

## Memorial 2022-3 Calling for a Social Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection

1 WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) often have profound and lifelong  
2 impacts on children;  
3  
4 WHEREAS, every congregation should collectively study, review the data and evidence  
5 regarding child abuse, and educate themselves on the harm that abuse can do to a child  
6 physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually;  
7  
8 WHEREAS, Jesus called children messengers from God and contended that our treatment of  
9 children reflects our view of our Creator (Mark 9:36-37), we must repent our sins against  
10 children and demonstrate the fruit of this repentance through enforceable child protection  
11 policies, sermons and Bible studies on child maltreatment, and ministries to address the needs  
12 of children suffering under the cross of abuse or neglect;  
13  
14 WHEREAS, the biblical interpretation by some communities of faith have been used to excuse  
15 or minimize the abuse of children, to discourage victims of child abuse from seeking  
16 evidence-based mental health care, and to violate mandated reporting laws;  
17  
18 WHEREAS, the biblical interpretation has sometimes been distorted to justify hitting children  
19 of all ages, and that this violence has been repeatedly shown in research to increase the risk  
20 of poor medical and mental health outcomes;  
21  
22 WHEREAS, every congregation, church agency, and school should have child protection  
23 policies that are widely communicated and clearly state that abuse, neglect, and maltreatment  
24 of minor children will not be tolerated and that child protection is of the highest priority;  
25  
26 WHEREAS, child protection policies help safeguard children, educate congregations,  
27 deter potential offenders, and witness our faith to the world;  
28  
29 WHEREAS, providing abuse survivors with a voice and opportunity to share their experiences  
30 will require the church to develop collaborations with professionals trained in recognizing  
31 and responding to all forms of child maltreatment and who are willing to consult with faith  
32 leaders in coordinating medical, mental health, and spiritual care;  
33  
34 WHEREAS, taking steps to develop a comprehensive training program for the leadership and  
35 members of the congregation lays the foundation for a safe environment in which abuse is  
36 identified, understood, and addressed promptly and effectively, including the process of  
37 mandated reporting;  
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39 THEREFORE, be it resolved:  
40 The St. Paul Area Synod memorializes the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to develop and  
41 adopt a Social Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The St. Paul Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America encourages all leaders of ELCA congregations and the Taskforce for a Social Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection to read and study the “Rationale for a Social Statement on Child Abuse and Child Protection” authored by Dr. Craig Nesson available for reference at: <http://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/306/335>

**Endorsed by the Congregation Council of:** Shepherd of the Valley, Apple Valley

*Because this memorial is consistent with the governing documents of the ELCA and addresses an issue of general concern to the Saint Paul Area Synod, the Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption of this memorial.*