



# News and Notes

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## In this issue:

- In Him Was Life . . . . . 1
- Merciful Care at the End of Life . . . . . 3
- Love Doesn't Murder. . . . . 4

“ In its most recent estimate, the Guttmacher Institute, a pro-abortion think tank, reports that 1.3 percent of abortions take place after the 20th week ... Its most recent estimate for the number of abortions annually in our country is 926,200. Taking both numbers together implies that **roughly 12,000 abortions after week 20 take place every year.** That is more than the number of gun homicides reported by the FBI.”

# In Him Was Life



BY MATTHEW C. HARRISON

A statement from the Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in response to recent gubernatorial actions expanding abortion in New York and Illinois.

*“In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).*

On Jan. 22, 2019, the 46th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion on demand, the governors of both New York and Illinois signed laws to extend and promote abortion.

As he signed the Reproductive Health Act into law, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo described it as the “evolution” of humankind in America. In Illinois, Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed an executive order to ensure taxpayer funding of abortions, saying that it would make his state “the most progressive ... in terms of women’s reproductive rights.”

Life, not death, is the goal of humanity. History testifies that death is never the means through which justice and human rights prevail. We do not advance on the graves of our children. Germany, which once sought eugenics as the solution to problems, now has strict abortion laws. To defend and support life is the goal of every just government, and the right to life is the hallmark of a good society.

Yet abortion laws have allowed the abortion of more than 61 million children in America since Roe v. Wade. That’s nearly 50 times the number of American soldiers killed in all wars. The abortion industry and its proponents go to great lengths to avoid facing the fact that abortion dismembers a living child in a horrid pool of its own blood. This is barbaric.

Abortion is a lie. Science is on the side of life. We shall stand against the barbarism of abortion until our dying breath. Abortion is illogical, as we slaughter babies in the womb while developing ever-better care for other unborn children. Abortion contradicts the natural law written on human hearts that teaches us it is wrong to kill.

Lawmakers and bureaucrats in our country have become emboldened to force citizens to go against their conscience. People publicly celebrate laws that lead to the deaths of children.

How long, O Lord, how long?

Our Christian faith teaches us to value life and to love each and every person as our neighbor. Love is life, and life is the great gift of love. Death is our natural enemy. This can be seen in our lives and in our world each day. Even the birds that seek food in winter

“ We continue to show God’s mercy to all, just as He, in Jesus, has mercy on all.”

testify that life is the goal of their movements and their work. The flowers that grow toward the sun seek the light that enlivens them. We all live under God, who grants life to His whole creation.

And in giving His Son to be the Savior, God shows that He is the Lord of life. Jesus came to love. He taught us to love all people, including those whom we consider our enemies. He taught us to unconditionally love every person, even those whom this world considers unworthy of love.

Jesus did not only teach us to love. He brought healing and wholeness to the broken. He proclaimed peace to those who were troubled. He sat with those who were excluded. He lifted up those who were beaten down. But most of all, He loved through the sacrifice of His own life on the cross. He died to forgive the sins of all humanity. His forgiveness is a free gift for all who trust in Him, including those who suffer from guilt for aborting their child. He rose on the third day.

The resurrection of Jesus is God’s grand statement that life is the goal of this creation. The resurrection of Jesus proclaims that all creatures find the goal of their existence in life. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so we learn that God treasures life over death.

We live as citizens in this world, and we seek to be obedient to our nation’s laws. We thank God for our leaders and for this great land He has given to us, with its precious freedoms and opportunities. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod advocates strong citizenship and active participation in government. We obey the laws of our land and encourage those around us to do so as well.

We are, however, bound by our conscience to speak against those laws that are unjust and, especially, those laws that violate God’s law and the natural law that binds all mankind. Abortion and other



means through which humans kill humans violate these natural and moral laws that form the foundation of society.

Therefore, we stand against these actions and against all laws that sanction abortion or the taking of innocent life. We cannot stand silent when people elected to positions in which they are to protect citizens continue to pass laws and advocate for legislation that undermines the sanctity of human life. Our conscience is bound by both the Word of God and reason to speak for life as a precious gift of God and to speak against any and all who promote the killing of unborn children. We cannot hide the evil of these laws under the banner of “rights” or “privilege.” Children’s lives are at stake. They cannot speak for themselves.

We will speak for them, and we will work to protect their lives.

And we will continue to work to love and support the women who face difficult choices or suffer from the consequences of abortion. We support young mothers who have chosen life for their children. We work to provide adoption and other opportunities to care for children in need. And we continue to show God’s mercy to all, just as He, in Jesus, has mercy on all.

We will work, love and pray that all might know the love of Jesus and trust in Him for salvation. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

*The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison is president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.*

At its meeting on Feb. 7, the LCMS Council of Presidents and the LCMS Praesidium unanimously voted to sign their names to President Harrison’s statement.

# Merciful Care at the End of Life

BY JOHN T. PLESS

The “right to die” has now been added to the growing list of entitlements allotted to human beings. People who are terminally ill or chronically injured and elect physician-assisted suicide, now legal in several states and the District of Columbia, are given heroic status and praised for exercising the option of taking their own lives before they are taken from them. A prominent Princeton ethicist, Peter Singer, argues that physician-assisted suicide should not only be readily accessible, but also in some cases be administered by physicians even to those who do not request it.

How are we to respond? The Lutheran ethic has been helpfully described by German theologian Oswald Bayer as an “ethic of gift.” That is, ethics is first and foremost not asking the question “What should I do?” but rather “What have I been given?” Bayer’s approach is a helpful way of framing the issues related to decision making when we or those we love are irretrievably dying. Our immediate questions should not be about “quality of life” or a person’s “worth” in terms of abilities. Rather our starting point should be that we are dealing with the life God has given, and so should tend to and care for it even if it is diminishing and nearing death.

Under the Fifth Commandment we are obligated, as Luther explains, not to “hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.” A cure may be elusive and healing may be beyond our grasp but we are never to kill or make death therapeutic. In whatever condition, as long as there is life, it is to be received as a gift from God and cared for appropriately as we are able. An “ethic of gift” means that we receive life; we do not take it.

This enables us to steer a course between two unacceptable options. On the one hand, we are never to purposefully seek death as a way of alleviating suffering. On the other hand, we must not selfishly grab on to biological life when it is clear that the Creator is recalling to Himself the life that He gave.

Human life from conception to natural death is a precious gift not because this life



is free from suffering or because it possesses particular capacities for performance but because the Triune God has assigned dignity to it. Our beginning and our ending are in the hands of the Lord and Giver of life.

It is a good thing for pastors to do what might be called pre-emptive pastoral care, in teaching and preaching on the end of life framed by the “ethic of gift.” It was for that purpose that I wrote *Mercy at Life’s End* a few years ago. It is more than likely the case that by the time the pastor comes into the ICU or hospice to minister to those who must make critical decisions about treatment and/or care for a dying loved one, nerves are frayed and emotions are raw. People, even Christians, are not always thinking with biblical clarity. For this

reason, it is good for Christians to think through ahead of time how we are to make distinctions between the burdens of life that may not be refused (but are to be borne with the patience that comes from faith in Christ) and burdens of treatment that may be refused. In all of these situations God’s gift of human life is to be honored and cared for even as death draws near.

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➔ An extended version of this presentation was given at the LCMS Life Conference, which was held in Washington, D.C., Jan. 17–19, 2019.



**Cooking dinner? Driving in the car? Go to [kfuo.org](http://kfuo.org) and search for the Jan. 28, 2019, broadcast to listen to KFUE’s Sarah Gulseth present reflections and conversations from her time at the 2019**

**March for Life**, including conversations with the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; the Rev. Dr. Al Espinosa, senior pastor of Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church, Irvine, Calif.; the Rev. Michael Saleminck, executive director of Lutherans For Life; the Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty; and Jeaneen Wylie, teacher at Lutheran High School Westland, Westland, Mich.

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# Love Doesn’t Murder

BY ALFONSO ESPINOSA


**T**he Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is defending marriage, life and the family! At the 2016 Synod convention, the LCMS ratified a seventh mission priority: “Strengthen and support the Lutheran family in living out God’s design.” Since that time, our Synod has vigorously pursued this vision, with the Board for National Mission generating policies to strengthen and protect marriage, life and family. In time, the Office of National Mission will run with these and offer resources for our congregations and schools through their districts. Presently, we are looking forward to the upcoming national convention as we prepare an overture that will further galvanize our commitment to invest more than ever in marriage, life and the family.

Why the priority? Because within our culture, we find a wholesale acceptance of the belief that that sexual intimacy and marriage are separate considerations. We see the growing industry of reproductive options, genetic manipulation and artificial intelligence that violates dependence upon the Creator. We witness the priority of the “me” culture and personal space isolationism and how these innately


miligate against the family. We realize how the busyness, overwork and frenetic pace of our culture invites the enemy to detract from the family. We face abortion pills no longer enabling us to monitor actual statistics. We are confronted by gender neutrality completely undermining the biblical family. We experience how current cultural values completely discount, ignore and call irrelevant Christian values and life-long commitment. We see the disenchantment of younger people alienated from a church that does little to address the pain of divorce, the pain of barrenness, the pain of rebellious children, the horror of domestic violence, the mistreatment of the elderly, the neglect of the disabled, and the abuse of children. We face new social and cultural groups in America upending the traditional role of family. We are impacted by the diversity of religion and world-views within families pulling them apart. If there was ever a time for the saving Word of Christ for marriage, life and family, it is now.

I was blessed to have been invited to preach at the two Evening Prayer services that were offered at the LCMS Life Conference this past January. Both sermons were based on pericopes from 1 John, the “love letter” in Holy Scripture. Why this emphasis? These texts bring out that there is no life apart from Jesus Christ and to know His love is to walk in a life of love. Quite simply, such love does not murder; it does not hate. It is a love that lays down its own life in order to serve the lives of others. It is a way of life that refuses to close one’s heart to those in need. This love is precisely the love needed to serve the unborn, the weak, the elderly, the disabled, the despairing, the barren and the lonely. This love is the incarnational expression of Jesus Himself in a world that needs His light to permeate its darkness.

*The Rev. Dr. Alfonso O. Espinosa is senior pastor of Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church, Irvine, Calif., and vice-chairman of the Board for National Mission.*

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