**Resolution #4**

**A Resolution Regarding Creating Safe Churches for Children**

WHEREAS, All forms of child abuse are contrary to Scripture, the teachings of Christ, and the deepest convictions and confessions we share as members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); and

WHEREAS, Across all denominations and expressions of the Church of Christ, we have often terribly failed in our responsibilities to protect children in our communities from abuse by adults, including trusted adults in positions of leadership; and

WHEREAS, Jesus taught about the importance of protecting children, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. … If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”[[1]](#footnote-1); 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 betrays God’s creation, inflicts grievous suffering on the victims, and rends the fabric of the whole community of the people of God."[[2]](#footnote-2); and

WHEREAS, The ELCA, gathered at the first Churchwide Assembly in 1989, passed a resolution which called, in part, for "each congregation [to] commit itself to become a safe place by working to

a. provide an atmosphere where sexual abuse can be discussed with the freedom and compassion of the gospel, and where specific acts of ministry be encouraged;

b. engage in education and prevention of all forms of sexual abuse and harassment;

c. provide pastoral care for survivors and referrals for treatment of offenders;

d. create policies and procedures that assist and support the members of the congregation and its leadership to cope in healing and redemptive ways with these abuses; and

e. manifest its concern for problems of this kind in its community, e.g., families, schools, and workplaces;"[[3]](#footnote-3) and

WHEREAS, The Delaware-Maryland Synod Youth & Family Ministry has created resources to support congregations as they develop their own child protection policies;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That each congregation of the Delaware-Maryland Synod be encouraged to enact a child protection policy that includes background checks and child abuse prevention training by the 2014 DE-MD Synod Assembly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the DE-MD Synod will set an example for congregations by putting safe church policies into practice in all ministries and programs of the Synod.

*Submitted by the Child Protection Policy Taskforce, DE-MD Synod Youth + Family Ministry*

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Penny Sadler-Vocke, Holy Communion (Fallston)

1. Matthew 18:10-14 English Standard Version [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *An ELCA Strategy for Responding to Sexual Abuse in the Church,* (ELCA, 1992), page 23, Appendix A "OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING POLICY/PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AGAINST CLERGY." Last accessed on March 29th, 2012. http://www.elca.org/~/media/Files/Growing%20in%20Faith/Vocation/Leadership%20Support/Safe%20Place/strategy.ashx [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. "RESOLUTION ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT" included as Appendix B in *An ELCA Strategy for Responding to Sexual Abuse in the Church,* (ELCA, 1992), page 46. Last accessed on March 29th, 2012. http://www.elca.org/~/media/Files/Growing%20in%20Faith/Vocation/Leadership%20Support/Safe%20Place/strategy.ashx [↑](#footnote-ref-3)