

# Leaders 4Life – December 2022

*A newsletter from Y4Life*

## Even in Darkness

by Michelle Bauman, Director of Y4Life

It's dark as I write this article, and it will likely be darker still when you read it. The coming of winter means the absence of light, and winter is definitely coming. In southern Indiana, we've felt a chill that's often reserved for weeks, if not months, from now. Winter is at our doorstep; the days are getting shorter and colder as we lean away from the sun.

Despite my love of daylight, I readily admit that darkness and the close of day resonate with good gifts—gifts like the comforts of home and family, freshly bathed children snuggling in for a story, evening devotions and bedtime prayers. Darkness is a gift that gives us the opportunity to rest and reset, a gift that prepares us for a new day and the work to come.

Yet, darkness reminds us of other realities too, of moments that are much less comforting. Perhaps it brings to mind nights spent in fervent prayer over a sick child or elderly loved one. Perhaps it harkens back to restless hours filled with worries and fears, loneliness and nightmares that kept us from the peace we had hoped for.



Darkness often carries with it a negative connotation. This was true in biblical times, and it is still true today. From the idioms and allusions we use in daily conversation to the eerie music playing in the background of movie scenes filmed at night, we know darkness has the potential to bring disorder, destruction, and even death.

And if we've read our Bible, we know that dark days and dark nights are coming.

**“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars,” Jesus declares. “See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake”** (Matthew 24:6-9).

Jesus speaks of dark times to be certain, end times. And we are living in them. Yet, God’s Word to us brings comfort and life:

**“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33).

*Even more reassuring? Romans 8:39 reminds us that nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

But what about our own lives? Like the transition into winter, we have dark seasons in our lives too—seasons full of sickness and suffering, periods of difficulty, loss, and grief. Sometimes those seasons befall us through no fault of our own; they are simply the result of sin and suffering in the world. And sometimes these seasons come because we, like the earth itself, are leaning away from the Son.

The Psalmist in Psalm 41 is clearly experiencing a dark season of sickness and suffering. Gravely ill, the Psalmist records the reactions of others:

**“My enemies say of me in malice, ‘When will he die, and his name perish?’ ... All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. They say, ‘A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies’”** (41:5,7-8).

To make dark matters even worse, it seems his close friend has also betrayed him. (41:9) Yet, despite these dark times, God’s Word speaks life and truth. The Psalmist declares his hope as he clings to the light of Christ.

**“In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the Lord protects him and keeps him alive”** (41:1b-2a).

How can he declare this truth so boldly? Because he knows that even in darkness, we are blessed For Life.

The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh are at work to turn us toward the darkness, but we were made for light and life. God’s Word and Sacraments cast darkness aside in our lives; they draw us closer to Him and make us strong unto salvation. May we, like the Psalmist, cling to the promises of Christ. May we recognize that we are blessed For Life even when we are surrounded by darkness, and may we in our darkest seasons, through the work of the Holy Spirit, lean toward the Son for light and for hope.

**“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen”** (Psalm 41:13).

## Bracelets

by Grace MacPherson

Four hundred ninety-eight, four hundred ninety-nine, five hundred! I laid aside the most recent bundle of twenty-five bracelets, finally one-sixth of the way to reaching my goal—making three thousand bracelets to represent the three thousand babies who lose their lives to abortion each day in the United States alone. Like every baby, each bracelet made in this project is unique. The bracelets are handwoven out of raffia by volunteers—so far, twenty volunteers from four states. Each bracelet has a single bead, which is the size of a baby seven weeks after conception. Tiny though the beads are, a baby this size already has a brain, a spinal cord, facial features, arms, and legs.

But how did I end up on this journey? Sometime last October, when we were lying awake in our room, my sister said to me, “Three thousand babies are aborted each day.” We hadn’t been talking about abortion or prolife issues before that, but she had paged through our homeschool history textbook earlier that day and had seen the statistic. I had heard that number before, but it struck me in a new way to hear it late at night as I was beginning to fall asleep. Suddenly, I was wide awake, and ideas were churning through my head. There are things in the world that I know I can’t fix, but I felt compelled to at least try to do something about this: I could make and distribute simple bracelets. The next morning, I told my mom about my idea. She was supportive but pointed out that my sister and I were preparing to volunteer at our local historical reenactment festival later that week. A big project like this was going to have to wait, and it wasn’t until the following spring that I really began work on it.



There is a lot that I hope to accomplish with this project. One of my main goals is simply to create more awareness about the magnitude of abortion. While people may have heard the statistic that three thousand babies are aborted each day, they might not realize what a huge number that actually is. (I didn’t until I started making that many bracelets by hand!) The bracelets are distributed with postcards that explain this project and request a donation to our local prolife clinic. These postcards are numbered 1 to 3,000, making this number more personal to the people who receive these bracelets.

Another goal I have with this project is to offer people a practical way to help. While someone may want to help prevent abortion, he or she might not know how to go about doing so. Those who are able to can help make the bracelets. For those receiving the bracelets, the postcards offer an easy way to donate to the prolife cause. I also hope that the bracelets will be able to start many conversations about the sanctity of life.

My final—and highest—goal is to share the message of forgiveness we all have in Christ, even those who have participated in the deaths of the unborn. I don’t just believe that life is precious—I believe it is precious for a very specific reason. God created life and made humans in His own image. We have fallen from this image, but He sent His own Son as a baby—yes, who once was the size of that bead when He was in Mary’s womb—to live and die for our forgiveness. This message is included on the postcards that will be

distributed with the bracelets. I hope and pray that all who see it will come to believe that their sins are forgiven by Jesus' death and resurrection.

I still have a long way to go on this project, but I haven't lost enthusiasm yet. There have been moments when I found myself frustrated at the prospect of having to measure out and cut raffia ... 2,500 more times ... but I have never regretted beginning, and I look forward to the day when I can see this project through to its end: two thousand nine hundred ninety-eight, two thousand nine hundred ninety-nine, three thousand!

For more information or to support this project, please visit:

**[www.intoyourhandsllc.com/bracelets-for-life](http://www.intoyourhandsllc.com/bracelets-for-life)**



# LFL National Essay Contest Winners

Each year the LFL Council of Federation Presidents sponsors a national essay contest for students in two categories. One category includes students in grades 6-8 and the other in grades 9-12. Students in the Federation states and all other Non-Federation states are eligible to participate. After all of the states have submitted their winners, a national committee selects one winner to be the National Essay winner in each category. The essay contest rules for 2023 will be published shortly. You will find them on the State Federation webpage on the LFL website. For a student to qualify, they must either belong to a Lutheran church or attend a Lutheran school.

## LFL National Essay Winners



**Alyssa Bivens**

2022 National Essay Winner – Grades 6-8

Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Collinsville, Illinois  
Illinois First Place

Essay Title: *The Blessing of Life*

Alyssa Bivens is currently a freshman at Metro East Lutheran High School in Edwardsville, Illinois. She was recently valedictorian of her eighth grade class at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Collinsville, Illinois, and has been published in three poetry volumes. Alyssa enjoys playing soccer and deer hunting in her free time.



**Grace MacPherson**

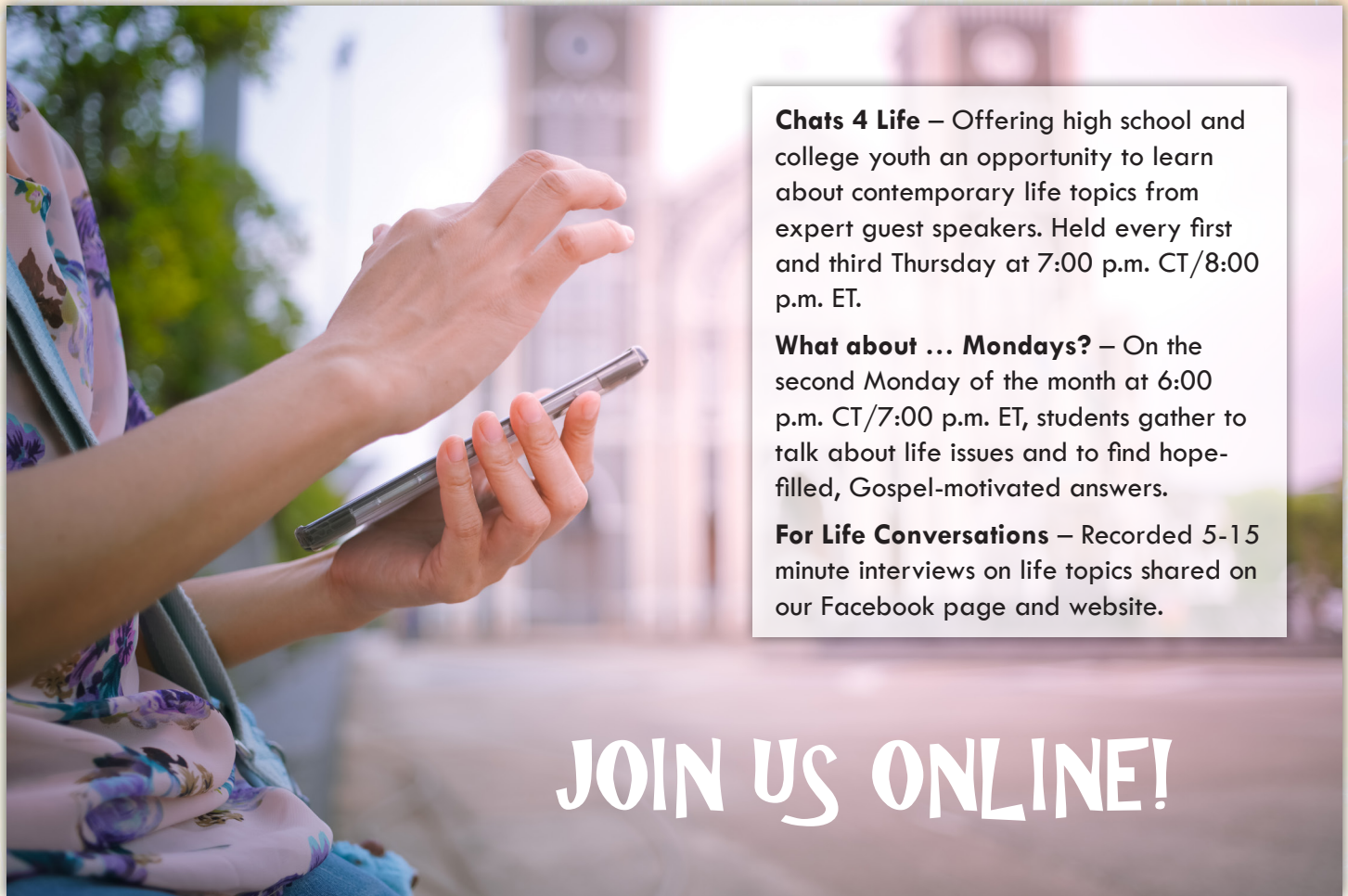
2022 National Essay Winner – Grades 9-12

Homeschool Educated

Minnesota First Place

Essay Title: *Blessed*

Grace Emma MacPherson lives in Mankato, Minnesota, and is 16 years old. Until this year, she has been home educated, but thanks to the post-secondary education option in Minnesota, Grace is now completing her first semester at Bethany Lutheran College as a junior in high school. Grace enjoys the flute and plays the organ. She constantly analyzes the grammar around her and carries a dictionary, just in case! She is the author of *The King's Sword*, her first publication. Grace is the beloved biggest sister to six siblings, precious daughter to Ryan and Marie, and God's own child, through faith in Christ.



**Chats 4 Life** – Offering high school and college youth an opportunity to learn about contemporary life topics from expert guest speakers. Held every first and third Thursday at 7:00 p.m. CT/8:00 p.m. ET.

**What about ... Mondays?** – On the second Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. CT/7:00 p.m. ET, students gather to talk about life issues and to find hope-filled, Gospel-motivated answers.

**For Life Conversations** – Recorded 5-15 minute interviews on life topics shared on our Facebook page and website.

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