Lutherans For Life

2027 Missouri Essay Contest

Sponsored by the LFL 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, youth group, Lutheran home school) is eligible when validated by their teacher or pastor, along with parental consent.

Contest Guidelines

Students will write a life-affirming essay based on the theme **"Be Bold For Life"** using Psalm 31:24, "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!"

1. Examples of topics the essay could deal with are – but are not limited to – abortion, disabilities, adoption, foster care, infanticide, physician-assisted suicide, hospice care, sexual purity, etc. For support or resources on the sanctity of life, visit lutheransforlife.org.
2. The first page of the essay must include the student's name, grade, school or church, a personal mailing address, email address, and phone number (of the student or parent).
3. All entries must be submitted by a teacher or pastor and include their contact information.
4. **Grades 6–8** should submit essays up to 400 words. **Grades 9–12** should submit essays up to 750 words. The word count does not include the title, footnotes, or bibliography.
5. Entries must be submitted digitally using Microsoft Word or Google Docs (*PDF files or other formats will not be accepted*). Email your entry to Diane Albers at dalbers.102@gmail.com by March 1, 2027.
6. The omission of any of the following required items will cause disqualification of the essay:
    a. The essay must include the entire theme and entire theme Bible verse as **part of the written text**.
    b. Each essay must include a title. Using the required theme as a title is acceptable but does not replace using the theme and verse within the essay.
    c. The essay must be in complete agreement with the Lutherans For Life mission to "Equip Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices For Life".
    d. A Bibliography listing sources used is required.
    e. Exceeding the appropriate word count is not acceptable.
7. Essays should make good use of standard essay writing components, including introduction and conclusion, main points, organization, style, mechanics, sources, and bibliography (*See page 2 for directions on using these elements*).
8. There will be a $200 first-place award and a $100 second-place award for each of the two grade levels. The two first place grade level winners will advance to the national contest.
9. The national award for the winning entry in each category is $500 for first place, plus free conference registration to the 2027 Lutherans For Life conference for the student and his/her parents, one-night stay at the conference hotel for the student and his/her parents, $200 travel expense reserved for conference travel only, and a framed certificate. The second-place award is $250 and a framed certificate.
10. All entries, including exclusive copyrights, become the property of Lutherans For Life.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidelines for the LFL National Essay Contest

Acceptable Uses of AI for Essay Writing

- Students may use AI to support brainstorming, outlining, and grammar.
- Students may use AI to explore creative research support.
- Teachers or parents for those homeschooled remain the primary guides of instruction. AI is a supplement, not a substitute.

Unacceptable Uses of AI for Essay Writing

- Students using AI to replace original work, such as submitting an AI-generated essay is unacceptable and will cause disqualification.
- Students using AI for dishonest purposes, including plagiarism, or misrepresentation of effort will cause disqualification.
- Students using AI tools that expose students to unsafe, inappropriate, academically unsound content are unacceptable.

Essay Integrity

- Students must always disclose when AI has been used in research or refining grammar for in-text citation and listed as a reference in the Bibliography.
- Undisclosed or inappropriate AI use will result in a disqualified essay.

Some information in creating these guidelines was developed by Mayer Lutheran Middle and High School with permission granted for usage by Lutherans For Life.

Helpful Information on Essay Structural Elements

- **Introduction and Conclusion** – The reader is engaged by a well-developed introduction that creates interest. The conclusion effectively wraps up the essay by clearly drawing a conclusion to support the essay position.
- **Main Points** – The main idea and statements are clear and may come from a variety of sources, including personal experience, observations, feelings, or prior knowledge. Supporting details are accurate and helpful to the main point. Statistics and other research, if used, are used effectively.
- **Organization** – The essay shows a logical progression of ideas that enhance the essay. Transitions are graceful and flow smoothly.
- **Style** – The paper is honest and enthusiastic. The language is natural and shares a message from the heart of the writer. Writing is smooth, skillful, and makes sense.
- **Mechanics** – Punctuation, spelling, and capitalizations are correct with no run-on sentences.
- **Sources** – All sources for references, statistics, and quotes are referenced within the essay by listing the author or source in parentheses after the quote.
- **Bibliography** – A simple bibliography/works cited page gives references for the sources used including the author, source title, page number or website.