



**UPDATE** |  **FREE TO BE FAITHFUL**  
 Fall 2021

# Consider Your Calling in the Political Arena

by Jonathan Lange, Editor



Mary Ann Hanusa, Council Bluffs, Iowa

At over 1.8 million members, the LCMS represents 0.54% of the American population. If it were proportionally represented in Congress, there would be two or three people in the House and Senate who were marked, not by an “R” or a “D,” but by an “LCMS.” And that’s just the federal government.

Imagine if the LCMS were proportionally represented in state legislatures, county commissions, city councils and school boards across the land? Imagine if, instead of merely seeking to influence the votes of non-Christian elected officials, the people of God had a direct seat at the table in numbers proportional to the population.

## WE ARE FREE TO BE FAITHFUL

In response to increasing intrusions by the government into the realm of the church, the LCMS launched the *Free to be Faithful*® campaign in September 2012 to educate and move people to take informed action to protect religious freedom and all the cultural issues that pertain to it: the confession of faith in the public square, holy marriage, the sanctity of human life and related issues.

In 2016, the Synod in convention adopted Resolution 14-01 to encourage education and leadership in matters of religious freedom.

For LCMS *Free to be Faithful* resources and news, visit [lcms.org/socialissues/freetobefaitful](https://lcms.org/socialissues/freetobefaitful).

But never mind proportionality, think bigger. Lutherans have a history of excellence in education, work ethic and community-mindedness. What would prevent them from outperforming mere mathematical expectations — and not only in elected office? Imagine, also, faithful Christians working as political appointees, under-secretaries and staffers in the halls of government at every level.

There are some who are doing more than imagining. They are putting their shoulder to the wheel and getting to work.

Meet Mary Ann Hanusa, a member of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa. For 10 years, she served as an Iowa State representative. In that capacity, she has been instrumental in passing nationally celebrated pro-life legislation and representing the Christian perspective in countless policy debates.

Now, she is setting her sights on higher office. Hanusa is *running to represent Iowa’s 3rd District* in the U.S. House of Representatives. “Now more than ever we need Christians in the political arena to defend life, and to protect our freedoms and liberties,” she told *Free to be Faithful*.

“Christians should not shy away from political involvement, but instead be an example for service in our society.” If elected, she will join one LCMS senator and three LCMS congressmen on Capitol Hill.

God has been preparing Hanusa for this moment in time. Her run for U.S. Congress is the next step of a decades long journey of service. This graduate of Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, Neb., served on the staffs of Sen. Charles Grassley and President George W. Bush before her election to the State House in 2011. All this combined to prepare her to run for Congress.

Public service is not limited to lay women like Rep. Hanusa. God also puts pastors, teachers and even district presidents into service in temporal government. The Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy, bishop of the LCMS English District, served eight years on the Peters Township School Board (near Pittsburgh). As chair of Finance and Personnel, he negotiated \$100 million business agreements and teacher contracts that put Christian principles first and served to protect children from many evils endemic in bloated bureaucracies.

The LCMS is interested in encouraging even the smallest step into government service precisely because it can prepare faithful Christians from all over the country for service. It is not only national or state offices where LCMS members

can serve their neighbor. County and city offices like commissioner, mayor and school board member are in dire need of Lutheran servants. Even the leadership of political parties are vocations of love for the neighbor.

Imagine LCMS Lutherans elected as both Republican and Democrat precinct committeemen and committeewomen. Imagine a world where political parties argued about

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the best way to protect the unborn and how to support God’s institution of marriage, rather than

arguing about whether the unborn should be protected or whether holy marriage should be redefined, undermined and torn asunder.

Involvement in local, state and national politics is not a diversion from the Christian life. It is participation in the Christian life. Lutherans have always proclaimed this. In 1947, as the LCMS celebrated her 100th anniversary, Concordia Publishing House celebrated the moment by publishing “The Abiding Word.” In it, the Rev. Dr. Theo Hoyer wrote an essay on our Lutheran ethos of church and state. He said, “The Church will not discourage, but rather encourage her members to take office in various departments of the State. Luther said, ‘If you are able, you should offer yourself for some office and try to get it.’”

We still proclaim this. “Aspiring to public office is an important way to love and serve your neighbor,” says LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison. “God has positioned many of our members to fulfill this vocation and to build a nation where free speech and free thought rule, and the Gospel can be preached in its truth and purity.”

How can you get started? Start with the smallest step. Simply attend a party precinct meeting. Listen in on a local school board meeting. Show up at a meeting of your town council. The Holy Spirit will take over from there. Follow His lead. Let us work together to fill the halls of power with the power of God’s Word. It is “the power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

**Editor’s Note:** In recognition of this vital vocation, the Synod president, in cooperation with the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty, is asking for help identifying LCMS members who are running for or serving in public office (from school board to congress). If you or someone you know fits this description, contact Barb Below, assistant to the president, at 800-248-1930, Ext. 1407. You may even be highlighted in future issues of this newsletter.



## CULTURE

# *Dobbs v. Jackson:* America's Moment to Return to Sanity

by Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, executive director, Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

**L**ife is precious, life is sacred, and each person is accountable to God for how he respects life. And in 2022, the United States might return to its fundamental roots of being a nation that honors life.

An underlying principle governing the American experiment from its inception is the notion that human beings have a universal dignity as those bearing the image of God (GEN. 9:6). No other government before or since (other than ancient Israel) has been willing to protect the rights that flowed from such truth. A basic societal expression of that view of life is the state's defense and protection of innocent life. The sanctity of human life is not a "political ideology," but a fundamental truth about what it means to be human.

We, as a nation, have not lived up to this most basic creed. Sadly, we are still fighting for the sanctity of life for all people from conception to natural death. America, as a civilized nation, still harbors the most barbaric laws in the Western world when it comes to life in the womb.

Anne Hendershott wrote in *The American Spectator* (July 31, 2021):

We are the only country in the world that allows an elective abortion throughout the entire nine months of a child's gestation. According to the Center for Reproductive Rights database, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Norway, Switzerland, and a long list of other European countries have a gestational limit of 14 weeks or earlier.

With *Roe v. Wade*, a misguided Supreme Court ruling, American culture was fundamentally, constitutionally set against the sanctity of life, aborting over 62 million children since that fateful day (Jan. 22) in 1973.

But 2022 could be the year that begins to reverse all of that. In October 2021, the Supreme Court of the United States will begin to hear oral arguments in the case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, with an expected ruling in June 2022. As Sarah Parshall Perry and Melanie Israel write in the article, "Will the Supreme Court Overturn *Roe v. Wade*?"

In *Dobbs*, the Supreme Court must answer a question it has never addressed: whether all pre-viability prohibitions on elective abortions are unconstitutional. And Mississippi has just submitted its first arguments to the court on why the answer should be "no."

Incredibly, *Roe v. Wade* claimed that the government's role, for the first time in American history, was to sanction the taking, not the protecting, of vulnerable, innocent human life. *Roe* actually argued that the more vulnerable the life, the more it can be aborted out of existence. The *Dobbs* case rightly challenges that assertion, directing our country back to a basic respect for life for all.

Also in question is the troubling assertion in *Roe* that the practice of abortion is a constitutional right. People of goodwill on both sides of the abortion debate know that such a practice is not grounded in the protections afforded by the Constitution. *Roe* was always judicial overreach. Overturning *Roe* would merely put the question back where it belongs: in the legislatures of each state, in the hands of those who must answer to the people, not in the hands of nine judges.

If 2022 becomes a turning point for "life" in America, Christians need to be prepared for the responsive debates or, worse, the demonizations that are sure to come. The forces that welcome the unfettered practice of abortion up to and beyond the ninth month (infanticide) will certainly be ready to spread malicious misinformation concerning *Dobbs*. In response, please join with us from October to June in a nationwide prayer vigil concerning *Dobbs*. (Watch for info at [lcrifreedom.org](http://lcrifreedom.org).) Join us, too, as we seek to rise to the occasion of defending life as pro-woman, pro-family, pro-science, pro-society, yes, indeed, pro-life as a blessing for all.

Our cultural and political experiences following *Roe* have shown that laws imposed at the federal level from the top down create chaos and dissension. More than 20 years ago, the sociologist James Davison Hunter suggested in his book *Before the Shooting Begins* that the best way to resolve the conflicts provoked by *Roe* is through local and regional and state debate — among people who care about their common neighborhoods. 2022 may be the moment when the American culture returns to the sanity of such a debate for the sanctity of life for all.

**Editor's Note:** The Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) is an endeavor inspired by President Harrison's Free to be Faithful initiative and works in close cooperation with this ongoing initiative. While organizationally distinct from the LCMS, the LCRL serves the members of our congregations by making their voices heard in Washington, D.C., and helping them to stay informed on matters of national importance to the family of God.

EDUCATION

# Issues before SCOTUS in *Carson v. Makin*

by *Protect the 1st* staff



LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

**R**est assured, the state of Maine holds that it is perfectly okay for you to be a Catholic, provided you don't teach children to believe in Catholic doctrine. Same with being a Protestant, a Jew, or a Muslim.

A strange split exists in the law concerning the difference between having the status or label of being an adherent to a religion and being so bold as to teach the tenets of that religion. A pair of Catholic and Protestant parents in Maine, David and Amy Carson and Troy and Angela Nelson, are petitioning the Supreme Court to resolve a split in the law and the philosophical mess that is Maine's treatment of religious schools.

In 2020, it seemed as if recurring state discrimination against religious schools was finally going to be recognized as the constitutional violation it is. In *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, the Supreme Court held that a state may not exclude families and schools from participating in a student-aid program because of a school's religious status. Maine, in administering its tuition assistance program, agreed that it could not deny tuition benefits to students on the basis of their school's status, but they could — and did — deny these benefits from schools that provide religious instruction.

Got that? Maine does not discriminate on the basis of religious labels but does discriminate on the basis of what those labels mean in practice.

The First Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the Maine law, agreeing that it is permissible to withhold tuition assistance from a school that, “in addition to teaching academic subjects, promotes the faith or belief system with which it is associated ...” Christian schools could, presumably, qualify for the tuition assistance program provided they jettison any mention of Christ, the Bible, and any moment of the day dedicated to prayer.

It is easy to see why the Supreme Court has granted the petition and will hear this case. The Sixth and Tenth Circuits have held such exclusions to be unconstitutional, while the Vermont Supreme Court has upheld them. This split, which preceded *Espinoza*, survives it since *Espinoza* revolved around religious “status.”

“Only the Supreme Court can resolve this split, whether there is a constitutionally significant difference between discrimination based on ‘religious status’ and discrimination based on ‘religious use,’” said Gene Schaerr, general counsel of Protect the 1st. “The attempt to distinguish between religious status and religious practice is absurd and betrays official contempt toward faith. For the Supreme Court, the conclusion here should be, in baseball terms, a slow ball down the middle of the plate.”

**Editor's Note:** Editor's Note: On March 11, and September 10, 2021 the LCMS filed separate Amici Curiae. Both are available on the [LCMS Board of Directors page](#).

## RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

# DEMKOVICH V. ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE PARISH

by Becket Law staff

### Walking with the Church

St. Andrew the Apostle Parish has been serving a Polish immigrant neighborhood in the city of Chicago for over 120 years. As part of the Archdiocese of Chicago, St. Andrew Parish is dedicated to ministering to all Catholics, including LGBTQ Catholics seeking to walk with the Church.

For over 25 years, the Archdiocesan Gay and Lesbian Outreach (AGLO) has been a community of accompaniment that seeks to meet LGBTQ people where they are. During the AIDS epidemic, AGLO worked closely with the Catholic Charities HIV/AIDS ministries and generously contributed its time, money, and prayer to help the afflicted and offer them hope in the face of a terrible disease. Today, AGLO offers weekly Mass and Sacraments, retreats and days of reflection, and prayer and discussion groups to help LGBTQ Catholics find a place of pastoral outreach in the Church.

### Violating Church Teachings

Sandor Demkovich was hired by St. Andrew Parish in 2012. During his time with St. Andrew, Mr. Demkovich served as music director, choir director and organist. These positions are important roles within the religious life of the parish. As music director, Mr. Demkovich shared the Catholic faith with members of the parish through music — he helped select scripturally appropriate music for Masses and other important sacraments, played the organ during services, and helped lead the congregation in singing hymns.

As a minister of the faith and a representative of the parish, Mr. Demkovich was responsible for upholding the teachings of the faith in word and action. But in 2014, after working at the parish for two years, the parish was required to end Mr. Demkovich's participation in its ministry because he entered into a same-sex marriage in violation of his agreement to bear witness to and promote the Church's 2,000-year-old teachings, including those on marriage.

### Ignoring the Ministerial Exception

In December 2016, Mr. Demkovich sued St. Andrew Parish and the Archdiocese of Chicago, claiming that he had been

discriminated against because of his sexual orientation and subjected to a hostile work environment.

The district court allowed some of Mr. Demkovich's claims against the Archdiocese to proceed, even though Mr. Demkovich admitted that the religious importance of his position at the parish made him a minister. In August 2020, a divided three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit also ruled against the Archdiocese.

The ruling conflicted with previous Seventh Circuit decisions, rulings of other federal circuits, and the Supreme Court's just-issued decision in *Our Lady of Guadalupe v. Morrissey-Berru*, in which the Supreme Court affirmed the right of churches to select and supervise their leaders and ministers free from government interference.

The Archdiocese of Chicago, represented by Becket, *asked* the entire 11-judge Seventh Circuit to reconsider the panel's decision. The court *agreed*, with one judge recused, and heard arguments on February 9, 2021.

On July 9, 2021, the Seventh Circuit *ruled* 7-3 to reverse its previous decision and declare that the "ministerial exception" protects the entire ministerial relationship and not just the beginning or end.

The Archdiocese of Chicago is also represented by its general counsel, Jim Geoly, who presented oral argument before the panel and the en banc court, and by Alex Marks at Burke, Warren, MacKay & Serritella, P.C.

**Editor's Note:** In the interest of defending the precedent set by the unanimous ruling for *Hosanna-Tabor* in 2011, the LCMS filed an *Amicus Curiae* with the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals asking that it hear *Demkovich*.

### Prayer for the Armed Services of Our Country

O Lord, God Almighty, whose arm is powerful to defend and protect all that put their trust in Thee, we commend to Thy fatherly care the men who are bearing arms in defense of our country at home or abroad. We pray Thee, keep them under the shadow of Thy wings; be Thou their strength in all danger, in distress and in temptations. Give them courage, boldness and faithfulness in the performance of their duty. In life and death, may they put their trust in Thee, who art the only Giver of victory; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**



PHOTO/BETTY IMAGES

# LUTHERAN CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

*Encourage, Educate, Advocate*

**KEEP UP TO DATE** on what's happening with the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) at [LCRLFreedom.org](http://LCRLFreedom.org), or on our "Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty" Facebook page.

The LCRL's mission is to ignite and fuel a uniquely Lutheran response to increasing intrusions, limitations and challenges by the government in the life of the Church, while educating, encouraging and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action in support of marriage, life and religious freedom.

One of the ways to "get on board" is to prayerfully receive our "Word from the Center" devotions and "Word from the Center" D.C. updates. On our "Word from the Center — Mondays" you'll receive a devotional reflection from His Word. At the end of the week, "Word from the Center — Fridays," you'll receive a Two-Kingdom reflection from the LCRL about a topic, issue or court case that concerns the issues of liberty, life, marriage and occasionally issues concerning education. When you receive the "Word from the Center," readers will be blessed by God's Word and will become better informed as to how to be a more useful citizen in His Hands for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel for all.

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**TO SUBSCRIBE** to our semi-weekly "Word from the Center" encouragements, please email us at [info@lcrifreedom.org](mailto:info@lcrifreedom.org).

Our influence on the Hill is growing with our partnerships in the cause of religious liberty and life, with our commitment to be a balanced voice of God's Two-Kingdom work for the sake of our culture and our church, and with your prayerful consideration to be at work together with us. To that end, we serve.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about the LCRL, including ways to support it, visit [lcms.org/lutheran-center-for-religious-liberty](http://lcms.org/lutheran-center-for-religious-liberty) or contact Martha Dahlke at [martha.dahlke@lcms.org](mailto:martha.dahlke@lcms.org) or 800-248-1930.

Contacting the President and other elected officials:

[usa.gov/elected-officials](http://usa.gov/elected-officials) | [senate.gov/senators/contact/](http://senate.gov/senators/contact/) | [house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative](http://house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative)



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