



What About End of Life "Comfort Care"?

"I trust in You, O LORD. I say, 'You are my God, my times are in Your hands.'" Psalm 31:14-15

The recent death of former First Lady Barbara Bush at the age of 92 has raised some questions regarding end of life issues. The day prior to her passing, it was announced that Mrs. Bush had decided to forgo further active medical treatment in favor of focusing on "comfort care."

Known variously as comfort care, palliative care, or hospice care, this approach has recently become more widely followed for those who are terminally ill or of advanced age. However, some have expressed concern that this practice borders on a kind of euthanasia.

It is a legitimate concern that in some cases this approach is indeed being taken too far, and true "comfort care," such as nourishment and fluids, is actually being *withheld* from patients, in order to hasten death. This is especially the case in some European countries, where elderly or terminally ill people have basically been told they have a "duty to die" as quickly as possible—in order to save the government-operated health systems the expense of caring for them.

Often, such individuals and their families are given no choice in the matter. The medical personnel are empowered to override the wishes of the patient and family, and against their express objections make the decision to forgo further active treatment.

This was recently seen dramatically in a sad case in Great Britain of an infant with a rare, fatal condition. Not only did the government-operated health system make the decision against the wishes of the parents to stop treatment, the parents themselves were actually legally forbidden to take the child to Italy for treatment at one of the world's leading children's hospitals, even after they raised money from generous donors to pay for it themselves. When the baby boy, against doctors' predictions, surprisingly survived even after being taken off life support, they further ordered that he cruelly be denied nourishment and hydration—and it still took four agonizing days to starve him to death. All this was actually approved by the so-called "European Court of Human Rights!"

A Christian, pro-life position does not require always availing oneself of every possible medical treatment.

The first rule of medicine is supposed to be "do no harm," but doctors are increasingly ordering passive steps be taken to intentionally hasten a person's death, such as withholding food and water. And in some countries they are even empowered to take active steps to kill the person, with lethal overdoses.

Last year in Holland a nursing home resident with dementia, who before dementia set in had specifically instructed that she not be euthanized, was forcibly held down as a doctor administered a fatal dose, while she fought desperately not to be killed. Though she had dementia, the moment she saw the poisonous needle she understood what was happening: she was being murdered. The doctor, however, was officially cleared by a

medical review board, because such outrageous actions are permitted under Dutch law. The doctor actually stated to the review board, "Even if the patient had said, 'I don't want to die,' the termination would have continued."

An astounding 5% of all deaths in Holland are now due to such *unwilling* euthanasia. The medical murder of elderly persons there has become so widespread that they are fearful of being admitted to hospitals and nursing homes, even for routine reasons and procedures.

You may go in with an easily treatable, common condition, such as pneumonia, or for a routine procedure, such as a knee replacement. But, if in the process a doctor judges you too old or too sick to be worthy of treatment, a "termination" can be secretly carried out, without the knowledge or consent of either the patient or family.

Most feared by elderly people is a fall that results in a broken hip. It seems that because euthanasia is much less expensive for the government-operated health system than a hip replacement, this common elderly affliction is often a death sentence.

That most certainly cannot be called "comfort care"! *Any active steps ever taken to end any person's life is nothing less than murder, and is never justified.*

The only exceptions that the Lord allows are self-defense of ourselves and others (Exodus 22:2, 1 Timothy 5:8), and cases of capital punishment or warfare carried out for appropriate reasons by the proper authorities (Romans 13:4, 1 Peter 2:14).

Apart from these specific exceptions the Lord commands, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13), and He warns, "You know that no murderer has eternal life in him" (1 John 3:15). So, we must indeed be very careful never to cross the line from true "comfort care" to murder.

This would include passive steps to intentionally hasten death, such as withholding food and water. In the case of those who are still able to consume food and drink in the normal manner, attempts should at least be made to give them nourishment and fluids. When my own father was in the final stages of cancer we would use a straw to dribble Ensure and water into his mouth, and also moisten the inside of his mouth with a small sponge. *That truly is "comfort care"!*

The question is more difficult with regard to those who can only be nourished or hydrated in some other manner, such as intravenously. That can really only be decided on a case-by-case basis by the patient and family, in consultation with the doctor, and it is also fitting to seek advice from the Pastor.

In the case of my father, he had been in and out of hospitals for years and detested IV's. My mother was a certified nurse aide and cared for him at home in his final months, so an IV was not an option in that setting. However, even if he had an IV, it would have greatly irritated him, and he would have been constantly pulling at it, even to the point of injuring himself.

In the end, it is all a question of *intent*. The very same action, such as removing or withholding an IV, could be either loving or sinful, depending on the intent.

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Is the intent truly to give the person "comfort care"? In that case, I doubt anyone would say having an IV inserted is comfortable, and for many, such as my father, it is a great discomfort. Removing or withholding an IV for that reason could be a loving action.

However, if the intent is to purposely hasten death, by starving or dehydrating the person, the same action becomes no longer loving, but sinful and murderous.

In the end it is a question of intent. The same action could be either loving or sinful, depending on the intent.

The same principle of intent applies to other medical treatments. It is often the case that some surgery or other treatment may theoretically be possible for a person, but in reality the "cure is worse than the disease," and due to advanced age or other factors the person would likely not effectively recover from or even survive the procedure. *A Christian, pro-life position does not require always availing oneself of every possible medical treatment.* There can be very valid reasons, in accord with a Christian, pro-life view, for forgoing active treatment. Again, this can really only be decided on a case-by-case basis by the patient and family, in consultation with the doctor and Pastor.

My mother passed away at 91 and Barbara Bush at 92 of the same condition, congestive heart failure, so I know what Mrs. Bush and her family went through. If a young person has congestive heart failure it is due to some acute abnormality, and it is probably appropriate to treat with open heart surgery or other intensive measures, from which a young body has a good chance of recovering. However, when congestive heart failure is due to advanced age, as in the case of my mother and Mrs. Bush, there really is no curative medical treatment, and true "comfort care" is fitting in such situations.

So, on the one hand, we must be careful never to cross the line from true comfort care, palliative care, or hospice care, to actually "terminating" the sick or elderly. Either passively, by withholding food, water, or medical treatment that is appropriate for their circumstances, or actively, by purposely administering lethal overdoses or other murderous means.

But, on the other hand, Martin Luther says in the Small Catechism that we should "*put the best construction on everything*" in regards to the actions and motivations of others. That means unless there is some glaring reason otherwise, we should always assume the best intentions of individuals and families as they struggle with such very difficult situations and end of life decisions.

As they approached death, both my mother and Mrs. Bush were blessed with the greatest comforts of all that a person can have when dying. One comfort was their families, lovingly gathered around their beds, as what the Bible says about Abraham's death also came true for them: "*He breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years, and he was gathered to his people*" (Genesis 25:8).

Yet, even more comforting as they faced death was their personal faith in their Savior, and His precious promise of eternal life:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. . . I am going there to prepare a place for you. . . I will come again and take you to be with Me, that where I am you also may be" (John 14:1-3);

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, even though he dies, yet shall he live" (John 11:25);

"For My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40);

"Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

No matter what the circumstances of your death may be, dying with faith in the Lord Jesus and His promise of eternal life is truly the ultimate "comfort care."

Pastor Kevin Vogts

Ascension Sunday Outdoor Service

On May 13 we will observe both Ascension Sunday and Mother's Day with a Service in the Shelter House! Pastor Vogts' message will be "What Does Christ's Ascension Mean for You?" based on Acts 1:1-11, and the service will end with a balloon launch by the children.

Other outdoor services planned for this year are July 1 in observance of Independence Day, and our annual Blocktoberfest Outdoor Service on September 16. We may schedule additional Outdoor Services this summer as construction progresses, since the project includes new carpet and paint in the Sanctuary.



As you can see, work is progressing quickly on our Building Addition & Modernization Project! The new main floor restrooms are now operational (though not fully "finished") and you are welcome to begin using them.

We are attempting as much as possible to keep the Sanctuary largely unaffected and useable during the construction process. However, the organ pipes have been covered and the pipe chamber sealed, to prevent damage from dust to the pipes and mechanism. We will be using an electronic organ or piano for services during construction.

Thank you to everyone for your patience and understanding during construction!

BUILDING



Fund Pledges

Now that construction is underway we are making payments to the contractor. Fulfilling your pledge to the Building Fund as you are able would be appreciated. If you would like a reminder of your pledge amount contact Mike Oberheide. If you did not make a pledge previously, or would like to increase your amount, additional donations are always welcome. Simply place in the offering plate marked "Building Fund."

Thank you to everyone whose generous donations are making this exciting project possible! *"And the people continued to bring freewill offerings . . . more than enough for doing the work on the sanctuary that the LORD had commanded to be done"* (Exodus 36:3-5).

Thrivent Cards for Building Project

Do you have any unused Thrivent Action cards for 2018? There are many individual aspects of our Building Addition & Modernization Project to which these could be dedicated! Just a few examples are: new ceiling speakers for the church sound system in the overflow area; a small refrigerator for the snack service area; a television for the Heritage Room; new rugs for all entries; etc.

Thrivent requires a specific individual item for each card, and only one card per year total can be for any single item at our congregation, so they will probably not approve a general designation such as "Building Project." If you would like some ideas or help using this Thrivent benefit contact chairman Greg Windler or Pastor Vogts.



We rejoiced with Hunter Rush and Halle Schlegel as they celebrated their Confirmation and received First Communion on April 22. *"I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow Your righteous instruction"* (Psalm 119:106).



We are preparing a new church pictorial directory for our 150th Anniversary. If you haven't had your picture taken yet please contact Kyle Minden or Stacey Elinton. Or, if you would like to submit your own photo, please have to us by June 1. If your photo is already in digital format, you can send it by email to Kyle at kminden@edtkc.com. Make sure you don't get missed in this historic church directory!



This month we begin our summer schedule of Communion on the 1st Sunday of the month. In July, however, we will have Communion instead on the 2nd Sunday, July 8, due to our Service in the Shelter House on the first Sunday, July 1, to celebrate Independence Day.



Damon E. Kettler
 Born February 27, 1926
 Entered Eternal Rest
 April 18, 2018

*"Blessed are the dead
 who die in the Lord."*
 Revelation 14:13



Save The Date For 150th Anniversary

In order to secure Kanas District President Peter Lange as our guest speaker we have changed the date of our 150th Anniversary Celebration to November 4, 2018. This also gives us an extra week to complete our construction project!

The schedule for the day is a Communion service at 10:00am, with a building dedication ceremony immediately following the service, similar to the recent groundbreaking ceremony. Everyone is invited to a catered Anniversary Luncheon at noon.

At 2:00pm we will have a special Anniversary Service with President Lange as our guest speaker, followed by an Anniversary Reception so that the reminiscing and fellowship can continue!

Please let all your relatives and friends who may wish to attend this grand reunion know now, so that they can save the date!



Our records of birthdays and anniversaries may not complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the Church Office at 913-849-3344 or email Church Secretary Stacey Elkinton at trinitylutheranblock@gmail.com.

- May 1 Clint Haley
- May 1 Eric Prothe
- May 1 Elijah Minden
- May 2 Brad Hendrickson
- May 3 Steve McMullin
- May 4 Maysen Armstrong
- May 4 Alex Brack
- May 5 Sarah Berner
- May 5 Kameron Alpert-Munir
- May 5 Mallory Allcorn
- May 7 Henry Vaughn
- May 8 Garrett Rausch
- May 8 Chloe Rausch
- May 8 Jim Ohlmeier
- May 9 Melanie Golubski
- May 10 Bobbie Jo Debrick
- May 10 Kathy Haley
- May 10 Bobbie Kunard
- May 10 Johnny Pagels
- May 11 Denise Holtz
- May 13 Kraig Kettler
- May 13 Lucy Kettler
- May 13 Nathan Peckman
- May 13 Nicholas Peckman
- May 14 Trish Armstrong
- May 14 Miranda Ferrell
- May 14 Beth D'Amato
- May 15 Matthew Reynolds
- May 15 Kris Stubbs
- May 17 Lori Donahue
- May 17 Dean Gerken

- May 17 Sherri Webb
- May 18 Emily Kettler
- May 18 Susan Ashley
- May 19 Jackie Smith
- May 20 Paul Sombke
- May 21 David Herrs
- May 21 Barb Koelsch
- May 21 Clifford Prothe
- May 21 Leslie Rudzinski
- May 23 Andy Brack
- May 23 Jeanne Hutchison
- May 23 Amanda Maisch
- May 23 Shane Gibson
- May 25 Stephanie Debrick
- May 25 Roger Holtz
- May 25 Kristie McMullin
- May 26 Scott Gerken
- May 26 Sharon Grother
- May 28 Alyssa Holtz
- May 28 Kayla Massey
- May 28 Dale Prothe
- May 28 Rawena Shay
- May 29 Wendy Bryant
- May 29 Brandon Gibson
- May 30 Ginny Linville
- May 31 Sarah Pemberton
- May 31 Janet Koelsch
- May 31 Amanda Stubbs
- May 1 ... Randy & Jennifer Rethman (20)
- May 16 Ed & Marcie Reyelts (30)
- May 19 Mike & Linda Oberheide (39)
- May 19 ... Clifford & Donna Prothe (55)
- May 25 Lloyd & Ginny Peckman (55)
- May 25 Jeff & Pam Thompson (38)
- May 30 Stan & Gayle Plummer (37)
- May 31 John & Lori Schlegel (15)



The quarterly issue of the devotional booklet *Portals of Prayer* for April thru June is available at the church, in regular size, large print, and a new "digest" size (same size as *Reader's Digest*). You may have to search for them a bit, due to things being dislocated by construction! Ask one of the elders if you cannot locate them. A great way to keep close to the Lord.



As they take a break for the summer, our thanks to director Janette Reinke, accompanist Becky Stuzman, and all the choir and tone chimes choir members for their faithful service and beautiful contributions to our worship!

Sermon Topics for May



These are the sermon topics for May. Sermons by Pastor Vogts are available in both printed and audio form on our church web site, www.trinitylcms.org/sermons, as podcasts under "Kevin Vogts" in the iTunes store, online at www.kevinvogts.podbean.com, or at www.kevinvogts.podbean.com/mobile for mobile devices. Printed copies of the current Sunday's message and those from the past several weeks are also available in a small literature rack in back of the church. You may have to search for them a bit, due to things being dislocated by construction! Ask one of the elders if you cannot locate them.

May 6

"Your Word Is Truth"

John 17:17

May 13 (Ascension & Mother's Day)

"What Does Christ's Ascension Mean for You?"

Acts 1:1-11

May 20 (Pentecost Sunday)

"The First Christian Sermon"

Acts 2:22-36

May 27 (Trinity Sunday)

"Encounters with Jesus:

Nicodemus"

John 3:1-18

NURSING HOME MINISTRY

You are invited to help provide brief worship services for nursing home residents at North Point and Medical Lodge on Sunday, May 20. The simple services are approximately 20 minutes in length. We begin at 1:30pm at North Point and then go to Medical Lodge for the second service.



Trinity Artworks Sought

Do you have any paintings, drawings, or other artwork depicting Trinity's old church, new church, school, cemetery, or grounds? It is all so picturesque that it has often been the subject of artists over the years. We have two such original paintings, one of the old church and one with the new church, cemetery, and school, and another reproduction of a beautiful painting of the old church (pictured above), the original of which belonged to the late Vivian Wilson.

We would like to use such artworks as we redecorate the church when work is completed. If you have such an artwork, could you please let Pastor Vogts know? With today's technology it



We rejoiced with Jimmy and Kayla (Holtz) Massey as they celebrated the Baptism of their son, Brooks Christopher. *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children"* (Acts 2:38-39).

is possible to simply take several high resolution photos that can be "stitched together" by computer and printed on canvas to create a very high quality reproduction, nearly indistinguishable from the original. So you can keep your artwork, but let others enjoy it too!

Missionaries of the Month



Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services—and you are encouraged to remember in your personal prayers—specific missionaries around the world who are supported by our congregation through our mission offerings to our Synod.

May 6

Rev. Micah & Robin Wildauer

Togo

May 13

Alyssa Anders

Russia

May 20

Rev. James & Angela Sharp

Uruguay

May 27

Nichelle Dykema

Peru



Our Building Addition and Modernization Project includes not only adding a new wing to the church, but also many other upgrades. To improve drainage and avoid occasional flooding we have experienced in the basement, this trench carries four large pipes well away from the church, for discharge from the gutters, perimeter drains, and two sump pumps, one existing and an additional one newly installed. This trench also carries a new gas line, so the church's propane tank can be relocated next to the one for the parsonage by the shed, and the prime space it has occupied be used for additional concrete parking spaces, conveniently close to the new north entrance.



We plan to continue holding Coffee Hour in the former overflow area when possible, but it may need to be in the basement some Sundays depending on the state of construction—or perhaps we'll have a picnic! Could you—individual, family, or group—serve snacks sometime after worship? The sign-up sheet is on the table with the snacks. Coffee and juice is provided, so those signing up are only asked to bring some treat. Thanks to all those providing snacks for Coffee Hour!

May 6

Gayle Plummer

May 13

Linda Prothe

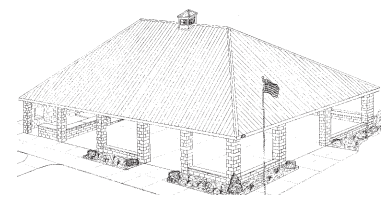
May 20 & 27

Need Volunteers



Our current study in Adult Bible Class is *God's Grace in Colossians*. One of the Apostle Paul's shorter letters, Colossians is especially rich with descriptions of Christ, His work, and the blessings He bestows on us. Though written nearly 2,000 years ago, this Biblical book still speaks to our lives today in a surprisingly fresh and relevant way.

Adult Bible Class will continue to be held in the former overflow area when possible, but may need to be held in the basement some Sundays depending on the state of construction. Join in Sundays at 9:00am to learn more about *God's Grace in Colossians*.



Shelter House Online Reservations

As we approach the summer months, a reminder that we have an online reservation system for the Trinity Lutheran School Memorial Shelter House. It automatically shows which dates and times are open up to two years in advance, and it is easy to make your reservations online. Go to our church web site at www.trinitylcms.org/shelter. You will also find there the rules for Shelter House usage. If you do not have access to a computer to make your reservation, you can simply call or speak to Pastor Vogts and he will make the reservation for you.