

# THE LINK

## Life, Death, and Ethical Dilemmas for the Christian

Dear fellow redeemed,

As the Church prepares to celebrate Christ's (and our) victory over death and the grave, it is a good opportunity to address some current issues that deal with death and life.

Covid-19 has given us many things to talk about. Fear of disease and death, trust in God's loving care for us, love for our neighbor, the promise of the resurrection of the body and everlasting life after death in Christ, to name a few. It has also perked the church's interest on some questions regarding Christian ethics. Is it right or ethical for the government to tell Christians that they cannot gather for worship in the time of a pandemic? What is the Christian's responsibility when it comes to obeying laws and mandates? Is absolute obedience required, even when something goes against our conscience? Over the past year many of us have been discussing these things, meeting together, and trying to grapple with the question of what it means to be a Christian who values life, honors and respects our God-given authorities, and believes in the principal of religious liberty.

Our world looks a lot different than it did a year ago. Because of operation "Warp Speed" we have multiple vaccines available to the public. There has been a race to come up with a vaccine that will bring an end to Covid-19 and enable the world to return to some sense of normalcy. One wonders if that is not a false hope. Even with the so-called vaccines available, we continue to be told to wear masks and adhere to social distancing guidelines. We continue to be told to "follow the science," as if "the science" was some monolithic, set-in-stone thing. Science is good but it is also somewhat subjective. There are plenty of medical professionals, scientists, and ethicists who do not think that everything that is being done is necessary or even beneficial to our health. These men and women are not being given a public voice because it would go against the popular narrative regarding Covid-19 mitigation efforts.



With Covid-19 vaccines come several ethical dilemmas for Christians. The biggest one has to do with the use of fetal cells from aborted babies in the development, testing, and manufacturing of the vaccines. Many years ago, a child was aborted, put to death in its mother's womb. Stem cell lines from

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IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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this aborted child were preserved in laboratories and used for research. According to Dr. Gifford Grobien, who teaches at the seminary in Fort Wayne, IN, "So far no authorized vaccine or those in Phase 3 trials have avoided using fetal tissue cell strains in some way."

Dr. Grobien notes that some of the vaccines (Pfizer and Novovax) do not use fetal tissue cell strains for manufacture and do not contain fetal cell strains but did use the HEK-293 fetal cell strain for confirmatory testing. Others, like Johnson and Johnson and AstraZeneca used fetal tissue cell strains in their manufacture, that is, as hosts for the antigen. The Moderna vaccine does not use a fetal cell strain for manufacture but relied on fetal cell strains for its development.

A promising alternative to these quickly developed vaccines is the John Paul II Medical Research Institute in Coralville, IA. They are currently working on a vaccine that does not use aborted fetal cell strains. Needless to say, the use of fetal cell strains of aborted babies in the development and production of a vaccine should be a cause of concern for Christians who value life from the womb to the grave. The John Paul II Medical Research Institute has produced a number of short videos that address the ethical concerns and scientific shortcomings of the "warp speed" vaccines that may answer some of your questions. Here are two: <https://www.jp2mri.org/addressing-operation-warp-speed> (7 min.); <https://www.jp2mri.org/ethical-and-cutting-edge-covid19> (6-1/2 min.)

The point in bringing these concerns up is not to burden the consciences of those who have already received the vaccines or are soon to receive them. The desire to inoculate oneself against a nasty virus like Covid-19 is certainly understandable, especially if you are at high risk for it. But you should know that we live in a world today that is not opposed to using the death of one person to prolong the lives of others. It should at least make us ask the question, "Is this ethical?" Just because something can be done, does this mean that it necessarily should be done?

There is much more that could and will be said about this. The jury is still out on the long-term safety and effectiveness of these vaccines. Some have raised concerns about their effects on the fertility of both women and men. I understand the desire to get vaccinated as soon as possible. As a pastor, it will undoubtedly make it easier to get into medical care facilities. It will make travel less restrictive. But I encourage you to be wise and to consider the ethical ramifications of using stem cell lines of aborted babies in the development of vaccines. Let us do our due diligence and be patient. Thankfully, the recovery rate for Covid-19 is extremely high (99%

according to the latest data at the CDC website). Additionally, there are effective therapies and treatments for this virus. This time last year we were not able to gather in full for Easter. Now, we look forward to this on April 4. For those who would like more information on this, I encourage you to read the statement by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on these vaccines, which can be found at <https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=uAzxHzE5YwadsTdVePS8cLWxAvHqFuwP>. Also, consider the following remarks from Dr. Gifford Grobien at Concordia Theological Seminary:

*Any decision to receive the vaccine should be done with the full awareness of the extent to which fetal tissue cell strains were used, and that there is not adequate data to answer safety concerns.*

*Some populations at high risk for complications or death from COVID-19 may choose to receive the Pfizer vaccine, or, when available, the Novovax vaccine. Due to their use of fetal tissue cell strains in manufacture, the AstraZeneca and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccines should be avoided. The Moderna vaccine, likewise, due to its heavy dependence on fetal tissue cell strains for development, should be avoided, especially with other options available.*

*I would warn women still capable of bearing children and without risk factors for COVID-19 against taking the vaccine. Women with risk factors for COVID, but still capable of bearing children, should consider their options conscientiously. Some men who are concerned about their fertility have ground for concern about the disease itself. However, if this is shown to be a real result of the disease, the vaccine itself could also have the same effect.*

*Those with allergies to ingredients should not take the vaccine, and those with a history of anaphylactic reactions should consider the benefits and risks of the vaccine in more detail. Whatever the choice, it should be supported when made conscientiously, considering the ethical sourcing of the vaccine, possible adverse reactions, and one's specific responsibilities and circumstances.*

I look forward to celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord with all of you very soon in a way that we were not able to last year. I also look forward to further discussions with you about all issues surrounding death and life, Christian ethics, and how Christ's victory over death and the grave impacts the choices we make regarding our health this side of the grave. God bless you all!

In Christ,  
Pastor Beisel



**A scared world needs a fearless Church.**

A.W. Tozer

# HOLY WEEK AT IMMANUEL

*Return to the  
Lord your God*

## **HOLY TUESDAY**

Matins with the Great Litany (8:30 a.m.)

## **HOLY (MAUNDAY) THURSDAY**

Matins with the Great Litany (8:30 a.m.)  
Divine Service with Stripping of the Altar (7:00 p.m.)  
"Return to the Table"

## **GOOD FRIDAY**

Vespers (7:00 p.m.)  
"Return to Truth"

## **HOLY SATURDAY**

**EASTER VIGIL** (7:30 p.m.)  
"Return to the Church"

## **THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD**

Easter Sunrise Divine Service (6:30 a.m.)  
Easter Day Service (10:00 a.m.)  
"Return and See"

## **EASTER BREAKFAST** (7:45 a.m.)

(The proceeds from your free-will offering will be used to help purchase new furnaces.)

If you would like to donate a coffee cake (9x13 pan) or one dozen muffins for the Easter breakfast, please add your name to the sign-up sheet on the kitchen counter. The breakfast team says "Thank you!"

## **CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL**

(pre-school through 8th grade) immediately following breakfast. Please meet at the front of the church.



### **PLEASE REMEMBER OUR HOME-BOUND & SHUT-IN MEMBERS**

#### **SCENIC MANOR:**

Mavis Klein,  
Dorothy Barhite

#### **HERITAGE:**

Helen Neubauer,  
Muriel Muessigmann,  
Audrey Fleener

#### **AT HOME IN IOWA FALLS:**

Gary & Sharon Groff,  
LaVelle Richmann

#### **OUT OF TOWN:**

Vera Duit, 306 4th St., Williams 50271;  
Alice Herrold, c/o Linda Nelson,  
7599 E. 25th Place, Yuma, AZ., 85365; and  
Margaret Fuhrman, c/o The Woodmoore,  
1200 W. Russell Ave. Apt 131, Bonham, TX., 75418



# I AM BAPTIZED! WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Baptism is like Christ Jesus winning salvation on the Cross. We don't do it. He does. It is not our work. It is His.

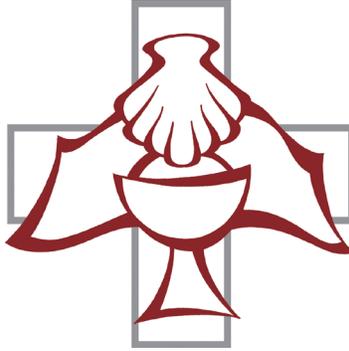
## What does your Baptism say to you and about you?

St. Paul says: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying." [Titus 3:5-8 NIV]

St. Paul writes: "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." [Romans 6:4 NIV]

## What is Baptism?

Let us not doubt that Baptism is divine. It is not made up or invented by people. . . . Baptism is no human plaything, but it is instituted by God Himself. Furthermore, Baptism is most solemnly and strictly commanded so that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved. . . . It is of the greatest importance that we value Baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted. We contend and fight for Baptism chiefly because the world is now so full of sects arguing that Baptism is an outward thing and that outward things are of no benefit. But let Baptism be a thoroughly outward thing. Here stand God's Word and command, which institute, establish, and confirm Baptism. What God institutes and commands cannot be an empty thing. It must be a most precious thing, even though it looked like it had less value than straw. [Large Catechism IV 6-9]



To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by men, but by God Himself. Therefore, although it is performed by human hands, it is still truly God's own work. From this fact everyone may readily conclude that Baptism is a far higher work than any work performed by a man

or a saint. For what work can we do that is greater than God's work? [Large Catechism IV 10]

From this now learn a proper understanding of what Baptism is. It is not mere ordinary water, but water comprehended in God's Word and command and sanctified by them [Ephesians 5:26-27]. So it is nothing other than a divine water. Not that the water itself is nobler than other water, but that God's Word and command are added to it. [Large Catechism IV 14]

## What benefits does Baptism give?

We cannot find a better [answer] than Christ's words: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" [Mark 16:16]. The power, work, profit, fruit and purpose of Baptism is this--to save [1 Peter 3:21]. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but, as the words say, that he "be saved." We know that to be saved is nothing other than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil [Colossians 1:13-14]. It means to enter into Christ's kingdom [John 3:5], and to live with Him forever. [Large Catechism IV 23-25]

Here you see again how highly and precious we should value Baptism, because in it we receive such an unspeakable treasure. This also proves that it cannot be ordinary, mere water. For mere water could not do such a thing. But the word does it and . . . so does the fact that God's name

is included in Baptism. Where God's name is, there must also be life and salvation [Psalm 54:1]. So Baptism may certainly be called a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water. Such power is given to Baptism by the Word that is a washing of new birth, as St. Paul also calls it in Titus 3:5. [Large Catechism IV 26-27]

### **How can water do such great things?**

In the water is God's Word or command and God's name. His name is a treasure greater and nobler than heaven and earth. . . . Baptism is quite a different thing from all other water. This is not because of its natural quality but because something more noble is added here, God Himself stakes His honor, His power, and His might on it. . . . It has, and is able to do, all that God is and can do [Isaiah 55:10-11]. In this way it also gets its essence as a Sacrament, as St. Augustine also taught, "When the Word is joined to the element or natural substance, it becomes a Sacrament," that is, a holy and divine matter and sign. [Large Catechism IV 16-18]

You must honor Baptism and consider it glorious because of the Word. For God Himself has honored it both by words and deeds. Furthermore, He has confirmed it with miracles from heaven. *Do you think that it was a joke that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and everything was divine glory and majesty* [Luke 3:21-22]? [Large Catechism IV 21]

### **What does such baptizing with water signify?**

[Under the water] is nothing other than putting to death the old Adam and affecting the new man's resurrection after that [Romans 6:4-6]. Both of these things

must take place in us all our lives. So a truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. . . . Without ceasing . . . we always keep purging away whatever belongs to the old Adam. Then what belongs to the new man may come forth. But what is the old man? It is what is born in human beings from Adam: anger, hate, envy, unchastity, stinginess, laziness, arrogance--yes, unbelief. The old man is infected with all vices and has by nature nothing good in him [Romans 7:18]. Now, when we have come into Christ's kingdom [John 3:5], these things must daily decrease. The longer we live the more we become gentle, patient, meek, and ever turn away from unbelief, greed, hatred, envy, and arrogance. [Large Catechism IV 65]

You see plainly that this is no work done here by us, but a treasure, which God gives us and faith grasps [Ephesians 2:8-9]. It is like the benefit of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, which is not a work, but a treasure included in the Word. It is offered to us and received by faith. [Large Catechism IV 37]

**Do you think that it was a joke that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended visibly?**

When our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say, "Nevertheless, I am baptized. And if I am baptized, it is promised to me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." [Large Catechism IV 44]

Martin Luther said, "What a great and wondrous thing is Baptism! It delivers us from the devil's jaws, and makes us God's own. It suppresses and takes away sin and then daily strengthens us as new men. It is always working--until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory." [Large Catechism IV 83]

From *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, 110-125

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

- 2 Lysle Macdonald
- 5 Scott Patton
- 7 Sam Off
- 8 Janice Harless  
Levi Thomas  
Ruth Kloetzer
- 11 Lois Mumm  
Brad Schutt
- 12 Bill Hanson
- 15 Jackie Schutt
- 16 Ron Baumann  
Lyman Olsen
- 17 Brian Doering
- 20 Mavis Klein
- 21 Erica Rodamaker
- 26 Dorothy Barhite  
Sandy Lettow
- 27 Linda Balvanz  
Sydney Holland  
Brody Pieper
- 28 Kyler Patton

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**

- 2 Steve & Jo-Ann Barhite
- 5 Dave & Nicki Smith
- 9 Dave & Amy Kloetzer  
Grant & Jennifer Nelson
- 18 Lysle & Trisha Macdonald
- 22 Norman & Dorothy Fiddelke
- 27 Bruce & Charisse Off



**LWML**

**Assignments**

**Altar:** Sharon Henson, Rosie Neubauer

**Flowers:** Rosie Neubauer

**Coffee:** Rosie Neubauer

**Rebekah Circle**

**Thursday, April 1, 1:30**

Hostess: Ann Hanson

Topic: Rosie Neubauer

**Videotapers**

- 4 Jaden Bartlett
- 11 Chris Wieting
- 18 Paul Bartlett
- 25 Steve Barhite

**Video Showing**

- 4 Lance Barhite
- 11 Gordy Lubbers
- 18 Earl Fey
- 25 Dennis Neubauer

**Elder:** Paul Bartlett

**GREETERS**

- 4 Easter
- 11 Confirmand  
Andrew Bartlett
- 18 CJ Doering family
- 25 Lance & Kelsey Barhite family

**Welcomers**

Jim & Brenda Stotser  
Scott & Margaret Wosepka

**ACOLYTES**

- 1 Kyler Patton
- 2 Will Hofmeister
- 4 6:30  
Collyn Hofmeister  
*acolyte/torchbearer*  
Andrew Bartlett  
*Crucifer*  
Zach Rodamaker *torch*
- 10:00  
Theo Beisel  
*acolyte/torchbearer*  
Ben Hoekstra  
*Crucifer*  
Collin Pieper  
*torchbearer*
- 11 Jackson Wieting  
*acolyte/torchbearer*  
Will Hofmeister  
*Crucifer*  
Collin Pieper *torch*
- 18 Zach Rodamaker  
*acolyte/torchbearer*  
Ben Hoekstra  
*Crucifer*  
Kyler Patton  
*torchbearer*
- 25 Collyn Hofmeister  
*acolyte/torchbearer*  
Andrew Bartlett  
*Crucifer*  
Theo Beisel  
*torchbearer*



I am the  
resurrection  
and the life.  
He who believes  
in me will live,  
even though  
he dies;  
and whoever  
lives and  
believes in  
Me will  
never die.

JOHN 11:25-26