

Feel-Good Friday: Pastor Jay Stewart Talks About the 'Life Ride' and Being the Church

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By [Jennifer Oliver O'Connell](#) | 10:00 PM on April 14, 2023

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Jay Stewart is the founder and lead pastor at The Refuge Church in Kannapolis, North Carolina, about 45 minutes outside of Charlotte. The church is one of the latest incarnations of “satellite” churches, so they also have a campus in Greensboro, NC, and they cover and support O Refúgio ministry in Brazil.

Yes, that’s the country.

From the church’s website, their mission reads, in part:

to ‘be’ the church and not just ‘do’ church, revering God in all we do and revealing God to all we meet.

Stewart and his wife Melanie started [The Refuge Church](#) out of a basement in 2004, and the church has since expanded to multiple campuses. [In 2016, The Refuge merged](#) with a predominantly Black congregation and that church’s pastor is now a part of The Refuge’s executive pastoral staff. A huge part of the mission of the church is to embody [racial unity](#), *not* racial equity.

A part of our purpose is (to) be a demonstration of unity, a demonstration of racial reconciliation in a nation that has been so divided for way too long. And we get the privilege of walking out this purpose,” Stewart said.

The Refuge Church has been a shining example of spiritual and racial unity to the city of Charlotte, the state of North Carolina, and the nation. Seven years since the merger, the church has only grown stronger in this embodiment, as Pastor Stewart discussed.

Even before the death of [George Floyd](#) and its fallout, we have seen how some churches have replaced Biblical unity with racial equity. Sadly, equity works from a premise to divide, rather than unite. Pastor Stewart beautifully expounded on those differences, and how scripture speaks to unity.

But the main focus of our conversation was a vision that Pastor Stewart had set decades before for when he reached his 60th birthday. An avid cyclist, on May 4, 2023 (the same date for the National Day of Prayer), Stewart will be participating in “[Life Ride](#),” a 3,400-mile bike ride across the country to raise awareness and funds for [Love Life Ministries](#). Stewart and hundreds of others will begin their ride in Corona del Mar, California, and will end the ride in June, around Charleston, South Carolina. Love Life Ministries seeks to unite and mobilize the church to cultivate a heart of Love and a culture of Life. They call it, Christianity 101: Loving our neighbors as ourselves. An activated Church can change the trajectory of the culture, so that women will not see abortions as their only option, and those who are orphaned or are in foster care can be embraced and incorporated into loving families and communities.



Pastor Jay Stewart on a Practice Ride for Life Ride (10-08-2022) (Credit: Facebook/Pastor Jay Stewart)

As you have seen from my articles, the fight for Life is not done just because *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. In California, our ridiculous and sick governor purchased a boatload of abortion pills in protest of a U.S. District Court decision to strip FDA approval of the abortifacient mifepristone. Hearts and minds need to be changed in order to see an end to abortion. Actively embracing and advocating for Life will also change the landscape for

orphaned children, creating a culture that not only protects the unborn, but cares for the vulnerable and abandoned children in our midst, while supporting mothers who choose Life for their child through all stages.

LIFE can only breed more Life.

Pastor Stewart talked about the vision that was birthed decades ago to do this bike ride, and how the Lord graciously brought it together.



Pastor Jay Stewart-One Month to Life Ride (04-02-2023) (Credit: Facebook/Pastor Jay Stewart)

Here are the fundraising goals for the Life Ride:

- Raise up 1,000 LifeRide Churches Nationwide
- Raise \$1,000,000 to support the loving work of Love Life in cities around the nation

The Life Ride website gives ways that you can help them reach their goals:

- Recruit 100 Life Ride teams to register with an average of 10 riders per team that will collectively ride 3,400 miles in 60 days in their own community or on a stationary bike!
- Each team will set a House of Refuge & Fundraising goal that they collectively commit to reach.
- All progress will be tracked virtually so you and your teammates can keep up with your goals.

Even if a person cannot support the ride financially, Pastor Stewart highlighted other fun ways that people can still participate: virtually, through prayer, and just simply by spreading the word:

Well, a couple of ways, and thank you for asking. We're asking people to do a few things: Number one, we're asking you to consider riding *with me*.

Not all the way across the country, but to ride with me virtually. And there are teams that are being formed all across the nation and people are riding on their Pelotons, riding in their gym, riding out on their greenways in their communities, and it's families that are doing this, business owners who are doing this, churches. So, we're asking you to form a team and then have people sponsor you and ride with me virtually across the nation. Secondly, we're just asking people help us get the word out.

The LifeRideUSA.org site gives information and stats on the teams that have formed already, the training and promotional videos, as well as the financial contributions made thus far. Pastor Jay is a top fundraiser, having raised over \$10,000. As of this writing, the organization has raised \$194,900 toward their \$1 million goal.

If people will just share that with their pastors, share it with their bosses. Share it with people in their community, people in their circle of influence, that will help us tremendously. To get the word out. But also we want to see people engage with us. I can't do this alone. I'm just telling you right now, it's a team effort and we need as many people involved as possible.

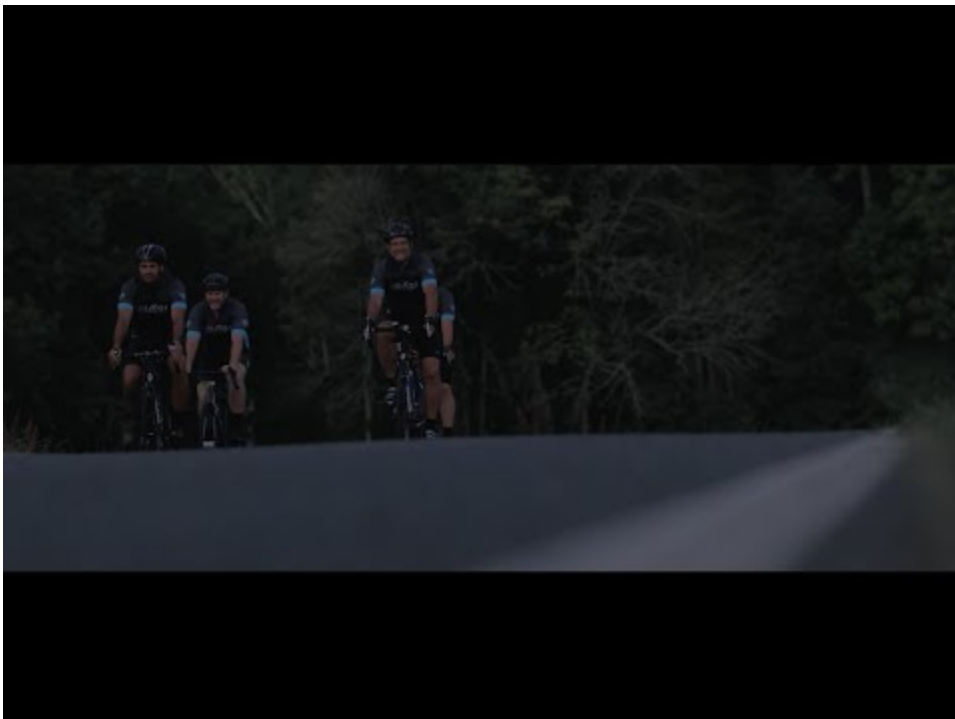
[Life Ride](#) also has an Instagram account, and [Pastor Stewart](#) regularly posts there as well as his own Instagram and [Facebook](#).

This video is a beautiful example of a Love Life Ministries partner based in California, that is changing the landscape of that county and the state. As mentioned above, Governor Gavin "Hair Gel" Newsom is in a race to the bottom to keep the state in the throes of death. It is heartening that Riverside Life Services and other pro-life centers partnered with Love Life Ministries are not just holding the line but transforming the culture.



Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/NU_u9x2sUFk

You can support Pastor Stewart, or participate in the Life Ride by visiting the [Life Ride USA website](#). Pastor Jay Stewart is featured in this promotional video for the Life Ride. Since he will be in my state *and* neighborhood for the start of the ride, I plan to see Pastor Stewart and the other Life Riders off on their journey on May 4 — a continuation of this story, as well as my own personal steps toward *being* the church, and not just doing church.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/ezP6p62WGNg>

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