

LCMS

Frequently Asked Questions

LCMS Views – Life Issues

(To navigate the document, hold down your control key and click the appropriate heading)

Life Issues	2
Abortion	2
Cloning	3
Cremation	4
Euthanasia.....	5
Organ donation	6
Suicide (2 pages)	7
Talking with children about death	9

Life Issues

Abortion

Q: *What is the Missouri Synod's view of abortion?*

A: The LCMS believes that abortion is contrary to God's Word and "is not a moral option, except as a tragically unavoidable byproduct of medical procedures necessary to prevent the death of another human being, viz., the mother" (1979 Res. 3-02A). Official synodical resolutions and other materials on this topic are available from the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations ([CTCR](#)).

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-843-5267 • infocenter@lcms.org • www.lcms.org/faqs



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Cloning

Q: *What is the Synod's position on cloning, whether of an animal or of human beings?*

A: At its 1998 convention, the Synod adopted a resolution in which it "reject[ed] without reservation as contrary to God's Word any technique or method of human cloning that results in the destruction of human embryos or the creation of human embryos for the purposes of fetal tissue research or organ harvesting or transplantation." In the same resolution, the Synod asked its Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to prepare a report "to help the church, on the basis of the Word of God, make informed ethical judgments concerning cloning and attendant issues."

If you haven't already done so, you may want to read the CTCR's report titled, [What Child Is This?: Marriage, Family & Human Cloning](#).

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-843-5267 • infocenter@lcms.org • www.lcms.org/faqs



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Cremation

Q: *What is the Missouri Synod's position on cremation?*

A: The LCMS has no official position on cremation. Cremation is increasing in favor, in part because of space limitations in some cemeteries and because of health considerations. The primary reason for the increase in cremations is economic, however, since it avoids such costs as the purchase of coffins and cemetery plots and substantially lowers the expense of a funeral.

Some Christians continue to oppose cremation, noting that cremation is never referred to positively in the Bible. It is true that early Christians rejected cremation and preferred burial because Jesus Himself was buried and because Greek philosophy looked down on the physical creation and thought that only souls, not bodies, survived death. The Christian burial of bodies was viewed as a way to proclaim the belief that our bodies will be raised from the dead.

In their textbook *Pastoral Theology* (used at our Synod's seminaries), LCMS Pastors Norbert H. Mueller and George Kraus offer this perspective: "Not too long ago, the church viewed cremation negatively. Because the general public associated the practice with heathen religions and/or an attempt to disprove the possibility of the resurrection, Christians were reluctant to consider it. In itself, the practice has no theological significance and may be used in good conscience." Synod's *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, approved by the LCMS in convention, includes an instruction (rubric) for the committal of a person's ashes, encouraging burial or interment and discouraging the scattering of the ashes.

Those Christians facing the death of a loved one or planning their own funerals are always encouraged to consider the opportunity a Christian's funeral offers to give witness to our faith in Jesus Christ's victory over death and His promise of the resurrection of our bodies for eternal life (John 6:40, 44, 54). It is therefore beneficial, as we face such occasions and the decisions they involve, to seek our pastor's support, advice, and counsel regarding the entirety of the funeral, including the question of cremation. However, this is a matter of Christian freedom and no Christian who chooses to have a loved one cremated rather than buried should be led to think that such a decision is sinful or in opposition to the Word of God.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-843-5267 • infocenter@lcms.org • www.lcms.org/faqs



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Euthanasia

Q: *What does the Missouri Synod believe with regard to euthanasia?*

A: At the 1995 synodical convention, the Synod delegates adopted resolution 6-02 titled "To Speak Out against Legalization of Assisted Suicide" (euthanasia) which reads as follows:

Whereas, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod affirms the sanctity of human life and recognizes the reality of human suffering; and

Whereas, Any attempt to legalize assisted suicide is an affront to the Lord, who gives life, and opens the door for abuse and future legislation that would deny the freedom of many; and

Whereas, Suffering and depression are also opportunities for helping, healing, encouragement, and hope through the Gospel; and

Whereas, Physicians in particular have a responsibility to sustain and promote life; and

Whereas, We respect the individual's right to refuse treatment or to forbid life-support systems by a prior directive and to be allowed to die; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention express its objection to medical personnel having any part in actively inducing death, even at the patient's request or at the request of the family; and be it further

Resolved, That the Gospel be applied to situations of suffering and depression as opportunities to help, heal, encourage, and provide hope; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod speak out against any attempt to legalize physician-assisted suicide and encourage its pastors and people to do the same.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-843-5267 • infocenter@lcms.org • www.lcms.org/faqs



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Organ donation

Q: *What is the LCMS position on organ donation? Is there any help on this issue in the Bible?*

A: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod encourages organ donation as an act of Christian love, but this choice is entirely up to the individual and/or his or her family, and should not be a cause of guilt or regret no matter what decision is made. The Bible has nothing specific to say regarding this issue. Therefore, it is a matter of Christian freedom and personal (or family) discretion.

In 1981, the Synod adopted Resolution 8-05: To Encourage Donation of Kidneys and Other Organs as follows:

Whereas, We accept and believe that our Lord Jesus came to give life and to give it abundantly (John 10:10); and

Whereas, Through advances in medical science we are aware that at the time of death some of our organs can be transplanted to alleviate pain and suffering of afflicted human beings (see Gal.6:10); and

Whereas, Our heavenly Father has created us so that we can adequately and safely live with one kidney and can express our love and relive the unnecessary prolonged suffering of our relative; and

Whereas, We have an opportunity to help others out of love for Christ, through the donation of organs; therefore be it

Resolved, That our pastors, teachers, and Directors of Christian Education be encouraged to inform the members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod of the opportunity to sign a Universal Donor Card (which is to authorize the use of our needed organs at the time of death in order to relieve the suffering of individuals requiring organ transplants); and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage family members to become living kidney donors; and be it further Resolved, That the program committees of pastors and teachers conferences be encouraged to include "organ and tissue transplants" as a topic on their agendas; and be it finally Resolved, That the Board of Social Ministry and World Relief seek ways to implement this program so that the entire Synod may join in this opportunity to express Christian concern.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.

Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-843-5267 • infocenter@lcms.org • www.lcms.org/faqs



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Suicide (2 pages)

Q: *What is the LCMS stand on suicide? If a person commits suicide, can his/her funeral be held in the church? Does the LCMS believe that the person is condemned to hell since after suicide there is no way to ask for forgiveness?*

A: The Synod does not have an official position regarding the eternal state of individuals who have committed suicide, though theologians of the Synod have commented from time to time on pastoral questions that often arise in such cases.

Since the spiritual condition of an individual upon death is known only to God, our theologians have proceeded cautiously in making judgments in this regard. LCMS pastor and author Otto E. Sohn, for example, has stated:

"Assuredly we would not wish to judge anyone who resorts to self-destruction. It is impossible for us to plumb the depths of gloom into which even Christian people may sink and irresponsibly lay unholy hands upon themselves. Perhaps the Lord will not hold them responsible, but we do not know." (*What's the Answer*, [CPH](#), 1960, p. 144).

In one of his *Table Talks*, Martin Luther himself commented: "I don't have the opinion that suicides are certainly to be damned. My reason is that they do not wish to kill themselves but are overcome by the power of the devil." Luther goes on, however, to express concern that this statement not be misunderstood or misused in a way that would downplay the danger and seriousness of this sin in the minds of people (*Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 54, p. 29).

With regard to burial services for those who have committed suicide, here again the Synod has no "official position," but entrusts to its pastors the responsibility of making caring and responsible decisions after weighing all of the relevant factors in each individual circumstance. In the book *Pastoral Theology* (ed. by Norbert H. Mueller and George Kraus, CPH, 1990, p. 156), used at our Synod's seminaries, the following counsel is given:

Before consenting to officiate at the funeral of a suicide victim, the pastor will want to make a full inquiry—not so much for a reason to avoid the question of officiating as to find a reason (even if weak) to accept the opportunity. Especially important in such situations is the state of mind of the deceased and whether the deceased was aware of what he/she was doing. Other important factors that need to be evaluated by the pastor along with the congregation's elders are the following:

As in the previous discussion, the service benefits the living and is part of the congregation's witness. Death is especially difficult for the bereaved of the suicide of a loved one. Usually the family feels a tremendous burden of guilt that an excessively judgmental pastor only exacerbates by refusing to officiate. No one can determine with certainty the faith (or lack of it) in another person. People have been heard to say even at the funeral a church member, "If the pastor only knew . . ." On the other hand, when the deceased's ongoing life and the circumstances of his death manifest an absence of faith in Christ, the pastor cannot conduct a Christian burial service which offers the comfort of the hope of salvation for the one who has died. What and how much will the pastor say in his sermon? Would the pastor have to explain away or excuse his participation in the funeral? How clearly can he point to the incarnate Lord who invites all to cast their burdens upon him? Is the family asking/insisting that the service be conducted in the sanctuary, with everything that implies? The pastor, with the congregational elders, will need a mutually-drafted general policy, based on sound theological principles, to govern the funeral for a victim of suicide—a policy that still

will have to be applied to each situation. As the pastor wrestles with any difficult case, he will find it especially helpful to consult with fellow pastors.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-843-5267 • infocenter@lcms.org • www.lcms.org/faqs



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Talking with children about death

Q: *How should I talk with children about the death of a family member and about death in general?*

A: First, it is important to be honest. The Bible presents death as a tragic "reality of life" in a fallen world, and children (like adults) need to know and understand this.

The prospect and reality of death, of course, can be frightening, sad and painful for children as well as for adults. Therefore (secondly) children also need the reassurance of the Gospel message, communicated in clear and simple language that they can understand. They need to know that Jesus himself experienced death on the cross to win victory for us over sin, death and the devil (Romans 4:25; Col. 2:15). He rose triumphantly on Easter morning, and by his resurrection has defeated death forever (1 Corinthians 15). Through his Word and sacraments, he now shares his victory with all who believe (Romans 6:4-5; Luke 22:17-18). All those who trust in Jesus, who are baptized into his death and resurrection, will live forever with him in heaven, where there is no more pain, suffering or death (Rev. 21:1-4). When Jesus comes again, we will be re-united with our Christian loved ones and with all believers to enjoy life in heaven forever with our loving, living Savior (John 11:23-27).

By the power of God's Spirit working through Word and sacrament, children, too, can cling with strong and simple faith to the precious promises God gives us regarding Christ's victory over sin and death (John 11:25-26; John 14:2-3; John 14:19, etc.). Sharing, memorizing and discussing these promises (and singing about them in treasured Easter hymns and songs) are wonderful ways of helping children deal with the death of a family member or with more general concerns about death.

Usage: We urge you to contact an LCMS pastor in your area for more in-depth discussion.
Published by: LCMS Church Information Center

©The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
888-843-5267 • infocenter@lcms.org • www.lcms.org/faqs



[Return to Table of Contents](#)