

Notes for Life

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“He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.”
Ps. 72:13 (ESV)

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Dear Friends of Mercy and Life,

In 1973, America was coming out of the crisis of the Vietnam War. The Godfather won the Academy Award for best picture, and rock band Aerosmith released its debut album. The Watergate scandal was in full swing, and Miller Brewing Company released Miller Lite for the first time.

Also in 1973, the Roe v. Wade case reached a resolution, with the United States Supreme Court deeming abortion a fundamental right under the U.S. Constitution.

Each year since 1973 — for 42 years — Americans have marked the Roe v. Wade decision by gathering in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 22, the anniversary of the decision, to prayerfully protest abortion and raise their voices for life. At the initial march in 1974, the crowd estimate was 20,000. This year, in 2015, estimates ranged from 600,000 to 650,000 people.

LCMS Life Ministry was honored to host a conference in conjunction with the march. About 350 participants joined together for worship, fellowship and education during the Jan. 22-24 event. Video and audio from the conference will be available at our website, lcms.org/life. I encourage you to visit the website and download the files to watch at home or listen to in your car.

To kick off the conference, attendees celebrated Divine Worship with Communion before heading over to the National Mall. With the Capitol building in front of us and the Washington Monument behind us, we joined hundreds of thousands of our pro-life friends walking to the steps of the Supreme Court. What struck me, as I stood in the crowd of people sporting lime green hats embroidered with “March for Life with the LCMS,” was the number of youth and young adults who had joined us. Forty-three percent of the conference participants — nearly half —



PHOTO: LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD



were high school or college youth who had braved the cold and crowds to stand up for life.

“How wonderful,” I thought, “that these young people are taking a stand.” Too often, we picture youth as uninterested; we think that they are unwilling to put their phone or video game or iPod down long enough to notice the world around them. These young people were not even born in 1973. They grew up in a world in which abortion was always available and legal. As we moved slowly along — 650,000 people make for more of a “shuffle for life” rather than a march — I wondered if that is the answer to their passion. The younger generation feels the sting. They are the ones who are missing their classmates, their friends and their siblings who were killed by abortion. They are marching for a lost generation — nearly 55 million people, created in God’s image, who never had the chance to march.

There were many conferences going on in Washington that week — all protesting abortion. Our speakers, too, emphasized the evils of abortion, exposing the lies that our culture uses to rationalize the killing of unborn babies. However, as I listened to the conference speakers, I was proud to be LCMS, because our message doesn’t end there.

2015 LIFE CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

- Laura Davis, Director, Y4Life
- Robert George, Author, Professor, Princeton University
- Rev. Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Professor, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
- Donna Harrison, M.D., AAPLOG
- Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
- Mollie Hemingway, Journalist
- Lila Rose, Founder, LiveAction
- Carol Tobias, President, National Right to Life Committee

Yes, abortion is sick and evil and wrong and needs to be abolished. But we also preach God’s mercy and grace. There is forgiveness and healing after abortion through the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Praise God!

If you were able to join us for the 2015 Life Conference, I thank you and hope that you returned home to your family, congregation and community energized with God’s message of the sanctity of human life. If you couldn’t make it this year, I encourage you to join us next year. I am thankful for each of you who so faithfully carry the message that all life is sacred.

Tracy Quaethem
Project Coordinator
LCMS Life Ministry

A Virtual Tour of the **Womb**

BY STEPHANIE NEUGEBAUR, SONOGRAPHER FOR LCMS LIFE MINISTRY
ULTRASOUND EDUCATION

*For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.
(Eccl. 3:1–8)*



Ecclesiastes 3 is frequently quoted in Christian circles. We like it because it talks about time — admittedly one of the most prized resources in our day-to-day life. As modern Christians, we can certainly relate to that and nod our heads as we agree with the wise sayings of Solomon.

We especially cling to the latter verses: “A time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.” But of the two seemingly opposing actions in each line of Solomon’s poetry, don’t we

always gravitate toward the easier route, the safer option?

Dear brothers and sisters, I am afraid that the church — both as individuals and as a unified body — has over time come to misuse these verses and misquote this text in order to provide an excuse. An excuse to remain silent. An excuse to claim that it's simply not the right season. An excuse to say it's more respectful to refrain from controversial items, rather than engage in them. An excuse to be swept away by the age of tolerance, which touts we must *only* embrace and *only* keep silent in order to love.

But keeping silent is costing our church a great deal.

Thousands of unborn babies are killed each year due to abortion.

It is not the time to keep silent.

Unplanned, unwanted pregnancies happen to single Christian women and single unchurched women alike.

It is not the time to keep silent.

Our educational system fails to teach our children about biology and prenatal sciences in a way that upholds the sanctity of human life.

It is not the time to keep silent.

You see, silence is not always synonymous with love, and an all-embracing attitude does not always lead to peace. It is time as a church to speak out, to educate and to fight for the lives of our young couples and their unborn babies. True enough, there are times in our lives where silence is called for; but a season of silence is never called for when abortion is still among us.

How can Christians learn to speak if all they've known is a hushed and muffled stance on abortion? Where do we even begin with such an enormous issue?

A simple answer is in the classroom. Children. Educating the future generations of both the church and of society.

Certainly, this is not the *only* way. But it is the newest approach from LCMS Life Ministry. In the fall of 2015,

Life Ministry will be launching an ultrasound education initiative — A Virtual Field Trip through the Womb — in which middle school and high school students will receive on-site education about prenatal development via ultrasound technology.

This initiative will have two parts — an innovative video featuring real-time fetal ultrasound scans and a live presentation led by a medical ultrasonographer. There will also be a very detailed teaching curriculum that will accompany these tools, which will allow teachers and/or youth leaders to tailor this presentation to meet their unique classroom requirements and/or teaching objectives. Through this program, both parochial and public school children will learn the truth about fetal growth and development. Through the lens of sonogram images, they will see with their own eyes the human characteristics of the preborn. And through sound scientific instruction, they will be instilled with the knowledge that life in the womb is as valuable as their own, that it is one worth protecting and defending.

Again, the idea behind this is a simple one: to educate our children about those yet unborn, so that the only response they could ever have to abortion is to speak out and fight against it. Silence in this case will be unthinkable for them. And hopefully, it will become unthinkable once again for our culture as a whole.

Dear church, it is time to end our season of silence and enter a season of articulating our Christian values. *We have something to say about abortion. About sex. About relationships.* We can speak to fear, crises, guilt, shame.

Solomon reminds readers that God “will judge the righteous and the wicked” (3:17), which means exactly what it says. Indeed, we will ultimately be held accountable for how we handle ourselves in this season!

Will we remain silent, or will we speak on behalf of the unborn?

Mercy at the Edges of Life

BY JOHN T. PLESS, CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, FORT WAYNE, IND.

“Mercy is not self-evident,”¹ writes Oswald Bayer. We live in a world where the weak are often pushed aside and the most fragile among us, the unborn and the aged, are seen as legitimate targets for extermination — and the act of killing them is even identified as mercy. How different from the Holy Scriptures where mercy, a characteristic of the Triune God Himself, is rather about the donation of life and the doing of that which guards and defends this life without



PHOTO: ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK

1 Oswald Bayer, “Mercy from the Heart” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* XIX (Easteride 2010), 30.

reference to how the quality of that existence might otherwise be evaluated. God shows His mercy to the weak, and so the psalmist is bold to pray, “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent” (Ps. 71:9).

Gilbert Meilaender argues, rightly I think, that aging is not to be seen as a disease to be cured but as a stage of life to be embraced.² When aging is medicated as a disease, physician-assisted suicide becomes all the more tempting. If there is no cure for aging, why should those who suffer from it be required to endure its discomforts and indignities? Once the aged are no longer capable of enjoying an appropriate “quality of life,” they should be free to bring that life to an end and seek medical assistance in doing so — these arguments have gained significant traction in our culture.

If “quality of life” is what defines human existence, such an argument makes sense. Christians recognize that it is not a question of life’s quality, but rather whose life it is. The euphemism for suicide, “she took her own life,” is deceptive. It was never her life to take. Life is an endowment of God’s mercy from conception to natural death. Human life is given dignity by the Creator without any merit or worthiness in me, to paraphrase the Small Catechism. It is always to be received as a gift and so protected from harm and danger no matter

² Gilbert Meilaender, *Should We Live Forever? The Ethical Ambiguities of Aging*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 1-19.

what its “quality” might be. This means that the Christian is under obligation not to “hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need,” to cite the Catechism’s explanation of the Fifth Commandment. It is not an act of courage to make yourself the author of your own death or to cause death for another. Courage is demonstrated in living the life that God has given — even with its burdens — to the end that God Himself will give. Death is never a gift we are entitled to give to ourselves or others.

Our responsibility to the aged, injured and infirm is always to care and never to kill. Anything that aims for the death of those who suffer is murder, which God strictly prohibits in His Law. Even when death is inevitable, it is our calling to “help and support” the neighbor “in every physical need.” We are never authorized to end suffering by terminating the life of the one who suffers. While it is true that the dying are not obligated to accept therapies that are burdensome or that promise little hope of a cure, none of us may excuse ourselves from the burdens of life. Protestations like “I don’t want to be a burden to anyone” are a fundamental denial of our humanity. To be a human being is to be a burden and to bear burdens (see Gal. 6:2). Rather than deserting the dying or accelerating their movement toward death, Christians show mercy by supporting them in this body and life, thereby bearing their burdens even as we commend them into the hands of a merciful Savior.

According to your Vocation ... **SPEAK!**

BY REV. MATTHEW M. TOOMAN, DISTRICT LIFE COORDINATOR — NEBRASKA

“Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Prov. 31:8–9)

This passage presents quite a challenge to the church of our day. We can see in these words a call to be active in speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Lurking in them is a push into political activity. How can one “open your mouth” or “defend the rights” of other people without a political result? Other people will surely push back, and then you have a debate. Can this action be quiet action, or does it by nature require making a little bit of noise?

In the church, and especially in the Lutheran church, there seems to exist inertia toward silence. Our voice is often muted — not by our culture, but by ourselves. “We will just let our actions be our witness,” we say. Actions are good, but without words will those actions persuade and convince others of what you believe in your heart? Must not words and actions accompany one another?

We believe that the Bible tells us the truth. The Bible comes to us through the Law and the Prophets and through the revelation of our Lord, Jesus Christ. We believe that hearts are changed through the preaching of God’s Word. How can we remain silent and at the same time believe that it is the Word of God that changes hearts? We must use language and words so that people can know Jesus. This Word of God brings both Law and Gospel to the world, and people must speak it. In as much as this is true for the entire message of the Gospel, it is also true regarding the message that God values life.

Sometimes people think congregations have called pastors to be their voice, and that is true. Pastors are to forgive the repentant and withhold forgiveness from those who are not repentant, and this is done for and on behalf of the congregation. In this context, pastors will speak about important biblical issues, including life issues. They will tell people that abortion is evil and contrary to the will of God. They will proclaim that marriage between a man and



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Calling All Readers

We want to hear from you! If you’ve got ideas for future issues, comments, feedback on articles you’ve read in *Notes for Life* or news and life outreach stories from your part of the world, please let us know. Write to tracy.quaethem@lcms.org with your stories, and be sure to include your name, city and state. Or post on our Facebook wall.

Coming Up

Practical Ideas for Pro-Life

Outreach. You are ready to take a stand for life, but how? In the next issue, leaders in the pro-life movement share their practical ideas for outreach at the individual, local and national level.

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a woman is the proper context for sexuality. They will give advice regarding the proper perspective on end-of-life issues. Pastors will cherish and speak for people with disabilities and remind people that Jesus died to save all people. Then, where people are secure in their sins, even those embodying issues of life, pastors will keep preaching the Law. Where people are terrified because of their sins, even those embodying issues of life, pastors will give the comfort of the Gospel — the forgiveness of sins. They speak as the spiritual leaders of a congregation.

Are the voices of the pastors enough to influence and change the culture?

In World War II, the Nazi government of Germany killed 11 million people. Many German people saw this evil, but only a few spoke. Maybe they saw and turned a blind eye because they were afraid and didn’t want to speak. Let us not, though, hold the German people in too great a derision. How can we, with our freedom, sit back and refrain from speaking when nearly 3,000 people are killed every day with salt solutions, knives and vacuums? They are killed in a place that is to be most protected — the mother’s womb. How can anyone who believes that this is evil keep from speaking out for those “who cannot speak for themselves”?

So, how do we speak? How do we overcome this inertia of silence? One might start with Matt. 28:19–20: “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.”

The first part of verse 19 could be translated, based upon the grammar provided in the Greek, “In the way of your going out make disciples” This assumes that people have lives. This assumes that you go out of your house every single day to carry out some good work that God has laid before you to do. This is where God calls His people to speak. He calls people to speak according to the life that He has given. You have a circle of people in your life to whom you can speak and to whom you are called to share God’s Word. “In the way of your going out” is where you are given to speak passionately and compassionately for those who are in danger — both physically and spiritually. You may not be a pastor, but you are a forgiven child of God with influence and reach, and you can speak God’s Word so that more people might know Jesus. As you do, remember to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

In that vein, evaluate the ways in which you might increase “the way of your going out.” Are there community activities where you might add your voice to a larger crowd? Does your congregation sponsor pro-life activities that you might easily join? Is there an organization in your church that speaks out on the issues of life? There are so many places and so many contexts where we can speak for those who cannot speak! Let us seek them out, and let us speak!



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Contact Your Elected Officials

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

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202-224-3121
www.senate.gov

Representatives
202-225-3121
www.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 Barack Obama
president@whitehouse.gov

Vice President Joe Biden
vice.president@whitehouse.gov

SHARING THE TRUTH, Leading by Example

BY LAURA DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF Y4LIFE, LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

I had the honor of speaking at the recent LCMS Life Conference in Washington, D.C., on how to equip and encourage youth to speak for life. After my presentation, one of the many youth who attended the conference stood up and read 1 Tim. 4:12: "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." I was so excited that the student chose to share these words, because they have been very meaningful to me as I developed Y4Life, the youth and young adult program at Lutherans For Life. They were spoken to Timothy by his mentor, Paul. Timothy had been called to evangelize and preach the Gospel in a critical time in the Early Church. By these words, we can guess that sometimes Timothy felt that his youth might be a stumbling block to those whom he was trying to reach. Maybe he felt inadequate, that he didn't know enough or have enough experience to do his job. Or maybe there were those who had been openly condescending of his age. Either way, Paul's encouragement to Timothy was clear: Your age or your experiences do not stop you from setting an example for those around you.



As a young woman, I have struggled with insecurities over my age and my ability to reach people with a message of life. I have often wondered, "Will adults find me credible? Will students find me engaging? Do I have enough life experience to have any authority to speak at all?"

I think many youth (and probably adults!) struggle with these feelings of insecurity when they think about speaking for life to those around them. The issue of "Life" can seem so big, so daunting, that it is hard to know where to start or what to do. That is why Paul's words to Timothy are so powerful. God knows our insecurities and gives us a formula to overcome them.

The first step to speaking for life is to simply set an example for those around us, to encourage those around us with what we say and how we live our lives. Our actions have an eternal impact on those around us, and I have seen firsthand how the examples of youth can change lives.

Two years ago, we hosted the first-ever Y4Life Servant Event in St. Louis. These events are a sort of "mini-mission trip," introducing students to life-affirming service opportunities in their own community. One of the participants had only been going to church for a few months when a friend invited her to attend the servant event. Out of all of the students, I saw the most dramatic change in her. By the end of the week, this is what she told me:

"This weekend has been one of the most inspirational weekends that I have ever experienced. At first I was very afraid, but after getting to know them [the other students] and getting to understand what they believe in and everything that they stand for, I just really want to further myself with them ... *and I want to dedicate my life to helping people.*"

By going out and serving her community, and by seeing others setting an example in their actions, this student's perspective and her desire to serve God were changed.



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But this doesn’t only apply to youth! While Paul was directly addressing Timothy’s fears about his youth, the second half of the verse applies to all of us and tells us how we can make a difference — by setting an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

That means speaking the truth in love when the situation calls for it — maybe as a sidewalk counselor or a pastor, maybe simply in a conversation with a co-worker or another student at your school. Failing to speak may be seen as affirmation, and we can set an example and be a witness simply by speaking the truth and making the most of an opportunity to share the Gospel.

We can set an example in conduct, by serving our community and by living out our faith in our own lives. We can make great strides toward changing the stereotype of the hypocritical Christian by putting our words into action.

We can set an example in love by showing love for our neighbor, compassion for those in need and forgiveness for those who have made mistakes in the past. Too often, the only voice people hear is the voice of condemnation. Set an example for those around you by being a voice of hope and forgiveness.

We can set an example in faith by being intentional in building our relationship with Christ and letting Him live through us. This means trusting Him more than we trust the solutions of the world, which often get us into trouble.

And finally, we can set an example in purity by living a counter-cultural lifestyle that honors God’s gift of sexuality. For youth and those who are single, this means living a pure and chaste life, in our words and our actions, and not being ashamed of it. If you are married, you can do this by honoring your marriage. If you are parents, set an example for your children of how Christian marriage reflects Christ’s love for the Church.

If you are struggling to know where to start when speaking for life, I would encourage you to start right here, right now. Start with yourself. Start by speaking for life in your own life. Start by living a life that honors the Lord of life and being an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity for the believers and to the world around us.

For more information about Y4Life and how to equip Lutheran youth to be Gospel-motivated voices for life, visit y4life.org or contact Laura at ldavis@lutheransforlife.org.

Resources

- **Resources from the Nov. 8, 2014, LCMS Infertility Ethics Symposium** are available online at lcms.org/life.
- **The LCMS Life Ministry Life Library** has more than 200 articles on topics including two kingdoms, vocation and Christian ethics at your fingertips via our new online library. Many articles are lay-friendly, while theological papers offer more in-depth study. All are free and easily downloadable. Visit lcms.org/lifelibrary and particularly the “Procreation Issues” page for in-depth resources on procreation and birth control issues.
- ***A Small Catechism on Human Life*** by John T. Pless. Examine abortion, bioethics, end-of-life and sexuality issues through the biblical eyeglasses of Luther’s Small Catechism. Thorough and readable for anyone at any age, each chapter is followed by thoughtful discussion questions and Bible references. Available from Concordia Publishing House (cph.org).