



**LUTHERANS**  
FOR LIFE

# National Conference 2023

Equipping Lutherans and their neighbors  
to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life



**October 11-13 | Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport | Erlanger,  
Kentucky, with visits to the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum**

[lutheransforlife.org](http://lutheransforlife.org)

**Lutherans For Life** has, since 1979, upheld the value of life affirmed by the resurrected Christ. We educate congregations on life issues with a Gospel perspective, equipping Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life. **Lutherans For Life** also offers help, healing, and forgiveness for anyone who bears the burden of overwhelming guilt through our 24-hour **Word of Hope** hotline (888-217-8679). This free service is available to men, women, and youths for information, referrals, and Scripture-based spiritual care to address life issues such as surprise pregnancy, abortion recovery, suicide, doubting salvation, and physician-assisted suicide. **Life Teams and Life Chapters and Life Advocates** are developed in congregations and communities – in collaboration with our **Volunteer Relations Team** – to affirm life and participate in motivating others For Life through the Gospel. **Lutherans For Life** also serves youth through its **Y4Life** program! Specifically focused on helping high school and college youth become Gospel-motivated voices For Life, **Y4Life** offers a variety of educational resources, service projects, and interactive, in-person opportunities that teach youth how to uphold the lives of others. **Lutherans For Life** offers a wide variety of print and online resources – including our quarterly journal, *LifeDate*.



Your prayers, volunteer involvement, and financial support allow Lutherans For Life to accomplish its Gospel-centered work.

During the conference, participants will be given an additional opportunity to support LFL.

Thank you for prayerfully considering how you, your family, and your congregation can help.

**2023 Lutherans For Life National Conference**

# A Word from Our President

## Welcome to the 2023 Lutherans For Life National Conference!

I'm so glad that you are here! I know you are going to have a great time because there is so much to learn and do at this conference. I also know this because I have been coming to these conferences since our fifth conference in 1986 and have not missed one – except the year my oldest son was running in the state cross country meet. (They won!)

Things have changed since 1986, but then again they haven't changed too much. If you come year after year, you will learn so much and be energized to take it all back to your church, your Life Team, or your Life Chapter. *(In fact, the national conference used to run from Friday evening through Sunday noon. There were so many plenary presentations and workshops. One was on overload – but still ready for more.)*



At the conference, I always look forward to renewing friendships and meeting new For Life friends. LFL is like a family that gets together once a year for the best family reunion. I hope that you too will renew friendships and make a few new friends!

This year our theme is **Fearfully and Wonderfully Made**, based on Psalm 139 and chosen because of the exhibit at the Creation Museum. However, that theme has always been a foundation of Lutherans For Life. We believe that God created us and sent His Son to redeem us and that therefore each person has value because God has given each of us value. From the beginning, we have covered abortion, post-abortion trauma, euthanasia, assisted suicide, sexual purity, infertility, and more. We have had “famous” non-Lutheran speakers like Molly Kelly (youth speaker), Andy Van Slyke (baseball player), Joel Belz (*WORLD magazine*), Ken Ham (Answers in Genesis), Chuck Asay (editorial cartoonist), and Wesley Smith (advocate on end-of-life issues), to name a few. We have had many Lutheran speakers – probably not so famous outside of Lutheran circles, except Dr. Jean Garton – such as seminary and Concordia University professors, nurses, doctors, lawyers, moms, and dads. Even though the issues have expanded since our early days, we remain faithful to our core belief that each person's value comes from our creation and redemption by God.

So, go soak up knowledge and excitement from the speakers, the workshops, the Creation Museum, and the Ark Encounter. Reconnect with friends, make a few new friends, and stop and talk to me. (I'd love it!) Take it all home and share it all with your family, church, Life Chapter, and Life Team. See you next time!

# 2023 Lutherans For Life National Conference Agenda

## Tuesday, October 10

3:00 p.m.	Hotel Check-in	
3:00-5:30 p.m.	Event Registration & Exhibitor Visits	Hotel Atrium
7:00-9:00 p.m.	Dessert Reception and LFL Updates, optional	Ballroom

## Wednesday, October 11

7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast Buffet & Exhibitor Visits	Hotel Atrium
7:00-8:30 a.m.	Event Registration	Hotel Atrium
8:00-8:30 a.m.	Welcome and Opening Devotion	Ballroom
8:30-9:30 a.m.	Keynote Presentation – <b>Rebecca Kiessling</b> <b>Equal Protection—No Exceptions</b> Rebecca will share her story and why every child deserves protection without exception.	Ballroom

9:45-10:30 a.m.	Breakout Session One (5 choices) <b>Pastor Brian Barlow</b> <b>Called out of the Grave – Leaving My Grave Clothes Behind</b> – Called out of the grave into a new life in Christ is every believer’s promise in Baptism. Our grave clothes are removed, and the once-disfigured life ruled by confusion and rebellion is covered and made new. The rise of gay Christianity has promoted a false gospel and brings despair, not hope, to those suffering from gender dysphoria, their loved ones, pastors, and those called to extend pastoral care. Rev. Brian Barlow offers a clear voice of hope and perspective to pastoral care, having been called out of a life disordered by homosexuality.	Boone
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<b>Michelle Bauman</b> <b>Raising Kids 4 Life</b> – Parenting is a labor of love. It’s a vocation filled with both joy and sorrow, success and failure. Between early mornings and sleepless nights, parents are given the important task of caring for their children in body and soul. But the world and all of its brokenness certainly doesn’t make that task easy, especially when it comes to the topic of life issues. How do we prepare our children for the life issues they’re certain to face? This presentation will offer basic guidelines for developmentally appropriate topics and conversations with our children, as well as rationale for starting conversations about LIFE today!	Kenton
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<b>Chrissie Gillet</b> <b>Peace – Developing Mental Health Sanctuaries in an Anxious World</b> In this anxious world, we are often overcome by fears. While not all experiences of fear result in functional impairment, which would then be considered a mental illness, they can still impact our daily lives in a harmful way. God recognizes the danger of fear and commands us not to be afraid (Joshua 1:9). In this presentation, we will discuss the spiritual danger of fear/anxiety and what the Lord has done to give us peace.	Campbell
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# 2023 Lutherans For Life National Conference Agenda

**Sheryl DeWitt**

Owen

**Redeeming Life Maternity Home: Solution-Based Ministry to Single Pregnant Women in Crisis** – Learn how Redeeming Life, an RSO of the LCMS, is bringing life and hope to single mothers who want to choose life for their babies but lack the necessary resources to do so. By focusing on the reasons many women give for aborting their baby, we work to remove the barriers and provide solid solutions for a life choice.

**Rev. Scott Licht**

Hamilton

**Awareness and Response to Modern-Day Slavery: Human Trafficking** It is reported that there are more slaves today than at any other time in the history of the world. But how can that be in such an “enlightened” and “civilized” time? And we seldom, if ever, hear anything about it. What should we, as Christians, know about this horrific industry? What should we be looking for? What can we do? Learn more about this global atrocity that is likely happening in a city near you.

10:45 a.m.

Carpool to Creation Museum. Lunch on your own.  
Meal and snack items available at the Creation Museum, if desired.

2:00 p.m.

## **SPECIAL PRESENTATION AT THE CREATION MUSEUM**

Auditorium

**Patricia Engler – Life in His Hands: Empowering Pro-lifers with Biblical Truths** – “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (Psalm 139:13-14). When does human life begin? How do babies develop inside their mothers? What does God’s Word say about every human being’s value, how can we answer common arguments about abortion, and what practical ways can families defend life together? In this sensitively crafted, family-friendly presentation designed for all ages, learn how to live out the Bible’s truth about the value of every human life.

5:00-6:00 p.m.

Return to hotel at your leisure.  
Exhibitor visits

Hotel Atrium

6:30 p.m.

Evening Devotions

Ballroom

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Buffet Dinner and Award Winner Presentations

Ballroom

8:30-9:00 p.m.

Vigil for Life – Prayer for Legislative Action

Ballroom

# 2023 Lutherans For Life National Conference Agenda

## Thursday, October 12

7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast Buffet & Exhibitor Visits	Hotel Atrium
8:00-8:15 a.m.	Opening Prayer	Ballroom
8:30-9:15 a.m.	Breakout Session Two (5 choices)	
	<b>Pastor Brian Barlow</b> – repeat session	Boone
	<b>Emily Jashinsky</b>	Kenton
	<b>The Human Cost of Open Borders</b> – This presentation will explore the human costs of open border policies that often go ignored in mainstream political discourse. America’s porous southern border allows for unspeakable cruelty by Mexican cartels that now terrorize much of North and South America, reaping billions of dollars in the process.	
	<b>Chrissie Gillet</b> – repeat session	Campbell
	<b>Michelle Bauman</b> – repeat session	Owen
	<b>Scott Licht</b>	Hamilton
	<b>Invisible to Indispensable</b> – There are many people who are societally “invisible” – people with disabilities, victims of abuse, unwed mothers, children in the foster care system (and those who have slipped through the cracks). What does Scripture say about these “invisible” people? And how can the Church minister to, with, and from these indispensable individuals? Join this interactive session to give and take suggestions for your local context.	
9:30-10:15 a.m.	Breakout Session Three (5 choices)	
	<b>Cameron Schroeder</b>	Boone
	<b>A Generation after God’s Own Heart: Discipling Gen Z for a Lifetime of Knowing Jesus</b> – Church leaders around the country are clamoring to answer the question: Why are all the young people leaving the Church? The truth is, they’re still here ... we just need to find better ways to reach them. Cameron Schroeder will speak from his youth ministry experience in church, school, and camp settings to bolster your heart for discipling the youth in your community and give you some useful strategies to do just that!	
	<b>Emily Jashinsky</b> – repeat session	Kenton
	<b>Rev. Adam Osier</b>	Campbell
	<b>The Sanctity of Life: Gospel Foundations and Imperatives</b> – In this session, Rev. Adam Osier will discuss how the value of every human life is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and explore practical ways in which this reality informs and motivates the various vocations of the Christian’s life.	

# 2023 Lutherans For Life National Conference Agenda

**Virginia Flo**

Owen

**Introducing the LFL Frontline Playbook: Discover How to Implement Proven LFL Programs in New and Creative ways** – Learn how to repurpose some of the best LFL Frontline resources. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. LFL has a variety of For Life resources already developed that you can utilize immediately in your local For Life ministry in the churches you serve. The playbook will provide optional game plans for your best program results as you adapt them to your unique local needs.

**Dave Probst**

Hamilton

**Serving and Supporting YOU – Our Ministry Partners!** – Lutherans For Life would like to invite *YOU*, our ministry partners, to an in-depth look into the five-year history of giving to Lutherans For Life. During our time together, we will also discuss the ways Lutherans For Life is celebrating, serving, and supporting our life affirming advocates.

10:30 a.m.

Carpool to the Ark Encounter. Lunch on your own.  
Meal and snack items available at the Ark Encounter, if desired.

5:00-6:00 p.m.

Return to hotel at your leisure

Exhibitor visits

Hotel Atrium

7:00-9:00 p.m.

Banquet Dinner and Keynote Address

Ballroom

**Rev. Mark Chavez**

**Joy and Death: The Blessing of Falling Asleep in Jesus** – Our Heavenly Father promises an abundant, joyful life in Jesus. His promise includes all of life, even the most difficult experiences like illness and dying. Embracing our life in Christ in those challenging times sets us free to receive the Father’s unexpected joyful blessings.

Evening Devotion

## Friday, October 13

7:00-8:00 a.m.

Breakfast Buffet & Exhibitor Visits

Hotel Atrium

8:00-8:15 a.m.

Opening Devotions

Ballroom

8:15-9:45 a.m.

Closing Session – **Rev. Salemink – Life after Dobbs: Q & A**

Ballroom

9:45-10:30 a.m.

Sending, Survey, Closing Devotion

Ballroom

12:00 p.m.

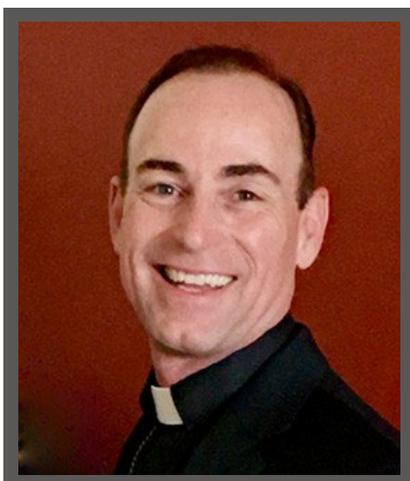
Hotel Check out

11:00-1:00 p.m.

Presidents (COFP) Meeting (private)

Thoroughbred

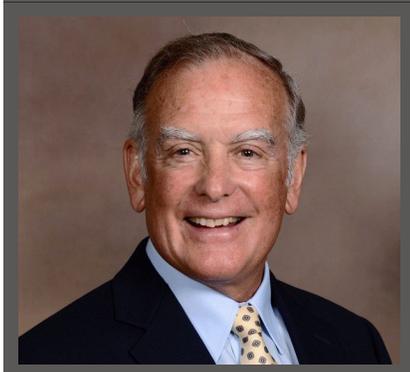
## Conference Speakers and Workshop Presenters



**Rev. Brian Barlow**, with over 20 plus years ministering to the sexually and relationally broken, addresses the necessity of keeping a clear gospel when walking alongside individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ and those who desire freedom in Christ. His personal journey out of a disfigured life is a testimony to Ephesians 3:20. God in His mercy continues to do more than Brian and this world could imagine. He married his bride, Nichole, in 2012, and together they are raising their four sons ages 10, 8, 4, and 2.5 months. In addition to pastoring, Rev. Barlow serves with many local and national ministries, including Lutherans For Life, Y4Life, and LINC-LA. Pastor Barlow is invited often to share his story and give hope to both large and small venues across the United States.



**Michelle Bauman** joined the Lutherans For Life team on June 1, 2019. She earned her Lutheran teaching degree in secondary education from Concordia Nebraska in 1998 and a master's degree in English from the University of Indianapolis in 2011. Before joining Lutherans For Life, Michelle taught middle school English from 1998 to 2002 at Holy Cross Lutheran School in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and English, Drama, and Speech at Trinity Lutheran High School in Seymour, Indiana, from 2002 to 2019. Michelle also served as Trinity's Recruitment Director from 2004 to 2017. She lives in Columbus, Indiana, with her husband, Pastor Doug Bauman, and two sons, Nathaniel and Simeon, and attends St. Paul Lutheran Church, Clifty, where her husband serves as pastor.



**Rev. Mark Chavez** is passionate about proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no life apart from Jesus. His ministry is all about focusing on Jesus so everyone, including him, is drawn to Jesus in love, faith, and obedience. He thoroughly enjoys preaching and leading worship and Bible studies. Since all who are baptized into Christ are called to be His disciples, Mark is also passionate about nurturing discipling relationships. He began serving Reformation Lutheran Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in May 2021. He served 21 years outside the parish, ten years most recently as General Secretary of the North

American Lutheran Church (NALC), and prior to that as director for Lutheran renewing and confessing movements. He served congregations in Maryland and Pennsylvania for 12 years at the start of his ministry. He tried, unsuccessfully, running away from the call to ordained ministry by attending the USAF Academy in 1972. After graduation and commissioning in 1976, he studied for two years at Queen's College, Oxford University, UK. He then served on a briefing team that made presentations on the Soviet Union at Air Force bases worldwide. God had his way with Mark, so he resigned his Air Force commission in 1983 to attend Luther

## Conference Speakers and Workshop Presenters

Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was ordained on All Saints Day in 1987. While in the Air Force, he met his wife, Jocelyn, and they married in September 1980. They were blessed with six children. Their youngest child, Kevin, was killed in 2013. Jocelyn was diagnosed with a rare, progressive neurological condition in 2012 and died peacefully in Jesus in March 2017. Mark has eleven grandchildren. Eight of his grandchildren live within five minutes of his home. Being a grandpa is one of his most important and joyful vocations. Mark grew up in Colorado and California. Most of his family now lives near Spokane, Washington. In the winter he skis with his family out west. The rest of the year he enjoys playing golf with his sons and sons-in-law and tending to his vegetable garden.



**Sheryl W. DeWitt** is the co-founder and Executive Director of Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries, which operates residential maternity homes and a transitional living home for single pregnant and post-partum women in crisis. With a professional background in the insurance and TPA industry, founding Redeeming Life was more about her life passion than her career development. Sheryl, along with her husband, Rev. Edward DeWitt, dreamed for over 25 years of opening a home for women in crisis pregnancies who were at risk of aborting their unborn child. That dream became a reality in November 2013 with the opening of The Southward House, a comprehensive

program and residential option for women who want to choose life for their child but lack the resources necessary to do so. In August 2018 Redeeming Life celebrated the opening of phase two of ministry, a transitional home, which offers graduates of the maternity home program continued stabilization and residential services. In late 2023 the first major expansion of the ministry is the scheduled opening of a maternity home in Chicagoland, specifically East Dundee, Illinois. Sheryl is passionate about offering positive, life-saving options to at-risk women and children. Sheryl and Rev. DeWitt have been married for 42 years and together raised three children. In addition to finding great joy in serving the women and babies of Redeeming Life, Sheryl is a dedicated and doting grandmother of three.



**Patricia Engler** is a Christian apologetics speaker, author, and podcast host for Answers in Genesis (AiG). After 12 years of homeschool and a B.Sc. degree, she backpacked 360° around the world in 180 days, documenting how Christian students keep their faith at university. The top takeaways from this research are available in Patricia's book, *Prepare to Thrive: A Survival Guide for Christian Students*. A series of "God stories" resulted in Patricia joining AiG-Canada as a speaker, writer, and youth outreach coordinator before transferring to AiG-US in 2022. The same year, she also embarked on a second backpacking journey,

this time to research Marxism's history and consequences in Europe. Both backpacking trips formed the basis for separate teaching series available on Patricia's blog ([answersingenesis.org/blogs/patricia-engler](https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/patricia-engler)). Along with blogging and speaking, Patricia serves as an *Answers News* panelist, co-hosts AiG's new podcast for young adults, *Zero Compromise*, and is pursuing

## Conference Speakers and Workshop Presenters

an MA in Bioethics to help Christians think biblically about sanctity of life issues and emerging technologies. In her spare time, Patricia can often be found adventuring outdoors, exploring back roads, sketching, reading, or playing the ukulele.



**Virginia Flo** joined Lutherans For Life in September 2013 and currently resides in Eagan, Minnesota, where she is a member of Trinity Lone Oak Lutheran Church and School. She has spent her life in a dual career, both in business management, working for several major corporations in the Twin Cities area, as well as making a career in church work. She has worked extensively in the areas of Christian education, stewardship, and evangelism, while also serving as a choir director, where she is able to share her love of Christian music with both adults and children. In her business experience, she has worked in management, marketing, technology, and the graphic and visual arts. Her strong conviction For Life has given her the opportunity to speak on

all the life issues, with a particular emphasis in the area of physician-assisted suicide, which is being addressed in many states today. She grew up in a family that welcomed foster children who found a safe home with them in the country. She has authored a Christian fiction novel capturing some of those foster care experiences. Virginia has served as an LFL Life Chapter president and is now working across the United States helping equip Lutherans to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life.



**Deaconess Chrissie Gillet, PsyD** is married to her best friend, Steph Gillet, who is a pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Tomahawk, Wisconsin. They enjoy working side by side in the ministry as a husband-wife and pastor-deaconess team. Together they have seven children, but only their youngest still resides at home, along with Phoebe, their Labradoodle in therapy dog training. Chrissie earned a doctorate in clinical psychology from Spalding University and completed her psychology residency as an officer in the United States Air Force. She served four years active duty and another four as inactive reserve. God blessed her with a range of counseling experiences in settings such as: a domestic violence shelter, the suicide crisis hotline, military mental health clinics, and a Christian counseling agency. Transitioning from an emphasis on psychology to theology,

Chrissie attended the Distance Deaconess Program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. She graduated in October 2018 and was commissioned as a deaconess with Lutherans For Life. In her position as the **Word of Hope** Director, Chrissie answers the hotline calls and emails. Understanding both the secular worldview and the Christ-centered perspective, she listens without personal judgment while also responding in Christian truth and love. Motivated by compassion, she often goes above and beyond to connect people with local services and natural supports.

## Conference Speakers and Workshop Presenters

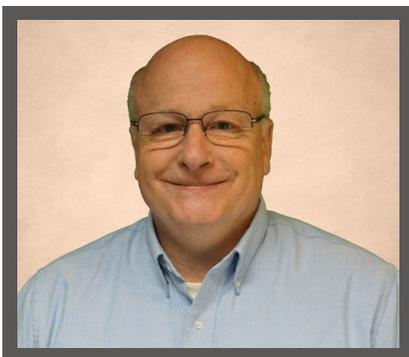


**Emily Jashinsky** is culture editor at *The Federalist* and host of *Federalist Radio Hour*. She previously covered politics as a commentary writer for the *Washington Examiner*. Prior to joining the *Examiner*, Emily was the spokeswoman for Young America's Foundation. She's interviewed leading politicians and entertainers and appeared regularly as a guest on major television news programs, including *Fox News Sunday*, *Media Buzz*, and *The McLaughlin Group*. Her work has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Post*, *Real Clear Politics*, and more. Emily also serves as director of the National Journalism Center, co-host of the weekly news show *Counter Points: Friday* and a visiting fellow at Independent Women's Forum. Originally from Wisconsin, she is a graduate of George Washington University.



**Rebecca Kiessling** has been an international pro-life speaker and adoption speaker since 1995, speaking for various pro-life organizations throughout North America and Europe. Politically influential, she changed the heart of Gov. Rick Perry during his presidential campaign, as well as Newt Gingrich, and many other legislators across the United States, Canada, and Europe. She's helped pregnant rape victims all around the world to choose life for their children. She's also an attorney and mother of five (the two oldest of whom are adopted), she lost two additional babies to miscarriage, and her 33-day-old adopted daughter, Cassie, who was born with special needs. She's also

the poster child for Feminists for Life's ad, "Did I Deserve the Death Penalty," author of the Heritage House '76 pamphlet "Conceived in Rape: A Story of Hope," and the writer of, and subject of, numerous articles and blogs on LifeNews, LifeSiteNews, and Live Action. She is the Founder and President of Save The 1 and co-founder of Embryo Defense.



**Rev. Scott Licht** grew up in New Ulm, Minnesota, and was raised in the Wisconsin Synod. He graduated from Martin Luther Preparatory School, Northwestern College (the WELS pastor-training college), and attended Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for a short time. In 2005, he earned an MBA and a Master of Science in Information Systems from Iowa State University. Scott worked in the corporate world for 30 years before combining his business and theological education and experience at Lutherans For Life beginning in 2012. Scott satisfied the requirements and was ordained in the Lutheran Congregations in Mission

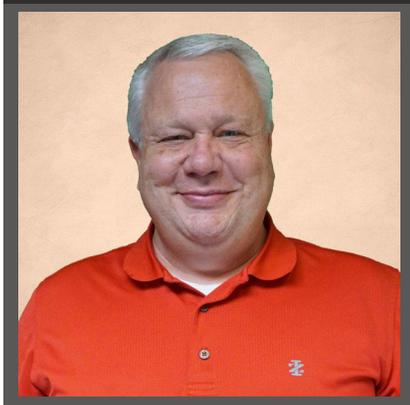
to Christ (LCMC) in 2014. In addition to his service at Lutherans For Life, he serves as pastor of Shepherd of the Prairie Lutheran Church in Huxley, Iowa – a congregation rostered with the LCMC and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). Scott has an adult daughter in the Des Moines area and a daughter, son-in-law, and two grandsons near Colfax, Iowa. He and his

## Conference Speakers and Workshop Presenters

wife, Sue, live near Huxley, Iowa, with three horses. Sue also has three adult daughters. Scott says, "There is never a lack of things to do, and I give thanks for how richly God has blessed me. I enjoy serving Him through the mission of Lutherans For Life, and I would ask for your prayers as we continue to 'equip Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life.'"



**Rev. Adam Osier** and his wife, Courtney, reside in Maple Grove, Minnesota, with their three children, Jacobi, Kaia, and Luther. He has pastored churches in rural central Minnesota and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Since 2019, he has served as Dean of the Free Lutheran Bible College in Plymouth, Minnesota. He is also a co-host of *Being Lutheran*, a podcast dedicated to proclaiming the excellencies of Jesus Christ and the biblical theology expressed in the Lutheran Confessions.



**Dave Probst** joined the Lutherans For Life team as the Development Director on January 17, 2022. He received a BS in Financial Management from Southwest Missouri State University in 1993, and a DCE Specialist Certificate from Concordia Nebraska in 1998. Dave worked two years as a Commercial Appraiser in St. Louis, Missouri, two years as a Youth Director at Oak Road Lutheran Church in Lilburn, Georgia, and sixteen years as a Youth Director at St. James Lutheran Church in Lafayette, Indiana. Dave left youth ministry in the summer of 2016 to begin serving as the Development Director at Trinity Lutheran High School in Seymour, Indiana. He and his wife,

Jennifer, have been married since 1998 and are blessed with two sons, Josiah and Caleb. The Probst family are members of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Columbus, Indiana, where Jennifer serves as Pre-School Teacher and the Early Childhood Ministry Director.



**Cameron Schroeder** is originally from LaCrescent, Minnesota, but currently lives in Saginaw, Michigan, where he serves as admissions counselor for Michigan Lutheran Seminary. He has previously served as a youth leader at Northcross Lutheran Church in Lakeville, Minnesota, Junior Staff Director at Camp Phillip in Wautoma, Wisconsin, and in an advisory role for churches around the country trying to take their youth ministry initiatives to the next level.

# LFL National Essay Contest

Each year the LFL Council of Federation Presidents sponsors a national essay contest for students in two categories. One category includes students in grades 6-8 and the other in grades 9-12. Students in the Federation states and all other Non-Federation states are eligible to participate. After all of the states have submitted their winners, a national committee selects one winner to be the National Essay winner in each category. The essay contest rules for 2024 are available on the LFL website. For a student to qualify, they must either belong to a Lutheran church or attend a Lutheran school.

## 2023 LFL National Essay Contest Winners

The annual Lutherans For Life National Essay Contest, sponsored by the Council of Federation Presidents, continues to afford our Lutheran students the opportunity to affirm and express their belief in the sanctity of life each year, and 2023 was no different! The theme this year was “Just As ... I Am,” based on Ephesians 2:10.

Our first place winners from each participating state advanced to the national level contest, and we are now very pleased to announce the four national winners. We received some wonderful essays, so these students should be commended for this achievement!

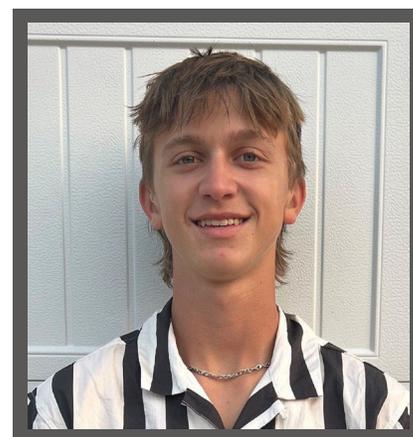
Just As ... I Am

← →  
**FOR WE ARE GOD'S  
workmanship,**  
CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS  
to do good works,  
WHICH GOD PREPARED IN  
advance for us to do  
← →

*Eph 2:10*

### National Essay Contest: 9-12 Grade Category

**First Place:** Samuel Jopp, Mayer, Minnesota, won first place at the national level in the 9-12 grade category. Sam won his award while in the tenth grade at Mayer Lutheran High School in Mayer, Minnesota, and is a member of Zion Lutheran Church in Mayer. He has three older siblings – one sister and two brothers. Samuel enjoys participating in football, basketball, and golf. When not participating in extracurricular activities at school, Sam enjoys going to the lake, helping his friends on their farms, and hanging out with his family.



Sam's essay is titled “Perfect—Just As I Am.”

Have you ever been told you are a mistake and that you will never amount to anything? I was told that many times in my young life, but I am here to tell you that you are not a mistake, even with all your imperfections, and that God has a tremendous plan for your life. The Bible says, “**For (you) are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for (you) to do**” (Ephesians 2:10). I am a living example of how I am God's handiwork, and I am loved by Christ just as I am.

When I was born, it was discovered that I was deaf/hard of hearing. After many doctor appointments and tests, I was diagnosed with bilateral conductive hearing loss. I

could not hear from either ear and there was no cure. I didn't qualify for hearing aids because of all the fluid in my ears. I had nine surgeries to put tubes in my ears to help with drainage and one surgery to reconstruct my right eardrum all before I was eight years old. I looked normal and spoke like other kids my age, so people thought I was "normal," but I am not normal. I am extraordinary!

I didn't know what I was missing in school from lack of hearing, and I appeared to be like my classmates, so teachers thought I was lazy or unmotivated to do the school work. My classmates teased me because I couldn't hear and because of my poor grades, but I was told every day at home that I was loved by my parents, three siblings, and extended family. They accepted me just as I am and helped me to say words correctly and to speak clearly. They worked hard to help me be successful.

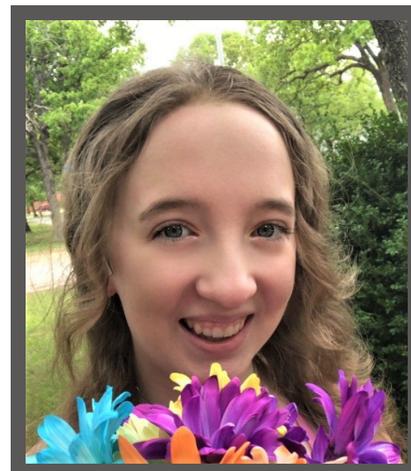
When I was in fourth grade, the fluid in my ears decreased, and I received hearing aids. There were so many sounds I was experiencing for the first time. Cars driving on the street, coffee dripping in the coffee maker, and the refrigerator humming were all the sounds I was hearing for the first time as a ten-year-old. I had no idea the world was full of so many sounds! I could now hear my teachers with my new hearing aids, but it also made all the other noises around me louder. No one understood what a struggle it was to be hard of hearing, and I was still teased and told I needed to pay attention in class. I had to learn how to focus on the speaker and block out all the background noises. It was very difficult to do all this and try to focus on what was being said. God knew all the obstacles I would have to overcome to succeed in life, but He placed people in my life to help me be successful in school and with my peers just as I am.

I am God's workmanship created with His hands to be perfectly made. He hears all the hurtful words and sees all the cruel acts others do to make fun of me, but He makes it all right because I belong to Him. He has my life planned out to do good works for Him. I get up every day and face the obstacles placed before me knowing Jesus is right there experiencing them with me. He will do a good work in me as I follow His command to love others and be forgiving.

I still struggle in school and fitting in with my peers is a daily challenge, but I know I will be successful. God has blessed me with a wonderful family. I am privileged to play high school sports with my peers. My family supports me just as I am, hearing aids and all. They know God has big plans for my life and they believe in me. That is all that matters. I am living proof that God made me to be exactly like I am and He loves me just as I am. I do not see myself with a disability, but as a child of God, His handiwork, His perfection!

Thank you, Sam, for your eloquent and moving reminder that "God doesn't make mistakes!" It is often those around us that see our disabilities as "shortcomings" when God sees no such thing! Sam's essay should give all of us the courage to face whatever life brings as we walk with our Savior and live the abundant life found in Him.

**Second Place:** Annika Peterson, Arlington, Texas, was in grade 11 when she won second place at the national level in the 9-12 grade category. She attends the Grand Prairie Fine Arts Academy, where she is working to establish a Students for Life chapter on her campus. Because of the loss of her newborn brother to Trisomy 18 in 2008 and the adoption of her little sister some years later, Annika is very passionate about helping families and mothers feel empowered to choose life. She is active in her home church, St. John Lutheran Church in Mansfield, Texas, and enjoys the youth, children, and music ministries. Every summer, she works as an assistant counselor at Camp Thurman in Pantego, where she is able show God's love to these little ones all summer long. Last summer she was given permission to write a devotion for her campers and described how God fearfully and wonderfully created them in His image. This message lights up Annika's life whenever she shares it, and praise God, she lights up our lives with this message as well!

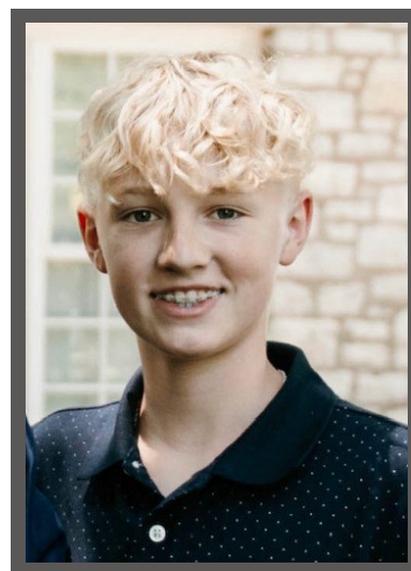


Annika's essay is titled **"For Such a Time as This."** On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned *Roe v. Wade* and returned the authority to regulate abortion to the states. Annika firmly states, "As children of God, it is our duty, our privilege, to relentlessly love on mothers and babies ... I am ready to do the work God prepared in advance for me to do, which is standing up for the lives of all the others He created to do His work ... Perhaps I was born for such a time as this ...."

All of us now living were born for such a time as this! God intentionally made us His children, now, in this place, for His work. Like Annika, let us recognize our importance to the Lord's plan and His ministry at such a time as this.

### **National Essay Contest: 6-8 Grade Category**

**First Place:** Jace Latham, from St. Charles, Missouri, won first place at the national level in the 6-8 grade category. Jace was in seventh grade at Immanuel Lutheran School in St. Charles when he won his award. He plays a variety of sports, including basketball, soccer, and track and field. He enjoys spending time outdoors fishing, hunting, and mountain biking. His favorite subjects include math and his STEM curriculum. (STEM is an abbreviation for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.) When he's not playing sports or spending time outdoors, he can be found working out or hanging out with his friends.



Jace's essay is titled **"Life's Puzzle."**

God's creation is a beautiful puzzle. When one decides to end his life, God's puzzle is incomplete. Everyone is part of God's creation and adds a special piece to the overall puzzle. Our lives add value and have a relevant place in the

world God designed. When someone commits suicide, it takes one amazing piece away from God's puzzle.

The Bible discusses the value and purpose of life in great detail. Jeremiah 29:11 says, **“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and hope”** (ESV). It is important to understand life can and will be difficult. God has a wonderful plan for each and every one of us; people must not lose hope. Unfortunate events can happen, and one must figure out how to work through them. When individuals keep God in their lives and listen to what He says, they have a better chance of realizing they have a purpose, just as they are. When one commits suicide, a puzzle piece is lost forever. Suicide is the twelfth leading cause of death, affecting every ethnic group and all ages. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, **“For you were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body.”** God did not give people a life for it to end early. Every person has value and is brought into the world for a reason.

All people should understand and say to themselves: I am loved, just as I am. Ephesians 2:10 says, **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** The importance of life goes beyond our daily lifestyle and tasks. There can also be a stronger purpose in situations not always seen and heard. While 275,000 people are saved every year from suicide, about 800,000 die worldwide from suicide alone. Mental health is important, as well as helping people feel like they belong and are part of God's puzzle.

God's puzzle becomes incomplete when someone commits suicide. The Bible tells every person they have value and a purpose as a human being. If people follow God's Word throughout their lives, everyone will feel connected. In the end, each piece of the puzzle will fit exactly how God intended.

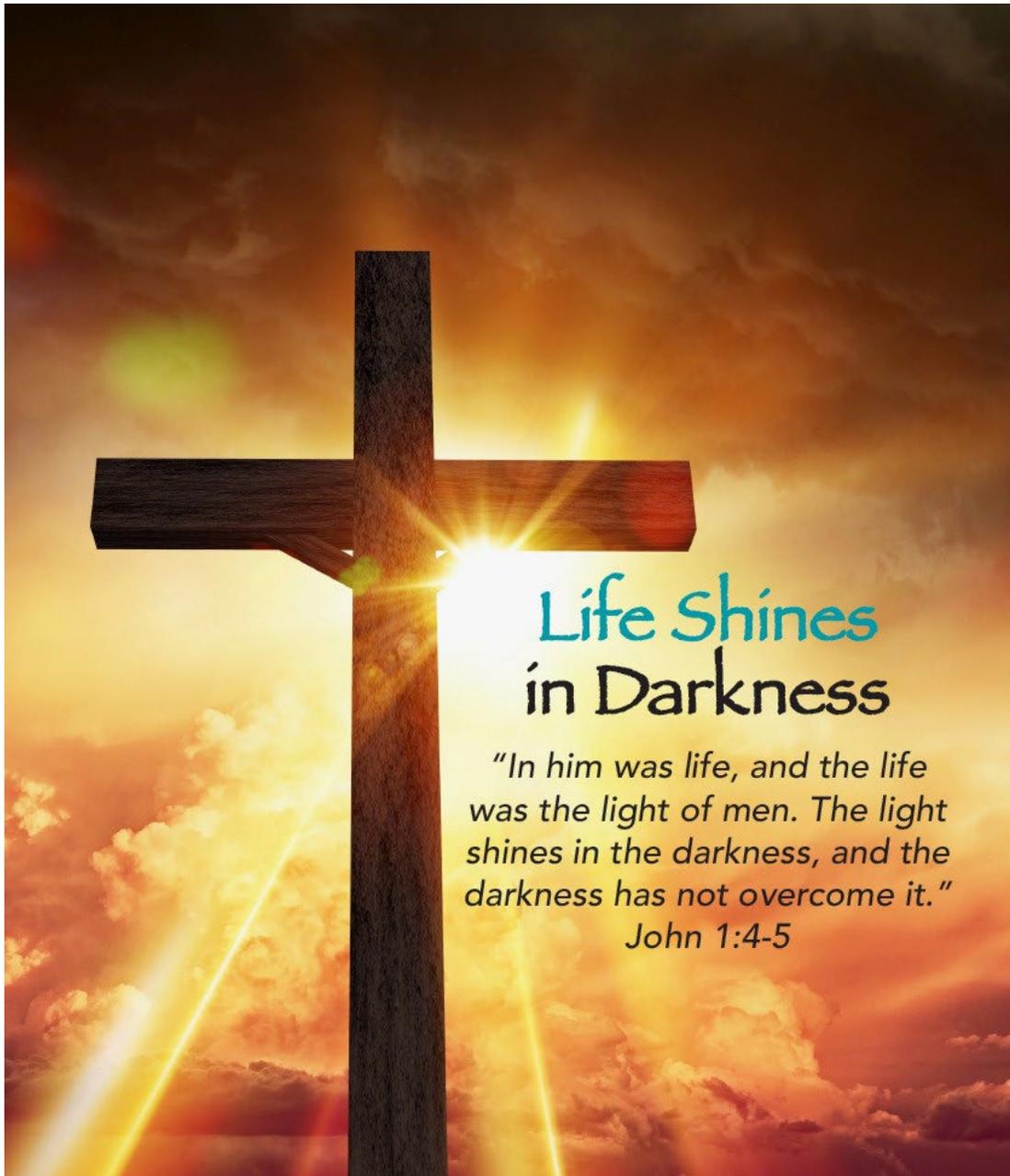
We truly appreciate and value Jace's essay on suicide. Because suicide is the second leading cause of death among teens, Jace's words send an urgent message to his peers: Follow God's Word. Believe that you are created by God for a purpose. Keep God in your life and listen to what He says. This is great advice for all of us, right? Right!

**Second Place:** Madison Ford, from Frankenmuth, Michigan, won second place at the national level in the 6-8 grade category. Madison was 14 and in eighth grade at St. Lorenz Lutheran School in Frankenmuth, Michigan, when she won her award. She enjoys dancing and participates in the Girls of Grace Dance Ministry at her school. She likes shopping, traveling, and spending time with her friends and family. Madison's favorite Bible verse is Matthew 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.”**



Madison's essay is titled "**Physician-Assisted Suicide: Killing the Living.**" Madison's essay affirms the role of Christians in the lives of hurting people. We have to learn about PAS: why it is a problem, why people choose it, how to prevent it, and most importantly, how to offer the love and grace of Jesus to those hurting people.

Suicide of any kind grieves our Father in heaven, and our desire should be to show love, hope, and kindness to those we know who are facing difficult times. We may never know how sharing the love and hope of Jesus may impact a friend's life, but Madison's words should encourage us to do just that.

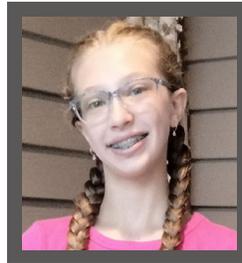


[lutheransforlife.org/2024-lutherans-for-life-essay-contest](https://lutheransforlife.org/2024-lutherans-for-life-essay-contest)

## LFL State Essay Contest Winners Grades 6-8



**Madison Ford**  
St. Lorenz Lutheran School  
Frankenmuth, Michigan  
Michigan First Place



**Claire Weidner**  
Grace Lutheran School  
Fargo, North Dakota  
North Dakota First Place



**Jacob Seeman**  
Trinity Lone Oak Lutheran  
School  
Eagan, Minnesota  
Minnesota First Place



**Micah Tiefel**  
Peace Thru Christ Lutheran  
Church and School  
Middleton, Wisconsin  
Wisconsin First Place



**Emma Mildred**  
Faith Lutheran School  
Plano, Texas  
Texas First Place



**Dean Hemmer**  
Good Shepherd Lutheran  
School  
Collinsville, Illinois  
Illinois First Place



**Jamie Schkade**  
Hope Lutheran School  
Shawnee, Kansas  
Kansas First Place

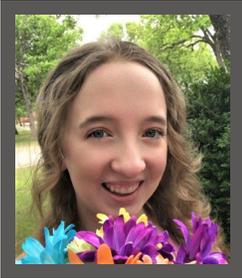


**Austin Udd**  
St. Paul's Lutheran School  
Arlington, Nebraska  
Nebraska First Place



**Jace Latham**  
Immanuel Lutheran  
School  
St. Charles, Missouri  
Missouri First Place

## LFL State Essay Contest Winners Grades 9-12



**Annika Peterson**  
St. John Lutheran Church  
Mansfield, Texas  
Texas First Place



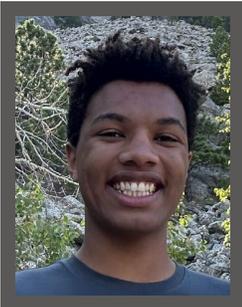
**Sarah Lovett**  
Concordia Academy  
Wichita, Kansas  
Kansas First Place



**Julia Koester**  
Holy Trinity Lutheran  
Church  
Wittenberg Academy  
(online academy)  
Walnut, Illinois  
Non-Federation First Place



**Nathaniel Clayton**  
Clayton Christian  
Homeschool  
Mascoutah, Illinois  
Illinois First Place



**Asher Boggs**  
Boggs Academy  
Homeschool  
Immanuel Lutheran  
Church  
Tilden, Nebraska  
Nebraska First Place



**Eutimia Woodside**  
Bethel Lutheran Church and  
School  
Bismarck, North Dakota  
North Dakota First Place



**Olivia Brown**  
St. Paul Lutheran Church  
Spearfish, South Dakota  
South Dakota First Place



**Sam Jopp**  
Mayer Lutheran High School  
Mayer, Minnesota  
Minnesota First Place

## A Special Thank You to ...

Our conference sponsors whose voice and sponsorship enable us to share the For Life message.

### Yacht Sponsor

- Lutheran Public Radio

*Lutheran Public Radio produces radio talk shows, podcasts, and 24/7 sacred music and talk stations.*



**Issues, Etc.**<sup>TM</sup>

Defending Life from Beginning to End

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- Lutherans For Life
- Redeeming Life Outreach Ministries
- Safe Haven Baby Boxes
- Word of Hope
- Y4Life

# A Special Thank You to ...

- Jeffrey Bolzman for sharing his artistic talents and allowing us to display his Fearfully and Wonderfully Made painting during the conference.
- The LFL Board of Directors for their faithful leadership.
- The LFL National Staff for their dedicated service For Life.
- The LFL Council of Federation Presidents, who keeps LFL active and moving forward in our State Federations and the Frontline.
- Our Life Teams, Life Chapters, and Life Advocates who work so diligently every day to affirm life in so many God-pleasing ways.
- All the conference presenters for providing enlightening presentations on various life topics, equipping us to be Gospel-motivated voices for life.
- All the conference attendees for helping to continue life-affirming work in their churches and communities.
- All donors who support LFL with their financial gifts in order to sustain our work throughout the year.

## Become a Member of Lutherans For Life ...

Membership in Lutherans For Life will help deepen your commitment to serving the Lord of Life. Membership makes you an active partner in the mission of LFL on a regular basis. Ongoing, regular support is both a way of declaring commitment and developing commitment. Your partnership will help expand our mission of “witnessing to the sanctity of human life, through education, based on the Word of God.”

### Members of Lutherans For Life Receive:

- LFL’s quarterly journal, *LifeDate*, at no cost to you – keeping you informed on all the life issues.
- An initial membership packet that will help you grow in your understanding of the mission, message, and manner of LFL.
- An official membership card.
- Semiannual mailings updating you on new materials.
- An annual report to help you see how your gifts are being used.
- Sponsor members, who give monthly gifts, receive a letter from the executive director each month giving some devotional thoughts, comments on pertinent issues, and updates on what is happening at the national office.

### These items will help you stay connected. Through this ongoing connection you will:

- Be reminded of how the Gospel of Jesus Christ relates to these issues.
- Grow in your faith as you see how God’s Word changes lives.
- Keep informed about what’s going on at the national office.
- Keep up to date on the latest life issues.
- Become better equipped to do more to make a difference in your congregation and community.
- Receive encouragement as you realize you are partnering with your fellow members all across the country.
- Learn about becoming involved at the local and/or state level of LFL.

[lutheransforlife.org/about](https://lutheransforlife.org/about)



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## Lutherans For Life

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Nevada, IA 50201-1816

[info@lutheransforlife.org](mailto:info@lutheransforlife.org)

[lutheransforlife.org](http://lutheransforlife.org)

888.364.LIFE (5433) or 515.382.2077

### LFL Business Hours:

Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. CT.  
Hours subject to staff availability.



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# Helping You Connect God's Word to Life Issues!



Equipping Lutherans and their neighbors  
to be **Gospel-motivated voices For Life!**



**LUTHERANS**  
FOR LIFE



**Sunday, January 14, 2024**

Zoom Presentation: Just as ... I AM from Fertilization to Forever with Rev. Scott Licht @ 8:00 PM ET

Life issues: Creation and Identity; Surprise Pregnancy, Pregnancy, and the Unborn

Theme color: Purple

**Monday, January 15, 2024**

Zoom Presentation: Just as ... I AM in Terminal Diagnosis with Ed Szeto @ 8:00 PM ET

Life issues: Disabilities, Aging Communities, Terminal Diagnosis

Theme color: Red

**Tuesday, January 16, 2024**

Zoom Presentation: Just as ... I AM Surviving and Thriving with Deac. Rachel Geraci @ 8:00 PM ET

Life issues: Hope in Illness, Hope in Pre-term Delivery, Mental Health, Rejoicing in God's gifts

Theme color: Light Blue

**Wednesday, January 17, 2024**

Zoom Presentation: Just as ... I AM in Surprise Pregnancy with Diana Vaughn @ 8:00 PM ET

Life issues: Prenatal Diagnosis of Disability, Unplanned Pregnancy, Adoption

Theme color: Yellow

**Thursday, January 18, 2024**

Zoom Presentation: Just as ... I AM with Courage and Compassion with Rev. Michael Salemink @ 8:00 PM ET

Life issues: Persecution, Christian Confession and Gospel-motivated Speaking, Engaging with the World

Theme color: Pink

**Friday, January 19, 2024**

Zoom Presentation: Just as ... I AM as Male and Female with Rev. Chris Esget @ 8:00 PM ET

Life issues: Masculinity and Femininity, Marriage, Homosexuality and Transgenderism

Theme color: Green

**Saturday, January 20, 2024**

Zoom Presentation: Just as ... I AM for Blessing and Service with Christa Petzold @ 10:30 AM ET

Life issues: Goodness of My Body, Goodness of Relationships, Engaging the Elderly, Christian Living and Serving Others

Theme color: Orange

**Zoom Codes**

Zoom codes for ALL presentations:

Meeting ID: 830 9195 8760

Passcode: 747958

Questions? Email [lifeweek2024@lutheransforlife.org](mailto:lifeweek2024@lutheransforlife.org)



**[lutheransforlife.org/life-week-2024](https://lutheransforlife.org/life-week-2024)**

Y4Life  
in Washington, D.C.  
January 18-20, 2024

Conference and March  
Open to all high school and college students!

Just As . . . I AM -

Thursday  
**18**

With Courage and Compassion

- Registration and Exhibits @ 6 PM ET
- Opening Devotions: Rev. Trevor Sutton
- Introductions and Icebreakers

January

- Y4Life Conference Session 1: Just as ... I AM with Courage and Compassion with Rev. Trevor Sutton Music, Sign-making, Exhibits, and Social Time

Friday

**19**

January

As Male or Female

@ 9 AM ET

- Y4Life Conference Session 2: Just as . . . I AM with Melissa Ohden
- Pre-March Devotion: Rev. Harrison Goodman
- March for Life: Rally, March, and Testimonials Dinner on own Exhibits, Social Time Devotion and Post-March Discussion
- Y4Life Conference Session 3: Just as . . . I AM as Male or Female (Panel Discussion on Gender)

For Blessing and Service @ 9 AM ET

Saturday

**20**

January

- Y4Life Conference Session 3: Just as . . . I AM Joy Despite Brokenness with Amy Skogerboe
- Y4Life Conference Session 4: Just as . . . I AM for Blessing and Service with Christa Petzold
- Closing Devotion: Rev. Michael Salemink

Ends @

Location:

Hilton Arlington National Landing (near Reagan National Airport)  
2399 Richmond Hwy, Arlington, VA 22202

Cost:

Conference is FREE for registered youth. Rooms cost \$124 per night with group rate, up to 4 people per room. Breakfast included. Limited availability.

Registration: Register with QR code or at [Y4life.org](http://Y4life.org)

Conference registration closes  
Dec. 15, 2023





# Y4LIFE SUMMIT

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, NEBRASKA

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2024

## Y4Life Summit:

Open to all high school and college-aged students and their Y4Life Teams! Attend the Y4Life Summit at Concordia University Nebraska and learn how YOU can respond to life issues with a Gospel-motivated voice.

## Reservation and Cost:

The Y4Life Summit is FREE! However, space is limited. Register before Feb. 10 [HERE](#).

## Accommodations:

Reserve your rooms at Cobblestone Hotel & Suites, 2575 Progressive Rd., Seward, NE 68434. Call (402) 646-1004 and request the Y4Life room block to book rooms at discounted prices.

## Schedule:

### Friday

6:00 PM: Arrival, Check-in, Meet & Greet  
7:00 PM: Welcome and Icebreaker Activities  
7:30 PM: Opening Devotion and Worship  
8:15 PM: Session 1: *What about . . . a Gospel-Motivated Response to Life?*

## Schedule Continued:

### Saturday

9:00 AM: Session 2: *What about . . . IVF, Infertility, and Surrogacy?*  
10:00 AM: Break  
10:30 AM: Session 3: *What about . . . Marriage, Birth Control, and Families?*  
11:30 AM: Lunch and Free Time  
1:30 PM: Session 4: *What about . . . Gender?*  
2:30 PM: Service Activity: Homeless Kits  
5:00 PM: Supper  
7:00 PM: Session 5: *What about . . . Bioethics at End of Life?*  
8:00 PM: Worship  
8:45 PM: Movie, Snacks, and Social Time

### Sunday

8:30 AM: Worship at St. John Lutheran Church, Seward, NE

TO REGISTER FOR THE SUMMIT, FOLLOW THE QR CODE OR CLICK THE LINK ABOVE BY FEB. 10. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT MICHELLE BAUMAN AT MICHELLE@Y4LIFE.ORG.





Join Us in 2024!

**September 14, 2024**

**Regional Conference Northeast**

Immanuel Lutheran Church  
Bristol, Connecticut (Hartford area)

**October 12, 2024**

**Regional Conference Midwest**

Hope Lutheran Church and School  
Shawnee, Kansas (Kansas City area)

**November 9, 2024**

**Regional Conference Southeast**

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Winter Garden, Florida (Orlando area)



**LUTHERANS**  
**FOR LIFE**