



News & Notes

LIFE, HEALTH & FAMILY

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JOIN US FOR Lutheran Days STL

APRIL 27-29, 2023

Designed for student groups, youth and adults, Lutheran Days STL will offer activities and learning opportunities at various Lutheran sites and institutions in the St. Louis area, including the LCMS International Center. This event is being held in conjunction with the annual March on the Arch life march in St. Louis which will take place on Saturday, April 29. Join us for Lutheran Days STL, and then join fellow Lutherans in marching for life on Saturday. For more information, visit calendar.lcms.org/lutheran-days-stl-2023/.

Reflections on a Decade with Dobbs

BY BECKY ROGNESS

The cracks in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision had been showing for years. When I started working full time in the pro-life movement in 2012, I thought I might see Roe overturned in my lifetime, but I hardly could have fathomed it would happen a decade later.

In 2012, my husband and I moved to Indiana from D.C. for him to start seminary. Indiana was, and remains, a pro-life state. This is evidenced, among other factors, by the vast network of pregnancy resource centers and the annual passage of pro-life legislation in the General Assembly. My communications work with Indiana Right to Life and on the local level largely focused on policy advancements. This meant increasing health and safety standards for women, protecting unborn children from discriminatory abortions, and increasing the safety net for women in need. But all our policy work had to be done within the outdated confines of Roe. And even then, the abortion lobby filed lawsuits over most bills. On one hand it seemed we were making pro-life progress, but on the other, it often seemed like an uphill battle. Roe loomed large. The 1973 decision stood in the way of enacting major pro-life protections.

Fast-forward to 2021. The U.S. Supreme Court had fresh faces and it agreed to hear a case out of Mississippi protecting unborn life after 15 weeks. Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch knew the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case wasn't just any case. This was the case with the potential to overturn Roe. I was grateful to be brought on to do communications, messaging and coalition-building. I jumped in alongside an old Capitol Hill colleague and we got to work. It meant some late nights, long days and so many phone calls. It meant combatting misinformation and outright falsehoods from abortion advocates and mainstream news outlets alike. It meant never wavering from the truth — advocating for the most vulnerable among us and recognizing that abortion has never been about empowering women.

June 24, 2022, marked an incredible and momentous day in our nation's history. It was surreal walking through the crowds outside the Supreme Court while I was 24 weeks pregnant. There were police and fencing on one side and a row of media on the other. Those in the street showed mixed emotions. Some were singing and celebrating. Others were cursing and handing out boxes of abortion pills that I can only pray were props. That night I



Rev. Noah and Becky Rogness outside of the U.S. Supreme Court on June 24, 2022.

was grateful our church, located mere miles from the Court, hosted a service of prayer and thanksgiving.

Because of the Court's decision, abortion policymaking is back at the state level where it was prior to Roe. People are best positioned to work out their differences at the ballot box, not at the Supreme Court. And I hope with Roe gone, we can truly have conversations about what helping women in need actually looks like. These conversations are going to range from maternity and paternity leave to child support enforcement, adoption policies, support services and everything in between.

The work of the church to promote a culture of life takes on a new earnestness.

Whether you're in a state that has banned abortion or not, we all have much to do. Unplanned and difficult pregnancies will continue. Abortion advocates will seek ways to get abortion pills into conservative states or direct women to states with abortion facilities. The devil will continue to sell the lie of abortion to the vulnerable. So it's incumbent upon us, God's people, to show love, care and dignity for all human life. To offer material, emotional and spiritual support to those in need. To welcome women, children and families into our midst with open arms. And in doing so, we pray they may know just how much they are loved by our almighty Father who gave up His only Son for us.

Advocacy in the Public Square

Encouragement from Lutheran leaders for living out the vocation of a citizen

"I believe the first duty of citizenship is to vote. It's so practical, yet if you look at off-year election numbers, it's surprising how many people don't vote. More broadly, I strongly believe all Lutherans and all men and women of faith should be active in the nation's civic and political life."

— Tim Goeglein, vice president of Focus on the Family

"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. ... 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."

— Ed Szeto, former coordinator for LCMS Life Ministry

To learn more about the confession of faith in the public square

and to take informed action on sanctity of life issues, as well as religious freedom and all the cultural issues that pertain to it, visit lcms.org/social-issues/free-to-be-faithful and the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty at LCRLFreedom.org.

To contact the president and other elected officials, please visit:

- usa.gov/elected-officials
- senate.gov/senators/contact
- house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative

Churches can create voter information guides.

Alliance Defending Freedom provides helpful resources: adfchurchalliance.org/electionguide. The LCMS Minnesota North and Minnesota South districts have prepared a Lutheran voter information guide available for download here: mnsdistrict.org/engaged-in-mission/2022/9/7/one-voice-2022-lutheran-voter-information-guide

"The Church remains the Church and never gives up the Gospel. The Scriptures speak clearly on moral issues, which fall under the kingdom of the Law. Civil society and the government should help put parameters on morality in a civil society. The Church butts up against those questions all the time and has to be able to speak on them within the Church. When politics shape and form or change the moral fiber and ethos of the society in which the Church lives, then the Church has a clear responsibility to speak out."

— Rev. Bart Day, president and CEO of Lutheran Church Extension Fund

"According to the Lutheran doctrine of vocation, God calls Christians to engage the secular 'left-hand kingdom' ... by their own theology [Lutherans] should be even more engaged in the 'world' than other Christians — in politics as in any other field. ... We can safely assume that God wants Lutherans, like members of other churches, to play their part within the governing authorities He himself has established (Romans 13:1)."

— Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto, German columnist and Lutheran lay theologian



Assessing Your Community Needs for Life, Health and Family:

A Conversation with the Rev. Carlos Hernandez BY JENI MILLER

Perhaps your congregation is preparing for Phase 3 of the Million Dollar Life Match. Or maybe you just want to get more involved in engaging with your community in rich and meaningful ways. We sat down with the Rev. Carlos Hernandez to talk about how best to assess your community's needs for life, health and family ministry.

Q: Why should a congregation assess their community needs when considering life, health and family work?

CH: Why else is a congregation in a neighborhood if not to serve that neighborhood in body, soul and spirit? Congregations are in communities, in neighborhoods. When suburbs started to flourish and folks moved into those areas, they were quickly surrounded by people that they didn't really know. As the years have gone by, our neighborhoods aren't necessarily Lutheran or of any faith. So, it's important for our congregations to look at ways to root themselves in their communities.

Q: How should congregations go about doing this?

CH: For the sake of our immersion in our communities, it helps to work using a geographical neighborhood parish model for the church and to have a goal to meet every family within a ten-block radius. Make it a goal to visit every home in this area and

tell them that you want to find out how you can serve the needs of this community. Don't mention anything else other than that. These are residential interviews, not time to proselytize. You can also do agency interviews and meet with organizations. You may have to go outside of the ten-block range a bit for this, but it's rich with people. Especially visit local schools. Go and interview the principal(s) or someone representing them. They are rich with information, and they are so happy to see that people want to help serve in the neighborhood. Ask questions like, "What do you think are the critical needs here as someone who serves families in this neighborhood?"

It also helps to have developed a brochure with the name and picture of your church as well as information on "when to call a pastor." People should be reminded that this is an option when they are in the hospital, having financial problems, marital problems, having a

child, etc. Try to list 10 reasons. People are fascinated with that. Show that you're accessible, low-key and non-threatening.

Q: Once they assess their community, what should congregations do next?

CH: Then it's up to the Holy Spirit to use that care to touch these hearts. One benefit of all of this is that your church will have more of a sense of being in community. There's a real salutary gift and benefit in knowing who these people are. It's extremely gratifying and promotes a sense of well-being because this is what we should be doing. Get out and see who these people are. Then the next steps will be obvious, and you'll have a clear path to serving your neighbor's life, health and family needs.



➔ Pregnancy centers and resources

One thing is for certain about LCMS members and congregations – they want to take action. So, when it comes to pro-life resources and pregnancy centers, having a list in hand can help the faithful as they better serve their neighbor in real and tangible ways. [Check out](#) this printable, sharable listing by state of LCMS-friendly pro-life resources.



DEFINE YOUR TERMS:

"Access to Abortion Care"

BY JENI MILLER

One of God's good First Article gifts is that of health and well-being. Always desiring to work through means — and primarily through people who distribute those means — God uses doctors, nurses and other medical providers to care for His people. It's a good and godly thing that we should have access to health care, as our Lord cares not only for the soul but for the body as well!

Today we hear the phrase "access to abortion care" everywhere, from the media and politicians to well-respected doctors at well-respected university hospitals. What is meant by this?

First, for "pro-choice" advocates, "abortion care" is synonymous with "health care." It's no wonder that those who promote abortion would become enraged when "access to abortion care" is lessened. For them, they feel their health care is in jeopardy.

But is an abortion actually a form of health care? It is not. Rather than caring for the health of the mother and her child, the child is removed from the equation altogether and the mother is left often with physical, emotional and spiritual wounds. Rather than doing no harm, abortion harms mothers and children.

For this reason, and many others, abortion cannot truly be characterized as health care, and so access to abortion care should not be celebrated or promoted. Still, abortion providers and their lobby desire to have abortion clinics in close proximity to all people in order to expand this so-called "access." They have even gone so far as to offer chemical abortions via mail-order in order to make their brand of "care" available anywhere, anytime.

If it was true health care, this would be a compassionate and kind endeavor, and as Christians we would rightfully praise this humanitarian effort. However, abortion care, as mentioned earlier, does not promote or produce the health and well-being of women and children. In fact, the more this "access" is expanded, the more abortions take place, and the more hurt and harm it causes to those in vulnerable positions, namely mothers and their growing unborn babies.

It isn't a positive or virtuous thing to encourage "access to abortion care," as it is no care at all. Instead, it promotes dangerous practices, like mail-order abortion pills and using unqualified health care providers, which only increase the likelihood of suffering for the mother, and certain death for the child.

Finally, another way in which advocates promote expanded access to abortions is by perpetuating the false claim that limiting access to abortions will result in further difficulties for women experiencing ectopic pregnancies — which are embryos that implant outside of the uterus, typically in a woman's fallopian tube — and miscarriages. In the case of miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies, both of which are unintended tragedies, neither are considered abortions because the baby is wholly unable to survive and, in many cases, has already died and is in the hands of our gracious God. A dilation and curettage (D&C) for a miscarriage and treatment for an ectopic pregnancy are not abortion, so restricting access to abortions does not in any way affect the true health care that those procedures provide to women in those particular situations.

Ten Tangible Ways...

Encouraging your neighbor to consider abortion alternatives

- Keep in touch daily — even an encouraging text message will do.
- Have an up-to-date list of resources at the ready.
- Make time to accompany your friend to a pregnancy resource center or other appointments.
- Consider ways that you might alleviate some temporary burdens (groceries, childcare, etc.)
- Connect your friend or neighbor with supportive adoptive families who can answer questions.
- Find opportunities to help your friend develop needed skills through parenting seminars, cooking classes, budgeting programs, etc.
- Help your neighbor develop a strong support network, preferably in a church.
- Share God's Word with your neighbor, focusing on the ways in which God often uses difficulty and suffering to bring good gifts to His people.
- Introduce your neighbor to others who've walked a similar road and have chosen life.
- Pray constantly that the Holy Spirit would soften their heart and give them wisdom and courage to either parent their child or place them in a loving adoptive home.

The Melius Family

BY JENI MILLER

Who: Jared and Jan Melius currently have nine children living in their home, including six biological children and three adopted children. The couple served as foster parents for eight years, taught foster care certification classes in their local county, and even participated on the advisory board for foster parents. Jared has served as pastor at Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in Denver for nearly 17 years, and Jan is thankful to be a stay-at-home, homeschooling mother.

What: “Being a foster parent is challenging and rewarding,” said Jan. “It’s an emotional roller coaster of stress, gladness, sadness, relief and joy; sometimes all at the same time if you can believe it.”

Jan explained that “one of the biggest highlights of fostering is probably working with parents and seeing them succeed in getting their children back. The goal of the foster care system is to work with parents in order to return their children to them. The system works hard to keep children with their families and/or provide services for parents to help them. The last resort would be the actual placing of children in a foster home. Being a foster parent, you get to work with biological parents who are either trying to overcome addiction, are in a domestic violence relationship, are struggling with mental health issues, or

just happen to need a little extra help with life. Many of the parents we have worked with were in the foster care system themselves as children, so oftentimes this is a generational issue.”

The Meliuses have fostered 15 children, and two of those were able to return home to their parents. “These parents were eager to have their children back with them and were mostly lacking in parenting skills because of the way they themselves were raised,” Jan recalled. “You could see the love they had for their children and the hurt it caused them when they were not able to be with their children. They were eager to learn and worked tirelessly to get their children back. We even welcomed them into our home to see how routines were managed in our home. We are still in contact with these families and have been able to watch the children grow from afar.”

Jared and Jan have stayed in contact with most of their past foster children’s families.

“It has been pretty incredible to see them grow and thrive after knowing their history and having seen the trauma that some of the children have been through,” shared Jan. “While parents are working to get their children back, we, as foster parents, get the joy of comforting and helping the children work through the trauma they’ve endured and often get to see them overcome big obstacles in life. We get to

experience many ‘firsts’ with the children. One of our first placements was a sibling group of three children — four-year-old twins and a three-year-old. When they arrived, they were barely speaking. One of the twins spoke for all the children. They had never had grapes. The little boy called grapes “little balls” because he didn’t know what they were. We took a 12-year-old to the park and she told us she had never been to a park or playground before. Another girl had never been swimming in a pool, so we got to experience that with her. While we get to delight in seeing their happy faces, there’s also heartache at the same time. We get to witness and be part of these experiences with them, but their parents do not.”

For the Melius family, a major highlight of adoption has been that they’ve gotten to know their children’s extended families.

“We’ve adopted three children, and they all have biological siblings in other homes who live nearby,” Jan said. “Also nearby are biological grandparents who have loved getting to know their grandchildren. We are also in contact with two of our children’s biological parents who have recently had another child. They are so grateful to us for raising their children and allowing them to see the children every so often. They call often and even ask for advice in raising their newest little one.”

“Being a foster parent is challenging and rewarding. It’s an emotional roller coaster of stress, gladness, sadness, relief and joy; sometimes all at the same time if you can believe it.”



Why: “Life is important because the Lord knew each and every one of us before we were born (Jer. 1:5),” said Jan. “Life is precious to our Lord, so it is precious to us, too. Every life, at any stage, in the womb to a natural death, is to be cherished.”

Jan also explained that “Fostering and adopting is part of being a pro-life Lutheran because as St. Paul says in Romans 12:9, ‘Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.’ To be pro-life as a Lutheran Christian means that you must abhor or hate abortion because the murder of innocent babies in the womb is evil. To have a genuine love as St. Paul says you must hate what is evil and cling to the goodness of something. In this instance, by abhorring abortion, babies become that goodness. Fostering and adopting is our way to love babies and children and welcome them with our whole heart into our home.”

The Meliuses also pointed to Psalm 146:9, which says, “He upholds the widow and the fatherless.”

“Fostering and adopting is our way to love babies and children and *welcome them with our whole heart into our home.*”

“When we started fostering, we weren’t really thinking about adopting,” recalled Jan. “We just wanted to help children and families, but when you begin fostering, the children that come to your home quickly become part of your family. You care for them as your own. When they become attached to your family and vice versa it is only natural to adopt them when the parental rights of their biological parents have been terminated. The children we have adopted have been in our home since they left the hospital, so they have known no other home.”

How: You can look into foster care and adoption by contacting the county in which you live or by looking up private

agencies. For instance, many agencies in Colorado work with the foster care system as well as families who are interested in a private adoption. While all states have different requirements, it is common to undergo several hours of training, obtain a background check, and have a home study completed in order to adopt or foster a child. “You literally get a license to be parent,” shared Jan. “Families should consider fostering or adopting if they have the means to do it. Historically, it was the Christian church that took care of orphans — not the government. While it may not be for everyone, there are many ways you can support children in foster care or children waiting to be adopted.”

First Round of Life Match Grants Awarded

BY CHERYL MAGNESS

Thirty-seven congregations have received grants during Phase 1 of the 1 John 3 Initiative Million Dollar Life Match. The program, which offers a total of \$1 million in matching grants, seeks to support LCMS congregations involved in providing beginning-of-life care in their local communities.

The recipients were chosen after a careful review process that included input from staff of the LCMS Office of National Mission, LCMS district presidents or their representatives, and district life coordinators.

“It is exciting to learn about the variety of mercy work being done by LCMS congregations across the country and to partner with them to expand their capacity,” said Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor, director of LCMS Life Ministry, who is overseeing the grant program. “There are some very creative projects that are providing spiritual, emotional and physical care. All of the projects chosen share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people in the communities.”

Grants were given out in four categories:

Congregational projects directly caring for families experiencing challenges at the beginning of life

- LifeBridge Community Church, Sealy, Texas
- Our Savior Lutheran Church, Carol Stream, Ill.
- Our Savior Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyo.
- St. James Lutheran Church, Glen Carbon, Ill.
- St. John Lutheran Church, Park Rapids, Minn.
- St. Paul Lutheran Church, Miami, Fla.
- theCross of Central Florida, Mount Dora, Fla.

- Trinity Lutheran Church, Clinton, Mo.
- University Lutheran Chapel, Minneapolis, Minn.

Partnerships with LCMS Recognized Service Organizations

- Bethany Lutheran Church, Naperville, Ill.
- Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Petersburg, Fla.
- Immanuel Lutheran Church, Lone Rock, Iowa
- St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Park Ridge, Ill.
- St. Peter Lutheran Church and School, Schaumburg, Ill.
- Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bridgeton, Mo.



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Your generous gift to the international and domestic work of LCMS Life Ministry will make a tremendous difference and help to uphold the message of Christ’s mercy to all in body and soul.

Click the Give Now button to support this work.

GIVE NOW



› Trinity Lutheran Church, Burr Ridge, Ill.

Supporting foster care and adoption in collaboration with local agencies

› Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Fairborn, Ohio

› Cross and Resurrection Lutheran Church, Ypsilanti, Mich.

› Our Savior Lutheran Church, Nashville, Tenn.

› Trinity Lutheran Church, Denver, Colo.

Collaborations with local pregnancy resource centers

› Bethany Lutheran Church, Vacaville, Calif.

› Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church, Livonia, Mich.

› Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kettering, Ohio

› Faith Lutheran Church, Appleton, Wis.

› Faith Lutheran Church, Stephenville, Texas

› Gethsemane Lutheran Church, La Crescenta, Calif.

› Grace Lutheran Church, Caldwell, Idaho

› Grace Lutheran Church, Clarksville, Tenn.

› Lutheran Church of the Way, Raynham, Maine

› Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Lake City, Fla.

› Praise Lutheran Church, Maryville, Tenn.

› Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Douglasville, Ga.

› St. Athanasius Lutheran Church, Fairfax, Va.

› St. James Lutheran Church, Montague, Mich.

› St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Jenison, Mich.

› St. John’s Lutheran Church, Adrian, Mich.

› Trinity Lutheran Church, Auburn, Ind.

Additional grants will be awarded during two more phases of the Million Dollar Life Match. A second set of applications is currently undergoing the review process.

Applications for the third phase will be accepted Nov. 1, 2022, through Jan. 22, 2023. All LCMS congregations are encouraged to apply.

Learn more about the 1 John 3 Million Dollar Life Match at lcms.org/serve/grants/life-grant

This story was originally published in the September 2022 issue of Reporter, the official newspaper of the LCMS.

Cheryl Magness is the managing editor of Reporter, the official newspaper of the LCMS.

Upcoming Marches for Life

JAN. 20, 2023 – National March for Life Washington, D.C.

JAN. 21, 2023 – March for Life Tucson, Ariz.

JAN. 21, 2023 – Walk for Life West Coast San Francisco, Calif.

JAN. 24, 2023 – March for Life Topeka, Kan.

JAN. 28, 2023 – Texas Rally for Life Austin, Texas

APRIL 29, 2023 – March on the Arch St. Louis, Mo.

➔ To learn more, visit lcms.org/life-ministry/march-for-life.

If you are leading an LCMS group in a local or state pro-life march or walk, email [LCMS Life Ministry](mailto:LCMSLifeMinistry@lcms.org) to add the event to the LCMS schedule. Individuals and groups can order LCMS Life Ministry attire and signage to stand out at pro-life marches and events.