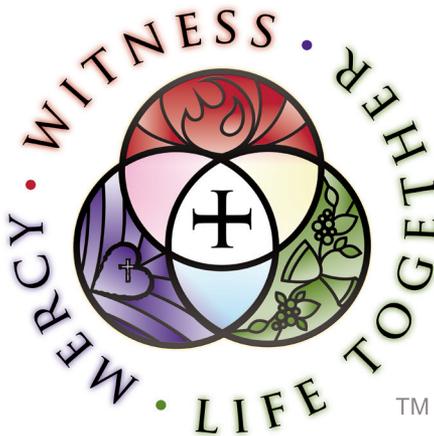


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*A Vigil of Repentance in  
Remembrance of  
the Victims of Abortion*



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INTERNATIONAL CENTER  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

## A VIGIL OF REPENTANCE

*Worshipers enter in silence.*

*The bell(s) may be tolled in memory of the children slain, both unborn and newly born.*

**L** O Lord, open my lips.

**R** and my mouth will declare Your praise.

**L** Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

**R** make haste to help me, O Lord.

**R** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.  
Praise to You, O Christ, Lamb of our salvation.

**L** The Lord be with you.

**R** And also with you.

**L** Let us pray. Gracious Father, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are Your ways higher than our ways and Your thoughts higher than our thoughts. We do not understand the disregard for the work of Your hands and the wanton destruction of human life that has taken place these past years through the atrocity of abortion. But we are not here to understand. We are here to remember. We are not here to understand. We are here to trust in You. Help us remember. Help us trust. In Jesus holy name.

**R** Amen.

## Hymn "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word" LSB 655

1 Lord, keep us stead - fast in Your Word; Curb those who  
 2 Lord Je - sus Christ, Your pow'r make known, For You are  
 3 O Com - fort - er of price - less worth, Send peace and

by de - ceit or sword Would wrest the king - dom from Your  
 Lord of lords a - lone; De - fend Your ho - ly Church that  
 u - ni - ty on earth; Sup - port us in our fi - nal

Son And bring to naught all He has done.  
 we May sing Your praise e - ter - nal - ly.  
 strife And lead us out of death to life.

## Reading

*Exodus 1:15–22*

Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

**L** O Lord, have mercy on us.

**R** Thanks be to God.

## Reading

*Matthew 2:16–18*

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

“A voice was heard in Ramah,  
weeping and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

- L** O Lord, have mercy on us.
- R** Thanks be to God.

## Dialog of Sorrow and Hope

- L** “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”
- R** “For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” (Psalm 43:2)
- L** “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”
- R** “I say to God, my rock: ‘Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’” (Psalm 42:9)
- L** “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”
- R** “My eyes long for your promise; I ask, ‘When will you comfort me?’” (Psalm 119:82)

- L** “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”
- R** “My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!” (Psalm 119:28)
- L** “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)
- R** “Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress.” (Psalm 31:9a)
- L** “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.” (John 16:20)
- R** “My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes.” (Psalm 6:7)
- L** “‘Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work,’ declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 31:16)
- R** “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)
- L** “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isaiah 35:10) “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’” (Revelation 22:20a)
- R** “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20b)

## Hymn

## “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb” LSB 740



1 I am Je - sus' lit - tle lamb, Ev - er glad at  
2 Day by day, at home, a - way, Je - sus is my  
3 Who so hap - py as I am, E - ven now the

heart I am; For my Shep - herd gent - ly guides me,  
staff and stay. When I hun - ger, Je - sus feeds me,  
Shep - herd's lamb? And when my short life is end - ed,

Knows my need and well pro - vides me, Loves me ev - 'ry  
In - to pleas - ant pas - tures leads me; When I thirst, He  
By His an - gel host at - tend - ed, He shall fold me

day the same, E - ven calls me by my name.  
bids me go Where the qui - et wa - ters flow.  
to His breast, There with - in His arms to rest.

## Litany of Remembrance

**L** Millions of babies have been murdered through abortion. This is incomprehensible. Perhaps that is why we do not mourn for them as a nation the way we mourn for children lost in tragic accidents or natural disasters. But let us remember them. Let us remember them as the individuals they were. Let us remember them as gifts from God whose lives were cut short before they could serve Him according to the purpose for which they were created.

*A brief silence is observed after each petition.*

- L** Let us remember the sons and daughters that were never born.  
**R** Little arms that never stretched out asking to be held.

*A brief silence is observed after each petition.*

- L** Let us remember the brothers and sisters who were never able to play with their siblings.  
**R** Their laughter was never heard.
- L** Let us remember the teachers who were never able to teach and the pastors who were never able to preach.  
**R** Wisdom that was never shared.
- L** Let us remember the physicians, nurses, technicians, researchers and other medical professionals through whom God's hand of healing was never able to be extended.  
**R** Mercy that was never shared.
- L** Let us remember business people and courageous leaders who were never able to extend a godly influence upon our nation.  
**R** Godly examples that could never be followed.
- L** Let us remember the farmers who would never reap the fruits of the earth.  
**R** Wholesome, hardworking lives that were never lived.
- L** Let us remember laborers whose hands could never form or craft or build.  
**R** Productive lives that never were.
- L** Let us remember artists and musicians who will never be able to express the joys and the sorrows within them for others to identify with and appreciate.  
**R** Works of art never seen, melodies never heard.
- L** Let us remember little girls who will never hold and nurture a child of their own and little boys who will never grow up to be fathers.  
**R** Generations yet unborn never to be.
- L** Let us remember those children with special needs that will never touch our hearts in ways no one else could.  
**R** God's unique purpose for them never realized.

- L** Let us remember those who would have been born into, “less than desirable circumstances.”
- R** **Opportunities for God to shape and form and do mighty things through suffering—taken away.**
  
- L** Millions—all individuals, all gifts from God, all capable of being used by God for His purpose, all deprived of the first and most fundamental right—the right to life.
- R** **Most tragic of all, individuals for whom Christ died who would never be able to hear of His precious love.**
  
- L** There are other victims of abortion, victims who have not died, but who have been wounded. Let us remember the mothers of aborted children who, in weakness, desperation and fear, listened to the voices of death.
- R** **Lift their hearts to You, O God, that they might know the sin of abortion, lay their burden at the foot of the cross and receive forgiveness and hope in Jesus Christ.**
  
- L** Let us remember the fathers of aborted children who, unwilling or unable to protect a defenseless life, are in conflict with their responsibility to their preborn child, to the mother of that child, and to God.
- R** **Lift their hearts to You, O God, that they might know the sin of abortion, lay their burden at the foot of the cross and receive forgiveness and hope in Jesus Christ.**
  
- L** We remember grandparents of aborted children who, unable or unwilling to protect a defenseless life, are in conflict with both their conscience and God.
- R** **Lift their hearts to You, O God, that they might know the sin of abortion, lay their burden at the foot of the cross and receive forgiveness and hope in Jesus Christ.**

- L** Let us remember the doctors, counselors, and all who have been deceived by Satan to see abortion as a solution to difficult problems of life.
- R** **Lift their hearts to You, O God, that they might know the sin of abortion, lay their burden at the foot of the cross and receive forgiveness and hope in Jesus Christ.**
  
- L** Let us remember ourselves, members of the Body of Christ, who in ignorance or fear have been silent when we should have spoken; passive when we should have acted to defend the “least of these.”
- R** **Lift our hearts to You, O God, that we might know the sin of abortion, lay our burden at the foot of the cross and receive forgiveness and hope in Jesus Christ.**

## Hymn

## “Shepherd of Tender Youth” LSB 864



1 Shep-herd of ten-der youth, Guid-ing in  
2 You are the ho-ly Lord, O all-sub-  
3 You are the great High Priest; You have pre-  
4 O ev-er be our guide, Our shep-herd,  
love and truth Through de-vious ways; Christ, our tri-  
du-ing Word, Heal-er of strife. Your-self You  
pared the feast Of ho-ly love; And in our  
and our pride, Our staff and song. Je-sus, O  
um-phant king, We come Your name to sing  
did a-base That from sin's deep dis-grace  
mor-tal pain None calls on You in vain;  
Christ of God, By Your en-dur-ing Word  
And here our chil-dren bring To join Your praise.  
You so might save our race And give us life.  
Our plea do not dis-dain; Help from a-bove.  
Lead us where You have trod; Make our faith strong.

5 So now, and till we die,  
Sound we Your praises high  
And joyful sing:  
Infants and all the throng,  
Who to the Church belong,  
Unite to swell the song  
To Christ, our king!

## Sermon

## Offering

## A Rite of Hope and Comfort

- L** One of the reasons to remember past tragedy is so that it will not be repeated. One of the reasons to remember tragedy that still continues is so that we can be motivated to bring it to an end. Let us give an offering in memory of those millions of babies. Let us offer ourselves.
- R** **Our Father in heaven, we offer ourselves to You and ask that You use the varied gifts You have given us to serve You in Your Kingdom. Particularly today we ask that You give us the opportunities and the willingness to use our gifts to witness, in word and deed, to the sacredness of life. Help us speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Help us defend those who cannot defend themselves. Help us love and support those facing difficult life choices. Help us love and forgive and bring the healing of the Gospel to those who have made wrong choices. We offer ourselves so that others may see and give glory to You through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**
- L** When filled with grief, we turn to God for comfort and reassurance, which can come only from Him. He does not explain to us why He allows the modern-day slaughter of the innocents in the womb. He does call us in faith, in the midst of the darkness of abortion, to acknowledge Him to be our heavenly Father, who has given us His first and best in Christ Jesus.
- R** **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32)**
- L** Our grief over abortion is compounded because abortion deprives children of the opportunity for Holy Baptism and, therefore, raises painful questions we cannot answer with certainty. We entrust such questions and the hurting hearts which ask them to the infinite compassion and wisdom of our God.
- R** **“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” (Romans 11:33-34)**

**L** Because of what we do not know, our grief is heavy, but we do not grieve as those who have no hope. Our hope lies in what we do know. We know we are loved.

**R** “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” (Jeremiah 31:3b)

**L** We know we are forgiven.

**R** “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

**L** We know we are not forsaken.

**R** “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go.” (Genesis 28:15a)

**L** We know God is always at work for our good.

**R** “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

**L** In God’s love, in God’s forgiveness, in God’s presence, in God’s goodness is our comfort and hope.

**R** “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57)

## Responsive Prayer

**L** Let us pray for our nation, a nation richly blessed by God, but a nation that tragically sanctions the murder of so many children.

**R** **Lord, have mercy upon our nation and change our hearts.**

*A brief silence is observed after each petition.*

**L** Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayers. We pray for the Church, a Church richly blessed by God’s grace, but too often silent as the innocent are being slaughtered.

**R** **Lord, have mercy upon Your Church and change our hearts.**

**L** Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayers. We pray for women and men struggling with a crisis pregnancy.

**R** **Lord, have mercy upon them and help them choose life and help us support them.**

**L** Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayers. Let us pray for mothers and fathers who are suffering the aftermath of an abortion. They, too, are its victims.

**R** **Lord, have mercy upon them and help them find healing in the cross of Jesus and help us share this forgiving love with them.**

**L** Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayers. Let us pray for children, born and unborn.

**R** **Lord, have mercy upon the children and in Your grace bring them to the fullness of life that You have promised in Your Son.**

**L** Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayers. As we remember the children whose lips never had a chance to speak it, we pray the Lord’s prayer.

**R** **Our Father, who art in heaven . . .**

## Candlelight Remembrance

*Candles may be lit in a manner appropriate to the local setting.*

- L** “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.” (Psalm 139:13)
- R** “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4)
- L** Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10b)

## Hymn

### “Jesus Loves Me” LSB 588

1 Je - sus loves me! This I know, For the Bi - ble tells me so.  
2 Je - sus loves me! He who died Heav-en's gates to o - pen wide.

Lit - tle ones to Him be-long; They are weak, but He is strong.  
He has washed a - way my sin, Lets His lit - tle child come in.

*Refrain*  
Yes, Je - sus loves me! Yes, Je - sus loves me!

Yes, Je - sus loves me! The Bi - ble tells me so.

- L** “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

## Benedicamus and Benediction

- L** Let us bless the Lord.
- R** Thanks be to God.
- L** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- R** Amen.

*The bell(s) may be tolled. Lights are turned up.*

*Worshippers may remain in the pews for personal reflection and prayer.*

Adapted from Lutherans for Life's Memorial Service for Victims of Abortion.

### Acknowledgments

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