

LIFEDATE



Winter 2023
from
LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

Just As ... I AM



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**LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE**

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

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Just As ... I AM

by Pastor Michael Salemink



My little brother fell into a cactus as a child.

The neighbors had a couple planted among the decorative stones behind their house. He was toddling on their deck next to the landscaping. Bent over to retrieve a toy and tumbled right off. Came up with two-inch spines sticking out of his arms and trunk. Started walking toward me like nothing happened.

Naturally I freaked. What kind of undead monster had he become?

Screamed and ran back next door to get a parent. Returned to find him crying, not from pain but because I had frightened him. Neither the drama nor the danger deterred Dad. Kid obviously needed a hug. Father scooped him up and held him close—prickles and all. (Then of course whisked him away to the emergency room. They extracted every barb-ended needle one by one and prescribed a precautionary antibiotic. Crisis averted.)

Sinful selfishness leaves humankind needing a hug. We clearly make quite a mess of ourselves. That includes all of us, no decisive difference from embryo or aged.

Still, it doesn't scare away our sanctity-of-life God. He hasn't forgotten becoming like us Himself. Thorns poked, straps pierced, nails punctured, spear impaled. Embracing such as you and me disfigured Him, but He wouldn't have it any other way. He's made Himself just like us to draw us near. In resurrection He remembers all the more His image imprinted within our kind.



“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

Forgiving grace takes us as we are and calls us just. Just—righteous, holy, and honorable the way He is. Our Heavenly Father lends His identity and rights to every human being alive at all. Whatever age, appearance, or ability, I am as much as He is. I am because He is, and so are you, and so are they.

Just as ... I AM.

Created for Good Works

by Diane Albers, President of Lutherans For Life



The thing about Lutherans is that we know that we are “poor, miserable sinners” in need of salvation. If we were not aware of it before, our Confirmation studies and the confession during the communion service remind us often. Yes, we are “poor, miserable sinners,” but sometimes, in a way, we take that too much to heart. We feel less than adequate to do what we feel God is asking us to do.

As president of Lutherans For Life of Missouri, I asked people to fill out their AARs (Annual Activity Reports) for the national office—or even to just give a little blurb about their activities to post in the quarterly newsletter. At first, it was especially difficult. I would get responses like, “Our Life Chapter/Team is not really doing very much” or “I know we should be doing more” or “Everyone else is doing so much more than we are” or “I’m embarrassed to tell you what we are doing.” After harassing them a bit and reminding them of what God says in Ephesians 2:10, they got better about reporting what they were actually doing!

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

I wanted Missouri people—and now you—to know that since we are created for the good works that God has already prepared for us, then we should do them! I want you to know that whatever life-affirming work you are doing has been created and prepared by God. Could you do more? Well, maybe! Examine your heart.



Think about what you *are* doing in your Life Chapter/LifeTeam at your church. Who else would organize the diaper shower or the baby shower for the pregnancy help center and/or local Lutheran family? Who would fill a table or two for their fund-raising banquet? Who would help people to understand the bills and amendments that affect life issues where you live? Who would lead a children's message on Life Sunday or teach a life lesson in Sunday school or Bible class? Who would sit at a table at a street or craft fair with a set of fetal models to engage the public? Who would display at conferences for church workers? Who would take a scared, newly pregnant mom to a pregnancy help center and support her through her pregnancy?

These are just some of the things that members of LFL are doing. Staff and board members can provide the direction and resources, but you are doing the lion's share of the work! I praise God for all the good works that He has prepared for you that you are doing! You are our hands and feet to do, our mouths to speak life-affirming words, and our ears to listen with sympathy and understanding to all those confused about God's view of life. Thank you and keep up the good works that he has prepared for you. We appreciate your work and sacrifice!



Diane Albers, President of National Lutherans For Life, at the 2023 LFL National Conference in Erlanger, Kentucky

Teaching 4 Life Award 2023

by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life



The **Teaching 4 Life** award recipient should:

- Uphold the sanctity of life in the classroom and outside of it.
- Incorporate life issues into content material.
- Support life work outside the classroom.
- Exhibit care and concern for their students' lives.
- Encourage youth to share the message that every life is valuable because it has been created by God and redeemed by Jesus.
- Be unafraid to confess the truth about the sanctity of life, even when public opinion is opposed to this message, and be able to do so with a Gospel-motivated voice. He or she should actively mentor young people to do the same.
- Advance the mission of Lutherans For Life by equipping his or her neighbors, in particular his or her students, to be Gospel-motivated voices for life.

This year's **Teaching 4 Life Award** recipient is an exceptional example of the previous traits. Not only does she gently and effectively uphold all human life publicly and privately through her vocations, but she also actively teaches her students, from fourth grade all the way through high school, the truth that every life is valuable, including their own.

An advocate for life at all ages, this year's recipient intentionally pairs beliefs with action, abounding in life-affirming work in her church and school. For example, each year she hosts a tea for students, their grandparents, and other older members of the congregation during the school's Life Week celebration.

In addition, she regularly partners with local nursing home and assisted living facilities by providing age-appropriate ways for elementary, middle, and high school students to engage with and honor their unseen neighbors through artistic drawings, letter writing, and on-site visits filled with hymn sings and conversation time.

And as faculty advisor for her school's Y4Life Team, Lions 4 Life, she has expanded their life-affirming reach, connecting them with local opportunities to serve, such as the local pregnancy resource clinic.

But her work doesn't end there. As a high school English teacher, this year's recipient helps students wrestle with the life issues they encounter in literature through the topics they research and write about and through the hymn texts they are assigned to compose. Even beyond her classroom walls, Christy consistently encourages her students to learn and confess the truth that every life is valuable through opportunities like the Lutherans For Life essay contest and Y4Life Leadership Retreats.

Perhaps a fellow co-worker and nominator from Faith Lutheran School in Plano, Texas, describes her best:

“Christy is one of those rare individuals that is a wonderful combination of dedication, passion, love, determination, and sincerity. Her Christ-centered focus shines through in everything that she does. Whether she is teaching students of all ages in the classroom, caring for an ill friend, celebrating family events, or interacting with church and school staff, she does everything with great love and energy ... always to the best of her ability ... Christy is passionate about life at all ages and stages, and this shines through in her work, personal life, and beyond.”

I could not agree more. It is my honor and pleasure to announce LFL and Y4Life’s very first Teaching 4 Life award recipient:

Mrs. Christine Rivers



If ... Then

by Barbara Lane Geistfeld, D.V.M.



"If": Let Us Examine This Tiny Word More Carefully.

Lutherans have a pretty good handle on the delicate balance between Law and Gospel, between the gift of eternal life found in the Gospel and the doing of good works in response to that gift, and between guidance from the indwelling Holy Spirit and our free will. Ephesians 2:10 affirms that, **"God created us in Christ Jesus [grace] to do good works** [our "assignment" if you will], **which God prepared in advance for us to do."** In John 15:16 Jesus tells His disciples, **"You did not choose me, but I chose you [grace] and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last ..."** Again, grace is entwined with our assignment to do good works—as we are exhorted to do in many other New Testament Scriptures:

"[L]et your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

"They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share ..." (1 Timothy 6:18).

"[S]o that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works" (Titus 3:8).

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works ..." (Hebrews 10:24).

And finally, the text that so concerned Dr. Martin Luther: **"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?"** (James 2:14).

Ahh! Here we find that little word "if." Let us examine this tiny word more carefully. The word "if" appears in the Bible several thousand times, both in the Old and New testaments. Webster's Dictionary defines the word "if" as a word "introducing a conditional clause." **"If this happens, then this happens."** Why does this matter? Because Jesus used this conditional word "if" over and over again. It must, therefore, be very important for us to comprehend the context and His meaning.

"If you love me, [then] you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

"Jesus answered him, 'If anyone loves me, [then] he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him'" (John 14:23).

"If anyone does not abide in me [then] he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned ... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, [then] ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you ... If you keep my commandments, [then] you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:6-7,10).

Jesus is appealing to us to remain in Him by the power of the Holy Spirit given to us in our Baptism. He tells us that the promises of God are *always* there, and they will benefit us substantially if we love Him, if we abide in Him, and if we keep our eyes fixed on Him as the Holy Spirit indeed leads and enables us to do. **If** we do not love Him or abide in Him, **then** it is to our own detriment. Jesus calls us to live in a constant state of repentance, prayer, and trust, again, possible only by the strength of the Holy Spirit in us. He is surely telling us openly and clearly that **if** we do not remain in Him, **then** there are serious spiritual consequences. Is He saying this to frighten us? Not at all. Jesus says this because He loves us! He loves us so much that He gave His life for each one of us. He *knows* the consequences of us losing our desire to remain in Him. He *knows* the “ifs” and “thens.”

The Scriptures call us to submit our will—this free will given to us by God—to God our Father. A constant struggle, is it not?

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (James 4:7-8).

May each of us continue to rest in the power of the Holy Spirit so that He might soften our wills and give us the desire and the strength to love Jesus, to abide in Him, and to walk with Him as we continue to do the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do.



A Statement on Determination of Death ...

by Pastor Michael Salemink



How do you know when a loved one has died? What elements of death characterize it as an event? Which dimensions make it more of a process? Do medical professionals ever get it wrong? Do any Scriptural concepts or theological categories help us understand what alive and deceased mean?

It affects some serious decisions we make. Sometimes we take otherwise lethal actions once we conclude death has occurred. Donating vital organs is one such context. Removing heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, and other essential tissues would cause death if it had not already happened prior to the procedure. Often these body parts are still operating at this point, however. So we have come to rely on ascertaining “brain death.”

But technology to detect neurological activity has only developed recently. And while the human brain serves a primary role in coordinating biological functions, it does not play the only important part. Other organs do contribute in decisive ways. Furthermore, how precisely do equipment and specialists measure the electrical signals that “brain death” involves? What do these test results mean, and how do they relate to defining life or death?

Lutherans For Life’s Board of Directors has formulated an official position statement addressing these circumstances. We have the benefit of members with both medical expertise and theological knowledge. They have brought together science, history, and—of course—God’s Word to offer the following guidance for considering situations where determining death becomes urgent. May our Lord bless this Gospel-motivated voice For Life as well as your own.



Determination of Death (with Special Reference to Organ Donation)

WHEREAS, The point of death is when the spirit leaves the body (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:46; James 2:26), but no present scientific test can determine that point; and

WHEREAS, According to the Scriptures (Leviticus 17:11; Ezekiel 37:1-10; Luke 23:46), the total cessation of breath and heartbeat is the primary means of determining when the spirit has left the body and therefore the point of death; and

WHEREAS, Scripture furthermore teaches that God alone is the One who determines one's time of death (Deuteronomy 32:39; Ecclesiastes 8:8; Small Catechism: Seventh Petition of Lord's Prayer) and that when it pleases Him to call her/him out of this vale of tears, even medical intervention will not stop it from happening (Matthew 6:27); and

WHEREAS, With the development of organ transplantation in the mid-twentieth century, outcomes data demonstrated that vital organs removed while the heart was still beating performed better in the one receiving the transplant than did those removed after the heart had stopped, due to damage to the latter from lack of oxygen; and

WHEREAS, The concept of "brain death" was developed in part to avoid the transplant team being charged with murder, as it allows individuals in a persistent coma who appear to no longer have central nervous system activity and thus deemed unlikely to survive, to be considered dead, even with still-beating hearts; and

WHEREAS, The 1981 Uniform Declaration of Death Act, enacted in 39 American states and jurisdictions, includes "brain death" as a criterion for determination of death, and others rely on "accepted medical standards," which essentially do the same; and

WHEREAS, The criteria for "brain death" include persistent coma with no response to noxious or painful stimuli, absence of brainstem reflexes as tested at the bedside, and failure to breathe when removed from a mechanical ventilator for ten minutes (apnea test); and

WHEREAS, These bedside assessments do not measure all of the functions of the whole brain; as evidenced by continued hormone secretion, wound healing, successful completion of pregnancy, movement during surgery, survival after brain death declaration and even complete recovery on occasion; and

WHEREAS, The guidance on "brain death" determination is based on opinion and not evidence, changes from time to time, and furthermore, studies have shown that not all medical centers apply "brain death" criteria in a uniform manner; and

WHEREAS, Sometimes organ donation factors into end of life decisions; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life affirms that the concept of "brain death" as the sole determinant of death comes from outside of the Bible, and that the use of "brain death" as the criterion to remove vital organs is likely to cause death prematurely, and this is contrary to the express will and Word of God in the Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:13); and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life affirms complete cessation of cardiopulmonary function as the Scriptural determinant of physical death and thus opposes using "brain death" as the sole criterion for removing vital organs; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life encourages Lutherans who wish to be organ donors to indicate so on their Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care paperwork, and to specify in writing that they wish their medical teams to use the Scriptural criterion of cardiopulmonary failure to determine that their physical lives are ended; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life assures those who regret having allowed loved ones or other neighbors to be declared dead on the basis of the "brain death" criterion that there is forgiveness in Jesus' blood shed at Calvary, and encourages them to seek the comfort of Pastoral Absolution.

ADOPTED 10 OCTOBER, 2023

Sing! Pray! March On!

by Pastor Paul Clark, President of LFL of Michigan

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in his poem, “The Day Is Done,” makes a reference to the poets and songwriters of old, who comfort us through their words. Longfellow writes:

*Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.*

The road that we as Lutherans who stand For Life have trod is long and often very wearing. We are especially aware of that now with the anti-life climate in the state of Michigan. Yet, we march on, weary but not defeated. We are deeply saddened by the lack of empathy for the most vulnerable among us, and yet we are not surprised. We know that the dark shadow of Satan still falls over this world, and that in that shadow there is much pain, sorrow, and anguish, and of course, just plain evil in this world. The open season in many states on our unborn babies is solid evidence of that.

Yet there *is* **light**. There *is* **joy**. There *is* **hope**. Because this world was invaded by God in Jesus Christ, who came into this world to save sinners. Hebrews 2:14-15 reminds us of this imperishable truth:

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

Jesus is the One who came to give us life, abundant life, endless life. A new beginning. The anticipation of a new world.

The blood of Jesus cleanses us of all sin. Thanks be to God!

So, we keep on! Yet, oh, how toilsome that long road can be. How overwhelming, the loud and often angry voices of those arrayed against us—against life—can be! It can be daunting, even frightening, to make a firm stand For Life. Yet make that stand we must, for this is who we are as the people of God. Human life has value and deserves protection, and we cannot back away from our calling to be the salt of the earth, even though our hearts grow weary.

But, as Longfellow wrote, there are “songs that have the power to quiet the restless pulse of care.” We have the treasury of the life-affirming and faith-building hymns of the Church.

As we strive to push forward in the battle for life, and as we struggle to see clearly through the smoke and stench of this twisted, hate-filled, lie-driven culture of death that surrounds us, we do so with the words and melodies of the great songs of faith dwelling in our hearts, resounding in our ears, and pouring forth from our lips.

"On Christ, the solid Rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." LSB 575

**"I know that my Redeemer lives, what comfort this sweet sentence gives ...
He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death."
LSB 461**

"Christ has triumphed! He is living! Alleluia!" LSB 465

**"Awake, my heart, with gladness, see what today is done; Now after gloom
and sadness, Comes forth the glorious sun!" LSB 467**

**"Entrust your days and burdens to God's most loving hand ... Take heart,
have hope, my spirit, and do not be dismayed; God helps in every trial, and
makes you unafraid. Await His time with patience through darkest hours
of night, until the sun you hoped for delights your eager sight." LSB 754**

**"This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done: One little Word can fell him." LSB 656**

Sing the songs of the faith. Hurl them against the darkness of the world, the devil, even your own sinful flesh. God is good, and He is the Lord of Life. Armed with His Word and comforted by the songs of the faith, we will *not* grow weary, we will *not* give up the fight, and we will *never* stop speaking of the hope that is in us.

The Lord's benediction rests upon us. *HE* blesses us. *HE* keeps us. Lift up your heads. Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. *Sing! Pray! March on! IN JESUS! Amen.*

**"Holy, holy, holy
Almighty**

Support Lutherans For Life through iGive.com

In February 2023, Amazon permanently shut down its Amazon Smile program after providing eight years and \$11,000 of financial support to Lutherans For Life. LFL is so thankful for all people who donated to LFL through Amazon Smile and invites everyone to continue shopping and supporting the mission of Lutherans For Life through the iGive.com program.



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iGive.com is a rebate program where iGive members can shop online and donate their rebate to LFL. The rebate amount iGive.com will send to Lutherans For Life is based on the donation percentage of the store you shop at online. To see the entire list of stores and donation percentages you can provide to LFL, please visit: www.igive.com/LFL and click on "ALL STORES" on the bottom of the page.


Once you create your free iGive.com LFL member account, you can financially support our life-affirming ministry every time you shop online at any of 2,000+ online stores with no added costs, obligations, or hidden fees. There are also no extra steps, no codes to enter, and no notifications when making payments.

To join iGive.com as a Lutherans For Life member and start supporting LFL while shopping online this holiday season, please copy and paste the following link to your web browser: www.igive.com/LFL or scan the QR code on the right. Once you have registered, you can shop online and donate to LFL in the following ways:



- Create a free account on **iGive.com** or **iGive.com/mobile** and shop retailers directly on our site.
- Download the **iGive Button** and shop by items online. The extension will show you what stores carry the item and the percentage they are giving to LFL.
- Download the **iGive App for iPhone, iPad or Android**.

For answers to the most common questions, concerns, suggestions, or contact information, please visit: support.igive.com or contact Dave Probst at dprobst@lutheransforlife.org.



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
ONLINE!



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.



I praise you because ...

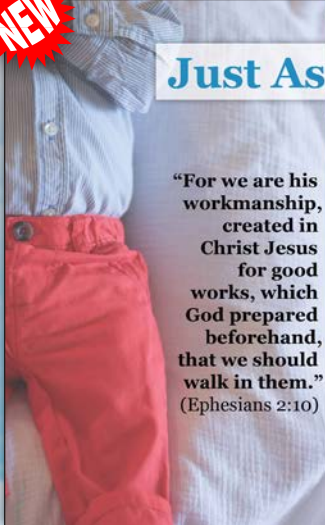


... I am fearfully and wonderfully made

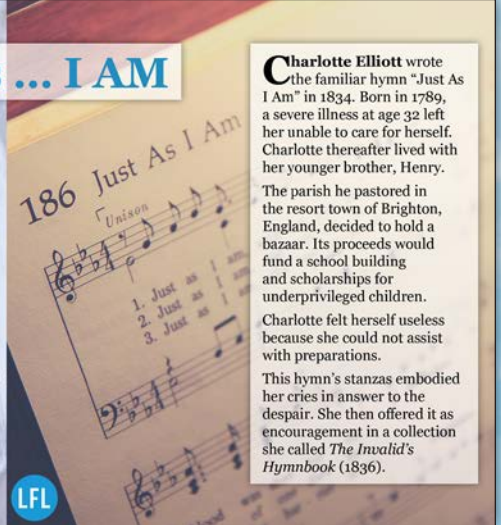
I Praise You ... – This beautiful 14" x 36" fold-out brochure highlights the fetal development of Jesus in the womb.
Item LFL101B. **\$1.00 ea.**



Just As ... I AM



“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
(Ephesians 2:10)



Charlotte Elliott wrote the familiar hymn “Just As I Am” in 1834. Born in 1789, a severe illness at age 32 left her unable to care for herself. Charlotte thereafter lived with her younger brother, Henry.

The parish he pastored in the resort town of Brighton, England, decided to hold a bazaar. Its proceeds would fund a school building and scholarships for underprivileged children.

Charlotte felt herself useless because she could not assist with preparations.

This hymn’s stanzas embodied her cries in answer to the despair. She then offered it as encouragement in a collection she called *The Invalid’s Hymnbook* (1836).



Life Sunday Resources for 2024

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lutheransforlife.org/store-life-sunday-2024



JANUARY 14-20

Now is the time to learn more and get your congregation energized and anticipating the opportunities that **Life Week 2024** provides.

lutheransforlife.org/life-week-2024

2024 LFL Regional Conferences

Join Us in 2024! Just As ... I AM

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)



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FOR LIFE**

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, January 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 ...



2023 Lutherans For Life National Conference

Nearly 280 people from across the country and beyond turned out October 11-13 for the 2023 Lutherans For Life National Conference in Erlanger, Kentucky, with trips to the Creation Museum and the Ark Encounter. (Look for three regional conferences in 2024. See page 17.)



Top: Pastor Michael Salemink with Rebecca Kiessling; The Ark Encounter. Middle: Artwork by Jeff Bolzman (featured in the "I Praise You ..." fold-out brochure; fetal models were a hit with all ages. Bottom: Virginia Flo, Director of Volunteer Relations, Rev. Mark Chavez, Lorelei Humphrey (Word of Hope), Deaconess Janet Nicol (Word of Hope).

Built as God Intended – Just As ... I AM

by Virginia J. Flo, Director of Volunteer Relations



“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

What God has created is perfect. Yet, I am by no means perfect, and He made me. Yes, sin has made us imperfect, but when God looks at His creation, He sees perfection. Even with our imperfections, God sees us as being created in His image, and His workmanship is perfect. Have we messed things up because of sin? Of course we have. Have we taken care of our bodies as a temple? Not really. Do we push ourselves to the limits at times, stressing ourselves unintentionally or intentionally, beating ourselves up for some self-made crisis? Oh my, yes!

How often have you looked at yourself and wondered why others look so great, and you have some work to do to ever have a hope to look that same way? Do you find yourself in what seems to be a never-ending diet, or do you make those endless trips to the gym or walking path for needed exercise? I think the vast majority of our society faces that dilemma not only to look good but to be healthy.

Do we stop serving the Lord because we don't fit a certain image of what society considers perfect? Does the smile of joy on your face not mean anything, even though it touches other hearts as they catch a glimpse? Do the words of kindness and love you share from your spoken words not fill those hearing them with a sense of peace, hope, and emotional satisfaction? Does the glow from your eyes not penetrate the hearts of those you are looking at with the love your glance generates?

Are your powerful smile, your words of kindness, and your visual interaction not a gift God gave to you and only you? You are surely God's workmanship, and it's not just your body He created but everything that comes from within, including your unique gifts and all your senses.

God made me **Just As ... I AM**, and He also made you just as you are. We all serve the Lord together, yet ever so slightly differently because that's who we are. And guess what, He did it on purpose. I will never be perfect—and neither will you by the world's standards. Yet, we each serve the Lord in ways that will make God's plan complete if we allow Him to guide our way. Will there be disappointments, oh yes, because the devil and our sin always try to get in the way. However, when we submit to the Lord, the end result will be wonderful.

You can make a difference in someone's life as your share the love of Jesus in your words and in your actions. As you witness through your interactions, you will be noticed because God's love is catching. And everyone wants to embrace the love God has to give. He showed His love when He created you, redeemed you, and called you to be with Him eternally in heaven. God loves life, and nothing the world can do will overpower our all-powerful God.

It is our hope at Lutherans For Life that everyone will seek ways to share and support the sanctity of human life. You might consider becoming a partner in the Frontlines as a Life Advocate, becoming part of a Life Team, or developing and fostering a Life Chapter. Let us help you to be part of one of these For Life opportunities on

the Frontlines where the everyday action takes place.

Avoid the temptation of finding reasons you can't do certain things because of your imperfections. Remember, God built you as He intended. He didn't lay down rules of which gifts you had to possess, or decide that when you reached a certain age, you all of a sudden became disqualified for service. He gave you more than one gift, so if you don't have a specific one you think is a requirement, perhaps one of your other gifts will compensate. Maybe you don't have the gift to lead, but you have the gift of encouragement, and that is what life-affirming ministries need to be uplifted and moving forward. He also didn't say old people can't serve at a certain age; in fact, He views older people as having wisdom that comes from life experience as you age. It's when the young and the old blend together to serve with a common goal that God sees His creation working just as He planned. Won't you consider being part of His plan through your service?

If you are interested in serving with Lutherans For Life, please contact our Volunteer Relations Department by emailing info@lutheransforlife.org or reach out directly to me, Virginia Flo, Director of Volunteer Relations at vflo@lutheransforlife.org, and I will match you up with someone on our team to guide you through the process. May your prayer be, "Dear God, please show me the way to serve **Just As ... I AM.**"



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The Importance of Lineage

by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life



I don't know about you, but I'm a big fan of family photos, especially generational ones. Whether browned at the edges or shiny and new, family photos are valuable.

They provide a record of sorts, not only of who we are at a moment in time but also how we are loved, where we belong, and, in some cases, how we came to be.

In the visual record photos offer, we also see God's life-affirming love: His gifts of sustenance over time, His work to sustain life over generations. Photos remind us of God's longevity, His commitment to upholding life with abundance.

And that reality isn't new. As Christians, we know that God's commitment to upholding life started long ago—before photos—before the beginning of time even. From His ordered creation of the world to His ordered creation of you in your mother's womb, God's work has always been life-affirming. Grafted into His family through Baptism, we have become children of God and inheritors of eternal life. Our lineage, our family photo, traces back to and includes Him.

It's easy to forget that truth though, isn't it? Sinful by nature and enamored by self-sufficiency, we often opt to serve self over fulfilling obligations to others. Ephesians 2:1-2 reminds us of our old Adam, our fallen nature that, no matter how often he is drowned, seems to rise up. Paul declares,

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience ..."

Yet these verses are soon followed by the lineage God formed for us, one that traces back to Christ Himself:

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us ... made us alive with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

We died with Christ and rose with Him. In Him we now live.

That, my friends, changes everything.

The 2024 theme verse for Lutherans For Life is Ephesians 2:10:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

As theme verses go, it's a good one. It reminds us of our vocations, our purpose even. God did call us to good works through our vocations; even now He gives us opportunity to serve Him by serving and upholding the lives of our neighbors.

But Ephesians 2:10 finds its roots, its lineage, in the verse that comes before:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Our works are made both possible and good because they are a result of His workmanship in our lives. They have meaning because their lineage is found in Him.

Lineage matters. And no lineage is more important than the lineage God provides through His Son, Jesus. He shapes our yesterdays and today's, and He is already at work to shape our tomorrows.

I don't yet know what it's like to have grandchildren of my own, but I can imagine that seeing a little part of yourself being passed on to another generation is a gift. Surely, recognizing the shape of your eyes or the tilt of your nose on the face of a new grandbaby would be a reminder of God's faithfulness. And watching a family mannerism or inclination toward a common hobby develop in a grandchild would make any grandparent proud.

But even greater than God's work to pass on our genetic code is His joy-filled work to pass on His Son's. And that most important work is carried out, by the grace of God, through Word and Sacrament and through you.

May you find many opportunities to pass along the lineage of Christ to those you love. And may you rejoice in the life-affirming work God has prepared in advance for you this day and in the year to come!



(Upper left) My dad's family. In back: my grandpa, Bob Bridges, Aunt Cheri, and my grandma, Mary Bridges. Front row (l-r): my dad, Michael, and my Uncle Larry. (Upper right) My mom, Mary Carlson (now Bridges), with her lamb, Tinkerbell. (Lower left) My maternal grandparents—Carl and Donna Carlson—on their wedding day. (Lower right) My mom and her two older sisters. (l-r) Janie, Mom (Mary), Carla Carlson

Surprise! (But, Not Really!)

by Marie MacPherson

We recently uprooted our family of nine from our home in Minnesota to central Wyoming. Anyone who knows even a little about American politics would rightly say we left a liberal state and now reside in a conservative state. Yet, because of a judicial loophole post-Dobbs, abortion is currently legal in Wyoming. Back in Minnesota, I was 90 miles from an abortion clinic; here in my new “conservative” state, abortions are taking place just a few blocks away! I never would have imagined such a thing. Nor would I have expected the “Pro-choice, Pro-woman” garden flag that appeared on our neighbor’s lawn just after we moved in. God’s world is full of surprises, and my new life is filled with pro-life opportunities. That knowledge can feel daunting. Everyone reading this magazine wants to be a For Life witness, *but how?* The good news (though perhaps a surprise) is that *you can stop trying!*

St. Paul writes to the Ephesians:

“[W]e are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand” (2:10).

Imagine, God’s good-work-doers, chosen before time began, for exactly whatever it might be that God has planned! Your service, your good works, your pro-life witness is already in front of you as you live your vocation in your home, society, and community!

Certainly, we don’t immediately see the fruits of the good works that God is doing in us and through us. But that’s no reason for despair or discouragement! A farmer plants a seed, waters and hoes, and waits for the season of harvest. A mother raises a child, hopes and prays, and waits until the child is mature. A Christian, too, plants a seed, prays and hopes, and waits until the New Heavens and New Earth to see a harvest. Good things take time. Your smiles, your encouraging words, your time and talents donated for pro-life work done “in Christ” are sure to be effective, even if you can’t immediately see the effects.

“[H]e who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

Norma McCorvey, better known as “Jane Roe” of *Roe v. Wade*, worked at an abortion clinic next door to a pro-life center. Emily, the little daughter of one of the pro-life volunteers “played on the sidewalk in front of the two adjacent offices ... Emily did more than deter women from seeking abortions; she smiled and greeted, she hugged and conversed with McCorvey ... ‘Why,’ asked Emily, so innocently and so gently, ‘are you letting the little ones die inside?’ For a seven-year-old girl, however, [Norma] had no defense. ‘I never answered her,’ she later recalled. ‘I couldn’t.’ In the months that followed, McCorvey became attached to Emily, and to her mother.”¹ Years passed, and through the love of others, and most importantly, the love of Christ, Norma repented of her sins and was baptized. Yes, life is full of surprises as Christians live out their vocations!

You might have no idea how God is using you for His kingdom. And that’s okay.

“[N]ow we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

We shouldn't expect to know or understand the ways of God. We simply live in trust and ask God's blessing on our lives of sanctification, lived in love and thanksgiving to Christ.

“[M]y thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD ... [M]y word ... that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose” (Isaiah 55:9,11).

A month ago, my oldest daughter bravely walked up to our “pro-choice” neighbor lady, inviting her to our “Open House.” We were surprised that she attended! She later sent us a note describing her appreciation at being included in the event, and, surprisingly, complimented our family of nine! Last week, we invited her over for birthday cake for our two-year-old. She listened as we sang “God's blessings” on our daughter and read with interest the hymn verse about Jesus that another child had illustrated for the birthday girl. She also read the Scriptures stenciled on our walls. Is this the beginning of something beautiful—something I never would have imagined or expected? I think so. But should it really be a surprise? We serve the Almighty God!

In your state, city, and neighborhood, God is working, too—working through you! My prayer for each reader is that:

“being rooted and grounded in love, [you] may have strength to comprehend ... the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:17-21).

¹ www.hausvater.org/book-reviews/152-how-a-christian-childs-love-won-jane-roes-heart.html





My high school students attended the February 2022 Y4Life Summit in Austin, Texas, and learned about many organizations that work diligently to uphold God’s good gift of life. Two of those students and I attended the Y4Life Team Training in October of 2022, and together we planned a life-themed mission trip for summer 2023, which we called “Austin Alive.” The idea was that we would spend four days serving different organizations that upheld the value of life throughout all stages.

Our first day of serving was spent at Sarah’s House, a maternity home in Austin for mothers who have chosen life for their babies. Sarah’s House not only provides a home, but it also helps women complete their education, find a steady job, manage their finances, and connect to a local church. Several women have been baptized through Sarah’s House ministry! Our seven students helped move donated cribs from the attic of the maternity home for two mothers who were very close to their due dates! Then we went off-site to their storage unit, which was set to be demolished within a matter of weeks. We helped sort through items and moved them to a new storage unit. One of the pregnant mothers came with us as we cleaned out the storage unit, and our students were able to visit with her for quite a while. They learned that her baby is a girl, and she planned to name her Sunshine. Since our visit, Sunshine has been safely delivered, and her mother is doing well in Sarah’s House. Praise be to God!

We stayed at an Airbnb with a theater room, so we spent that evening watching *Unplanned*, the story of how former Planned Parenthood employee, Abby Johnson, came to learn that abortion is the purposeful killing of a child. After the movie ended, we had hours of conversation about *Roe v. Wade* and the Dobbs decision, the emotional and spiritual impacts that result from the horrors of abortion, and how Sarah’s House, as well as the organization we’d be serving the next day, were working faithfully to help women choose life for their children.

On the second day of the trip, we traveled north of Austin to Annunciation Maternity Home. This ministry offers many resources to expectant mothers including housing, education, life skills classes, finance management, and Christian counseling. Our students stayed busy helping the staff prepare for an upcoming fundraiser by sorting through baby clothes. We spent a lot of time outside, and the students were cheerful servants and always kept the goal of being a Gospel-motivated voice for life in mind—even in the blazing central Texas heat!

During our next day of serving, we visited an assisted living home in Austin, where my heart swelled with joy as I saw my students THRIVE in serving! They assisted the residents as they got some exercise playing cornhole and eagerly joined them for a game of trivia. They served snacks and sparkling grape juice during “Happy Hour” and joined right in for a sing-along during music time. One student and I went to the memory care wing and led a watercolor class for a few residents, while the other students continued playing games with the other residents. We met residents who were partially paralyzed, couldn’t remember things that were said 30

seconds ago, couldn't speak, and couldn't see. We also met several staff members who were incredibly patient and loving. The students were quick to realize that the residents who had physical ailments or memory issues were still people God dearly loves and how valuable their lives are. As soon as we got in the car that evening to leave the assisted living home, every single student told me they want to serve with elderly people regularly at home. You can be sure I have already set up monthly visits to an assisted living center just up the road from our church for the coming semester!

On our final day of serving, we spent the whole day at a food bank. The students were responsible for checking expiration dates, bagging fresh vegetables, and sorting through canned goods. Earlier in the week, several students said they weren't sure how serving at a food bank would be a life-affirming service project. However, while we were serving at Sarah's House, the staff told us that the majority of the food the mothers eat comes from that exact food bank. It was excellent motivation for our whole group when we realized that the food we were preparing was helping feed mothers and their babies! The students were certainly tired at the end of the day, but they all determined it was well worth it when the food bank staff announced that after six hours of service, we had helped prepare 7,550 meals for our neighbors in need!

Since returning home from our trip, several of the students' parents have told me that "Austin Alive" was the highlight of their child's summer and that they can't stop talking about all they learned. I am confident that God has mighty things planned for each of those high school students as they continue to uphold life in each of their vocations.

Michaela Seeliger is Director of Christian Education at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Wichita Falls, Texas.



Life Thoughts in the Church Year

Based on appointed readings from Lutheran Service Book

January 7 – Epiphany I/Baptism of Our Lord – Nothing and nobody comes into existence apart from the will and the Word of the Lord God Almighty (Genesis 1:3). This means God desires the survival of every human life from fertilization to forever. We court great danger if we go against this intent or counsel others to do so (Psalm 29:7-8). Instead let us receive neighbors as blessings and enjoy our Father’s favor (Mark 1:11)!

January 14 – Epiphany II – Life issues like surprise pregnancy and terminal diagnosis come with uncertainty. But the Lord our God knows both our worries (Psalm 139:4) and the best way forward. He has already seen (John 1:48) what it will take to save, and He has still chosen life for all humankind, even when we behold only darkness and despair. We may not know what tomorrow holds, but we know who holds tomorrow.

January 21 – Epiphany III – The size of a people (as in the case of Nineveh, Jonah 3:3-4) makes no difference to their worth. Nor does the height of an individual’s status (so says the Psalmist, Psalm 62:9) affect his or her sanctity. The life-giving grace of God measures according to His abundance rather than our scarcities of age, appearance, or ability. May we likewise direct gazes beyond abortion’s and assisted suicide’s shortsightedness (1 Corinthians 7:30-31).

January 28 – Epiphany IV – Gospel-motivated voices have the privilege – and the responsibility – to proclaim the whole counsel of God. Those who speak otherwise dabble in judgment and condemnation (Deuteronomy 18:20). The Scriptures and the Savior have graciously made clear – with “shalls” and “shall-nots” – His jealous devotion to the survival and salvation of every human life. We get to repeat and rejoice in it, especially for the sake of the weaker ones (1 Corinthians 8:12).

February 4 – Epiphany V – Our Almighty Maker has blessed us with bodies for enjoyment. He has entrusted them to our control (1 Corinthians 9:26-27), but this means more than the mere “my body, my choice” indulgence of appetites. The greater gratification comes from receiving and serving even the least neighbor (1 Corinthians 9:22). Who are we to lie silent about the sanctity of life and thereby withhold the divine invitation to such a delightful discipline?

February 11 – Transfiguration of Our Lord – We proclaim not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord (2 Corinthians 4:5) of body and sexuality. We proclaim not personal choice, but Jesus Christ as Lord of marriage and procreation. We proclaim not popular opinion, but Jesus Christ as Lord of hurts and healing. We proclaim not political debate, but Jesus Christ as Lord of life and death. Listen to Him who makes us beloved children of God (Mark 9:7).

February 18 – Lent I – The Lord God forbid father Abraham from sacrificing his boy Isaac (Genesis 22:12). The lesson extends to us, too. Abortion is immoral because it is unnecessary. Jesus alone serves as beast of burden in the solemn rite of righting

Life Thoughts in the Church Year

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

wrongs (Mark 1:13). Death always hatches from sin (James 1:15), but we belong in the business of redemption. If God's forgiveness forgets even abortion (Psalm 25:7), we ought to forget about it also.

February 25 – Lent II – Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia view aging and affliction as burdens. But Abraham became a blessing in his elderliness (Genesis 17:1-2). And we encounter the glory of the Lord in carrying one another's crosses (Mark 8:34, 38). So let us resist Satan's temptations to take death into our own hands (Mark 8:33). We will rejoice in our suffering (Romans 5:3) and receive neighbors as gifts even in theirs (Psalm 22:24).

March 3 – Lent III – The Lord God closely associates life and family. He stands commands about parenting and marriage on either side of the prohibition against killing (Exodus 20:12-14). He holds human life as highest priority and will not accept any other creatures as replacement (John 2:15-16). Body and sexuality serve to enrich life – our own as well as one another's – and not to eliminate it.

March 10 – Lent IV – Surprise pregnancy and terminal diagnosis come with risks and costs. But as with the ancient Israelite serpent infestation, the real enemy is neither one's neighbor nor the Maker (Numbers 21:8). Only impaling the snake (not terminating each other) brought deliverance, and the antidote called for faith instead of death. Christians insist God has sent us His Son for extending lives and not ending them (John 3:17).

March 17 – Lent V – Jesus Christ embodies the God who abides beside us in our ailments and frailties. Our incarnate and crucified Savior suffers with and for those who cannot sustain or save themselves. He regards even human beings beset by weakness or sickness high enough to take on our condition Himself (Hebrews 5:7-9). The Gospel just leaves no room for abortion or assisted suicide.

March 24 – Palm Sunday/Passion of Our Lord – Sinful nature prizes popularity, property, and power. It despises dependence and discards aging or gestating neighbors because of it. But Jesus proves that God has designed humankind to rely on Him and each other. His salvation comes about by humbly and happily entrusting oneself to an Almighty Father (Philippians 2:6-8). We need not take life and death into our own hands when we can rest upon His.

March 31 – Resurrection of Our Lord – The Scriptures do not limit the sanctity of human life to a few isolated passages. Almighty God has made survival and salvation, abundant and everlasting, the point of the whole story. He intends His resurrection to encompass and affect every member of our race and every moment of our existence, from fertilization to forever. This is nothing less than the Gospel of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)!

End-of-Year Appeal 2023!

by Dave Probst, Director of Development



As we draw closer to the end of 2023, please take a moment to read through our end-of-year appeal that was sent to you in November and discover the impact YOU are providing in our journey to equip Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life. Your ministry partnership, faithfulness, and unfailing love are a vital part of our relentless effort to change hearts and save lives—and we thank God for YOU!

Our 2023 end-of-year appeal is filled with information on the incredible ways your Gospel-motivated efforts continue to assist us with our Word of Hope ministry, Y4Life ministry, and our Volunteer Relations Frontline Life Teams, Life Chapters, and Life Advocates. Your

partnership continues to touch thousands of congregations across the country and hundreds of volunteer communities in a nationwide effort to influence society to uphold the God-given value of human life and to speak and act on behalf of those who are vulnerable and defenseless.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

As we close out this year, we celebrate together as life-affirming children of God the victories and gifts God has provided to Lutherans For Life this year, and we ask for your continued support in 2024. The devil, the world, and our own fallen flesh continue to devise new threats to the blessing of life. Pressures and deceptions continue to intensify. And your help is needed to make an immediate and eternal difference!

Please prayerfully consider partnering once again with Lutherans For Life to flood society with the love and presence of Jesus through a generous contribution to our end-of-year appeal. We need your help to reach our end-of-year goal of \$350,000 for our Gospel-motivated, life-affirming ministry. Thank you for moving forward in faith with us again.

God’s blessings to you and your family!



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.

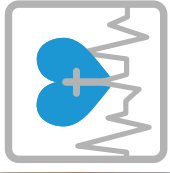
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