



# Notes For Life

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*Appealing to the law inscribed in everybody's heart might be the most effective way to unite Americans of all walks of life against the genocide that has already killed 50 million children since the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Roe v. Wade in 1973, a legal decision flying in the face of the law of nature.*

– Uwe Siemon-Netto,  
director of the Concordia Seminary  
Institute on Lay Vocation

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## Here We Go Again...



By Maggie Karner  
Director, Life and Health Ministries  
LCMS World Relief and Human Care

I'm a baby-boomer (but I am quick to add, of course, that I was born in 1963 — the last year that technically qualifies as belonging to that generation). I was young during the 60s, so I conveniently bypassed having to deal with the cultural upheaval of that decade, which my older siblings had to endure.

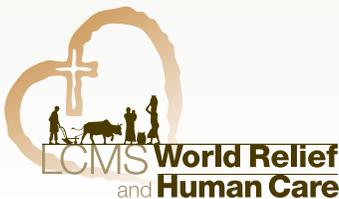
Instead, my cultural upheaval came much later during the 90s when I was already married and a mother actively involved in the pro-life movement. My cultural struggles appeared at home when I had small children who were curious what the word abortion meant. "How does one explain this horrendous act to a child," I thought. And later, in 1998, I had to figure out how a parent should explain the sexual indiscretions and hoopla surrounding the impeachment of a sitting president without somehow disrespecting the office.

Well, here we go again. I recently had to explain to my 9-year-old why the President of the United States repealed a law that was designed to prevent our tax dollars from being used to fund abortions overseas. That was just the beginning. Since then, we've had numerous anti-life administrative and legislative news items of interest — things that just don't seem to make sense to my youngest with her natural understanding of the value of God-given life. In her mind, things seem pretty black and white . . . why doesn't everybody see it that way?

I've come to realize it is the rest of us world-weary adults who often become desensitized to the horrors of anti-life maneuvering and the anti-family cultural upheaval all around us. We have become used to politics as usual and the babble of lobbyists and television talking heads who drone on about the agenda of this political party or that political action committee (PAC). Sometimes it is too easy to just tune out the cultural "noise" and pull up the drawbridge.

Perhaps it's time to re-sensitize ourselves and re-enter the cultural upheaval going on all around us so that we can tune-in to make our voices heard. Speaking up is what this issue of *Notes for Life* is all about. It provides ideas for re-sensitizing ourselves to the issues at stake and making a difference for life in the sometimes confusing culture around us.

Take a moment to read through this issue. It includes excellent suggestions provided by our Life Special Projects Coordinator Ed Szeto on how you can make change happen in your corner of the world. And don't miss the moving article by Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto who recently organized a prayer vigil at the abortion facility in his local urban area. Finally, make sure your wishes regarding end-of-life issues are observed by



Mercy forever.

reading attorney Rita Marker's informative article on advanced directives. Then go out and speak up for life with love and grace!

In the life and light of our Savior,



Maggie Karner

## The Obama Scorecard



By Ed Szeto  
Special Projects Coordinator  
Life Ministries, LCMS World Relief and Human Care

Since President Obama took office on January 20, his administration has proven to be decidedly anti-life in policy, appointments, and dogma. Here is a brief recap on what he, or someone in his administration, has done during his first 100 days in office:

**January 23:** President Obama overturns the “Mexico City Policy,” which previously restricted U.S. funds from subsidizing nongovernmental organizations that promote abortion as a means of birth control or population control.

**March 3:** President Obama nominates pro-abortion Governor Kathleen Sebelius (Kansas) to be secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. This nomination follows other pro-abortion activists who were appointed to positions in the new administration: Dawn Johnsen, former legal director of NARAL; Ellen Moran, former executive director of the pro-abortion EMILY's List (a PAC dedicated to supporting pro-abortion women politicians); and Melody Barnes, who has served on the boards of both EMILY's List and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

**March 9:** President Obama removes the ban on the use of federal funds for embryonic stem cell research. This same executive order also rescinds President Bush's directive to fund alternative forms of research and treatment that do not include killing embryos.

**March 10:** The Department of Health and Human Services begins the public comment period as the first step toward rescinding the regulation entitled “Ensuring That Department of Health and Human Services Funds Do Not Support Coercive or Discriminatory Policies or Practices in Violation of Federal Law.” This regulation, known commonly as the “conscience rule,” protects health care providers from discrimination if they choose not to do anything contrary to their religious, moral, or ethical beliefs.

**March 30:** Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, upon receiving the Margaret Sanger Award from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, stated that she admires “Margaret Sanger enormously, her courage, her tenacity, her vision.” (Sanger was the founder of Planned Parenthood, was sympathetic with Nazi Germany's eugenics programs, and was committed to preventing blacks, Hispanics, and the poor from having children. Read more at [www.nrlc.org/news/2004/NRL07/margaret\\_sanger\\_and\\_planned\\_pare.htm](http://www.nrlc.org/news/2004/NRL07/margaret_sanger_and_planned_pare.htm) and [www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=1466&department=CWA&categoryid=life](http://www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=1466&department=CWA&categoryid=life)) In the same speech, Secretary Clinton announced that promoting reproductive rights — including abortion — will be at the top of the government's international agenda.

### Contact Your Elected Officials

For the name of your U.S. representative or senator, contact your local elections officer 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 Web sites or call the following Capitol switchboard numbers:

#### Senators

(202) 224-3121

[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

#### Representatives

(202) 225-3121

[www.house.gov](http://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](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

#### Vice President Joe Biden

[vice.president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:vice.president@whitehouse.gov)

Updates on pertinent legislative activities and public policy are available by subscribing to *MercyNotes*, another e-newsletter from LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Subscribe online by registering at [www.lcms.org/enews](http://www.lcms.org/enews). Select *Mercy Notes* from among the “LCMS World Relief and Human Care” newsletters.

For a complete list of President Obama's anti-life actions, visit LifeNews.com: [www.lifeneews.com/obamaabortionrecord.html](http://www.lifeneews.com/obamaabortionrecord.html).

Compiled by Ed Szeto, special projects coordinator for LCMS Life ministries. Sources: LifeNews.com, Catholic News Agency, National Right to Life.

## Christians as Activists in the Public Square

One of our *Notes for Life* readers sent us a challenge last month: Give LCMS Lutherans guidance on how to become activists in the public square. Our goal with each and every issue is to showcase all facets of life issues, from the theoretical to the theological, from the good and bad news to the practical actions a Christian should take in light of what's happening in the world. Now, more than ever, Christians must be vigilant in speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Ed Szeto, our special projects coordinator, weighs in with some very practical tips.



### How can Christians be active in the public square?

The first step is to be connected. Many organizations can help you with this. In addition to getting *Notes for Life* and other e-mails from LCMS Life Ministries ([www.lcms.org/life](http://www.lcms.org/life)), I also get daily or weekly e-mails from Family Research Council, Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute, LifeNews.com, and Life Issues Institute.

The second step is to be informed. I frequently check Web sites like Do No Harm ([www.stemcellresearch.org](http://www.stemcellresearch.org)) for the latest on stem cell research; Lutherans For Life ([www.lutheransforlife.org](http://www.lutheransforlife.org)), Concordia Bioethics Institute ([www.cuw.edu/Academics/institutes/bioethics/index.html](http://www.cuw.edu/Academics/institutes/bioethics/index.html)), and Family Research Council ([www.frc.org](http://www.frc.org)) for life and bioethics issues; International Task Force on Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia ([www.internationaltaskforce.org](http://www.internationaltaskforce.org)) for end-of-life issues; and Americans United for Life ([www.aul.org](http://www.aul.org)) and the National Right to Life Committee ([www.nrlc.org](http://www.nrlc.org)) for legislative issues. Getting your facts straight is of the utmost importance.

The final step is to go out and do something. It can be as simple as taking part in the recent red envelope campaign where pro-life group supporters sent red envelopes to President Obama with a short message: "This envelope represents one child who died in an abortion. It is empty because that life was unable to offer anything to the world." It can be as difficult as running for political office, as a friend of mine did in northern Minnesota last year. It can be anything in between like writing letters, writing comments in blogs and Web sites, calling radio talk shows, or just sharing information with your neighbor.

### What issues need to be addressed right now?

There isn't one specific aspect that is of utmost importance right now as the sanctity of human life is being attacked on all sides. Just some of the things that have happened since November 2008 are: homosexual activists threatened and vandalized churches supporting California's Proposition 8 (a repeal of a judicial ruling that legalized homosexual marriage); citizens of Washington state passed an initiative to allow physician-assisted suicide; a judge in Montana ruled that a patient had the right to ask his physician to help him kill himself, thus setting a precedent; several states, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, looked at or are looking at physician-assisted suicide laws this year; federal funding is once again flowing to the United Nations and the nongovernmental organizations it supports that are coercing nations around the world to legalize abortion; federal funding is also enabling destructive embryonic stem cell research; the federal government approved embryonic stem cell research treatments on humans; a U.S. district court judge ruled that the FDA must allow 17-year-olds to purchase Plan B without a prescription; homosexual marriage is being discussed in the state house of New Hampshire and was recently legalized in Vermont (the fourth state in the Union to legalize gay marriage); and Secretary of State Hilary Clinton recently

stated at the Planned Parenthood Federation of America's National Convention that ensuring "reproductive rights" (a buzzword for abortion access) around the world is the administration's top foreign policy priority. Shall I go on?

Our church tends to focus on abortion and end-of-life issues, but what issues between these bookends are critical for Christians to be aware of and speak out on?

In addition to abortion and end-of-life concerns, other life issues we need to be aware of include: health care issues, sexual purity, marriage, biotechnology, and people with disabilities. This is not an exhaustive list, but these are probably the issues that people will see the most.

An example of a health care issue would be Plan B, or emergency contraception. The whole idea behind Plan B is that if you have unprotected sex or your chosen method of contraception fails, you should be able to have a "back-up" plan. What society doesn't tell you is that in countries where Plan B has been available over the counter for several years, promiscuity and the occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases have risen. With a New York federal judge recently ruling that the FDA must allow unrestricted, over-the-counter access to this drug (despite current FDA guidelines that require a prescription) to 17-year-olds, many health care providers are concerned about the long-term effects of repeated use of these high-dose hormones on women — especially young girls. Those in opposition to this ruling also fear that Plan B may now be easier to give under coercion, especially to those who have been sexually abused, if the contraceptive can be obtained without a prescription. So although there may have been good intentions, the reality is that Plan B can easily be abused. Additionally, people are not usually told that if fertilization has already taken place Plan B may act as an abortifacient. Christians need to be aware of these things so they do not become complicit in sin, knowingly or unknowingly.

An example of biotechnology is stem cell research. There are various kinds of stem cells: embryonic (from an embryo), adult (not embryonic), and induced pluripotent, (adult stem cells made to have the characteristics of embryonic without the chance of becoming a human.) Why is this a life issue? It comes down to this one question: When have we gone too far to do the right thing? Many people support embryonic stem cell research because of the promise of cures and treatments for debilitating and terminal illnesses. But where's the line that we shouldn't cross in the name of progress? As Christians, it must be when it crosses God's Word. God says that all human life is precious and valuable no matter the size of that life, the stage of development of that life, or the location of that life. Science in its purest form is subjective and only concerned with results. This is where Christians must step up, so that we are able to influence society for God's glory.

A final example is sexual purity. Many young adults in our churches today, actually adults of all ages, don't have a problem with sex before marriage. And yet, this is an important part of understanding God's big picture for the sanctity of human life. God created a place where human life is meant to be brought forth and nurtured — within a marriage covenant between a man and a woman. This is the place that God intended human life to spring forth. This doesn't mean we all have perfect parents and wonderful families. No, that doesn't happen because we are sinful human beings and we live in a sinful, fallen world. However, understanding God's design and purpose for marriage, and asking the Holy Spirit to help us live within God's will is all part of our sanctification. We don't have a right to thumb our noses at God and say, "Well, I have these needs and they have to be met, so who cares what God has said?" When we see how God wants that human life to be protected within the context of a loving, monogamous, heterosexual relationship meant to last the length of our natural lives, then we can see how precious and valuable that little baby is and how the baby needs protection from sin.

What about other life issues such as capital punishment and the environment?

Occasionally, the term life issues is defined too broadly. For example, some would include the following things as life issues: the problem of homelessness, global warming or the environment, or the death penalty. Although these are issues of concern, they are not "life issues." Yes, God has called us to care for the least of our brothers, but to the best of my

### The New Administration: Resources in print and on the Web

- LCMS Life Ministries updated news bulletins. Check back often for the latest news: [www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=14944](http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=14944).
- LCMS Life Ministries Life Library. More than 200 articles on topics including two kingdoms, vocation, and Christian ethics are at your fingertips via our online Life Library. Many articles are lay-friendly, while theological papers offer more in-depth study. All are free and easily downloaded. Visit [www.lcms.org/lifelibrary](http://www.lcms.org/lifelibrary).
- Lutherans for Life. [www.lutheransforlife.org](http://www.lutheransforlife.org)
- Follow all the latest life and political news at [www.lifeneews.com/](http://www.lifeneews.com/). You can sign up for daily or weekly e-mail updates. LifeNews is tracking President Obama's anti-life political actions here: [www.lifeneews.com/obama-abortionrecord.html](http://www.lifeneews.com/obama-abortionrecord.html).
- The Wall Street Journal's Obama's First 100 Days blog tracks the administration's policy decisions from January 20 to April 29. On the right-hand side, in the "Tracking Obama's First 100 Days" widget, you can search for life news stories by selecting all dates and clicking on "Health." <http://blogs.wsj.com/obama-100-days/>

knowledge, there is no state-sanctioned law allowing the murder of a homeless person, and there are not 1.2 million homeless people being murdered in America every year. Although we are called to be good stewards of God's creation, when you do not build a new bridge that would help people travel safely down the road in order to protect the habitat of a spotted turtle, then you have placed the creation above human life. And, while being good stewards of God's creation is certainly everyone's responsibility, all the concern about global warming destroying the earth, the validity of which is hotly debated by leading scientists in this field (see [www.cato.org/special/climatechange](http://www.cato.org/special/climatechange)), is contrary to a Christian's beliefs that the Lord is sovereign and that He will destroy the earth in His time and in His way; it is arrogant for humans to think they can destroy or save the earth if it is contrary to God's will. Finally, concerns about the death penalty being applied perfectly does not negate the fact that God tells us that the death penalty is a just punishment for certain crimes such as murder, rape, and causing the death of a baby in the womb.

### How can we as individuals make sure our voices are heard?

In today's world, there are countless ways to voice your opinion. Newspapers and magazines still publish letters from their readers. Some newspapers with religion sections also welcome input (either letters or articles) from their readers.

For those who are digitally connected to the world, it's even easier. The first way to make your opinion known is simply to contact your elected officials. For example, I recently sent e-mails to the governor of Virginia on two issues. The first was allowing "Choose Life" license plates to be sold in Virginia, thus helping pregnancy centers in the commonwealth. I wrote him two messages, one prior to his signing and a second thanking him for his signing the bill creating the license plate. I also sent a message thanking him for passing a law that bans state funds for embryonic stem cell research. I think it's important to praise our elected officials as well as urge them not to do things.

Another way is to comment online regarding articles. Most newspapers and magazines that publish their articles on the Internet have areas for you to comment on the article. On the other hand, if you'd like to start your own op-ed column, that's easy. On the Internet, it's called a blog. It's a way for you to voice your opinion and let everyone in the world read what you're thinking. I just started my own blog, and you can find it at <http://speaking4life.com>. The issues we're discussing here are exactly the issues I want to tackle on my blog. I'm hoping to help people see that the life issues touch our lives in many ways, often unseen.

### What type of activism is inappropriate for Christians?

Our goal should always be to serve as the face of Christ and to speak the truth in love. Therefore, we should not do anything that is sinful or would not honor God. For example, we shouldn't bomb abortion clinics, nor should we yell at workers and women entering abortion clinics. Of course, neither action is pleasing to God. However, it doesn't mean we should be silent. We



*Celebrate the Abundant Life at the*

## 2009 National Lutherans For Life Conference!

*Doubletree Westport, St. Louis, Missouri, July 24-25, 2009*

Please join us at the **National Lutherans For Life Conference** as we follow the Shepherd from the beginning of life to the end of life and through the trials of life in-between.

Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb will host a pre-conference leader's workshop focusing on **RENEWAL FOR LIFE** and show how LFL leaders can work together as a team to advance this new initiative. This workshop is followed by a musical, intergenerational, 30th anniversary celebration of life! And after that: a less formal than normal worship service.

**You won't want to miss the Friday evening banquet and keynote speaker. Bobby Schindler, brother of Terri Schiavo and executive director of Terri's Foundation, will speak about their family's battle to save Terri's life.**

*Celebrate the Abundant Life* at our conference by bringing layette items for an ingathering. Please bring any of the following: blankets, diapers, onesies, other new infant clothing, or toys. These items will be packaged in gift bags for Concordia Seminary families.

Educational daycare will be provided on Saturday during the conference for children ages 3-12. The plan is to include activities that incorporate some of the pro-life concepts outlined in our **Teaching For Life** curriculum.

Our Conference offers a wonderful opportunity to come together for encouragement, education, fellowship, and renewal of strength in our work of upholding the sanctity of all human life. Please meet us in Saint Louis July 24-25 as we follow the Shepherd while *Celebrating the Abundant Life*.



**REGISTER ONLINE AND SAVE \$10: [www.lutheransforlife.org](http://www.lutheransforlife.org)**

should utilize lawful means to share the message. Therefore Christians can participate in prayer vigils outside of abortion clinics; lovingly counsel women who are so confused that they think abortion is their only choice; write letters to newspapers and magazines; share information about voting records of our elected officials; participate as individuals in election campaigns; and so on. The possibilities are endless. As long as we live in a free society and are citizens of this free society, we need to use our freedoms to share the Gospel message and to promote God's truth of love and reconciliation to the world — not only with respect to life issues, but in all aspects of our society.

*Ed Szeto is the special projects coordinator for LCMS Life Ministries. He has been involved with pro-life groups since 1997. Ed has a B.S. in systems engineering and is a commissioned lay minister in the LCMS. He is available to speak to your congregation on various life issues such as sexual purity, abortion, biotechnology (stem cell research, cloning, assisted reproductive technologies), and end-of-life issues (assisted suicide and euthanasia). Ed can be reached through his blog at <http://speaking4life.com> or at [ed.szeto@lcms.org](mailto:ed.szeto@lcms.org).*

## A Common Concern of Academics and Janitors

By Uwe Siemon-Netto

Something extraordinary occurred outside the Planned Parenthood facility in the Central West End of St. Louis during Lent. Probably for the first time in this building's history, a sizable group of academics in full regalia joined the "40 Days for Life" people, mainly Catholic parishioners, fasting and praying in front of this gloomy house of death. Lutheran and Catholic scholars processed silently together with professors from Concordia and Kenrick-Glennon Seminaries, the Aquinas Institute, Ave Maria University's Institute for Pastoral Theology, and a mathematician from the Jesuit-run St. Louis University. Occasionally they stopped to mingle with the other faithful who had been there since the early hours of the morning and would remain until the evening.

The reaction of most passers-by to this unique spectacle was equally remarkable. To be sure, a couple of young women drivers stopping at a traffic light made rude signs to the pro-life academics. But this was more than offset by truck drivers showing their support by honking their horns and waving at the robed scholars. One young African-American man walked with them for a short while. He held his little son's hand.

"Daddy, what are these men doing here?," the child was overheard asking. The father pointed at the "Planned Parenthood" sign above the abortion clinic's entrance. "If your mother had been in there," he answered, "you would never have been born." Yellow school buses filled with girl students drove by. They spotted President Theodore Wojcicki of Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, who wore a black cassock with red trim identifying him as a Monsignor, a ranking Catholic cleric. "Bless us, bless us," they yelled, and he did.

As four of this procession's participants returned to their cars, they passed three janitors working outside a building next to Planned Parenthood. They came forward, and called loudly, "Bless you! Thank you for doing this. Please do come back!" To the academics this might well have been the most gratifying episode of that afternoon because it showed that they had made their point.

They had come dressed as if attending a graduation ceremony, not as an act of vanity, but in order to refute a falsehood spread by proponents of the culture of death — the fib that only undereducated hicks opposed abortion. By their action, these "Academics for Life" demonstrated that a universal moral code applies to men and women with doctorates from the world's finest universities just as much as it does to janitors, truck drivers, and housewives. This code called Natural Law makes no distinction between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, and even nonbelievers, to wit the existence of the Web site of a substantial group called "Atheists and Agnostics for Life." This law is written on everybody's heart, according to St. Paul (Rom. 2:13–16).

You don't have to be a Christian to know that murder, adultery, and theft are wrong. It seems to be the consequence of moral lobotomy that women's bodies seem to have become the most dangerous places for children to be in. Science has shown that a fetus can hear music played and sung outside the womb and that this can later affect this person's behavior for the rest of his or her life. By now it is also possible to trace people's traumas back to the pain they suffered during surgery while they were still fetuses. So we know that fetuses are not insensate, useless clusters of cells to be discarded like rubbish.

The janitors next door to Planned Parenthood knew this, as did the mathematics professor from St. Louis University, and the housewife from the suburbs, the sociologist, the trucker, the zoologist, and the theologian — all men and women joined in a procession for life on an afternoon in Lent. They were united by a built-in sense of right and wrong. It follows that appealing to the law inscribed in everybody's heart might be the most effective way to unite Americans of all walks of life against the geno-

cide that has already killed 50 million children since the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, a legal decision flying in the face of the law of nature.



"Please come back," the janitors called out. This will happen, and perhaps not only in St. Louis. The word of the academics' show of solidarity with the 40 Days for Life worshipers on the sidewalk outside Planned Parenthood is spreading; we hear that already at one location 700 miles to the east of this city, scholars are planning a similar demonstration later this year outside their local slaughterhouse for unborn children.

*Uwe Siemon-Netto, Ph.D., is director of the Concordia Seminary Institute on Lay Vocation and the international religious affairs commentator on "Issues Etc." on KFUCO radio. He is the former religion editor of United Press International.*

## Advance Directives: Protecting Yourself and Your Loved Ones

By Rita L. Marker

If you are an adult reading this article, you have the right to make your own medical decisions. However, if you decide to drive to the store and are in a serious car accident that leaves you temporarily or permanently unable to make those decisions, who will make them for you?

Most people assume that their next of kin automatically has that authority. But that is a dangerous assumption. It is generally true that health care providers turn to the next of kin for decision-making. If there is agreement between the decision-maker and the doctor, and if there are no objections from other family members, everything can go smoothly. But when there are disagreements, the results can be heart-wrenching.

Over and over during the coverage of Terri Schiavo's tragic death, television "experts" pronounced that, in cases like hers, when a person hasn't left written directions about health care, all states have laws giving decision-making authority to the spouse. That sounds logical. But it is inaccurate.

Some states do, indeed, have laws specifying who can make decisions for a patient who does not have an advance directive. In many — but not all — of those states, a spouse is designated as first in priority, followed by adult children, parents, and siblings. Other states have different procedures for deciding who will speak for a patient.

For example, one state gives the supervising health care provider authority to select the decision maker after giving consideration to the patient's spouse, adult child, and others. In another, the law gives the patient's attending physician or an advanced nurse practitioner the right to select the decision maker. Thus, if the doctor doesn't agree with the patient's spouse about what should or should not be done, that physician can designate someone else.

Even if a person happens to live in a state in which the priority list gives authority to the person that they would prefer to have as a decision maker, that priority list is only effective while in that state. Therefore, if a person is traveling in another state and is in a car accident there that leaves her temporarily or permanently unable to make medical decisions, the law in the state where the accident occurred will control the selection of a decision maker.

Having an appropriate, carefully drafted advance directive (of the right type) is the only way to be certain that the person you want to make decisions for you will have the authority to protect you.

### All Advance Directives Are NOT Created Equal

How can people make certain that their values are respected, their lives are protected, and their medical care is provided in a manner that they would choose?

Does it mean, as so many experts advise, that everyone should have a living will? If, and only if, the term living will is used generically to refer to an advance directive, the answer is "Yes." Frequently, lawyers and others who should know better call any type of advance directive a living will. But there are major differences between the types of advance directives. All living wills are advance directives, but not all advance directives are living wills.

### The Living Will

The living will is the oldest type of advance directive. It is a signed, witnessed (or notarized) document, sometime called a "declaration" or "directive." Most living wills instruct an attending physician to withhold or withdraw medical interventions

from its signer if he has a terminal condition or is in a permanent vegetative state. Because the document is so vague and the attending physician may be unfamiliar with the signer's views and values, the document can be interpreted by the physician in a manner that was not intended by its signer. Essentially, the living will is a blank check to an unknown physician. Only, the blank check does not apply to the signer's money. It applies to the signer's life.

### The Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care

The most protective and the most flexible type of advance directive is the durable power of attorney for health care. With this type of document, you designate someone else to make health care decisions on your behalf if you are ever temporarily or permanently unable to make those decisions for yourself. The person you name is usually called an "agent," although some states refer to this individual as an "attorney-in-fact," a "healthcare proxy," a "healthcare representative," or a "healthcare surrogate."

The person you name should be an adult who shares your views and values. This may, but need not, be a family member. It is also important that the person have the ability to be assertive when necessary. He or she should be a person who will be open to receiving necessary information and will not be intimidated by a physician or ethics committee who may hold different views.

When you are able to make your own decisions, it is the responsibility of your health care providers to let you know your diagnosis and give you information about possible treatments as well as the risks and benefits associated with those treatments. Then, it is up to you to give or withhold consent based on that information. If you have named an agent to make decisions for you, that person stands in your shoes. The doctor gives your agent the same information that would have been given to you. Then, based on your prior discussions with your agent regarding your wishes and values, your agent gives or withholds consent for treatment on your behalf.

Because the durable power of attorney for health care is a legal document, it is important that you have one that is carefully drafted because every word takes on a legal meaning.

Some durable power of attorney for health care documents — even those that have been drafted by well-meaning organizations — contain blank lines where the signer is directed to "fill in your additional wishes." This can present significant problems because the signer may write in words that have a different legal meaning than the signer intended. For example, a signer may write that she doesn't want life-sustaining treatment "if death is imminent." But what the signer meant by "imminent" might be death is going to occur in several days when, in fact, some states and some health care facilities interpret "imminent" as meaning up to one year! It is best to treat documents with fill-in-the spaces or check boxes as well-meaning, but potentially problematic, documents.

It is not necessary, advisable, or even possible to write down everything about your wishes. There is no way any one of us can envision every possible condition, treatment, or situation we could face at any time. The most important thing is to maintain communication with your agent about your wishes as they change from time to time. Sometimes what we want now may be different than what we wanted five years ago.

Because requirements for a valid durable power of attorney for health care differ from state to state, your document must comply with the law in your state. If your durable power of attorney for health care is valid when you sign it in your home state (the state where you are registered to vote or where your driver's license is issued), it will be honored in other states when you are traveling.

Having a carefully drafted durable power of attorney for health care is the only way to be assured that someone who has your best interests in mind will be making your medical decisions if you are ever unable to make those decisions for yourself. That's why the International Task Force on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (ITF) formulated the Protective Medical Decisions Document (PMDD) to meet state requirements and to protect the signer. (For more PMDD information, visit [www.internationaltaskforce.org/pmdd.htm](http://www.internationaltaskforce.org/pmdd.htm))

True, you may never be in a situation where such a document is necessary. But do you really want to take that chance? People have fire insurance even though their houses may never burn down. Likewise, all competent adults should have a protective advance directive even though they may never be unable to make health care decisions for themselves.

A PMDD packet can be obtained by contacting the ITF at 800-958-5678. Although a donation for the packet is appreciated, it is not required.



*Rita L. Marker is an attorney and executive director of the International Task Force on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide.*

## In the News

### President Obama Kills Bush Executive Order for Adult Stem Cell Research

LifeNews.com — President Obama, in addition to signing an executive order for taxpayer-funded embryonic stem cell research, also rescinded an executive order President Bush had put into place funding adult stem cell research and new research with iPS cells. Full story: [www.lifenews.com/bio2786.html](http://www.lifenews.com/bio2786.html).

### Luxembourg Officially Becomes Third European Nation to Legalize Euthanasia

LifeNews.com — Luxembourg has become the third nation to legalize euthanasia on the European continent. In February 2008, the parliament initially approved a bill to legalize the practice, and then voted on a motion to strip the powers of Grand Duke Henri, who refused to sign the bill into law. Full story: [www.lifenews.com/bio2799.html](http://www.lifenews.com/bio2799.html).

### Study: Abortions Cause Future Relationship Problems, More Domestic Violence

LifeNews.com — Some women decide to have abortions because they think having a baby will contribute to problems in their new relationship with their husband or boyfriend. However, a new national study finds abortion causes more future relationship problems than carrying the pregnancy to term and parenting. Full story: [www.lifenews.com/nat4946.html](http://www.lifenews.com/nat4946.html). Related essay: [www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/fashion/29love.html?pagewanted=1&r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/fashion/29love.html?pagewanted=1&r=1).

## Did You Know?

### LCMS Life Ministries Producing Regular News Bulletins

LCMS produces news bulletins on public policy actions to help you stay informed about changes in life issues from the Freedom of Choice Act to the Conscience Clause.

“It is critical for Christians today to pay attention to our culture and movement in public policy. Often people hear sound bytes on the news and perhaps don’t understand what this means in relation to life issues. We hope to present this information in an easily accessible format so that people can see things from a pro-life, solidly Lutheran perspective,” said Maggie Karner, director of LCMS Life and Health Ministries.

Read news bulletins here: [www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=14944](http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=14944), and check back often for the latest news.

### Ed Is Blogging!

LCMS Life Ministries Special Projects Coordinator Ed Szeto has just started a personal blog, and you can find it at <http://speaking4life.com>. He will discuss a variety of life issues and hopes to help readers see that life issues touch our lives in many ways, often unseen.

## Coming up:

**Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design:** Conflicts between science and religion are practically as old as the earth itself — but just how old is the earth, anyway? Evolutionists claim it is 4.6 billion years old; some creationists say it is closer to 6,000 years. In the next issue of *Notes for Life*, we’ll explore the dichotomy between evolution, which ultimately devalues human life, and creation, which teaches that we are fearfully and wonderfully made in God’s own image. Not a subscriber? Don’t miss the next issue! Subscribe now to receive this free quarterly e-mail newsletter.

## Support LCMS Life Ministries

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Your generous gift to the international and domestic work of LCMS Life Ministries will make a tremendous difference and help to uphold the message of Christ’s mercy to all in body and soul. [Click here](#) to give.

## How to Subscribe

To subscribe to Notes for Life, register online at [www.lcms.org/enews](http://www.lcms.org/enews). Select **Notes for Life** from among the “LCMS World Relief and Human Care” newsletters.

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