

LifeNEWS

PROMOTING THE SANCTITY OF LIFE



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A Brief Story of Thomas Patrick McMaughan

REV. SEAN PATRICK MCMAUGHAN

On February the 3rd 2013 my wife, Marie, gave birth to our second child. Our newest edition to the family, Sophia, was a wonderful blessing after two mid-trimester one miscarriages. We were overjoyed to have two beautiful healthy daughters. As soon as Marie was physically ready we started trying for another blessing, and God provided us with one, but not in a way we expected.

We found out in late autumn that Marie was pregnant again. We were overjoyed. But the initial joy soon gave way to grief. Marie did something she hadn't done with any of the other pregnancies. She had blood work done to determine if there were any genetic issues. Not that an issue like that would have changed our minds, but Marie wanted to know in order to prepare.

The results came back that there was a 50% chance of a genetic abnormality. It was all quite surreal. Here we were with a baby under 6 months old and one on the way with something wrong. So we went to the genetic counsellor at the Royal Women's in Melbourne. Our initial meeting started out confrontational. The counsellor mentioned 'termination' of the pregnancy after further testing indeed showed a problem. I said something to the effect of, "That isn't an option for us." The counsellor, a female, turned away from me and toward my wife and said, "It is your choice, not his."

I was seething, but thanks be to God I kept my composure. Just as I was about to tell her what I thought, a beautiful thing happened. My wife gave one of the most brilliant apologies of Christian marriage and faith that I have ever heard. A couple

of the points she told the counsellor, "We are married which means that we are no longer just two individuals but we are one flesh, and any decision would be made by us both." She continued, "And speaking of flesh, our child is of my flesh and my husband's, but our child is his own person created in the image God, we will not kill him." Both the counsellor and myself were gob smacked, although for different reasons. I thought we would need a different counsellor after that, but she really took what Marie said on board and became our advocate.

Unfortunately she was only the first person we would deal with at genetic counselling. The default position seemed to be that if there was a problem then the mother would terminate the pregnancy. But all along the way we gave a reason for the hope that is in us.



We had lots of tests run, and eventually had a placental test done around week 18. It confirmed the diagnosis; trisomy 18 – Edwards Syndrome. We also found out our little one was a son. We named him Thomas Peter.

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Editorial

KIMBERLEY PFEIFFER

I am pleased to share with you this refreshed and rebadged edition of Life News. You may recall the announcement made in our most previous issue (March 2015) that LFL was going into recess in order to review the governance structure of the organisation. You will find more information about the changes made on the back page. The changes are well underway and the new LFL team is ready to enter this new season engaging, educating and offering conversation that promotes and protects the dignity of the human person at all of life's stages.

In this edition you will hear of a father's story; journeying with his wife as they discover that their child in utero was diagnosed with Edward Syndrome. I hope their story may be an encouragement to us as we support friends and families who are carrying babies with medical complications. I also cannot help but admire Marie's courage and confidence as she testified so well her choice to walk with her husband and son through this dark valley.

LFL friend, and current US correspondent, Chelsea Pietsch has written a piece on the recent Planned Parenthood scandal in the US alleging that Planned Parenthood employees have been engaged in illegal negotiations which cooperate in and profit from the sale of body parts from aborted fetuses. Chelsea has written from a personal perspective noting how the information, video and other, has raised deeper

concern about the abortion industry. Please note that some may find elements in this story disturbing.

Rob Pollnitz has once again written an arrangement of Snippets for us. We are grateful that he continues to do this though he now is (mostly) retired.

As we enter this new phase, we welcome two new members to the LFL committee - Janet Bowman and Margaret Pearce - please pray for them and encourage them as they serve our church and community through LFL. We also give thanks for the dedicated service of Pastor Christian Fandrich and David Pietsch to LFL during the past few years.

As I put this edition together I found encouragement in the activities of friends abroad who exercise ways to peacefully represent the values we hold sacred. My concern has grown that it is more difficult than ever in Australia to engage respectfully in life issues without being called a bigot or a religious zealot. We should recognise this bullying and see that these tactics are aimed at silencing dissenting views. We need to continue to find ways to engage courageously in the public square, to walk with our families and friends in truth and love, and remember to defend what is true, good and beautiful in writing and in person to our elected members of parliament when we are concerned about bills facing parliament. Please prayerfully encourage and support Lutherans for Life as it works to equip our church with these much needed resources.



Lutherans for Life Online

keep a look out for our new website
and Facebook page
coming 2016

lca.org.au/lutherans-for-life

Support Lutherans for Life

consider making a financial gift to
continue the promotion and
protection of human dignity in our
culture and community.

Lutherans for Life Branches

Riverland: Est. September 1989

Serving the Riverland area of South Australia
Contact: Mrs Lois Rathjen
08 8584 5706

New Zealand: Est. June 1991

Contact: Dr Petrus Simons
04 476 9398

Sunshine Coast: Est. August 1992

Serving the Sunshine Coast area of Queensland
Contact: Mr Norm Auricht
07 5443 6849

Darling Downs: Est. October 2005

Serving the Darling Downs area of Queensland
Contact: Mrs Joy Wurst
07 4613 4189

Baby Body Parts in America

CHELSEA PIETSCH

I have been meaning to sit down and write this article for weeks now. The reality is that I haven't wanted to face the subject matter. To say it is grisly would be an understatement.

I am referring here to the controversial Planned Parenthood videos which were released between July and October last year, and provide evidence into the trafficking of aborted baby body parts in America. The footage, which was secretly filmed by the Centre for Medical Progress ("CMP"), largely consists of meetings with executives and employees of the United States' largest abortion provider.

I finally bit the bullet and over the last few days slowly made my way through each of CMP's videos. As I watched them, I became mindful that the next courier van I see could very well be carrying a foetal heart, liver, or perhaps even brain in an eski. It may very well be making its journey from a Planned Parenthood clinic, where an abortion has just taken place, to a research lab somewhere across the country.

Some readers may wonder whether conducting research on aborted baby body parts is just a way of bringing something good out of the sad reality of abortion. Perhaps experimentation on this body part may bring about some ground breaking research? If you're inclined to think along these lines, then I encourage you to watch the eleven videos produced by CMP over the period of two and a half years.

During this time, CMP hired actors to pose as employees of a fake biomedical research company, BioMax Procurement Services. By doing so, they were able to gain entry into abortion industry events and secure meetings with some of Planned Parenthood's top executives, abortionists and partnering procurement technicians.

The hours-long conversations that the actors recorded on a hidden camera take place in different locations: over lunch at a restaurant, at a conference, in Planned Parenthood offices and even their laboratories. Some of the footage is graphic; all of it is disturbing.

The intention of the videos is to show that certain Planned Parenthood clinics are illegally altering abortion procedures in order to be able to deliver "intact" baby organs which they then sell to researchers. The videos also allege that the harvesting of baby body parts sometimes takes place without the consent of the mother.

Let's discuss some of the footage, but please bear in mind that you may find this upsetting. I certainly did.

In the first video, the actors have a lunch meeting with Planned Parenthood's senior director for medical services. While crunching on salad and sipping wine she explains how doctors use ultrasound guidance "so they'll know where they're putting their forceps." She continues:

"We've been very good at getting heart, lung, liver, because we know that, so I'm not gonna crush that part... I'm gonna basically crush below, I'm gonna crush above, and I'm gonna see if I can get it all intact."

The director also talks about how she tries to deliver the babies in a breech position (feet first) so that the woman dilates more as the procedure goes on, maximising the chance of delivering the head intact:

"So if you do it starting from the breech presentation, there's dilation that happens as the case goes on, and often, the last, you can evacuate an intact calvarium [head] at the end."

In video five, another Planned Parenthood employee states:

"The other thing that plays a tremendous part in this all, is um, the dilation that you've obtained, and also, whether, how, for lack of a better word, how cooperative the patient is during the procedure".

She then proceeds to explain how, even under conscious sedation, the patient's tolerance is "maxed out". This makes the procedure "a little more difficult", because when the woman is "completely relaxed" the abortionist is not required to "do so many passes with the forceps." In other words, the means required to obtain "intact" body parts can involve taking steps which make the abortion procedure more uncomfortable or painful for the woman.

Evidence suggesting that Planned Parenthood benefits financially from this practice is laced throughout nearly all of the videos. One disturbing encounter is in the second video where a senior executive and former president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of Medical Directors Council argues with the actors over the payment of baby body parts.

The author of an article entitled 'Pro-choicer changes mind after seeing planned parenthood videos' writes about the encounter as follows:

'Who could forget Dr. Mary Gatter... when in Video #2, she tells undercover investigators that it isn't about the money – before she zeroes in on dollars and cents?

"Let me just figure out what others are getting, and if this is in the ballpark, then it's fine," Gatter said. "If it's still low, then we can bump it up."

Then, going for broke, she added: "I want a Lamborghini."¹

In later footage we hear conversations with other executives negotiating a per specimen price with potential buyers,² and a manager of a procurement company discussing that their desired volume would include "another 50 livers a week".³

As if these conversations aren't hard enough to stomach, other videos show people sorting through trays of baby body parts to show the potential buyers what the organs look like.

In the fourth video, an abortionist describes one baby's body as "war torn", while another person in the lab notices that it's "another boy!" In the fifth video, Planned Parenthood employees pull the remains of a twenty-week-old baby, a twin, out of the freezer. We see a liver, a lung, a limb as one of the employees marvels at how "intact" they all are.

This is hard footage to read about, let alone watch. We can be tempted to stop reading, or to look away. We prefer to deal with abortion in the abstract – either as an abstract "right to choose" or an abstract evil in the world.

However, as one commentator writes: 'what most [people] have failed to realize [sic] is that abortion is not an idea; it is flesh and blood upon a table, a heart that is beating one moment, then stopped the next.'⁴ These videos bring home this reality. Arguably, they expose the barbarity of the abortion industry more than anything ever has.

There is something deeply incongruous about the way these babies' bodies are discussed and treated by Planned Parenthood employees – at one moment the remains may be referred to as "tissue", but at the next moment as "a baby", or even their body parts as "cute".⁵

Other executives captured in the footage talk about how to secure the right business contracts while avoiding media scrutiny. For example, in the tenth video, Planned Parenthood's Vice President for External Medical Affairs chats with the actors who are posing as potential buyers and emphasises: "This is important. This could destroy your company

and us, if we don't time those conversations correctly." Another top executive is cautious about how they manage remuneration "[b]ecause the headlines would be a disaster".

Shifting focus, some of the footage shows the testimony of an ex-procurement technician who used to work with StemExpress, Planned Parenthood's partner in the trade. This woman explains that her former job included drawing blood, dissecting fetuses and then selling the parts to researchers. "It's basically a huge trafficking of foetal tissues", she says in video three. While she fainted on the first day of her job, it was not until she harvested the brain of a baby boy whose heart was still beating that she decided to quit. "I don't want any part in that", she says, even if it were to result in a new vaccine.

Final remarks:

There are times I tire of engaging in the abortion debate. But then I come across something that wakes me up, and again realise how important it is for the stories of these little ones to be told.

The footage I have described relates to the scene in America, where I am living at the moment. I wonder if similar practices take place in Australia, and what we can do to ensure that we don't directly or inadvertently support companies that engage in or benefit from the destruction of innocent human life?

Postscript:

The release of these videos gave rise to several congressional bills to defund Planned Parenthood, but none of them passed. They have also given rise to several congressional hearings and state investigations. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the congressional hearings have failed to uncover much. And while the state investigations have been unable to reveal illegal foetal harvesting, they have apparently uncovered numerous other grisly practices. Nevertheless, six states have since defunded their Planned Parenthood programs. It remains to be seen whether their decision to defund the program is in conflict with federal law.

In more recent developments, a grand jury in Texas has decided there is not enough evidence to bring to trial one of the Planned Parenthood clinics that featured in the videos. It has, however, indicted two of the investigators behind the videos for alleged criminal conduct, including tampering with governmental records and - bizarrely - the purchase of human organs.

1. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/08/10/i-don-t-know-if-i-m-pro-choice-anymore.html>
2. Video 5
3. Video 8
4. <https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2015/10/this-is-your-wake-up-call>
5. See videos 4 and 11

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All the research we did on Edwards Syndrome was depressing. Hell, the whole situation was depressing! The median lifespan of babies born alive is 5 to 15 days. Most die in the womb. We knew that we would have very little time with Thomas Peter. The thought of going through a pregnancy and birth and knowing our son would soon die was excruciating to ponder.

In my despair I just wanted to either work or shut down completely. A fellow pastor whom I respect told me, "You may think I am strange for saying this, but congratulations." Strange? No. Bizarre? Yes. Congratulations just didn't seem like the right word for the situation. He continued, "God has called you and your wife to be parents to Thomas Peter for however long or short his life on earth may be." That resonated with both Marie and I. We may not have Thomas Peter for long, but we had him right now in Marie's womb. So we began to do all those things that we did when Emily and then Sophia were in Marie's womb. We read to Thomas Peter, we prayed for him, we sang to him, we played music for him. I even found and purchased a foetal Doppler so we could listen to him. Marie would fall asleep with headphones still over her ears.



Marie was a trooper through the whole pregnancy, which did not last much longer. Thomas Peter died in utero and was stillborn on the 8th of November 2013 after nearly 23 weeks in Marie's womb. Even though we knew that was the most likely outcome it was still a kick in the guts. Thinking about his little white coffin still brings tears to my eyes.

We took comfort in knowing that we were called by God to be Thomas Peter's parents. We took that vocation to heart and did the best for him that we could, by God's grace. Marie was especially diligent as only a mother can be. The genetic counsellors, doctors, and staff thought so little of him that they believed 'termination' was warranted, as if he were sub-human. But as hard as it was, we know that God blessed us with our son, Thomas Peter, and we give thanks for him.

Sean is Pastor at St Paul's Lutheran Church Natimuk, Victoria. He moved to Australia with his wife Maree and daughter Emily from San Antonio, Texas. Sean captured this precious family moment at the birth of their second daughter, Sophia.

Marching for Life in Washington, DC.

Chelsea, Tom and Benedict Pietsch were among ten students from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis who were sponsored by Lutherans For Life (USA) to attend the 43rd annual March for Life on January 22 in Washington, DC. They were among thousands who marched down Constitutional Avenue, ending at the U.S. Supreme Court to protest Roe v Wade, a decision made in 1973 which effectively mandates a nationwide policy of abortion on demand. The crowds of pro-lifers gathered despite warnings of "Winter storm Jonas" which buried the city in 2 feet over the 48 hours following the march. Chelsea says it was a "wonderful experience", and describes the march as "peaceful" and "full of interesting groups and personalities, including monks, nuns, marching bands, families, and all sorts of religious and cultural groups." Thankfully the storm didn't start until the march was ending, giving the Pietsch family and others in their group enough time to get back into the warmth and safety of their hotel. The snowfall, however, was so great that it closed down the roads and metro for the next 2 days. The power in their hotel did go out, but only for a few hours, and the Pietsch family barely noticed. They were too busy enjoying the company of the Lutherans For Life staff and students, including 15 high school students who took a particular liking to little Benedict.



Perth mum delivers healthy quintuplets

Kim Tucci and her husband Vaughan report the quins were conceived without assisted reproductive technology. When she was found to have five babies in utero she was offered selective foetal reduction to a twin pregnancy, but the couple decided “no”, and managed to reach 30 weeks gestation with all five before having a swift birth on the 28th January. They have four girls and a boy, the names being reported as Keith, Ali, Penelope, Tiffany and Beatrix. The King Edward Memorial Hospital notes the odds of conceiving quins naturally are 1 in 60 million. The last quins born at the KEMH arrived in 1989. (Perth Now)

2013 Abortion figures for SA released October 2015

The paper indicates that in 2013 there were 20,263 births and 4,681 abortions reported, giving an abortion rate of 14.4 per 1000 women aged 15-44 years. The peak abortion numbers were back in 1999 with 5,679 reported and a rate of 17.9. In SA 91% of abortions took place within the first 14 weeks, and 2% after 20 weeks. Foetal reasons were given for 50% of the late abortions. Overall close to 20% of reported pregnancies ended in abortion. (sahealth.gov.au)

Australian pro-life champion Bill Muehlenberg has published a softcover book of 115 pages, “The Challenge of Abortion”, CultureWatch books, 2015, dispelling the myths around abortion in a very readable fashion. Available through Koorong and Kindle.

Nicholas Tonti-Filippini honoured

Many LFL supporters will remember the late Prof Tonti-Filippini of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Melbourne, who managed a huge work load despite years of chronic illness. Nicholas was a good friend to the LCA and it is pleasing to see him granted the Order of Australia (AO) posthumously in the New Year’s Honours list.

Victoria passes Public Health (Safe Access) Amendment Bill 2015

Last November the VIC parliament passed this law which creates a 150 metre zone around abortion clinics, excluding even the peaceful silent presence of pro-lifers as this may cause “anxiety or distress” to women entering the premises. The helpers have been present near the main clinic in Wellington Parade and have offered support to women who don’t really want to have an abortion but feel forced into that decision by circumstances. They estimate that over the last 20 years some 300 babies have been saved by that support. The new law was put forward by the Labor Party and its members were denied a free vote. VIC law allows abortion right up to the time that birth is completed. (News Weekly)

Dr Philip Nitschke to appear at Melbourne Comedy Festival in April

Festival organisers have concerns about Nitschke showing his Deliverance machine and having a volunteer inhale gas to “die on stage”, and the show will proceed with air only being inhaled. “Dicing with Dr Death”, subtitled “Practising without a License”, was reviewed as being “witlessly infantile” at an Edinburgh performance. (The Age)

Euthanasia bills in Australia and New Zealand

The New Zealand parliament has a select committee inquiring into assisted suicide, with submissions due by the 1st February 2016, and reports to follow. In Canberra Senator David Leyonhjelm has another bill to overturn the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 and enable the NT and ACT to legislate for euthanasia. In SA the Hon Steph Key has listed her latest bill for lethal doses, and the VIC parliamentary inquiry continues. There are rumblings of bills which may appear in NSW and TAS later in 2016 also. (see noeuthanasia.org.au)

For a review article by Wesley J Smith, see www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/01/what-euthanasia-enthusiasts-really-want

Euthanasia declaration fails at European Parliament

The declaration by Elena Valenciano of Spain called on the European Commission and the Council to identify best practices in end-of-life care, including the right to die when the person concerned chose. The declaration needed the support of 751 MEPs to proceed, and lapsed after 3 months when only 95 MEPs had indicated their approval (released 12th January).
(alexanderschadenberg.blogspot.ca)

Gender madness

When the writer went to medical school in the 1960s there were two genders, almost always anatomically evident at the moment of birth. Nowadays our progressive leaders wish us to accept that gender has become a social construct, with Facebook recognising over 50 options, and a current British Government survey asking 13 to 18-year-olds at school to select from 25 choices. When my children were teenagers they would have ticked the box they found most laughable. Feeling male, female and androgynous – tick tri-gender. Feeling variable from day to day – tick gender fluid. And the 99.7% of people who are happy with the sex they were born with should call themselves cis-gendered or cis. Cis comes from the Latin, meaning ‘on the side of’. This is the opposite of trans, meaning ‘on the other side of’.

My experience with same-sex attraction in teens is that these feelings are usually transient, given loving parental support and the absence of homosexual advocates.

Walt Heyer writes from personal experience of the adult transgender journey, having had male-to-female surgery and slowly realised that changing genders had not relieved his anxiety and depression. He opted to resume life as a male and notes, “My life is living evidence that no matter how broken a person’s life seems to be, it can be restored to joy and fullness.” His review paper records how transgender people continue to have major mental health problems and high risks of suicide despite sex-change surgery. For his article see:

www.thefederalist.com/2015/09/22/transgender-characters-may-win-emmys-but-transgender-people-hurt-themselves

USA abortion rates decline to lowest since Roe v Wade law of 1973

The Center for Disease Control notes that in 2012 there were 699,202 abortions reported in America, a drop of 18% since the peak in the late 1980s. This means there continue to be over 3,500 abortions in the US each working day. Pro-abortion advocates say the decline is due to better sex education and better contraception. Pro-lifers note the decline is greatest in those states that require pre-abortion counselling including viewing an ultrasound. Exact numbers are not known since many abortions are not recorded and California does not report abortion figures at all. In the 43 years since Roe v Wade there are believed to have been over 58 million abortions in the USA.

Former abortion advocate Frederica Matthewes-Green says she slowly came to realise that no woman genuinely wants an abortion. She wrote – “She wants an abortion as an animal, caught in a trap, wants to gnaw off its own leg.” Her article “When abortion suddenly stopped making sense” was published on the 22nd January - see www.nationalreview.com/article/430152/abortion-roe-v-wade-unborn-children-women-feminism-march-life

Two million gather in Rome for Family Day

Convoys of coaches carrying families from all over Italy met in Rome on the 30th January, overflowing the huge Circus Maximus. The gathering was in support of the traditional family, in opposition to a new bill seeking to recognise same-sex unions and adoption by same-sex couples. The event was essentially non-political, with the focus being on the importance of mothers and fathers for healthy families and a healthy society. Spokesman Massimo Gandolfini said – “The family cannot be the last and most neglected institution, because it is the family that holds society together.” (Breitbart) Two of our former PMs agree – “The traditional family is the best social welfare system that mankind has ever devised” (John Howard), and “Not long ago, most gay activists rejected marriage as an oppressive institution. They are now seeking what has never been, and expecting others to surrender what always has.” (Tony Abbott)



Update from the LFL committee

In the last edition of Life News the LFL committee announced that it was in the process of undertaking a governance review.

One of the decisions resulting from this review was to bring LFL under the umbrella of the Lutheran Church of Australia ("LCA"), and take steps to disband LFL as a separate legal body.

Some of the reasons for this were as follows:

- To bring LFL in line with similar LCA bodies;
- To enhance LFL's profile within the church;
- To ensure LFL's long-term status within the church;
- To enable LFL more flexibility in the way it operates.

Therefore, at its meeting on 31 July and 1 August 2015, General Church Council ("GCC") resolved to accept LFL as a subcommittee of the the LCA.

LFL will continue to be accountable to the church through the Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions.

There are still some details regarding the new structure which the LFL committee is continuing to work out in conjunction with the LCA business manager.

To assist us, would all LFL branches kindly email a list of the people serving in your branches and proposed activities for 2016 to the LFL committee at lutheransforlife@gmail.com.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of LFL's rules, please include that in your email also.

The LFL committee for this synodical term is composed of the following people:

- Janet Bowman, Onkaparinga Lutheran Church in Woodside;
- Pastor Joshua Pfeiffer, Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Adelaide;
- Chelsea Pietsch, Hope Lutheran Church in St. Louis, USA;
- Pastor Jason Pokela, Esperance and Kalgoorlie-Boulder Lutheran Church;
- Margaret Pearce, Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Adelaide.

We note, with gratitude, the service of those who did not stand for re-election, namely David Pietsch, who served on the LFL committee as Interim Treasurer since 2011, and Pastor Christian Fandrich who has served on the committee since 2007, and over that time served in several roles including Treasurer and Chair. Thank you for your dedicated service, and God bless you as you continue to serve the church in other ways.

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