearance of our Lord as the sacrificial Lamb of God (John 1) reminds us that God is always faithful (Isaiah 49:7), even at the cost of His own blood. By faith in Christ, we can and should wait patiently for the Lord (Psalm 40:1) and make Him our trust (Psalm 40:4) in any and every situation, and we should invite our neighbors to do the same.

January 25 (Epiphany 3) – Abortion and assisted suicide are often followed by crushing amounts of guilt and shame. While the Church rightly teaches that these are sins against God and neighbor, may we never forget that Christ has sent us to preach the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation (1 Corinthians 1:17-18). In Christ, “there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish,”

(Isaiah 9:1), for He has come in the fulfillment of His promises, bringing the Kingdom of God near to us (Matthew 4:14-17), that all who repent and believe in Him can take shelter in the Lord (Psalm 27:5).

February 1 (Epiphany 4) – Tragically there are many people who do in fact sacrifice the fruit of their bodies for the sins of their soul (Micah 6:7), killing their own children to undo or cover up the sinful choices they've made. How foolish is the so-called “wisdom” of the world (1 Corinthians 1) that calls death life! And though the Lord could rightly bring an indictment against His people for this evil (Micah 6:2), He instead shames the “strong” and “wise” among us by sacrificing His only begotten Son to cover the sins of the entire world (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). In Christ crucified, all who believe will inherit the kingdom of heaven, and those who mourn the wanton destruction of life will be comforted forevermore (Matthew 5:3-4).

February 8 (Epiphany 5) – “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). God's people do wonderful things before the world: march for life, support local pregnancy resource centers, speak up on behalf of the unborn and vulnerable. However, we must always remember that we are to shine our light before men, not to earn favor with men or with God. Such self-serving works “will not make your voice be heard on high” (Isaiah 58:4). Instead, knowing Christ crucified and having the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2, 16), we let our light shine before men to give glory to God (Matthew 5:16), that all might have life now and forever.

February 15 (Transfiguration) – In the Transfiguration of Jesus, we see that the glory of the Almighty God was hidden in the human flesh of our Lord. What a great reminder that God can work remarkable and glorious things through that which the world views as normal and ordinary.

Life Thoughts in the Church Year

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

God, who can bring about the restoration of the fallen world through human flesh and blood, can also do wonderful and amazing things through surprise pregnancies, people born with severe disabilities, and those with terminal illnesses. Instead of turning to death in these cases, we should look for the ways that God might be hiding His good and gracious will in them.

February 22 (Lent 1) – Satan tempts us to turn away from God by appealing to the desires of our flesh and our egos. The devil twists God’s Word to make us think that things like abortion, sex without marriage, suicide, and assisted suicide will give us pleasure, self-fulfillment, and an end to our suffering. But, like our first parents did, those who give in quickly find that the devil’s words are nothing but empty promises which end in pain and suffering. Thankfully, by withstanding the devil’s temptations, Jesus both defeats that old Satanic foe for all sinners and reminds us that the way to true joy and happiness is found in trusting the unfailing promises of our Heavenly Father.

March 1 (Lent 2) – Salvation comes only through faith in Christ, who was “lifted up” on the cross as the payment for the world’s sins (John 3:14-15). Not even Abraham our forefather was saved by his works or inner worth (Romans 4:2-3). In choosing to redeem us by His own grace apart from our works, God shows us that our value is not found in a person’s own qualities. Instead, every person is precious to God and worthy of dignity because “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” (John 3:16).

March 8 (Lent 3) – The world tells us to avoid suffering at all costs, even justifying murder (abortion, suicide, assisted suicide) on the grounds that death can be used to avoid further suffering. However, St. Paul reminds us that instead of trying to avoid suffering through death, we “can rejoice in our sufferings” (Romans 5:3), knowing that God uses our suffering to increase our hope in Him and bring us to everlasting glory. Therefore, when

suffering comes, “let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker (Psalm 95:6), entrusting ourselves into the hands of the One who “died for us” (Romans 5:8).

March 15 (Lent 4) – Sin makes us blind to the things of God (Isaiah 42:16, 18). Not only do we often fail to recognize our neighbors and the many needs they have, but we also have a hard time seeing our own lack of love (John 9:41) and need for salvation. Thankfully, Jesus has come to open our blind eyes and turn our darkness into light (John 9:6, Isaiah 42:16). The Lord not only grants us faith to see Him and know His salvation, He also empowers us to “walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8) to better see and serve our neighbors in need, from the least of them to the greatest.

March 22 (Lent 5) – Jesus is the “resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), the one true God who raises the dead from their graves and gives them new life (Ezekiel 37:5-6). Everything Jesus has said and done testifies that He gives, sustains, and loves life. It is inconceivable to think that Jesus, who raised Lazarus from the tomb and who died to “give life to our mortal bodies” (Romans 8:11), would approve of the murder of any innocent person, regardless of their size or condition.

March 29 (Palm Sunday) – When Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, he gave up, washed his hands, called himself innocent, and let the Innocent One, our Lord Jesus Christ, be taken away and crucified (Matthew 27:24-26). As the world around us continues to call for the death of the innocent, it may seem that we are gaining nothing, and we will be tempted to wash our hands and give up like Pilate did. But the Lord, in His mercy, has given you a tongue to speak that you may sustain with His Word those who are weary (Isaiah 50:4). God grant us the strength to speak up on behalf of the innocent ones and let “every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).

END OF YEAR **APPEAL!**

BY DAVE PROBST, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT



As 2025 draws to a close, we would like to take a moment to express our heartfelt thanks to our faithful **Lutherans For Life** ministry partners. Your thoughts, prayers, and financial donations have made a profound difference in the lives of many, and we are incredibly grateful for your advocacy in our joint mission to equip Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices for life.

This year, the ministries of **Y4Life**, **Word of Hope**, and **Volunteer Relations** have increased their outreach efforts and promoted a life-affirming culture in individuals, churches,



and communities around the country. **Y4Life** has engaged with over 11,000 youth through impactful conferences and outreach efforts, fostering advocacy and education around life issues. Our **Word of Hope** ministry continues to provide spiritual care through our 24/7 hotline and has maintained an impressive average of 420 monthly contacts. And our **Volunteer Relations** team has strengthened community connections by mobilizing dedicated volunteers who contribute to outreach and support, creating a nurturing environment for those in need.

This holiday season, we encourage you to take an active role in assisting LFL in proclaiming God's sanctity of life message by donating to our end-of-year fundraising campaign.

Your support is vital to expanding our ministry teams' projects and initiatives, and your contribution will have a significant impact on the lives we touch, the hearts we reach, and the culture we aim to transform.

WAYS TO GIVE



**LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE**

- **ONLINE** lutheransforlife.org/donate2025
- **LFL APP** Select "Give" on the bottom menu.
- **MAIL** Send to Lutherans For Life:
1101 5th St., Nevada IA 50201-1816
- **QR CODE** →



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.

National LFL Board of Directors

Diane Albers, President – St. Louis, Missouri
Rev. Byrene K. Haney, Vice President – Fort Dodge, Iowa
Dr. Roni Grad, Secretary – Tucson, Arizona
Alice Steljes, Treasurer – Pawnee, Illinois
Kim Berry – Benton Harbor, Michigan
Rev. David M. Bottorff, State Representative – Bourbonnais, Illinois
Rev. Dr. Dennis Di Mauro – Herndon, Virginia
Col. John Eidsmoe – Pike Road, Alabama
Dr. Adam S. Francisco – Wheaton, Illinois
Kyle McMillian – Sacramento, California
Deaconess Pamela Nielsen – Ballwin, Missouri
Rev. Dennis Norby, State Representative – Valley City,
North Dakota
John Talley – Newark, Illinois
Diana Vaughn – Ponca City, Oklahoma

LFL Council of State Federation Presidents

Rev. David M. Bottorff, Illinois – Bourbonnais
Daniel Lindemeier, Iowa – Ames
Rev. Michael Brockman, Kansas – Oakley
Rev. Paul Clark, Michigan – Fowler
Mike Albers, Missouri – St. Louis
Berniece Stulc, Montana – Belgrade
Bob Saeger, Nebraska – Waco
Rev. Dennis Norby, North Dakota – Valley City
Jill Johnsen, South Dakota – Wessington



LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE

1101 5th Street
Nevada, IA 50201-1816
ISSN 1098-5859



Donate to LUTHERANS FOR **LIFE** Now

**65,464,760 babies have been killed in abortions
since *Roe v. Wade* in 1973**

www.lifenews.com/2024/01/17/65464760-babies-have-been-killed-in-abortion-since-roe-v-wade-in-1973

