



Lutherans For Life

2024 MINNESOTA

Essay Contest

Sponsored by the Council of Federation Presidents

For Students in Grades 6-8 and 9-12

Any student in a Lutheran school or Lutheran congregation (e.g., confirmation class or youth group) when validated by a teacher or

pastor, is eligible. Students may also enter through a Lutheran home school when validated by their Lutheran pastor.

Contest Guidelines

Students will write a life-affirming essay based on the theme "Life Shines in Darkness" using the Bible verse "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

1. Not incorporating the **theme and verse** in the essay will disqualify the entry.
2. All essays must include a title. Using the theme as the title is acceptable, although it does not count as using the theme within the essay, which is required.
3. Examples of topics the essay could deal with are, **but are not limited to**, abortion, living with disabilities, adoption or foster care, infanticide, cloning, stem cell research, physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, etc.
4. Essays should include the student's name, grade, school or church, email address, and phone number. All entries submitted by a teacher or pastor should include their name and email address. This information must be submitted on the rubric page used in grading the essay.
5. All sources for references, statistics, and quotes should be incorporated within the essay and then included in a bibliography at the end.
 - Grades 6 - 8 should submit essays up to 400 words (body copy only).
 - Grades 9 - 12 should submit essays up to 750 words (body copy only).
6. Entries should be submitted digitally using **Microsoft Word or Google Docs** to vflo@lutheransforlife.org by April 1, 2024. Any PDF files or submissions in other formats will *not* be accepted.
7. There will be a \$100 first place award and a \$50 second place award for each of the two categories. The two first place category winners will advance to the national contest. Email vflo@lutheransforlife.org with any questions.
8. Grand prize for the national winning entry in each category is \$250 for first place plus free conference registration to the 2024 Lutherans For Life conference and one night stay at the conference hotel. The prize is \$125 for the second-place winner.
9. All entries, including exclusive copyrights, become the property of Lutherans For Life.
10. For questions or resources on the sanctity of life, see lutheransforlife.org



Rubric for Assessment of the Life Essay

(maximum of 21 points for each essay)

	3	2	1	0
ORGANIZATION Structure Transitions	Logical progression of ideas with a clear structure that enhances the thesis. Transitions are mature and graceful. The essay has a nice smooth flow between ideas.	Logical progression of ideas. Transitions are present equally throughout essay. The essay has a flow of ideas.	Organization is clear. Transitions are present in some places but may be missing in others. In places flow is interrupted or doesn't exist.	No discernable organization. Transitions are not present. Connections between ideas seem confusing or incomplete.
INTRODUCTION Background/History Thesis Statement CONCLUSION	Well-developed introduction engages the reader-creates interest. Contains detailed background information. Thesis clearly states a significant and compelling position or belief. Conclusion effectively wraps up & goes beyond restating the thesis.	Introduction creates interest. Sufficient background information is provided. Thesis clearly states the position or belief. Conclusion effectively summarizes topics.	Introduction adequately explains the background, but may lack detail. Thesis states the position or belief. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends.	Background details are a random collection of information, unclear, or not related to the topic. Thesis is vague or unclear. Conclusion does not summarize main points.
MAIN POINTS Body Paragraphs, Bibliography	The main idea or thesis statement is clearly defined. There may be more than one key point. Appropriate relevant information and details are shared from a variety of sources including personal experiences, observations, feelings and prior knowledge. Supporting details are accurate, relevant, and helpful in clarifying the main idea(s). Statistics or research are used effectively. A simple bibliography gives the references for the resources used.	The main idea can be identified. The writer shares relevant information, facts and experiences. There is a clear distinction between general observations and specifics. Supporting details are relevant and explain the main idea. Research is evident and statistics are used. Missing information in bibliography.	The main idea can be identified. The writer shares some information, facts and experiences, but may express feelings without much to substantiate it. There may be problems going from general observations to specifics. Stronger support and greater attention to details would strengthen this paper. Statistics and research do little to help support the main idea. Incomplete bibliography.	More than one of the following problems may be evident: The main idea is not identifiable. The writer shares some information, but it is limited or unclear. Details are missing or repetitious. Statistics are missing. No bibliography.
FOCUS LFL Mission, Conference theme verse	The paper is in complete agreement with the mission of Lutherans for Life and focuses on the conference theme verse.	The paper is in agreement with the mission of Lutherans for Life and somewhat focuses on the conference theme verse.	The paper doesn't completely agree with the mission of Lutherans For Life and touches on the conference theme verse.	Little or no effort has been made to address the mission of Lutherans For Life and doesn't focus on the conference theme verse.
BIBLICAL ACCURACY	Several Biblical references give strong support for the main idea and are a natural part of the essay. Verses used are interpreted accurately. Citations are accurate.	Biblical references are used to support the main idea. Verses used are interpreted accurately. Citations are accurate.	There are places where a Biblical reference would have helped support the main idea. There are some problems with interpretation of the verses used. Citations are accurate.	Little effort is given to use Biblical references to support the main idea. Problems exist in the interpretation of the verses and their citations.
STYLE Writer's Voice, Audience Awareness	The paper is honest and enthusiastic. The language is natural yet thought-provoking. It brings the topic to life. The reader feels a strong sense of interaction with the writer and senses the person behind the words. Writing is smooth, skillful, and coherent. Sentences are strong and expressive with varied structure.	Writer's voice is consistent and strong. The writer is aware of an audience. The reader is informed and remains engaged. Sentences have varied structure.	Writer's voice may emerge strongly on occasion, then retreat behind general, vague, tentative, or abstract language. The writer is aware of an audience. The reader is informed, but must work at remaining engaged. Sentence structure shows some variety.	Writing is confusing, hard to follow. Language is vague. No audience awareness. No variety in sentence structure.
MECHANICS Spelling, punctuation, capitalization	Punctuation, spelling, capitalizations are correct. No errors.	Punctuation, spelling, capitalizations are generally correct, with few errors. (1-2)	A few errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization. (3-4)	Distracting errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization

	POINTS
ORGANIZATION	
INTRODUCTION/CONCLUSION	
MAIN POINTS	
FOCUS	
BIBLICAL ACCURACY	
STYLE	
MECHANICS	
TOTAL POINTS	

Students Name _____

Church/School _____ Grade _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Student Email Address _____

Phone Number _____

Teacher/Pastor _____ Email _____