

Memorial 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. 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 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (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. 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 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 be it

RESOLVED, that the Minneapolis Area Synod (MAS), in assembly, memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to direct that all synods of the ELCA oversee the implementation and maintenance of policies and procedures in their congregations, including regular training and resources, which safeguard children and vulnerable adults; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2025 MAS Assembly memorializes the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to forward this memorial to the ELCA Church Council's Executive Committee for referral and disposition to the appropriate unit or office of the churchwide organization in accordance with the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church.

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40 **References:**

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

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

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44 historical document of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Copyright © 2005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

46 ⁴Ibid., page 2

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

48 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)
49 prevention

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