

Cherish Our Children

1 WHEREAS the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted
2 a *Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Message)* in November 2001, and
3
4 WHEREAS this *Message* states, “Love born of faith in Jesus Christ calls us all to attend to,
5 discuss, resist, and reject the system of sexual exploitation” (pg.1), and
6
7 WHEREAS “The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America calls upon
8 members, congregations, synods, churchwide units, and affiliated agencies and institutions to
9 give serious consideration to what they should and can do,” (*Message*, pg.7), and
10
11 WHEREAS in 2005 a Bishop’s Task Force in the Minneapolis Area Synod created Cherish Our
12 Children as a congregation-based ministry of prayer, education, relationship-building, and action
13 to implement the ELCA *Message*, and
14
15 WHEREAS the 2006 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly passed a resolution encouraging
16 congregations in the Minneapolis Area Synod to become involved in Cherish Our Children,
17 setting a goal of 50 percent congregational participation by 2010, and
18
19 WHEREAS since that Minneapolis Area Synod 2006 Resolution, the Northwest Synod of
20 Wisconsin, Western North Dakota Synod, Southwestern Minnesota Synod, Southeastern Iowa
21 Synod, and the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod have joined with the Minneapolis Area
22 Synod in promoting Cherish Our Children among their congregations, therefore be it
23
24 RESOLVED that the 2007 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2007 ELCA
25 Churchwide Assembly to direct the Church in Society Unit to convey to each synod council,
26 information and an invitation to implement Cherish Our Children as a ministry in its synod, and
27 be it finally
28
29 RESOLVED, that the 2007 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2007 ELCA
30 Churchwide Assembly to set a goal of having at least 50 percent of the 65 ELCA synods
31 implementing Cherish Our Children by 2015, with the progress towards this goal reported by the
32 Church in Society Unit at each churchwide assembly through 2015.

Author: Amy L. Hartman, Diaconal Minister, National Director of Cherish Our Children,
612-280-1259, ahartman001@luthersem.edu
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Contact: Doris Buerkle, member of the Minneapolis Area Synod Cherish Our Children
Task Force, 952-471-9734

The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

Background Information

Cherish Our Children was started by a Bishop's Task Force in the Minneapolis Area Synod and has spread to five other synods: Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, Western North Dakota, Southwestern Minnesota, Southeastern Iowa, and Northern Texas—Northern Louisiana.

The commitment to participate in Cherish Our Children begins with the synod leadership. Each synod which takes on this ministry creates a Bishop's or Synod Task Force, which serves as the public voice for Cherish Our Children, provides training and support to congregations, and maintains an accountability structure to celebrate the ministry which is happening in congregations.

The heart of this ministry lies in congregations, where staff and lay leadership speak and act on behalf of children in and outside of the congregation. Each congregation creates a Cherish Our Children Leadership Team to develop and support the following components of this ministry:

Prayer

- The Leadership Team is involved in intentional prayer for 40 days.
- “Cherish Prayers” implemented—this is intentional prayer by a specific adult for a specific child or young person, age birth to 25.

Education

- Use *Wise as Serpents** with junior high confirmation students and their parents.
- Hold at least two educational sessions for senior high youth and two for adults on the topic of sexual exploitation.
- Preach two sermons which incorporate something about the system of sexual exploitation.
- Hold internet safety training for parents and youth.

Relationship-Building

- Develop a relationship with one organization that provides services to homeless, runaway, or prostituted youth.
- Develop a relationship with one organization that focuses on children's/youth ministry or issues.

Action

- Out of the prayer, education, and relationships, each congregation discerns what particular actions to pursue. The Bishop's or Synod Task Force encourages synod-wide actions for all congregations.

Please refer to the Cherish Our Children report to the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly for more information.

*Available from Adults Saving Kids, www.adultssavingkids.org