



Human trafficking and ELCA Engagement

The ELCA is committed to being a public church and speaking out against acts of injustice. One act of injustice our church has been addressing is human trafficking. (See the ELCA social message "Commercial Sexual Exploitation" [here](#).) Human trafficking is the second largest criminal industry in the world, exploiting women, children, and men. As a church, the ELCA is engaged in anti-trafficking work by speaking out, implementing measures of prevention, and education throughout the ELCA on ways to address human trafficking within communities. Within the churchwide organization, there are many different units and programs working to address this atrocity. Churchwide staff members hope this resource will help you become more aware of the ways the churchwide organization is acting to create change.

- [Human trafficking](#)

ELCA Global Mission:

ELCA Global Mission continues to work with our companion churches around the world to address issues of injustice and systemic root causes of trafficking through holistic approaches including ministry. The ELCA stands firm with our partner churches and joins the global dialogue with our partners at the Lutheran World Federation to claim that Human Beings Are Not for Sale, which is a subtheme to the 500th Reformation anniversary in 2017. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has published a paper on this topic that can be found [here](#).

In addition to partnering with the LWF, Global Mission also collaborates with **ELCA World Hunger** to implement programs and projects around the world that focus on preventing root causes of poverty that would leave someone vulnerable to trafficking. For example one program in Serbia that is being implemented seeks to address the correlation between migration and trafficking.

This project in Serbia seeks to improve access to protection and assistance of migrants and asylum seekers in Serbia.... To manage to leave their country, find shelter or reach the desired destination, asylum seekers often use the services of smugglers and facilitators who help them for a high price to cross borders and provide transport or connections in transit countries.... Illustrative examples, according to the statements made by respondents is children kidnaping and blackmailing of parents, or sexual or labor exploitation on their move, often suffering and drowning in the Aegean Sea...

Together ELCA Global Mission and ELCA World Hunger seek to partner with our international companions to help shed light on these complex issues and to protect those who are left most vulnerable.



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The Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC) located in New York City works closely with the United Nations to advocate to the wider political community the importance of justice for all. Currently the LOWC office is working in collaboration with several other units and teams within the ELCA on the Sustainable Development Goals which address root causes of poverty which can lead to trafficking.

ELCA World Hunger:

ELCA World Hunger's comprehensive approach supports innovative solutions that get at the root causes of hunger. In addition to life-saving relief and development work, we are a publicly engaged church working for systemic change. Recognizing that human trafficking is both a consequence as well as a cause of vulnerability to poverty and hunger, ELCA World Hunger supports partners and companion churches in accompaniment of victims of violence, abuse and trafficking, as well as those who are vulnerable to these realities. Effective intervention, psycho-social care and education support our neighbors who have been victims of trafficking, while human rights advocacy, community empowerment, and sustainable livelihoods support the development of communities and reduce vulnerability to trafficking in the long-term. Through partners and companions, in this vital work the ELCA is equipped to accompany neighbors around the world as God calls us to strive for justice and peace.

ELCA Advocacy Office:

The ELCA Advocacy office has historically worked to ensure reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. In addition to other requirements, this legislation provides authorization for specific funding towards prevention and victim assistance programs. To that end, our annual budget requests to Congress include request to replenish funds for human trafficking programming.

The International Violence Against Women Act has language that requires (1) U.S. government contractors and grantees to establish policies and measures to prevent sexual exploitation and gender-based violence within their workforce and (2) the U.S. government to include prevention of early marriage and forced marriage as a key part of promotion of gender equality and global health. A fact sheet can be found [here](#).

The ELCA Advocacy Office also houses the Corporate Social Responsibility program. This program uses the tools of screening of investments, and shareholder advocacy to work with corporations, calling them to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and to create sustainable communities. Over the last few years the program has addressed the concern of human trafficking in hotel chains, airlines and trucking companies.

For more information about how the ELCA lives this out in practice, see the [ELCA Code of Conduct Paper](#)



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Additionally, the Corporate Social Responsibility program continues to produce resources and link ELCA members with other organizations to learn about ways to invest positively and encourages members to learn more about the companies' supply chains before they spend money at those establishments. Visit the [ELCA Website](#) for more information.

ELCA Justice for Women:

The Justice for Women program is shaped by the unique voices and experiences of a multitude of women across race, ethnicity, ability, class, sexuality and age. It is within this rich foundation that we work to:

- tap into Lutheran theological roots to address sexism
- connect this theology with specific issues in the world
- encourage men and women to work together.

These action priorities nourish the work and service of this church and society. Specifically regarding human trafficking, the ELCA Justice for Women program primarily focuses on education and supporting advocacy. The program's multiple resources on human trafficking can be used to assist your congregation, youth group, class, or organization in education, worship, or advocacy. Resources from Justice for Women can be found [here](#).

Women of the ELCA:

Women of the ELCA participants have been doing anti-trafficking work for more than a decade. It's been a grassroots movement that spread across the churchwide organization. Significant efforts have been made to educate church and community members about the scourge that is human trafficking. These efforts, in a myriad of approaches, continue as participants in Women of the ELCA move into other areas such as advocacy efforts to pass Safe Harbor Acts (currently in Wisconsin) and training efforts for hotel, motel and convenience store employees (currently in Iowa). The churchwide organization of Women of the ELCA continues to create resources (collected at [WELCA's website](#)) that equip people to tell the story of human trafficking and move into action against it.

- Women of the ELCA: [Understanding and Responding to Trafficking Resource](#)

Journal of Lutheran Ethics:

Journal of Lutheran Ethics (JLE) is a free, monthly, ecclesial online publication living out the Lutheran tradition of addressing social issues theologically, using the resources of historical, theological, and ethical tradition, biblical interpretation, and social sciences.¹ JLE has dedicated several articles and theological underpinnings to the

¹ <http://www.elca.org/JLE/Pages/About>



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topic of Human trafficking, there articles can be found by following the links listed below:

- [Introduction to February 2010: Human Trafficking](#)
- [Human Trafficking: Flourishing in the Shadows, Demanding Our Attention](#)
- [Your Body, Myself: Combating Human Trafficking with Theology of the Body](#)

ELCA Social Statements:

ELCA social teaching and policy guides this church's institutional decisions and messages and serves as the basis for discernment for members, congregations, and affiliated ELCA institutions. A number of ELCA commitments are found in ELCA documents.

- [ELCA Social Statement on Economic Life](#)
- ELCA Social Statement on [Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust](#)
- Condensed as it pertains to Human trafficking: [Gift and Trust Highlights](#)

ELCA Social Messages:

- ELCA Social Message on: [Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#)
- ELCA Social Message on: [Gender Based Violence](#)