

District student wins national contest

Abigail Clayton, 12, was announced as the national winner of the 2020 Lutherans For Life (LFL) Essay Contest for middle school students. The essay theme was “From Invisible to Indispensable,” based on 1 Cor. 12:22:

On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

Abigail is the daughter of Rev. Kirk and Lori Clayton. Kirk serves as pastor of Zion, Mascoutah.

As the national essay contest winner, Abigail was asked to read her essay at the LFL Conference, held Sept. 26 near Pittsburgh. In addition to reading her essay, Abigail was presented with a certificate by Rev. Michael Salemink, LFL executive director. Pastor Salemink also presented a certificate to Matthew Clayton — Abigail’s brother — who was the Illinois state essay contest winner for high school students.

Abigail titled her essay, “Pray, Protect, and Provide for People with Disabilities.” She wrote:

Muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy... these were the awful words of diagnosis Scott and Joanna heard after a 7-month ultrasound. The year was 2005. Babies like this are often aborted. Would this be the terrible fate of this baby as well? No! This baby, invisible to the world’s eyes, was indispensable in God’s eyes. Zachary’s parents chose life and protected him. Zachary was born with cerebral palsy on March 9, 2005.

On March 7, 2020, two days before Zachary, my neighbor, turned 15, I was privileged to celebrate life at the March on the Arch rally. At this rally, I joyfully marched with many other Lutherans and prayed that abortions would end. I was holding an “Eyes of Life” poster with a picture of the eyes of a child with Down’s syndrome. I chose this poster because it reminded me of my friend, Marley, who has Down’s syndrome. In a lot of ways, she is just like me. Zachary and Marley are both as important as every other human in the body of Christ.



Abigail Clayton, left, was the national winner in the 2020 Lutherans For Life essay contest. At right is Michael Clayton, who was the winner for high school students in Illinois. The siblings are pictured with Rev. Michael Salemink, LFL executive director.

Mary Elizabeth Williams, in her article “So What if Abortion Ends Life,” states “All life is not equal.” The apostle Paul states, “On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable” (1 Cor. 12:22). Unborn babies with disabilities are equal with everyone else because they are created in the image of God. In the body of Christ, people with disabilities provide a special opportunity for us to love, provide for, and care for them. As I watch my neighbors provide for Zachary, I see how they love him and joyfully care for him. When Marley and I played together as children, she brought joy, peace, and love to my life.

Paul also wrote that the body of Christ should not be divided, but everyone should “have the same care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:25). In the body of Christ we are to protect those who have disabilities, and care for them. We are called to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, and care for those who cannot care for themselves.

Ever since Zachary and Marley were conceived, their parents have been praying, protecting, and providing for them. God creates each person uniquely, we are indispensable to Him. God calls us to pray, protect, and provide for His precious creations.



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Unplanned pregnancy

Good or bad news?

By Robin Schultze
Southern Illinois District
Advocates for Life
Administrator



Is an unplanned pregnancy bad news? Not necessarily. Often an unplanned pregnancy leads to good news, because unplanned does not necessarily mean unwanted.

Take for example, Bob and Mona. They married in 1951 and like many young couples, they wanted children. But six years, three pregnancies and tragically three miscarriages later, they were heartbroken. They resolved that the love God gifted them for one another would have to be enough.

Then God answered their prayers for a family with an unplanned pregnancy. Along came a little girl, and another little girl, and finally hoping for a boy, a third little girl was born. At that point, Bob and Mona stopped trying to have any more children. After all, God had blessed them mightily.

But as we know, God's plans are not our plans and He was not yet finished with the family. Much to their surprise, Mona was pregnant again. This time with an "oops" baby — unplanned. The very busy parents were thrilled! But they wondered how they would provide for four little children in a small house, one employed parent, a loaner car and living on a shoestring. Yes, this was an unplanned pregnancy, but certainly not unwanted.

When the big day finally arrived, the little one was a boy! Imagine Bob and Mona's surprise and joy. And the three little girls, ages seven, five and two had their prayers answered for a little brother. God answered the family's prayers in His own way, on His own timeline and through an unplanned pregnancy.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Your Son bore all our griefs and carried all our sorrow. Strengthen the faith of parents of children who were miscarried or stillborn and all who bear this heavy burden of sorrow and loss. Help them to rely on Your boundless mercy and to trust that their child, who has been gathered into Your loving arms, remains in Your abiding care; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Collect for the Parents of a Stillborn Child, Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*)

Now ponder Melissa, a young teen who is pregnant out of wedlock. And if the shame of that isn't enough, the father, Jeffrey, isn't even her boyfriend. She is not from a wealthy family and doesn't know what to do.

In today's culture we are not really surprised by unwed teens getting pregnant. However, it is often still a scandal, fraught with confusion, tears and threatening behavior. Jeffrey doesn't want to step up and help Melissa and her baby. He didn't have anything to do with this mess. He doesn't want to be responsible for any of the consequences.

But all children are gifts from God. We are taught that every life is precious in His eyes. But really, how can Melissa manage her young teen life and all her plans for the future? What do you do with a teenager whose unplanned pregnancy is unwanted?

After praying about this situation, Melissa and Jeffrey, with the support of their parents, decided to get married and keep the baby. Their circumstances caused them to realize they had both strayed from God. With the help of the Holy Spirit, they returned to church and are raising their little boy, surrounded by people who love him. Their little boy, their precious Joshua, was baptized shortly after he was born. He's now a rambunctious preschooler who knows the love of his Savior Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of children, no matter how or when they are conceived. Lead women with unplanned pregnancies to cherish the life you have given them and guide them to a course of action that will not only allow the child to live, but to enjoy life eternal. Amen

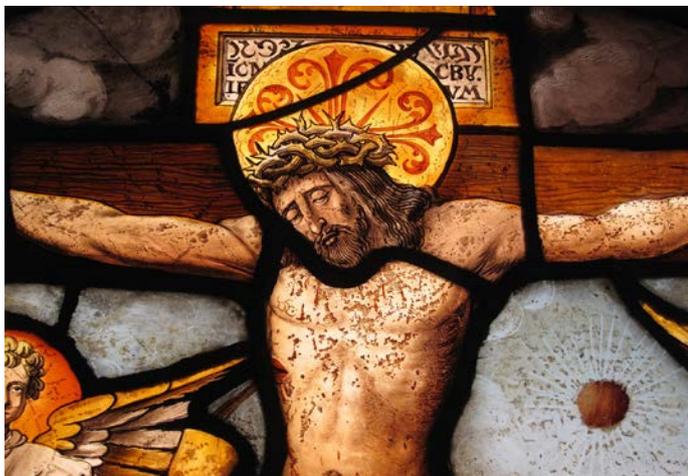
A final example of an unplanned pregnancy is illustrated in the mother of our Savior Jesus. Mary was a young, unmarried virgin, betrothed to Joseph when the angel Gabriel told her she is going to be the mother of the Son of God. Her pregnancy could have been a scandal for Joseph. He considered to quietly divorce Mary so she would not be put to shame.

But an angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream to have no fear and take Mary as his wife. The child conceived in Mary was from the Holy Spirit and was to be named Him Jesus.

Try to imagine our lives without the most miraculous unplanned pregnancy in the history of the world. This unplanned pregnancy was God's plan to save us from our sins. Though we cannot choose how God works, we have the assurance that our hope will not put us to shame. That single unplanned pregnancy became the most precious gift God ever gave us, the best Good News ever — Jesus Christ our Savior.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, before we were formed in the womb, You knew us. While we were still yet in the womb, You knit us together, fearfully and wonderfully forming us. Thank You for continuing Your miracle of creation

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MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

The forerunner of Jesus is a boy conceived by aged Zechariah in his childless wife Elizabeth. The Lord Himself would enter His world through the Virgin Mary. He would be conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit. Both women were unlikely candidates to bear a child. Mary was young and unwed. Elizabeth was old and childless.

It's good that this happened 2,000 years ago. Family and friends in 2020 might have counseled both women to have an abortion. The Lord chooses the weak things, and the things that are not, to shame the strong and humble the arrogant. Jesus came in quiet humility. If it were not for the angels announcing this to the shepherds it might have passed without fanfare of any kind.

Jesus comes in humbleness. He assumed human flesh at conception. His body developed in the natural way. He assumes our nature from conception to physical death. Jesus lives in resurrected glory. His glorified body is the first fruit of resurrected flesh that we will enjoy on the Last Day.

Jesus came in human flesh to take your sins into Himself. He spoke, He touched and people in human flesh were given sight, heard and spoke for the first time. The lame walked and at least three rose from death to life. Jesus continues to touch our lives and our senses through the Word, which is heard, spoken, read and meditated upon. The baptized hears the Word and feels the water poured upon them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper involves all five senses as the Lord enters into our frail, broken and sinful bodies. He comes bringing forgiveness, comfort, peace and life everlasting.

Those who want shock and awe will not be disappointed. On the Last Day, the trumpet will sound, the sun, moon and stars will give way to their creator. Every eye will see the glorified Jesus in His eternal, divine majesty. Emmanuel will remain eternally visible. He will be with His own forever. The problem is that repentance will no longer be possible. Today is the day of salvation. This is the time for repentance and forgiveness. Christmas is a celebration of Him who is with us, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Call Information

TRANSFERS INTO THE DISTRICT

- ▶ Rev. Lyle Buettner, pastor, St. Paul, New Athens, and Trinity, Darmstadt, June 7
- ▶ Hannah Zernicke, teacher, Trinity, Hoyleton, July 26.
- ▶ Rev. Joseph Nehring, pastor, Trinity, Harvel, July 19.
- ▶ Rev. Clifford Adair, July 20.
- ▶ Rev. Dr. Albert Collver III, pastor, St. Paul's, Troy, Aug. 31.

TRANSFERS OUT OF THE DISTRICT

- ▶ Rev. Josemon Hoem, to Indiana District, July 19.
- ▶ Kristin Hoem, to Indiana District, Aug. 15.
- ▶ Taylor Schimdt, to Michigan District, July 1.
- ▶ Rev. Daniel Speckhard, to Indiana District, Aug. 24.
- ▶ Rev. Brett Simek, to South Wisconsin District, Aug. 26.
- ▶ Rev. Aaron Kotila, to Oklahoma District, Aug. 26.
- ▶ Rev. Josepha Lecke to Florida-Georgia District, Sept. 1.
- ▶ Rev. Anthony DiLiberto, to Pacific Southwest District, Sept. 8.

CHANGES IN THE DISTRICT

- ▶ Rev. Russell Koen, emeritus, July 1
- ▶ Rev. Timothy Scharr, assistant pastor, Messiah, Carlyle, Sept. 9

CALLED TO GLORY

- ▶ Rev. E James (Jim) Rivett, July 8.



LIFE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

through the life of Jesus that You granted in Mary's womb. Open the eyes of all that we many understand the miracle You are working in the wombs of mothers, even though their pregnancies may be unplanned. Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit to love and cherish every one of these lives, even as You love and cherish us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen