

Resolution on Child and Vulnerable Adult Safety Policies and Procedures

WHEREAS, one in four women and one in six men are sexually abused or assaulted by their 18th birthday^{1,2}, and there are survivors and perpetrators in our churches; and

WHEREAS, all people are created by God in the divine image, and human sexuality is a gracious gift of God, and the family of God is called to stand firmly and pastorally against all forms of abuse. Sexual abuse and harassment betray God's creation, inflict grievous suffering on the victims, and rend the fabric of the whole community of the people of God³; and

WHEREAS, sexual abuse and harassment in the church has been a matter of concern to the ELCA since it formed in 1988. The first churchwide assembly in 1989 passed a resolution on making the church a safe place, free from sexual abuse and harassment. Synods, seminaries, congregations, colleges, social ministry organizations, and the churchwide expression have struggled with these issues since our beginnings⁴; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA's social message on gender-based violence states that "Christian churches and individuals too often have contributed to gender-based violence through denial, resistance and a lack of preparation...operating with inadequate policies and practices contribute to the problem"⁵; and

WHEREAS, all forms of sexual abuse and harassment are unacceptable within the life of the church, because the church should be a safe place where people can worship, learn, work, love and receive care in a manner that is free from sexual misconduct⁶; and

WHEREAS, when sexual abuse and harassment occurs, not only the victim and their family suffer; but the entire congregation suffers emotionally, spiritually, and financially; and

WHEREAS, "A vast number of organizations and agents need to be challenged to adopt and use policies and practices that prevent or reduce gender-based violence"⁷ and neither the ELCA, nor the MAS require congregations or mission starts to implement and maintain policies and procedures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults; and

WHEREAS, a written policy statement is an important first step toward preventing sexual abuse or harassment; and education and training are among the chief means of prevention, therefore let it be

RESOLVED, that a task force of the Minneapolis Area Synod ("MAS") be formed to oversee that all MAS congregations and mission starts implement policies and procedures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, and renew them every three years; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the staff of the MAS keep records of the policies and procedures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, (along with their triennial renewal) of all MAS congregations and mission starts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the staff of the MAS arrange for annual training and resources for rostered and lay leadership.

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40 **Adopted by:** 394 Corridor North Conference in assembly, February 13, 2025

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44 **References:**

45 ¹ Statistics In-Depth, National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)

46 ² The 1 in 6 Statistic - Sexual Abuse & Assault of Boys & Men, Confidential Support for Men

47 ³ ELCA STRATEGY FOR RESPONDING TO SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH, p 23, an
48 historical document of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Copyright © 2005
49 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Produced by the Commission for Women.

50 ⁴Ibid., page 2

51 ⁵ ELCA Social Message, p. 10-11 Gender-based Violence

52 ⁶ [https://www.elca.org/about/churchwide/office-of-the-secretary/legal-issues/sexual-misconduct](https://www.elca.org/about/churchwide/office-of-the-secretary/legal-issues/sexual-misconduct-prevention)
53 prevention

54 ⁷ ELCA Social Message, p. 16 Gender-based Violence