Medical Assistance in Dying (Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia)

WHEREAS, God is the God of life, the Creator and Giver of life (Matthew 16:16; Ruth 4:12; Psalm 139:13-15; SC Apostles' Creed, First Article); suffering and death were not part of God's original plan, but entered the world as a result of Adam's fall (Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 5:12); and God alone, as King of Kings, has the right to determine when, in His perfect will, each person shall die (Job 1:21; Psalm 31:15, 139:16; Ecclesiastes 3:2a; SC Lord's Prayer, Seventh Petition); and

WHEREAS, The Fifth Commandment prohibits murder (Exodus 20:13 [Deuteronomy 5:17; Matthew 5:21], c.f. Genesis 9:5-6), meaning that, "We must not kill, either by hand, heart, or word, by signs or gestures, or by aiding and abetting" (LC Ten Commandments 182); and

WHEREAS, The Fifth Commandment includes the prohibition of suicide (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Ephesians 5:29)[1]; and

WHEREAS, Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD), which may include (i) assisted suicide (AS), in which a physician or other health care professional provides a patient with a prescription for lethal doses of drugs which s/he then ingests on his/her own, and (ii) euthanasia, in which a physician or health care provider administers the lethal doses directly to the patient, is now legal in a number of countries around the world, as an attempt to end suffering and provide so-called "death with dignity"; and

WHEREAS, Euthanasia may be voluntary (with the consent of the patient being killed), non-voluntary (without consent in the case that the one being killed is legally or medically incapacitated or unable to consent), involuntary (against the wishes of the one being killed), and/or passive (withholding medical treatment with the intent of killing the patient); and

WHEREAS, While voluntary, non-voluntary, and involuntary euthanasia remain illegal in the United States (US), an increasing number of states permit AS; and passive euthanasia is legal in the US when patients have so-directed on a "living will" or "advance directive" document; and

WHEREAS, Initially, MAiD was targeted to those in the end-stage of terminal illnesses, it has been increasingly used as an attempt to end suffering (which may relate to symptoms from the underlying disease, and/or "existential distress" from perceived loss of autonomy and inability to engage in activities that they enjoy) in individuals whose conditions are not terminal and may well not become terminal[2], even some with mental illness who are tired of coping, and some, including newborns and children[3], whose lives are not deemed to be of sufficient quality to be allowed to continue to live; and

WHEREAS, The weakest members of the community are indispensable (1 Corinthians 12:22); and

WHEREAS, In locations where MAiD in any of its forms is legal, true palliative care is impaired,

mental health services are impaired, third-party payors may deny coverage for ongoing medical treatment, there may be other economic incentives to hasten death, the right to die can quickly become a so-called "duty to die," the Hippocratic Oath is violated and the very role of the physician/health care provider becomes corrupted, and physicians/healthcare providers and surviving family members may experience moral injury following the assisted death of the patient[4]; and

WHEREAS, When suffering and facing death, the Christian can take comfort and grow spiritually in the knowledge that God masks Himself in human suffering, pruning believers of perceived self-sufficiency (John 15:2; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9), drawing them to Him, allowing Him to meet their physical needs through others in their vocations, and pointing to their future glory (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Peter 1:7)[5]; furthermore, Christ, who experienced the same on his/her behalf, sympathizes (literally suffers with) with him/her (Hebrews 2:10-11, 14-18, 4:15), having sanctified his/her suffering in His own; as the Church sings, "Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure by the cross are sanctified" (LSB 427.4); and

WHEREAS, The Christian grows spiritually in bearing the burden of others who are completely dependent on him/her (Galatians 6:2); and

WHEREAS, As fallen sinners, all people rightly deserve death, but the God of life sent His Son to take on human flesh, and pay the price for all sin for all time, by suffering an excruciating and humiliating death on the Cross and rising again, that all who receive this precious gift by faith might be declared right with the Father and restored to an eternal life of bliss in the presence of our Triune God (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Passion narratives in the Gospels; John 3:16; Romans 4:25, 5:8, 6:23); and

WHEREAS, People's lives are not their own and their meaning and quality of life are determined outside of themselves (and any personal strengths/weaknesses); namely, who they are in Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19-20); and

WHEREAS, A truly dignified death is one died in Christ with eyes on His Cross and Resurrection (Romans 14:7-9; c.f. LSB 450.7) in God's good timing; and

WHEREAS, MAiD, in all of its forms, violates the Fifth Commandment; and

WHEREAS, God gives government alone the authority to kill when necessary (the "power of the sword"), specifically in order to maintain the moral good, protecting human life and preventing harm to others (Romans 13:1-4)[6], and there is no moral good in MAiD in any of its forms, given that it does not protect human life nor does it prevent harm to others; thus, governments are not authorized by God to declare MAiD legal nor to coerce its citizens to participate in it; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life opposes MAiD in all of its forms; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life acknowledges that the lives of individuals with severe physical and/or mental illnesses and/or disabilities, even those who appear to be

approaching the ends of their lives, remain ones for whom Christ died, whose lives are worth living, and who remain indispensable members of their communities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life exhorts Christians to compassionately care for the sick and dying, and never to kill; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life encourages ongoing treatment of illness, with the firm assurance that when death is certain to happen, the Christian is free to face death in confident hope of his/her resurrection on the Last Day; aggressive care may be withdrawn, but basic care (pain management, nutrition, hydration) should be continued; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life acknowledges that while the treatment of pain may on occasion hasten death, the intent must never be to deliberately kill the patient; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life does not support the forced withholding of nutrition and hydration when the patient is able to eat and/or drink for him/herself, albeit slowly and in small amounts; at the same time, Lutherans For Life does not encourage forced attempts to feed and hydrate when the patient is no longer able to receive these First-Article gifts safely; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life encourages families of the sick and dying to seek help from life-affirming hospices, *Death and Resurrection Doulas*, and others who are available to assist in dying well in Christ; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life discourages the use of living wills and advance directives, but rather encourages Christians to utilize forms such as the *Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – Christian Version*, available at *Christian Life Resources*, to designate a person to be their health care agent, allow them to indicate the type of care they desire at the end-of-life, and provide a Christian sanctity of human life witness[7]; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life encourages pastors to regularly prepare their parishioners for their dying well in Christ; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life encourages pastors to regularly provide bedside spiritual care for their sick and dying parishioners, delivering God's gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation, including the Lord's Supper in quantities that may be tolerated by the patient; and be it further

RESOLVED, That deacons, deaconesses, elders and all members of the congregation, be encouraged to help bear the burdens of the sick and dying and their families in any way they can and are needed; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life encourages Christian health care professionals to resist the demands of authorities (ex. supervisors, hospital administrators, licensing boards,

local regulators, and the like) to participate in MAiD (Acts 5:29), and all Christians to advocate for the sanctity of all human life in the public square; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Lutherans For Life reminds any who have participated in a MAiD decision in any way and sincerely regret having done so, that there is forgiveness in Christ-crucified, and recommends him/her to see their Pastor to confess their sin and receive Christ's absolution.

Notes:

1. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in his work *City of God*, pointed out that, unlike the Eighth Commandment, which prohibits false witness specifically against one's neighbor, the Fifth Commandment does not limit the prohibition on murder to an act against another. Indeed, the command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39) grounds love of neighbor in love of self. See Augustine, *City of God*, Book 1, Chapter 20, accessible at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120101.htm (accessed 17 March, AD 2026). Thank you to Rev. Christopher Seifferlein for sharing his insights on St. Augustine.
2. A case in point is Canada: Originally, eligibility for MAiD was restricted to those with a "reasonable foreseeability of natural death." The 2019 *Truchon* decision of the Superior Court of Quebec found this, as well as the "end-of-life" criterion in Quebec's provincial law, to be unconstitutional, in that it violated the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Following this decision, eligibility for MAiD in Canada as a whole was expanded to include anyone having a serious and incurable illness, disease, or disability, which will include mental illness beginning March 17, 2027. See *Canada's medical assistance in dying (MAID) law*, at https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/ad-am/bk-di.html (accessed 17 March, AD 2026). For reasons driving requests of individuals for MAiD, see for example James Downar, Susan MacDonald, and Sandy Buchman "What drives requests for MAiD?" *CMAJ* 2023;195(40):E1385-E1387 (accessible at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10581715/, accessed 9 April, AD 2026; note that the authors are supporters of MAiD).
3. See Felipe E Vizcarrondo, *Assisted Suicide And Euthanasia In Pediatrics*, accessible at https://acpeds.org/assisted-suicide-and-euthanasia-in-pediatrics/ (accessed 17 March, AD 2026).
4. See for example the following reflections of Leonie Herx, palliative care physician in the Department of Oncology at the University of Calgary: "Physician-assisted death is not palliative care" *Current Oncology* 2015;22(2):82-83, accessible at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4399615/ (accessed 9 April, AD 2026), and "How has medical assistance in dying changed palliative care?" *BMJ* 2024;387:q2423, accessible at https://www.bmj.com/content/387/bmj.q2423 (accessed 9 April, AD 2026).
5. See the brief "Suffering and The Theology of the Cross, Question and Answer with the Rev. Dr. Harold Senkbeil" in *The Days That Were Formed For Me – Psalm 139:16, The Christian Response to Assisted Suicide* (St. Louis: LCMS Life Ministry, 2020), downloadable at https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/7860AF1D-2742-4C63-B160-09D4502B521A (accessed 17 March, 2026).
6. The word ἀγαθός (*agathos*) in the text refers to moral good, which originates from God and is empowered by Him.
7. May be downloaded at https://christianliferesources.com/resources/publications/christian-medical-directives (accessed 17 March, 2026). Note that since the laws vary among states,

one needs to provide some basic information, including address, phone number and email, to receive a proper form.

ADOPTED 1 June, AD 2026