

Notes for Life

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Is the LCMS Still Involved in Life Ministry?

While LCMS Life Ministry's director position is currently unfilled, advocating for the most defenseless and vulnerable among us continues.

BY KEVIN ROBSON

One of the first questions that good friends typically ask one another when they reunite is, "What's happening in your life?" If your good friend happens to be The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, you might hear an answer that aptly starts with, "Where to begin?"

Now more than ever, LCMS Life Ministry continues to sustain a path begun in Christ's life of love and excellence, offering a multitude of resources and tools (lcms.org/life-ministry) that reflect and uphold life-affirming programming, advocacy and teaching. Earlier this year, the LCMS Life Conference, *Life 360*°, attracted several hundred participants in Washington, D.C., who heard from a stellar lineup of nationally renowned speakers.

Furthermore, the Synod's "Eyes of Life" campaign is spreading its beautiful story from one individual to the next, giving voice to what millions of others believe as well: that all life is sacred, valued and a gift from God (eyesoflife.org). The LCMS Office of National Mission, pressing on within the framework of seven mission priorities formally established by the LCMS in convention, currently is forging an even stronger working partnership with Lutherans For Life and is driving forward a landmark study of procreation, fertility and care of the unborn through a convention-mandated task force (2016 Resolution 3-04). All these initiatives (and more) are expected to be under the supervision of a new director of LCMS Life Ministry, anticipated in the first half of 2018.

And if that weren't enough, the newly-established Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty and its executive director, the Rev. Dr. Gregory P. Seltz, are poised "to ignite and fuel a uniquely Lutheran response to increasing intrusions, limitations and challenges by the government in the life of the Church, while educating, encouraging and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action in support of marriage, life and religious freedom" (LCRL statement of mission).

In all these efforts, our blessed life together is rooted in a Life that teems with life — the Life that has given us life abundantly and freely. He is the only Life in whom "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

"Where to begin?" It all begins (and ends) in Jesus.

The Rev. Kevin D. Robson is the LCMS chief mission officer.

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“Our blessed life together is rooted in a Life that teems with life.”



“Worth Doing in a BIG Way” Defending Life with Greg Seltz



PHOTO: CMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

The Rev. Dr. Gregory P. Seltz — speaker for “The Lutheran Hour” since 2011 — is headed to Washington, D.C., to defend life in a big way. As the new executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty, Seltz will cultivate relationships and resources in the areas of marriage, life and religious liberty on behalf of the LCMS and the center. Wondering what that will look like? Dr. Seltz fills you in.

What will a day in the life of the executive director of the LCRL look like?

[It] encompasses so many things. There will be educational curricula to develop about citizenship, vocation and the Church in the public square. There will be devotions to be led on the Hill to encourage our lawmakers and workers in the capital. There will be research and writing on issues pertaining to life, family and religious liberty, [plus] resources to be created for use by our churches, schools and universities — not just for their information, but also for their protection. There will be calls and visits to donors who graciously are sacrificing so that this effort can go forward. There will also be meetings with congressmen and congresswomen, meetings

with partners in the cause all around the capital. And finally, of course, there will be time for personal Bible study and prayer because this work will sometimes be overwhelming.

What challenges or speed bumps do you expect to face in sharing the Lutheran understanding of marriage, life and religious liberty in the nation’s capital?

The main challenge in sharing the LCMS view on life, marriage and religious liberty is overcoming the notion that we are sharing this merely for our own protection and survival. Truth be told, we are

sharing this because we are trying to be faithful to the Scriptures about these fundamental issues. But we are sharing our views on these things because we believe that they truly will bless others in our culture too, whether they are believers or not. Lutherans tend to focus on fundamental moral issues when engaging in public dialogue because we believe they affect all of us. Overcoming that notion that holding these views is somehow sectarian — that is a big challenge.

“ We are sharing our views on these things because we believe that they truly will bless others in our culture too.”



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Because we speak a “two-kingdom” language about public issues, namely that God works two different ways in the world, there isn’t a “public” language to express that view. Both the modern secular and present public religious view about culture tend to emphasize a “transformation” of the culture if one is faithful to the cause. A two-kingdom view of life, one that understands the utter brokenness of this

world because of sin, and the reality that God is at work in world two distinct ways — such a view sees God at work in the temporal realm of this world to “keep the peace” and in the spiritual/eternal realm to “give forgiveness, life, and salvation.” That sober view of things properly tempers expectations and yet still gives real hope.

When it comes to life issues in particular, how will you share the biblical truth that God gives each life worth and meaning from conception to natural death?

Somehow we have been convinced that we are merely “animals” and that human life isn’t special or unique. With no reference to God in so many people’s lives today, the result is not the secular freedom and utopia that so many envisioned, but a violence, a despair and a hopelessness about life. When human beings are convinced that they are not “human,” all kinds of things devolve. We see it in the decline of commitment to love, the decline of marriage, the incivility among so many. It’s important — vital — that we point out the results of this “anti-life” philosophy in the real lives of people.

As Christians, we are here to proclaim that every life is precious to God. We are here to live the reality that no life is unredeemable. And most of all, we are here to stand against the violence of abortion, the despair of euthanasia and the general disdain of modern, crass culture towards all that is humane. We are here to say that life matters and that every human person was meant to live a purposeful, meaningful life of love and service in God to others.

For people in the pew who may be intimidated by these hard discussions about life or who may not know where to start, what pastoral encouragement or direction can you offer?

Defending life is not as hard as you might think. Very often people are afraid of the passions that surround this discussion. The key to moving beyond the passion is always to remember that your reason for engaging this issue with others is not about winning an argument, but it is about truly caring for and loving those with whom you are speaking.

How do you foresee the LCMS joining with other like-minded churches or organizations to speak up and out in defense of life in an increasingly anti-life culture?

It’s wonderful to know that there are others passionately standing for life already in the public square. I’m encouraged by the many groups already in D.C. that are there to stand for the sanctity of life. Whether it is research organizations designed to get the truth out about this issue, whether it is other church groups that realize our views on life are foundational not only to the lives of believers but to the culture as well, whether it is politicians or other public officials who stand for life, we will seek to partner with those who realize that this issue affects us all. To stand for life is essential to knowing what it means to be human, [to be] humane. We will partner with those who undergird this for the sake of the communities in which we live and serve.

While sharing the truth can be hard, it can also be immensely rewarding — even fun! What are you most looking forward to about your position, especially as it pertains to defending life on a large scale and in a big way?

I think that sharing the truth of what it means to be pro-life is hard because of how the culture so often caricatures what we believe and say. The joy proclaiming the uniqueness of human life, the purpose of human life, the value of human life, is the joy of having people come to understand that their lives too are indeed that precious to the God who loves them in Jesus. To defend life publicly is to value the lives of those who even disagree with you. That’s a powerful message that can heal, that can forgive, that can empower those we seek to love and serve. That’s something worth doing in a big way.



There are facts that help us make the case for life, not just for us, but for all. There are psychological, sociological, scientific, even cultural reasons for defending the sanctity of all human life, especially those most vulnerable in our society. Look at those facts, those realities, with a love for the people that you are speaking with, and see what God can do with your testimony. You might be surprised.



Contact Your Elected Officials and Encourage Them to Defend Life

For the name of your U.S. representative or senator, contact your local elections office or call the Federal Citizen Information National Contact Center at 800-333-4636.

For the most recent information about elected national officials, log on to these websites or call the following Capitol switchboard numbers:

Senators
202-224-3121
senate.gov

Representatives
202-225-3121
house.gov



To contact the White House
Comments 202-456-1111
Switchboard 202-456-1414
Fax 202-456-2461

TTY/TDD phone numbers for hearing impaired only:
Comments 202-456-6213
Visitor's office 202-456-2121

President Donald Trump
president@whitehouse.gov

Vice President Mike Pence
vice.president@whitehouse.gov

Strengthening and Supporting Lutheran Families

BY JONATHAN LANGE

During the previous triennium, the LCMS Office of National Mission undertook a “Lutheran Family Initiative.” This forward-looking effort was commended by 2016 Resolution 16-02A and written into the Synod’s existing mission priorities. It affirms that to “strengthen and support the Lutheran family to live out God’s design” is not only important to the mission of the Church, but that it is mission work itself.

When the Bible teaches that Adam was made in the image of the Triune God (“... in our own image, after our likeness. ...”), it immediately specifies, “male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26-27). In this way marriage is directly tied to the life of humankind.

Marriage, life and family are biblically bound together. They are interwoven realities rooted in creation, distinguishable but inseparable. From this simple observation, it is clear that the strengthening of families necessarily involves the strengthening of marriage. It also follows that the strengthening of both marriage and family are a direct benefit to the sanctity of human life.

Here is where LCMS Life Ministry comes into play. Since the tragic ruling of *Roe v. Wade*, the LCMS has been focused on upholding the sanctity of life of the unborn human being. More recently, the appearance of the Hemlock Society has presented a direct challenge to the sanctity of life at all ages.

Now, in the face of myriad assaults on holy marriage and the integrity of the family, we must recognize that our devotion “to upholding the sanctity of human life” compels us to uphold the sanctity of marriage and to support of the family in direct support of life itself.

The Office of National Mission, which has been tasked with implementing Resolution 16-02A, is thinking both deeply and concretely on how this might be done. It is exploring how the specific ministries of life, marriage and family might be brought under a single roof to the benefit of all three.

Currently the office has a goal of producing both a theological rationale and a structural road map to accomplish this by the festival of the Holy Nativity 2017. Pray that God would bless this work with His wisdom and grace.



“In the face of myriad assaults on holy marriage and the integrity of the family, we must recognize that our devotion ‘to upholding the sanctity of human life’ compels us to uphold the sanctity of marriage and to support of the family in direct support of life itself.”

The Rev. Jonathan Lange is the Marriage, Life and Family consultant for the LCMS Office of National Mission and pastor of Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Evanston, Wyo.



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Word of Hope:

Responding to Post-Abortive Suffering

BY CHRISSIE GILLET

As a ministry of Lutherans For Life (LFL), Word of Hope is a unique national hotline devoted to intervening on behalf of life issues and imparting the value of all human life as divinely created and redeemed by Jesus Christ. Hotline callers are primarily men or women suffering for weeks, months or years after an abortion. Many of the hurting people describe overwhelming guilt, depression, anxiety, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, unwanted memories or other symptoms of post-abortion syndrome. At Word of Hope, we respond to suffering with love, mercy and support, guiding each person toward reconciliation with God by the gift of faith.

At the peak of the ministry under founder Grace Kern, M.S.W., as many as 300 people connected with Word of Hope through the hotline or email each month. Over time, the ministry's effectiveness was impacted by the need for Kern to singlehandedly operate the hotline, write literature, speak publicly and procure funding. Grace's decision to retire, in addition to her selfless service to callers, meant some tasks needed to be deferred and others postponed as the pursuit for a new director commenced. In April 2017, the search concluded when I as a deaconess intern accepted the invitation to join the LFL mission as the new Word of Hope Director.

The transition presented an opportunity to reflect on past successes and a vision for the future. Word of Hope aspires to be a national resource that offers supportive referrals and a Christocentric experience with the hope that all people will be liberated from the overwhelming guilt associated with issues such as suffering related to abortion, which are encompassed by life ministry. To proceed in harmony with the vision, the focus of our efforts must address the need for knowledgeable staff, an online

presence, updated technology, proper referral resources, revised publications and collaboration with other agencies.

Due to the generosity of the LCMS with the Domestic Development Grant and funding given by additional dedicated supporters, we accomplished various goals within a few months. Word of Hope launched the transition from Grace to me, acquired advanced software technology, revised media and exhibited at the LWML National Convention. Our ability to "have mercy on those who doubt [and] save others by snatching them

“Our ability to ‘have mercy on those who doubt [and] save others by snatching them out of the fire’ (JUDE 1:22–23A) is critically dependent on the compassion from people and organizations who also share in the true value of life.”



out of the fire” is critically dependent on the compassion from people and organizations who also share in the true value of life (Jude 1:22–23a). We are eager to partner with you — for life!

Chrissie Gillet is a deaconess intern and the director of Word of Hope.

Want to learn more about Word of Hope? Visit lutheransforlife.org/about/word-of-hope.



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Mercy Forever

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Give Now

Mark Your Calendars!

Lutherans For Life has packed this fall full of opportunities for you to get involved in discussions regarding life. Bookmark lutheransforlife.org/calendar so you don’t miss an event!

Nov. 11, 2017. 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

Lutherans For Life Regional Conference

St. John’s Lutheran Church, Pekin, Ill.
“Hope for Life”

Sessions include “The Value of Pregnancy Centers,” “Embryo Adoption,” “Pain Perception in the Developing Human” and “Standing Out in the Life Field.”

lutheransforlife.org/conference

Jan. 19, 2018

March for Life

Washington, D.C.

While LFL is not coordinating lodging or travel, its Northern Virginia Chapter will carry a banner in the march. LCMS attendees are invited to assemble and march near it. The Rev. Christopher Esget and Immanuel Lutheran Church and School in Alexandria, Va., will host a Divine Service the morning of the march, to which all Lutherans in attendance are invited. LCMS student attendees are invited to get more information on housing, scholarships and financial assistance for attendance at lutheransforlife.org/y4life-programs.

marchforlife.org

Jan. 22, 2018

National Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

1 Peter 3:15, “Hope for Life”

Worship and education resources including ready-to-reproduce bulletin inserts, Bible study, children’s message, order of service and model sermon manuscripts available at no cost.

lutheransforlife.org/conference