

AFFIRMING LIFE

ROCKY MOUNTAIN DISTRICT LCMS

Three Ways to Honor Life at Its End

"I find myself again sitting at the bedside of a beloved brother in Christ, who is struggling during his last days on this side of heaven. He is not struggling the way you might think. This is a man who is happy and confident in his faith and trusts that when he breathes his last, he will see his Savior face to face. He trusts and believes with the psalmist when he confesses, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil." This dying man's struggle is instead about how now he cannot serve in the ways he has become accustomed and finds this state-of-being useless and unnecessary. Why not just skip to the ending? Why prolong the inevitable?"

This is the moment as a pastor that I have the opportunity to bring God's Word to bare in honoring life, even at its end. Here are three ways, as Christians, we can honor life in its end.

One, how we speak about our frail, failing life. It is too easy to become far too pragmatic about failing health and look toward the inevitable. We must fight to always speak about our life in such a way as to acknowledge it is not our own. Romans 14:8 says, "If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." Our life is not our own. We are the Lord's, who is the giver of life and salvation. Using this language helps us to fight the temptation of control. We are not in control, and that can be a

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scary thought for many. Let us put our confidence in the One who actually has control and let our language reflect that confidence. After all, the One who has all control gave His life for you.

Two, how we make medical choices during times of failing health and imminent death. As we are taught in the explanation of the 5th commandment, we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need. This applies to every physical body, even our own. As we make choices, especially in times when medicine has become so advanced, it can be hard to discern when we are or aren't following the 5th commandment. As a general rule, "always care, never kill" is a helpful axiom for working to be faithful to the Lord's commands regarding the preservation of life. Let us never take lightly the choices we make about our failing bodies. There are choices that honor life and choices that don't. May the Lord help guide these conversations through the wisdom of your pastors, doctors and family.

Three, how we allow others to care for us during our moments of frailty and death. We are blessed in most churches to be surrounded by people who desire to care for those in need. Sermon after sermon reminds us of God's call to "...

This monthly newsletter, serves to support the Rocky Mountain District in the ministry of defending those who cannot defend themselves and proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to those struggling with life-related issues.

Comments and suggestions are always welcomed and appreciated.

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love your neighbor as yourself.” This love comes in service to our neighbor. We really like being the people who serve. It feels good. We receive more from the people we serve than we give. It is great! However, in order to serve, this necessitates someone being served. During moments of failing and frail health, we, by necessity, become the ones needing service. This can be difficult. My encouragement to all of us is to receive that service thankfully, humbly and patiently. Pray with those who care for you. Share the hope you have in these moments of vulnerability. Bless those who serve for you. In our last years, months, days or hours, this might be our greatest act of service. Don't miss your

opportunity to bless others during your time of need!

No matter how well we work to fulfill all this, we will always fall short. We will, now and always, rely on God our Father, who created our bodies; God the Son, who by His blood redeemed our bodies; and God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified our bodies to be His temple.

Rev. Jason S. Rust
Southern Region VP, RMD



Mercy at Life's End, A Guide for Laity and Their Pastors
written by John T. Pless

This book and other great resources can be downloaded from our LCMS Life Ministry webpage, www.lcms.org/life.

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