

ADVOCATING FOR LIFE, SERVING OUR NEIGHBOR

‘We confess that God gives life to all things’

Lutherans march for **LIFE** in D.C.



When asked to describe their experience at March for Life, held Jan. 24 in Washington D.C., many marchers were initially at a loss for words. When they found their voice, they often summed it up in one word – **Epic, Powerful, Encouraging, Rewarding.** And yes – **Exhausting.**

Then they were so excited to share all they saw and heard. It seems they cannot stop talking.

That was how it was for Monica Shannon, Southern Illinois District (SID) Advocates For Life coordinator. Monica and Robin Schultze, SID Life administrator, joined many thousands for the 47th annual march.

Epic is Shannon’s word.

“It’s just so inspiring to be in the middle of so many like-minded people,” Monica said. “There were people there from all walks of life. It wasn’t just Lutherans or even just Christians. There were Atheists for Life, Seculars for Life, Feminists for Life, LGBTQs for Life. It didn’t matter what our theological or other

differences might be. We were able to come together to advocate for the value of all life, including the unborn.”

Monica’s group joined with a Lutherans For Life chapter from Jefferson City, Mo., that has been attending the march for 20 years. The group chartered a bus and drove 12 hours through the night to arrive in the nation’s capital at 5:30 a.m. the day before the march.

The bus driver did a quick drive through the city for the group to see the memorials and buildings lit up in the dark early-morning hour before arriving at the hotel. The group then headed to the March for Life Expo, where participating groups set up booths to share ideas, display information about their

organizations and find and give support and encouragement. March activities also included rallies and conferences.

After a long-awaited night of sleep, the group was up early the morning of the march to attend a Divine Service at Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Alexandria, Va., led by Rev. Christopher Esget, Immanuel senior pastor and LCMS fifth vice-president.

“Only God can give life. Man cannot give life. We can only let live — or not let live,” Pastor Esget said in his sermon. “We have forgotten that we are made. Made by God.

“Today we don’t confess that we are against abortion. We are, of course, but that’s not quite it. Today we don’t confess that we are pro-life. We are, of course, but that’s not quite it, either. Today we confess that God gives life to all things. God makes and we are made. He makes life and we leave alive.”

From there, the marchers made their way to the National Mall for a rally featuring a number of speakers, including President Donald Trump.

“The march is not an angry protest. It’s a very joyful experience. Marchers are not shouting angry slogans. People are singing and praying and hugging each other.”

— Monica Shannon



Austin Meier, a student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., leads participants in hymnody before the March for Life.

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Lutherans walk in the March for Life on Jan. 24 in Washington, D.C.

“We couldn’t actually see the president from where we were, but many were able to watch him on a jumbotron,” Monica said. “There was such a roar of applause from the crowd when he spoke. No matter how you feel about him or his position on other issues, his comments about life at the rally were spot-on.”

The group then began the 1.5-mile march down Constitution Avenue to the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court.

“We didn’t really march,” laughed Shannon. “We walked a few steps, stopped, shuffled, walked, stopped, shuffled. It took us two hours.”

The LCMS group was easy to spot in the crowd. Hundreds of Lutherans wore green stocking hats and carried posters that read “eyesoflife.org” on one side and had hymn lyrics printed on the other. The group sang, prayed and recited the Apostles’ Creed as they walked.

“Other groups around us would cheer us on or join in singing with us,” Monica said. “The march is not an angry protest. It’s a very joyful experience. Marchers are not shouting angry slogans. People are singing and praying and hugging each other. It’s also respectful. We march for the future of the unborn, but also in sadness for the lives already lost to abortion.”

Eyes of Life is an LCMS campaign that gives a platform for members to tell

their own life stories. Its website states, “By sharing their stories through the #eyesoflife campaign, they are boldly giving voice to what millions of others believe as well: that all life, from conception to natural death, is sacred, valued and a gift from God. ... Jesus sees you with eyes of life. Jesus gives us eyes of life to see all life as a gift from God.”

Organizers of the LCMS march effort point out that the group is not there to protest. It is there to confess a faith in the God that gives life and to celebrate the value of human life. The tagline for this year’s group of Lutheran marchers, “Show up. Confess Christ. Be Lutheran,” was meant to encourage the participants throughout the events.

The Southern Illinois District Advocates for Life Team

is actively seeking members within our district to join the effort to advocate for life and serve our neighbor. For more information, contact **Monica** at sidlcmslife@gmail.com or **Robin** at sidlcmslifeadm@gmail.com.

 [facebook.com/sid.lcms.alt](https://www.facebook.com/sid.lcms.alt)

A sizable portion of the participants in the march were young people — children, teens and young adults. Organizers say this demographic has been steadily growing throughout the years.

“The commitment and joy that these young people have, that all the other organizations have, is contagious,” Monica said. “We headed home on another overnight bus trip and you would think we would all be exhausted. And we were. But we were also energized and aglow. But most of us still slept on the way home.”

The first national March for Life was held in 1974, one year following the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion. More than 61 million babies have been aborted since the landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling. The march is held annually near the Jan. 22 anniversary date of the ruling. Other March for Life events are held across the country throughout the year.

This article was written by Cheryl Hemmer. She serves on the district Advocates for Life Team and is a member of Zion, Belleville.

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A night at the movies!

Join your brothers and sisters in Christ to watch the movie “Unplanned,” which tells the story of Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood director who is now a nationally recognized pro-life advocate.

The movie will be shown at 7 p.m. on Friday, April 17, at Zion Lutheran Church, 101 S. Railway in Mascoutah.

Rev. Michael Salemkink, executive director of Lutherans For Life, will be the featured guest speaker. His talk is titled “A Lutheran Reflection.”

For more information, contact Monica at sidlcmslife@gmail.com or 618-580-5573.

“Unplanned” is rated R because of an abortion scene and is not suitable for young children. Parental discretion is advised. Snacks and soft drinks will be provided, and a free-will offering is appreciated to help pay for expenses.