



Lutherans For Life - Canada

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From the President's Desk

Winter 2024

Nov. 18, 2023, LFLC held their AGM at Peace Lutheran Church, in Tillsonburg, ON. LFLC was pleased to have Reverend Ken Maher as our Guest Presenter. Here are some of the highlights of his presentation.

DIGNITY AND COMPASSION: HOSPICE CARE VS. EUTHANASIA

By Reverend Ken Maher

- Hospice care origins are explained
- Hospice in the Canadian context
 - 90% of North Americas today die slowly from debilitating disease.
 - 70-75% die in institutions (where formerly more died at home)
 - Hospice got people out of hospitals where the focus was on healing, and dying people in hospital came to be seen as failures within the hospital system.
 - People need good symptom control and human presence. In the hospice facility, end of life care is emphasized over cure. Pain management is given top priority in patient comfort care.
- Hospice and MAiD in the current culture. MAiD soon to take over the fourth leading cause of death (84,000 Canadians). In Quebec, MAiD is the cause of 7% of all deaths.
- More and more Canadians are led to believe that they have no other choice than to choose MAiD.
- An issue is whether Hospice should be forced to offer MAiD.

Arguments for MAiD within hospice:

- It's expedient - Answer: Isaiah 55:8f.
- We wouldn't treat our animals this way - Answer: 1 Corinthians 6:19f.
- It helps prevent the unnecessary prolonging of life - Answer: Psalm 31:14f.
- Certain life is not worth living - Answer: 2 Corinthians 12:9f.
- Not wanting to be a burden. But there is no duty to die - Answer: Galatians 6:2
- Suffering leads to an undignified death - Answer: 1 Corinthians 10:12-14

What is a Christian response?

- Dignity is a character trait. Dignity is not as exalted as many make it, certainly not so in the Bible. The serpent's appeal was to man's dignity by claiming the forbidden fruit.
- Compassion however is a very prominent concept in the Bible.

- All life is a gift of God. Job 10:12; Acts 17:25.
- The 5th Commandment & Small Catechism Explanation, which includes despising anyone else's life no matter their condition.
- Death is already defeated. 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

Dignity or Compassion: Problems with integrating MAiD into Hospice:

1. It confuses the person (dying) with the problem (pain, suffering, etc.). You don't treat the pain by removing the person. Answer: Revelation 2:10
2. It destroys trust. People need to know they are respected and safe. MAiD gives frightening power to a professional and the state. Matthew 5:37
3. It causes fear and doubt among the most vulnerable. Jeremiah 22:3
4. It doesn't remove suffering ... it only transfers it to others. cf. The Good Samaritan
5. It denies the Hippocratic oath and makes hospice care providers complicit in killing. Hospice care is not the same as palliative care.

What to do?

- Speak up! – to individuals – to elected officials. Proverbs 31:8f.
- Volunteer! Matthew 25:37-40
- Life is a life of forgiveness! Christ died for all – including the uninformed and wrong believing. Ephesians 4:32
- Live a life that celebrates life – this one is fun. Celebrate milestones. Luke 15:31f.
- Finally, Romans 14:7-9, we live to the Lord!

Reverend Maher's entire paper can be downloaded from our website -

<https://lutheransforlife-canada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Maher-Hospice-Presentation-2023.pdf>

On Saturday February 11, 2024, our former board member Linda Welke gave a presentation for LFLC at the East District Lutheran Young Adults Winter Retreat at Faith Lutheran Church in London, ON. She presented the online recording of Reverend Ken Maher's presentation, "Dignity & Compassion: Hospice Care vs. Euthanasia" with those attending. To explain what Lutherans for Life is about, she used a brief online presentation by Pastor Salemink from Lutherans for Life (USA). In addition, she shared resources on various life issues, including what the Word of Hope hot-line is and how it can support in life crisis, and she shared ways individuals can be involved in Lutherans for Life-Canada. Our thanks to Linda Welke!

LOOKING FOR PRAYERS FOR LIFE?

As the people of God, forgiven and redeemed through Christ, we know that we can pray to our heavenly Father on all occasions and in any situation. At times, we have an idea of what we want to say, but are not sure how to say it. This includes individual and group situations where we want to pray for and about God's gift of life. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod has put together a prayer book that you can use for these situations, called "*The Lord's Mercy Endures Forever: 40 Prayers for Life*".

Download this booklet at:

https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/life-ministry-40-prayers-for-life?_gl=1*pufmuo*_ga*MTk4MTU5NTcxMC4xNzAxMjE4MTA1*_ga_Z0184DBP2L*MTcwNzkyNzQyMC4xMS4xLjE3Mdc5Mjc0NDkuMC4wLjA

Or if preferred we will send a copy of this booklet by emailing us:

LMC-Coordinator@lutheransforlife-canada.ca

VACCINES - HOW ETHICAL ARE THEY?

Recently, LFL-C was asked a question by some Lutheran Christians, of why, as an organization that promotes, supports, and seeks to equip the Church in defense of the Sanctity of Human Life, have we never engaged the discussion regarding the use of aborted fetal stem cells in vaccines, medicines, and other technologies where they are employed. Truthfully, it is a very large topic, one which we are overwhelmed by, and so we have been silent. Dear Lord, forgive us!

In an effort to open the discussion, and to begin to equip Christians with clear Christian thinking based on the Word of God in making informed decisions where these technologies are employed, we have asked Reverend Dr. Harold Ristau (formerly, Professor of Theology at CLTS, and now, incoming President of Lutheran Classical College - Casper, WY) to write an article engaging the topic. What he writes will be challenging to some readers, the call to repentance always stings. But, through contrite repentance we are led back to the abundant grace and mercy of the Living God who takes no delight in the death of sinners (Ezekiel 33). The devil likes to keep us ignorant, silent, and fearful... but God's Word won't permit such spirits to reign.

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING VACCINATIONS DERIVED FROM FETAL STEM CELL RESEARCH

By Reverend Dr. Harold Ristau

Lutherans are caught in a moral dilemma. Our Church is overtly anti-abortion, which includes opposing all technologies that are derived from abortion and murdered fetuses. And yet, most of us have unhesitatingly received vaccinations, undergone medical procedures, and received medications that have been derived from fetal stem cell technology.

Canada boasts third place as the largest global spender per capita on pharmaceuticals, with the USA and Germany ranking at the top.¹ That means, not only are Canadians unusually ill or likely over-medicated, but decisions about fetal stem cells are very relevant due to the rapidly expanding use of fetal stem cells in pharmaceutical research.²

One of the subjects that I taught as a professor at CLTS was ethics. The intention of this paper is to offer some principles for consideration in Christian decision making. I myself refused the COVID "vaccinations"³, one reason being that they utilize fetal stem cell technology in their manufacturing. However, I am not without guilt. For many years as a military chaplain deploying overseas, I unquestioningly received dozens of vaccinations which I only later learned contained fetal tissue and were derived from fetal stem cells. Yet, I have repented of those sins and now seek to help stop other Christians from making the same mistake. For it was only during the recent pandemic that I was forced to investigate this topic and was horrified by my discoveries. However, even today, many Lutheran Canadians proudly state that they would make the same decision on COVID injections despite their newfound knowledge that these injections are incompatible with Pro-Life values. This is shameful. I hope they change their minds. Maybe they will after reading this short essay.

¹ *Pharmaceutical spending per capita in selected countries in 2022*. Statista. Published by Matej Mikulic, Aug 22, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266141/pharmaceutical-spending-per-capita-in-selected-countries/>; accessed Dec 21, 2023.

² The use of stem cells as research tools has expanded with most of the major pharmaceutical companies

Pharma's Developing Interest in Stem Cells. Cell Stem Cell 6, June 4, 2010 Elsevier Inc. 5. Volume 6, Issue 6, 4 June 2010, Pages 517-520. Ruth McKernan 1, John McNeish 2, Devyn Smith 3 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1934590910002225>. P. 517; accessed Dec 22, 2023.

³ The reason "vaccinations" are in italics is that mRNA injections are a form of experimental gene therapy and not actually vaccines in the traditional sense.

Before discussing the guiding principles in decision making the next time you consider a vaccination, I would like to share with you some, albeit horrible descriptions of what fetal stem cell research looks like in the laboratory. The book, *The Fetus As Transplant Donor: The Scientific, Social, and Ethical Perspectives*, by Peter McCullagh,⁴ reports on the methods used in harvesting fetal tissue in Sweden:

"They would puncture the sac of a pregnant woman at 14 to 16 weeks, put a clamp on the head of the baby, pull the head down into the neck of the womb, drill a hole into the baby's head and attach a suction machine to remove the brain cells.... at 16 to 21 weeks, they would do prostaglandin abortions where a chemical is injected into the womb causing the woman to go into a mini-labor and pass the baby. Fifty percent of the time, the baby would be born alive, but that didn't stop them....they would simply open up the abdomen of the baby with no anesthesia, and take out the liver and kidneys, etc."

Here's some more quick scientific details on the aborted cell line products used:

"PER C6 came from a healthy 18-week-old baby who was aborted for social reasons. This tumorigenic strain is being used to develop adenovirus, Ebola, influenza, malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV vaccines. Developers call it a 'human designer cell' but what they really mean is 'aborted baby cells.' The HEK293 cell line is derived from the kidneys of a healthy aborted fetus and is being used to develop new influenza vaccines. The IMR-90 cell line came from a 16-week-old female aborted baby and IMR-91 came from a male aborted baby. Both were created for vaccine production and functional references. The WI-38 (RA 273) was a 16-week-old female baby (20 cm long) who was aborted in Sweden because the parents felt they had too many children. The baby was packed on ice and sent to the United States where it was dissected. The use of WI-38 cells is a lucrative moneymaking business. The WI-1 through WI-25 cell strains were derived from the lung, skin, muscle, kidney, heart, thyroid, thymus, and liver of 21 separate elective abortions. WI-44 was derived from the lung of a three-month old surgically aborted fetus. MCR-5 cell line was derived from the lung tissue of a 14-week-old male (Britain). Eighty elective abortions (recorded) were involved in the research and final production of the current rubella vaccine: 21 from the original WI-1 through WI-26 fetal cell lines that failed, plus WI-38 itself, plus 67 from the attempts to isolate the rubella virus."⁵

I realize that this information is disturbing, which is why our Synod and all Pro-Life Churches are theoretically opposed to fetal stem cell research. Yet, the fact that Lutherans and Church leaders of all conservative denominations received vaccinations without considering the controversial dimension of the "vaccinations" during the recent pandemic, demonstrates the need for training in Christian ethics.

Firstly, two arguments for Lutherans succumbing to the temptation of receiving a vaccination that they were morally uncomfortable with was fear of the physical and social consequences of not receiving it. During the recent "panda-mania," Lutherans were terrified that they would die from COVID, and health concerns were more important than any other moral considerations. At best, they bought into the mainstream narrative that taking "the jab" would help others, such as the elderly and immune-compromised. Questioning the science or ethics was perceived as selfish. Peer pressure included: "Everyone is doing it". "You deserve to travel". "Don't ask questions, just follow the party line". Many pastors who knew the differences between vaccines, and knew their controversial character, chose to not raise the issues, arguably an abuse of their authority. Not all brands were produced from the same fetal stem cell research and thus moral distinctions could have been made between them. Instead "This is no time for theological heroics", one pastor is recorded as saying. It's shocking. The moment that we cease to filter all of life's issues through a theological lens, we demonstrate that we are no different than the world around us, a world that we claim that we despise (Rom 12:2).

⁴ Peter McCullagh, *The Foetus as Transplant Donor: Scientific, Social and Ethical Perspectives* (Wiley, 1987), ⁵ Peter McCullagh, *The Foetus as Transplant Donor: Scientific, Social and Ethical Perspectives* (Wiley, 1987), The COVID "vaccines" used the HEK293 stem line in their development.

In our words and our silence, we failed in our response as a Church and are guilty of grave sins before heaven. We knew these injections were controversial and for very good reason and did not even take the time to seriously discuss the matter. In many cases discussion was actively prevented and shut down. The government works for God and not the other way around. We rendered unto Caesar what is God's. In the best-case scenario, we can argue that our fear clouded our ability to reason. Yet unless we learn from our mistakes and repent of our sins, we will make the same mistakes again. Yet God is good to us in Christ, and after confession and repentance, we find a God eagerly waiting for us with his outstretched arms of love, ready to forgive our sins. "[I]f we are faithless, he remains faithful" (2 Tim 2:13).

The bottom line is that as Christians we know that two wrongs do not make a right. Utilitarian arguments such as "the means justifies ends" are refuted by the Lord's convicting words of Law.

Yet still the old sinful Adam always tries to find a clever way of justifying bad behaviour. Some Christians argue that unless they feel bad about something, it is not a sin. This is based on a misinterpretation of Romans 2:15, as if to say that the only judge of what is sin for you as an individual is feelings that you have in your conscience. If your conscience is not troubling you, then you must be clear with God. Well, truth be told, your conscience could be misinformed. You could cause a car accident by driving poorly and never realize it. You are still guilty for that sin despite your ignorance. You are still guilty for sins you do not know or feel in your heart. Consider the Nuremberg Trials prosecuting Nazis after WWII. One was still considered guilty for serious crimes despite lack of full knowledge of all the details and circumstances of the situation in question. We require forgiveness for both sins of which we are aware and unaware. God is eager to forgive them all, and we can only confess those that we know, and we ought never invent sins to "cover our bases". But an honest confession of the mouth presumes a careful examination of the heart. And we dare never ignore the accusations of the Law when newfound knowledge reveals sins that were previously hidden in the darkness of personal ignorance. Certainly, the punishment varies according to knowledge (those who know more or have more power/influence are held more responsible: See Luke 12:48) but no one is "off the hook" just because they didn't know better, and nobody told them the whole story. And there is certainly no excuse when it comes to *choosing* to be misinformed. Such lazy and childish responses reflect irresponsible stewardship of our bodies and neglect of our divine purpose in society as Christians whom God uses as His witnesses and influencers in a changing the world.

Because clergy largely failed in raising these discussions before the COVID injections were being pumped out, many pastors were deliberately not raising questions in order to circumvent division within their congregations under the utilitarian argument: "its not worth losing members over this. We will hurt their feelings. Many members have already taken a dose and they can't undo the past. We don't want anyone feeling guilty". With such weak and pathetic arguments, pastors consoled themselves that they were being kind shepherds, instead of protecting the sheep from the wolves of the world that seek to devour human children through abortion. Ostensibly, we don't necessarily lie, but we don't tell the whole truth, or hold back information that Christians need to know. Misinformation included faulty arguments to artificially soothe consciences such as the use of the laughable "remote distance of evil" argument: the aborted babies from which we benefited were murdered several decades ago. In short, you are not guilty for the action of others. The act is too far removed from you personally to make you accountable for the act to any mentionable degree. If this logic was Christian, we could deny the guilt for which we are responsible accrued by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Sins took place thousands of years ago for which we are still responsible. We call it original sin. And this is why Christ died for all sinners, including you and I, and not just our first parents. This is why we are baptized at birth even though we haven't had much time to commit any deliberate sins.

In reconciling a crisis of conscience, some have tried to heroize the sacrifice of those poor children who died for the sake of the scientific industry, comparing them with Christ our Lord, joining voices with Caiphaz, the enemy of Christ (John 11:50). The difficulty here is not only that it is intuitively crass, but these children had no choice in this apparent martyrdom. This is like saying, "I killed a man in order to save my own life. That

man is such a hero!" One cannot escape the reality that murder is murder. Some claim that only a very few babies were killed long ago for the benefit of the science from which we now profit. Even if that were true, which it is not, since in selecting and then harvesting the healthiest stem cells from one child, one needs to slaughter a lot of others⁶, it does not change our level of guilt. Christians should be the first to stand up for the one lost sheep. Furthermore, allowing fetal stem cell research and product development to continue will lead to more and more abortions to satisfy the demand since the existing "immortal" cell lines are not in fact immortal but will need to be replaced at some point resulting in the vivisection of many more fetuses. In fact, there are many ways to make products that achieve the same goals and objectives, that do not use fetal stem cells. However, many have fallen out of production due to lack of demand stemming from lack of concern. In other words, if Christians would begin to stand against these sinful practices, the companies would resort to other ethical methods of research and production.⁷ We shouldn't be surprised that our faith can have such a positive impact on civil society. The best of Western culture is a direct consequence of Christian decision-making.

The strongest argument for compromising on any ethical or moral decision is the one that states that nobody can ever act completely consistently because we are imperfect sinners in a complex broken world. "Because I am not able to be entirely consistent, I may as well not bother trying. After all, nobody's perfect". Yet any sensible Christian must flee from such argument arising from an unbelieving and unsanctified heart. God will be our judge when we stop trying to do right even in midst of a gray world.

Life is filled with daily decisions. We mess many of them up. But we are not excused. We don't say "because I messed up similar ones in the past, and, because I am a sinner, I will mess up again in the future, I may as well not try to do better." Such thinking is rebuked by St. Paul in Rom 6:1 in which he addresses lukewarm Christians who are abusing the grace of God.

A line of reasoning that shrugs its shoulders in matters such as these, quickly tumbles into a heresy called "antinomianism". Because I am freed from the Law, I don't need to care about obeying God's law as a Christian. Luther's famous quote about "sinning boldly but believing more surely", is often employed as an excuse for making bad decisions that are promised to be forgiven afterwards. Instead of fearing God by putting Him to the test, those who misquote Luther here believe that because the blood of Jesus covers all your sins – past, present and future – great faith imagines any judgment as inconceivable, temporally and eternally. Yet the context of Luther's words was an encouragement to be honest in your private confession, and not hold back anything from our loving Lord in that sacrament. He was not addressing questions of ethics. Yet even so, if one wishes to apply this phrase to ethics as a way of approaching a situation where either decision is polluted by sin (i.e. a "best of two evils" situation), one still needs to admit that the decision is sinful. In this case, those who received injections polluted by fetal stem cells because they believe they had no choice, should not celebrate the act (e.g. boasting about it, tempting others to follow their example, publicizing it, etc.) but undergo it in a repentant attitude begging that God have mercy on us all, and that He come back soon to save us from this dark world in which we believe that we are forced to make compromised decisions. Is this how Christians and churches reacted to the vaccines/injections? Instead, most continue to dismiss, cancel or demonize those who underscore the controversial nature of these injections and vaccines.

⁶ The healthiest stem cells are harvested and then modified, "immortalizing" them for continued replication and reuse. However, this typically involves many attempts with cells from a number of fetuses before success. Hence, it's not just one abortion but many abortions that go into the development of any one fetal cell line.

⁷ "The Vatican... in 2005, [expected] that Christians' objections would eventually lead to alternative vaccines. Unfortunately, the guidance did little to disrupt the widespread acceptance of vaccines using fetal cell lines. Rather, in 2009, Merck discontinued the separate measles and mumps vaccines, and offered them only as a combination with the rubella vaccine as MMR or MMRV, both of which use fetal cell lines. Yet developing and manufacturing vaccines that do not use fetal cell lines is quite possible. Japanese manufacturers have produced both rubella and hepatitis A vaccines using nonhuman cell sources. However, they are not licensed for use in the United States." Gifford Grobien, "As Long As Vaccines Are Tied To Abortion, Christians Need Exemptions", *The Federalist*. May 6, 2020. <https://thefederalist.com/2020/05/06/as-long-as-vaccines-are-tied-to-abortion-christians-need-exemptions/>; accessed Jan 28, 2024.

If I am sick with the flu, I cannot help displaying the symptoms of it (like being grumpy, vomiting non-stop, etc.). My behaviour is explained by the illness. But that does not mean that I am excused from my acts and words. I am accountable for my words and deeds. The mess of things I make in and by my illness is my fault, my own fault, and no-one else's fault. Sin explains our behaviour but does not excuse it. Yet many Lutherans dismissed or trivialized the topic of the COVID injections saying "it's a grey world. Everything is controversial. We are all by nature hypocrites. If I say no to this vax, what about the others I have taken. What about the ones upcoming? We can't be consistent and must rejoice that we are forgiven. Sin boldly". This is a severely dangerous and unchristian attitude. We complain about the loss of young people in our Church. The youth are watching us. Are we proud of the example that we are setting forth? Repent. And then remember that your loving Saviour is waiting to embrace you with His mercy. Furthermore, there is an unparalleled joy and relief that comes with a heart unburdened by sin.

It takes a lot of work to be Christian today amid an increasingly anti-Christian culture. We are saved by grace, but Jesus never promised an easy ride. He said it would be a bumpy road of suffering and persecution. Picking up your cross and following Jesus includes evaluating the authorities in your life according to the word of God and addressing areas where their messages do not align with the Lord's. Your family doctor is no exception. Besides, he or she is a generalist and not a scientist, and likely not a theologian. So that means that you need to do your own research, and yes there are competing scientific narratives, and power politics and money often determines the "science" that ends up being displayed as authoritative through the mainstream media. It's hard to determine the truth in these latter days when information is no longer free flowing. So, at the very least, remember this: "vaccine hesitancy" is bad for business and there are many things that your family doctor either doesn't know, isn't sharing with you, or isn't concerned about. Don't make him or her into your god and blindly trust his or her decision regarding what you inject into your body. "Your" body is not your body. God made it. It's His. You are a steward over a temple redeemed by Christ. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:19-20). Out of a love and respect for yourself and the unborn, take the time to research, reflect and pray for a mercy that God is more eager to give than we are to receive. God is ready to heal us all. Let's try our best not to get in the way!

Please consider supporting Lutherans for Life-Canada through your prayers and making a financial contribution, or becoming a member. You are then placed on our mailing list and will receive our newsletters and notified of upcoming events.

PLEASE NOTE:

In an effort to curb some of the producing and mailing expenses of the LFL-C newsletters, we are happy to offer it in both formats; online in an e-mail OR a mailed hard copy via Canada Post. Please indicate your preference by providing your email address to the treasurer when you make your next donation or remit your yearly membership. We appreciate your help in this matter. PLEASE ALSO FEEL FREE TO FORWARD AND SHARE WITH OTHERS ON YOUR CONTACT LIST.

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Membership fee renewals are due as of January 2024. Donations and Membership may be made:

- ***electronically via e-transfer - visit our website <https://lutheransforlife-canada.ca/contact/>***
- ***or: via cheque and completing the form on the next page***

Lutherans For Life - Canada



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Eight Objectives of LFL-C are:

1. To provide an organization through which Lutheran Christians can unite to share dialogue and give common witness within the Church and society to their concern for the value and dignity of all human life;
2. To strengthen the existing common bond of concern by bringing Lutherans of like mind into contact with one another;
3. To gather and share pertinent information with its membership and develop strategies for witness and response;
4. To develop and distribute educational materials based upon the Word of God;
5. To identify resource people who can write and speak on behalf of the organization;
6. To monitor public and private action in order to enhance the right to life;
7. To respond to and co-operate with other groups in society who share similar concerns; and
8. To examine and correct popular but misleading stereotypes regarding pro-life advocacy.

To contact LFL-C please email us at: Contact@Lutheransforlife-canada.ca

To order Pro-Life materials: Concordia Publishing House www.cph.org