

Model Resolution for ELCA Synod Assemblies: Calling for a Social Statement on Child Protection

A detailed article on the “Rationale for a Social Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection” is available for reference and study at: <http://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/306/335>

WHEREAS, one in eight children in the United States experiences a confirmed case of abuse or neglect before they turn 18, although the actual prevalence of known and unknown abuse is significantly higher;

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) often have profound and lifelong impacts on children;

WHEREAS, 90 percent of people receiving public mental health services for major mental illnesses have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse in their lives, often as children;

WHEREAS, every congregation should collectively study, review the data and evidence regarding child abuse, and educate themselves on the harm that abuse can do to a child physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually;

WHEREAS, Jesus called children messengers from God and contended that our treatment of children reflects our view of our Creator (Mark 9:36-37), we must repent our sins against children and demonstrate the fruit of this repentance through enforceable child protection policies, sermons and Bible studies on child maltreatment, and ministries to address the needs of children suffering under the cross of abuse or neglect;

WHEREAS, the Bible and Lutheran theology have sometimes been used to excuse or minimize the abuse of children, to discourage victims of child abuse from seeking evidence-based mental health care, and to violate mandated reporting laws;

WHEREAS, the Bible has often been distorted to justify hitting children of all ages, including infants, and that this violence has been repeatedly shown in research to increase the risk of poor medical and mental health outcomes;

WHEREAS, every congregation, church agency, and school should have child protection policies that are widely communicated and clearly state that abuse and neglect will not be tolerated and that child protection is of the highest priority;

WHEREAS, child protection policies help safeguard children, educate congregations, deter potential offenders, and witness our faith to the world;

WHEREAS, providing abuse survivors with a voice and opportunity to share their experiences will require the church to develop collaborations with professionals trained in recognizing and responding to all forms of child maltreatment and who are willing to consult with faith leaders in coordinating medical, mental health, and spiritual care;

WHEREAS, taking steps to develop a comprehensive training program for the leadership and members of the congregation lays the foundation for a safe environment in which abuse is identified, understood, and addressed promptly and effectively;

THEREFORE, be it resolved:

1. The ____ Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America encourages its members to read and study the “Rationale for a Social Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection” available for reference at: <http://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/306/335>
2. The ____ Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America join a churchwide, synod-wide, and congregation-wide process for developing effective and enforceable child protection and child maltreatment policies at every level;
3. The__Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America encourages ELCA seminaries to provide education on recognizing and responding to child abuse, including appropriate spiritual care, and to provide continuing education on child maltreatment for pastors, deacons and other faith leaders in the field;
4. The ____ Synod of the ELCA encourages its congregations to offer opportunities for dialogue and education on effective discipline of children including Bible studies on the Christian obligation to discipline children without the use of corporal punishment;
5. The ____ Synod memorializes the ELCA to develop and adopt a social statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection.