



MY NEIGHBOR IS NOT FOR SALE





We are pleased to present our sixth congregational discussion guide, “My Neighbor is Not for Sale.”

Joining our previous studies – “My Neighbor is Muslim”, “My Neighbor is on Medicaid”, etc. – “My Neighbor is Not for Sale” brings congregations the facts, figures, and stories of the insidious world of sex trafficking of children and youth in our country. It also represents our first collaboration with Cherish All Children, a 10-year-old Lutheran social ministry, which has recently become a service of LSS of Minnesota.

It has been a shock to so many of us to learn that, what we used to call prostitution, has been quietly and quite creepily replaced by an Internet-driven industry of luring kids into phony relationships, controlling them, and selling them in the sex trade right under our noses in communities everywhere.

The images we grew up with of adult women on the corners of the “red light district” soliciting men has been replaced with an invisible web of adults preying on children and youth. Our new awareness has also made us question whether those women in the “red light district” ever really had many choices in life themselves.

Over the past couple of years, the State of Minnesota has contracted with LSS and others to offer “Safe Harbor” services in several communities that reach out to youth trapped in trafficking, help them escape the life, and support them in getting back into strong and healthy lives, utilizing our years of experience working with homeless youth.

Our new affiliation with Cherish All Children adds a rich dimension of congregational outreach and education and a focus on helping our children and youth protect themselves from trafficking by teaching them to beware of the signals that they are being lured into the danger zone.

I wish you blessings on your journey of awareness and enlightenment.

Jodi Harpstead, CEO (2011-2019)
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota



"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:13-14



This is a unique opportunity to shed light on a darkness in our world that many in our communities of faith have not dealt with. Cherish All Children has been working with congregations in the prevention of child sexual exploitation for over a decade. Now, joined with Lutheran Social Service of MN, we are providing this resource for more congregations to join in this effort to protect all of God's children.

It is our sincere hope that congregations will use this tool to become educated on this topic and see the needs in their own communities. Education is the very first step in prevention efforts. We learn what signs to look for, how to talk with our children and other adults, how to make changes in society that can transform the culture. Then, with this knowledge, we can engage with others in our communities doing this work.

Faith communities are powerful agents for social change. And combatting this issue requires the entire community. Partnering with organizations that have the expertise with trauma-informed care allows professionals to do their important work while we identify the appropriate ways to support them. Creating a welcoming and informed environment in our places of worship provides a critical support network for children and youth. And engaging in activities that address the root causes of sexual exploitation – such as poverty, homelessness, gender inequality, and the demand for sex – are key prevention measures.

Thank you for taking the first step in protecting and cherishing all God's children. We hope this resource is just the beginning of your engagement with Cherish All Children and others working to end all forms of sexual exploitation.

In Christ's service,

Joy McElroy, Executive Director
Cherish All Children

LEADER'S INFORMATION

Thank you for entering into this important topic of preventing child sexual exploitation and trafficking. Your leadership in using this guide will help your faith community become educated about the issue in order to identify ways we can all make a difference in raising generations free from exploitation. Cherish All Children is available to help at any point throughout your journey. Reach out with questions, for support, or to identify what next steps may be after completion of the guide.

TO BEGIN:

1. Read through all sessions of the discussion guide, view the videos, and determine which handouts and additional resources you'd like to have copied for your group. It is impossible to cover all of this topic in just four 1-hour sessions, so the guide is written to give the best introduction to each area, along with Biblical perspectives to reflect on. Reading through the complete guide will also prepare you to respond to questions that may be better saved for a future session that addresses the question, or to contact Cherish All Children in advance with your own questions.
2. Decide whether you will print out copies of the guide for all attendees or order them from Cherish All Children for a nominal fee.
3. WiFi is needed in the sessions, to view some of the videos and links provided. Videos could be downloaded to a computer in advance if Wifi is not available.
4. Prepare for the potential of an individual in the training disclosing a personal situation of abuse, exploitation, or other trauma to you. This may be something that happened in the past that they are now ready to talk through with you (and they may or may not have received professional support at that time), or it could be a current situation of their own or someone they know or love. At the start of sessions 1 & 2, we have a statement to be read encouraging people to take care of themselves as needed, and to see the pastor for support or to be referred to another professional if they choose. Please prepare for this by identifying professional resources you can provide or direct them to. These may include a local domestic abuse or sexual violence center, crisis hotline, or the National Human Trafficking Resource Center. Session II of this guide introduces you to resources to learn more about trauma and what faith communities can do to support individuals in their healing process.

5. You may wish to have Bibles available as all texts are not written out in full in the Biblical perspectives section. Think through how you'd like to lead this part of each session, reading through in advance and discussing as a group Bible study, or led by the pastor, or another method that works for your group.

Specific information related Session I: What is Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking?

For this session, we are now offering two different video paths to introduce the issues of sexual exploitation and trafficking.

- The *Chosen* 20-minute video is in DVD format, not Internet available. Cherish All Children can loan you a copy, or you can order from [Shared Hope International](#) for \$30. Shared Hope has provided permission for Cherish All Children's use of the video.
Chosen tells the true stories of two teenage girls who were involved in their school, community and church life, but were manipulated and tricked by traffickers into danger. It highlights what to look out for and warning signs for youth and adults.
- *The Life Story – Entry Into the Life* videos are available to download and use. *The Life Story* is a comprehensive project to shine a light on the realities of girls and women's entry into exploitation – poverty, violence, discrimination and system failure – to explore solutions and larger system change. *Entry Into the Life* is just one of the videos in this series, so there's opportunity for further learning at www.thelifestory.org.

Also important to note: Both of these videos focus on girls and women, but we know all genders and gender-identities experience exploitation and trafficking. This reality in the movement is becoming more evident and unfortunately resources have not yet caught up.

This session lays the foundation for learning about this issue, but each session can be independent of the others. If someone cannot make it to one session, they can participate fully in those they are able to attend. Session I also has a lot of content, so if there's an option to have a 1 ½ hour session, that would be ideal, or some content can carry over to the next session.

"My Neighbor is Not for Sale" is not copyright protected and can be freely copied for your use and for participants to read and take home for further education.

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I. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING

What is Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking?



Joy McElroy
Executive Director

Thank you for being here today, to learn about this important and difficult topic of keeping children and youth safe from sexual exploitation and trafficking. While we may wish to push this to the back of our minds and not think of the horrific reality some of our children face, becoming educated IS a key step in prevention.

While we go through this series, it is important for you to take care of yourself as needed. If you need to take a break from the room, please do so. If you have experienced trauma and need someone to talk to, please see the pastor who can talk with you or refer you to a specialist as needed.

In order to get started, let's begin with learning some of the terms we will be using, and some of the terms we will *not* be using, although you may hear them in some video clips as they have been a part of this issue for many years.

TERMS TO KNOW:

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) "refers to a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) given or received by any person."¹ CSEC includes child pornography, child sex trafficking, child sex tourism, and child marriage when payment is exchanged.

- The exchange for "anything of value" may include money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, higher status in a gang or group, transportation, or a place to sleep.

Sexually Exploited Youth (SEY) is defined by Minnesota Safe Harbor law to include youth under age 24 who have engaged, agreed to engage, or were forced into sexual conduct for anything of value. This includes survival sex, exotic dancing, and pornography. (Safe Harbor laws are discussed more in Session 2.)

Term NOT to use: ~~Child prostitute~~ This term implies choice and negative stereotypes rather than a child who has been a victim of a crime.

TERMS TO KNOW (continued):

Survival Sex involves exchanging any type of sexual act in exchange for something of value, including things like money, a place to sleep, food, diapers, drugs, transportation.

Sex Trafficking is defined as a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion in return for payment to a third party. If the person induced to perform the act is under 18 years old, force, fraud or coercion do not need to be present.

- **Force** may include physical restraint, beatings, rape, confinement
- **Fraud** may include false promises, lying, tricking, withholding wages
- **Coercion** involves threats and blackmail

Trafficker – the person or persons luring victims into labor or sex trafficking and then profiting from this crime.

Term NOT to use: ~~Pimp~~ This term has been glamorized through music, video and social media. Changing the language we use is one step in changing the culture.

Buyer/Sex Buyer – the person who is engaging in the criminal act of paying for a sexual act with another person

Term NOT to use: ~~John~~ Using a common male name normalizes this criminal act.

VIDEO OPENING:

Option 1: *Chosen* DVD

In the video *Chosen*, we hear from two youth, ages 13 and 18, who break the stereotypes many people have of victims being runaways, addicts, promiscuous, or truant. Child sex trafficking victims come from all economic classes, races, and cultures. They include girls, boys, and LGBTQ youth – anyone who can be vulnerable to the lies and manipulations of a trafficker. Brianna shares her story, and that of another youth Lacy, and how their experiences led her to commit to educating other young people to keep them safe.

- Watch *Chosen* video (22 minutes)

Small group discussion questions after watching the video:

1. What stood out to you about the stories of Brianna and Lacy in the video?
What about Evan's role?
2. What vulnerabilities do you think may have been present in Brianna and Lacy's lives? How were those used to exploit them? How can we step in to support youth in their vulnerabilities?

Option 2: *The Life Story intro, and Entry Into the Life*

The Life Story: Moments of Change shares the voices of survivors of sexual exploitation. It reveals opportunities we all have to step in and address root causes of poverty, violence, discrimination, system failures – inviting us to explore changes to create a better world.

One survivor shares, “Exploiters offer false love and support to girls who are primed to believe them. Adults from all areas of life can give girls [and boys] the real love and support they deserve.”²

We will see that exploitation and trafficking cuts across all economic classes, races, and cultures. It includes girls, boys, and LGBTQ youth – anyone who can be vulnerable to the lies and manipulations of a trafficker.

- View both the intro <https://thelifestory.org/> (2 minutes) and the segment [Entry Into the Life](#) (7 minutes)
- Additional segments may be watched for further study and action, especially for those involved in the fields highlighted, such as education, housing, public health, economic and racial justice, mental health and addiction services, and many more.

Small group discussion questions after watching the video:

1. What stood out to you about the stories of the survivors in the video?
2. What vulnerabilities do you think may have been present in these girls lives, and how were those used to exploit them? What are ways healthy adults could step in to support youth in their vulnerabilities?

FOUR STEPS TO GET STARTED WITH PREVENTION:

1) Know what child sex trafficking and sexual exploitation are.

- Sex trafficking is when a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion OR when the person induced to perform the act is under 18 years old, regardless of force, fraud, or coercion. A third party (the trafficker) is involved in sex trafficking.
- A commercial sex act means any item of value is traded for any sexual service (prostitution, pornography, or sexual performance.)
- Any item of value may include shelter, food, or drugs – to keep the victim dependent; or money – which the child victim rarely receives.
- Sexual exploitation is sexual abuse through the exchange of sex or sexual acts

for drugs, food, shelter, or other basics of life, and/or money. Sexual exploitation includes involving minors in pornography, sexually explicit websites, and strip clubs. A third party need not be involved.

Intersections of Abuse



(Image from StreetWorks Collaborative, Outreach Worker Certification Training Curriculum)

Young people are inherently vulnerable, and those who seek to exploit or traffic a young person are experts at finding these vulnerabilities which leave a void in youth. Exploiters fill these voids with lies and deception, including promises of love, safety and care. This can happen in person or through online recruitment, and often happens over a period of time in order to build trust. Oftentimes a youth does not even know they are being exploited. A need is being met, a void is being fulfilled, and then they may find themselves in a dangerous situation they cannot see a way out of.

Adults can take steps to fill these voids leaving youth less vulnerable to a potential exploiter. "I think mentors are very important for teenage girls [and boys]. Someone who can listen and help them establish healthy boundaries and learn to trust the right people."³ -Andrea, Survivor and Advocate

2) Know the signs of sex trafficking.



Red Flags of Victims

- Has an older “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” and is secretive about him/her
- Sudden change in clothes or expensive gifts such as jewelry or new phone
- Loss of interest in school and/or favorite activities
- Distancing from friends (a control tactic)
- Signs of physical abuse and evidence of being controlled
- Fear, depression, or other unexplained changes in behavior

Tactics of a Trafficker

- Looks for a vulnerability that can be used to lure in a young person
- Bonds through extreme emotional highs (love & praise)
- Purchases gifts and takes “girlfriend/boyfriend” to parties with drugs & alcohol
- Separates a young person from friends and family
- Controls through cell phone, texting, calls and Internet tracking
- Instills dependency and obedience through fear, threats
- Manipulates through feelings of guilt, shame and unworthiness

3) Don't be afraid to talk about it.

- If you see something – say something. Youth: tell a school counselor, police officer, youth leader, or other trusted adult if you think someone is being stalked or trafficked. Adults: talk to the young person you're concerned about and offer your unconditional love and support, and talk to a professional to share your concerns and learn next steps if needed.
- The following hotlines are available for support, to report a tip, or to get help:
 - National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
1-800-THE-LOST
 - National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline
1-888-373-7888
 - BeFree textline
Text “Help” to BeFree (233733)

4) Take action now.

- If something looks wrong – TELL. It could save a life.
- PRAY for all children's safety. Join our weekly e-prayer list and find more resources on our website to become further educated in prevention.
- Help shift the narrative in society – this is not a choice; these are victims of a crime and need our unconditional and nonjudgmental support.
- SPEAK UP when women and girls are being disrespected, and help raise a generation of healthy young women and young men.
- Talk to your children about personal safety and your family values – including online safety and pornography.
- Check out what your local schools are teaching about healthy relationships and sexual violence. Ask teachers and coaches to be true role models and partners in raising healthy youth.

Message of Hope

*If every adult can protect just one child, they will forever change one life.
If we can all change one life, together we will make a difference in this
generation of children.*

From *Safeguarding God's Children* training materials

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, retrieved 7/31/19 from www.ojjdp.gov/programs/csec_program.html

² Anonymous, The Life Story. Retrieved 7/31/19 from www.thelifestory.org

³ Andrea, The Life Story. Retrieved 7/31/19 from www.thelifestory.org

How does the Bible inform our response as Christians?

Diane L. Jacobson
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Genesis 16: ¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, ² and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³ So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. ⁴ He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt (*made little*) on her mistress. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong (*violence*) done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace (*to your bosom*), and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly (*oppress, do violence to, rape*) with her, and she ran away from her.

⁷ The angel of the LORD found her by a spring (*eye*) of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." ⁹ The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her." ¹⁰ The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." ¹¹ And the angel of the LORD said to her, "Now (*behold*) you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael (*"God hears"*), for the LORD has given heed to (*heard*) your affliction.

¹² He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin."

¹³ So she named the LORD who spoke to her, "You are El-roi" (*God of my seeing*); for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?" (*Am I indeed here seeing after I have seen?*) ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi (*"Well of the Living One who Sees Me"*); it lies between Kadesh and Bered. ¹⁵

Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abraham.

Genesis 21 (compare highlighting to Genesis 22:1-19): ¹⁴So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. *And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.* ¹⁵When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰ God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow.

We Are Sarah, Abraham, and Hagar: Biblical Sex Trafficking?

Sex trafficking entails profiting from the sexual use and abuse of someone else. Very early in the Bible we find a story of sex trafficking by, of all people, Sarah and Abraham.

The Bible is a complicated book of faith. What we want is our heroes and heroines always to be good and noble and our villains to be evil. What we get are stories about very complicated people, stories that become mirrors so that we can see ourselves and our own sins more clearly.

Abraham, and by implication Sarah, are promised a child by God (Gen. 12; 15). Things don't work out because Sarah appears to be infertile, so they take things into their own hands. Sarah has an Egyptian slave by the name of Hagar. She tells Abraham to sleep with Hagar, and then the child will become Sarah's child. When pregnant Hagar looks with contempt on Sarah, Sarah, with Abraham's blessing, further abuses her until Hagar finally runs away into the wilderness. In the parallel story (Gen. 21), after both Hagar and Sarah give birth to their sons, Sarah casts Hagar and her child into the wilderness.

Many notable aspects of this story are found in the details, particularly in what is said and done. We see these details clearly when we look, in turn, at each of the four major characters: Sarah, Abraham, (the angel of) the LORD, and Hagar.

Neither Sarah nor Abraham see Hagar as a person, worthy of identity and respect.

Sarah embodies female complicity in her plotting, jealousy, and active enabling. She hands Hagar over to Abraham. She both blames God for her infertility and takes on the role of God by trying to solve the problem herself through trafficking Hagar. Ironically,

Sarah speaks as if she is the object of rape, citing the “violence” done to her by her slave-girl. And then Sarah proceeds to actively abuse Hagar.

Abraham, for his part, is the subject of three important verbs. First, Abraham “listened” to the voice of Sarah, taking up her sex-trafficking scheme. Second, Abraham “went in to” Hagar. This non-descript, non-violent verb disguises the rape, the offence, the actual sexual assault. It is as though he does no evil. And third, Abraham speaks, “he said to” Sarah that her slave-girl is in her power, under her hand, giving Sarah permission to continue the violence.

The angel of the LORD or God directly is not without complicity in either this story or its companion. The angel tells Hagar to return and submit to abuse. The angel commits Ishmael to a life of conflict, contributing to a view of family systems wherein violence begets violence. And in Genesis 21, God instructs Abraham to listen to the voice of Sarah. But the major aspect of the divine role and voice moves beyond this complicity. The angel delivers the ancestral promise of offspring to, of all people, Hagar. And the words of the second part of this promise are all important:

"Now (behold) you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael (God hears), for the LORD has given heed to (heard) your affliction."

Not only do we hear words that that will be spoken at the annunciation of Mary, we also hear, in the naming of Ishmael, a clear foreshadowing of the God of Exodus. In Exodus 3:7, the Lord says,

"I have observed the misery (affliction) of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,..."

In response to this cry, God delivers his people, Israel, from their enslavement in Egypt. And so the full force of this story of Hagar explodes in our hearing. Before the descendants of Sarah and Abraham are ever enslaved by the Egyptians, these same two enslave a poor Egyptian girl. And the same God who is revealed as savior in delivering the Israelites from Egypt gives heed to the suffering of this Egyptian slave-girl at the hands of her oppressors. In the companion story in Exodus 21, God hears her plaintiff cry, “Do not let me look on the death of the child.” And just as God opens the eyes of Abraham in response to his willingness to obey, showing him a ram caught in a thicket, so also God opens the eyes of Hagar, in response to her unwillingness to accept violence and death, showing her a well of water.

Throughout the story we now see the role of Hagar. We could make the mistake of seeing her only as victim and insignificant slave, off to the side. She begins in Genesis 16 as an object of talk who only has things done to her. But then, we are told, she

conceives. As she prepares to give birth, her own character is birthed as well. She “makes little” of her mistress, and then she runs away. This run-away slave, like the later Israelites, flees to the wilderness. There she, like the people of Israel, receives the promise of God. And then Hagar does something remarkable. She does her own naming, not of the child, but of God. She is the only person in all of Scripture to name God. She says, “You are El-roi”; for she said, “Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?” It is all about seeing the truth of what is in front of her. And for us as well, it is all about seeing.

The role that Hagar is given in the book of Genesis is quite astounding. She is given narrative space. This Egyptian slave has action and voice, and she has the sympathy of the reader. Hagar stands as a warning against sex trafficking, rape, and all forms of slavery. She insists that we look at her as a person, a full human being, who, in her presence, warns us against being blinded by privilege and promise. Hagar resists being defined by status or nationality. She stands before us as a significant child of the promise and a namer of God, central rather than peripheral. Not insignificantly, her descendants, the Ishmaelites (who become the Muslims), are the very ones who, later in Genesis, save Joseph from death at the hands of his brothers and deliver him to Egypt. Hagar can help save us as well from delivering others to sentences of death and abuse if we have ears to hear her story and take heed.

Biblical Response Discussion Questions

1. Now that you know about sex trafficking, does this forever change the Hagar story for you?
2. What challenges you most about relating this Biblical story to trafficking?
3. What do we learn from Hagar’s story that helps us to understand our own role in and possible reaction to vulnerable youth and sexual exploitation?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, we come before you, weeping. Help us to see your continued presence with all those enslaved, oppressed, and abused. Help us to use our positions of privilege and our assurance of the promises of God to be instruments of deliverance to all who are oppressed and used by others. This we ask in Christ’s name. Amen.

RESOURCES

National Human Trafficking Resource Center www.traffickingresourcecenter.org

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children www.missingkids.com

Polaris Project www.polarisproject.org

Shared Hope International (*Chosen* video and resources) www.sharedhope.org

Minnesota Human Trafficking Taskforce <http://www.mnhttf.com/>

Cherish All Children www.cherishallchildren.org – Further resources and E-Prayer sign-up

Women of the ELCA www.womenoftheelca.org/ministry-action/justice/human-trafficking

ELCA Justice for Women www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Justice-for-Women/Social-Issues/Human-Trafficking

For Parents and Kids

www.netsmartz.org NetSmartz provides online safety activities for kids, making learning fun, both online and printable. Created by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children along with the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, and others.

www.love146.org Internet safety resources for teens and adults. Interactive online segments provide safety rules, warning signs to look for, sexting, pornography, apps and websites to look out for, and what to do to stay safe.

Suggested Books

Renting Lacy, A Story of America's Prostituted Children, by Linda Smith

Linda's tenacious advocacy for those who are trapped in these situations has already roused many to action, but this book will awaken far more... My hope is that all will be spurred to action. – Ernie Allen, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Girls Like Us: Fighting for a World Where Girls are Not for Sale, by Rachel Lloyd

At the age of only 13 Lloyd was caught in the snare of commercial sexual exploitation. A local community church helped free her of her pimp and her past. Rachel Lloyd went on to found GEMS: Girls Educational and Mentoring Services in New York City.

Faraway: A Suburban Boy's Story as a Victim of Sex Trafficking, by R.K. Kline and Daniel D.

Maurer When Kevin was fourteen years old, he was just starting to understand his orientation as a gay teen living in a suburb of St. Louis. He met someone who he thought was his friend, but instead led him into the trap of sex trafficking. Kevin's memoir is a tribute to friendships that shaped his faith and worldview in the worst of situations.

II. SAFE HARBOR

Support for Survivors



Joy McElroy
Executive Director

Sarah McGuiness
LSS Metro Homeless Youth
Services Intern

Thank you for joining our second of four sessions to learn about the issue of sexual exploitation and trafficking of youth. As we discussed in the first session, this topic can be difficult, especially for those who have experienced trauma. It is important for each of us to take care of ourselves, so if you need to take a break from the room, please do so. If you need someone to talk to, please see the pastor who can talk with you or refer you to a specialist as you choose.

Today's topic introduces Safe Harbor Law, and the cultural shift this brings about for exploited youth and young adults. As people of faith, we can help to spread the message of treating all youth with dignity and respect, and offer safe, supportive, and non-judgmental places within our churches.

Victims are often left with feelings of shame, fear, and abandonment. They have experienced trauma, and often need the support of professionals. Our role is not to "rescue", but to provide unconditional love and grace, meeting them where they are in their journey. It may be unlikely that a victim or survivor will ever reveal their experience within a congregation, but survivors are in our midst, looking for a place of healing and God's love. Our churches can be a beacon of refuge, aiding in the healing process. Unfortunately, faith communities can also do harm, when an individual's experience is not believed, or an individual is judged or blamed for their experience. This session is important to learn both about the laws protecting and supporting survivors, and also to become aware of the impact of trauma and be mindful about how the church supports healing for individuals and communities.

SAFE HARBOR LAW:

Safe Harbor Laws are in different stages throughout the country, which provides an opportunity to get involved to ensure your state is progressing to support sexually

exploited youth and young adults. In Minnesota, for example, the Safe Harbor Law:

- Treats sexually exploited youth under age 18 as victims and survivors, rather than prosecuting them for prostitution
- Added the definition of sexually exploited youth to Minnesota's child protection codes so that child protective services and child welfare can respond
- Increased the penalties against commercial sex abusers or purchasers
- Provides funding for a service model called "No Wrong Door" to support trainings, services, housing and outreach that meet the needs of youth and young adults age 24 and younger

No Wrong Door is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and multi-state agency approach. It ensures communities across Minnesota have the knowledge, skills and resources to effectively identify sexually exploited and at-risk youth and young adults. A statewide network of victim-centered and trauma-informed services and safe housing are provided.

Why is Safe Harbor Needed?

There is still a view by some that a person "chose" to go into this life, and victim-blaming occurs regularly in our society. But we know that vulnerable children, youth, and young adults are targeted by experienced exploiters, who use psychological manipulation, violence, and threats. A trafficker has preyed upon some vulnerability in this young person's life, lured him or her in, with no real "choice" made by that young person. Once in the life, it is very difficult to get out. So even to assume an adult engaged in prostitution is making a "choice" may be very harmful and damaging.



- To see how your state is doing, Shared Hope International has created the Protected Innocence Challenge, grading states on their progress of enacting state laws on child sex trafficking. States are graded on areas such as: Criminalization of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking, Criminal Provisions addressing Demand, and Protective Provisions for Child Victims. Check out your state's grade [here](#).

HOW WE, AS THE CHURCH, CAN RESPOND:

PREVENTION

“A protective factor for youth at-risk or those who have been exploited is having healthy relationships with adults.”¹ The Minnesota Department of Health goes on to say, “If you suspect sexual exploitation: Be understanding. Stay calm and listen. Be non-judgmental and kind.” They offer 5 Actions to keep children safe which include:

- Setting a high standard of love within your home
- Talking to children about healthy relationships, and helping them understand unhealthy relationships, boundaries, and consent
- Talking about internet safety and coming to a trusted adult if an online interaction becomes uncomfortable or dangerous
- Paying attention to children and being alert to any warning signs
- Talking honestly about pornography as the primary gateway to the purchase of humans for commercial sex, and its often dominant and violent context.

Excerpts from the *ELCA Social Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation*:²

“May our action grow out of our faith as well as be informed by a comprehensive awareness of social evil. We esteem children and youth as God’s precious gifts to us, knowing that not only this is the right thing to do but also that it is the best way to keep them safe from the manipulative deceit of predators.” (pg. 7)

“We attend to those who are exploited by caring for and empowering them, not by condemning and shunning them. We need to grasp how commercial sexual exploitation feeds upon global and domestic poverty, war, political and social turmoil, homelessness, child abuse and neglect, gender inequality and violence against women, racism, and related social ills against which this church has called for action, and to join with others to curb these ills.” (pg. 8)

Small group discussion questions:

1. How has learning about Safe Harbor changed or informed your view of victims of sexual exploitation?
2. Reflect on the excerpts from the ELCA message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation. How have we been complicit in this social evil? How will we join with others in action, especially in regard to the root causes that feed exploitation?

TRAUMA-INFORMED CONGREGATION

Being a survivor of sexual exploitation by its very nature can be traumatic. Survivors often need to work with specially trained medical, social service, legal, and mental health professionals in their healing journeys. In addition to physical and emotional wounds, there may also be a sense of spiritual injury. There is a growing awareness of the positive healing effects of life-affirming spirituality in community with others.

In her presentation “The Trauma Informed Congregation: The Power of Relationship to Heal,” Reverend Kirsten Peachey uplifts the natural strengths of church – liturgy, music, ritual, art, inclusive community – and asserts that the key to becoming a trauma responsive community of faith is to do those things with even deeper intention. She draws from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) concept of a trauma informed organization³ as one that:

- **Realizes** - People at all levels of the organization/community have a basic realization about trauma and understand how trauma can affect families, groups, and communities as well as individuals.
- **Recognizes** - People in the community recognize the signs of trauma.
- **Responds** – The principles of trauma-informed care are applied in all areas of the organization.
- **Resists re-traumatization** – Understand how organizational practices may interfere with healing or trigger painful memories, and actively work to resist these.

Rev. Peachey, of The Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation, adds:

- **Repents** - Acknowledge ways in which our faith communities have been sources of trauma through abuse, judgement, rejection, abasement, and excluding.⁴

Building upon the inherent strengths of our churches through liturgy, music, art, ritual, movement, and community, we are called as people of faith not only to become increasingly aware of trauma but also to take steps to help prevent and heal its effects.

[Changing Minds Now](#) offers **5 Healing Gestures**⁵ that communities can intentionally enact as part of creating a safe and welcoming space for all. The power of a caring adult is significant, and these actions are both preventative and restorative.

- **Listen**: Show interest in their passions
- **Celebrate**: Use “put ups” not “put downs”
- **Collaborate**: Ask for their opinions
- **Comfort**: Stay calm and patient
- **Inspire**: Expose them to new ideas

We encourage you to dig deeper into these resources as your congregation and community seek to prevent harm and mindfully support individuals and their healing.

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What can you do in your daily life to continue the cultural shift to treating those who are or have been exploited as survivors rather than criminals? And even more so, not defined by their trauma, but as whole and complete persons, as children of God.
2. What next steps would you like to see in order for your church to become a trauma responsive community?

Messages from Youth for youth workers

“Even if I have done something wrong, still help me and treat me with respect.”

“Build confidence so we believe we can do things – recognize how hard we are working, recognize the things we are doing right.”

StreetWorks Greater Minnesota Focus Group Summary: Youth Experts and Service Professionals, February 2019

¹MN Department of Health, Safe Harbor Youth Outreach Materials. Retrieved 8/19/19 from <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/communities/youthoutreach.html>

²Retrieved 8/19/19 from https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Commercial-Sexual-Exploitation?_ga=2.60394670.2081244941.1566575838-1718494155.1554993845

³Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved 8/19/19 from <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884.html>

⁴The Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation. Retrieved 8/19/19 from <https://www.faithhealthtransformation.org/resources-and-toolkits/health-topics/trauma-and-resilience/>

⁵Retrieved 8/19/19 from <https://changingmindsnow.org/healing>

How does the Bible inform our response as Christians?

Professor Karoline Lewis
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Luther Seminary

When we think of Jesus' care of and attention to children, Jesus' invitation, "Let the children come to me," likely comes to mind. In both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke, we find people bringing children to Jesus, likely for a blessing of some sort, which then the disciples attempt to interrupt and prevent. Jesus insists that these efforts not be stopped for it is to these children that God's kingdom rightly belongs (see Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17). In Luke, Jesus goes on to say, "Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."

The literary setting of Jesus' interactions with children is important. In both Matthew and Mark, Jesus welcomes children within the context of conversation about marginalized persons in society. In the case of Matthew, Jesus answers questions about divorce, with clear compassion for the situation of the wife. A man should not be able to divorce his wife for any cause he chooses. With women primarily dependent on men for their livelihood, a divorce put a woman in a precarious, even dangerous and destitute position. Shamed and abandoned, she was left to rely on the mercy of her community. In Luke, Jesus has just told the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector. The self-righteousness of the Pharisee is contrasted with the humility of the tax-collector. The tax-collector, who would have been a despised member of society back then because he was charged with collecting taxes for a foreign power, the Roman Empire, is the one Jesus lifts up. As a result, when Jesus blesses the children, we need to interpret his concern for them against this wider backdrop of care for those whom society would overlook and determine undeserving of divine devotion.

The status of children in the ancient world did not share the same kind of regard that children typically have in today's culture. Children were valuable, to be sure, but utilitarian in many respects, as workers contributing to the well-being of the livelihood of the family and, if male, as necessary to carry on the family name. Jesus' attention to children, therefore, stands out – and stands out significantly. Furthermore, it is to children, – to tax-collectors, to women, to those oppressed, to those enslaved, to those disregarded – that Jesus says the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God belongs. That is, they are full and valued members of God's kingdom. They are to be regarded and respected. The kingdom is not complete, does not come fully near, and is not completely realized, without their presence. With the references to the kingdom of God/heaven in

these two passages, Jesus insists that these children are blessed and beloved. By recalling the Beatitudes (see Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 6:20-23), blessed are the poor and the persecuted; blessed are those who are hungry and those who thirst; blessed are those who are reviled and excluded – Jesus asserts that it is for these very children that the kingdom of heaven is near and here. In other words, God’s kingdom comes up short, God’s kingdom cannot be fully known, God’s kingdom is not *God’s* kingdom when any of God’s children are not deemed created in God’s image.

The disciples are called out for their inability to see that this is a moment where the Beatitudes might actually come true – and that they have a crucial role in making that happen. And so, when we do not recognize and live out our charge in caring for children caught in trafficking, we are much like those first disciples. God’s kingdom cannot afford our oversight or our inaction when it comes to the children in our midst.

The Gospels are clear, Jesus is clear, that God’s children need our vigilant attention and unconditional love. God’s children need our commitment to their freedom so that they might flourish in God’s abundant grace. God’s children are deserving of our devotion not just to their well-being, but to their promise and potential of living into the people God has called them to be. When we come alongside our children in need, not only do we care for them, nurture them, and keep them safe, but we also embody the kingdom of God for all to witness and in which all can belong.

Biblical Response Discussion Questions

1. Read Matthew 19:13-15 and Luke 18:15-17 again after reading Session 2, Safe Harbor: Support for Survivors. How do you experience these Bible passages differently after learning about the Safe Harbor Law?
2. How might you imagine that your support of victims of sex-trafficking is an act of discipleship?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Loving God, we pray today that you might empower us to be your presence in the lives of those who need to know you still love them. Help us to listen to the cries of those who need God’s healing. Help us to see the un-seeable and to regard the overlooked. And embolden us to bring about your kingdom so that all of your children might experience your grace. Amen.

RESOURCES

Polaris Project

<https://polarisproject.org/policy-legislation>

Shared Hope International

<https://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/bring-justice/reportcards/>

Minnesota Department of Health

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/safeharbor/>

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA Social Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation) https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Commercial-Sexual-Exploitation?_ga=2.87346204.524303079.1566242851-2077381934.1525719641

The Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation:

Trauma Informed Congregations Network

<https://www.faithhealthtransformation.org/community-of-practice/trauma-informed-congregations-network/>

Faith Health Transformation Resources

<https://www.faithhealthtransformation.org/resources-and-toolkits/health-topics/trauma-and-resilience/>

Changing Minds Now - Five Healing Gestures link and many additional resources

<https://changingmindsnow.org/healing>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Concept and Guidance for Trauma-Informed Approach Manual (free download)

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884.html>

Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*, second Ed. (Westminster John Knox Press 2019)

Christy Gunter Sims, *Trauma Care: What Religious Professionals Need to Know about Healing Trauma* (Higher Education & Ministry 2018)

(Christian Century review June 2019 <https://www.christiancentury.org/review/books/trauma-survivors-are-your-congregation-how-will-you-help-them-heal>)

III. ENDING DEMAND

Raising the Next Generation of Healthy Boys and Young Men



Joy McElroy
Executive Director

This is our third of four sessions to learn about the issue of sexual exploitation and trafficking of youth, and how we can get involved to make a difference. This session exposes the role that male socialization plays in contributing to this issue, and offers a challenge to change destructive social patterns. It offers the opportunity to “empower men to create a world where men and boys are loving and respectful – and a human race where women and girls are valued and safe.” ¹

In our churches and faith communities, we can take an active role in opening up these conversations with men and boys. We have too often shied away from what we perceive as difficult conversations in our churches and in our homes. It’s time to step up to the discomfort, realizing the alternative of doing nothing causes much greater harm. This conversation is about cultivating a healthy culture, about engaging our youth, loving them through the mess of what society often portrays, and helping them to grow spiritually and emotionally into their God-given selves.

We need to engage our youth – youth create the culture.

CREATING RESPECTFUL CULTURE:

A Call to Men is an international violence prevention organization that has worked with the NFL, NBA, MLB, the US military, colleges, high schools and other organizations to promote healthy, respectful manhood. Watch the following video to hear how we can make a difference in raising the next generation of healthy boys and young men.

- [Tony Porter - A Call to Men](#) (11 minutes)

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. What resonated most with you from what Tony Porter shared?
2. How have you experienced the “Man Box” in your life? Allow for the differing perspectives of those who identify as male, female and all gender identities.

Another organization working to build safe communities free from violence against women and children is Men as Peacemakers, based in Duluth, Minnesota. “Men as Peacemakers believes that violence, including sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, can be prevented, and that change begins with the individual, who can then be engaged to help create change in their relationships, communities, and society.”²

They have developed a public awareness and education campaign to address the rising demand for commercial sex, called the “Don’t Buy It Project.” Watch this powerful public service announcement of males sharing common misconceptions.

- [Don't Buy It Project PSA - Men](#) (30 seconds)

The primary objectives of the Don’t Buy It Project include:

- Increase awareness among men about the prevalence of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in all its forms.
- Increase men’s understanding of Commercial Sexual Exploitation as a form of oppression.
- Decrease social normalization of Commercial Sexual Exploitation, which is a primary prevention strategy to decrease the use of porn, strip clubs, and the purchase of sex.

The [Don’t Buy It Project website](#) provides significant resources to support the movement to minimize demand for commercial sex, look at root causes, and work toward healthy masculinity. Each one of us can commit to start seeing how our society objectifies and degrades those who are seen as “less than” which can include women and girls, LGBTQ youth, and boys who may not conform to the norms that have been put upon them.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

[Ten Simple Prevention Steps for Men](#) is a resource provided by the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA), applicable across the country, to create communities that can thrive and grow. There are additional [“Ten Simple Step”](#) handouts for parents and for all, and each handout is also available in Spanish. The Prevention Steps include:

- Powerful documentaries to help start discussions around masculinity, social influences on men, and survivors’ experiences with sexual violence
- Information about what it means to be an active bystander to look out for those around you and intervene in safe and healthy ways
- How sports culture can use its power and influence to support healthy relationship skills for youth, and much more

John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney in Minnesota, proclaims, “We need to have a really important conversation about how we’re raising our boys. Men are at the core of this issue and need to be a part of the solution.”

- Men – have meaningful conversations with other men in your life about your shared common values, the realities of sexual exploitation, and ask them not to participate.
- Adults, Parents, Grandparents – talk to the boys and men in your life about healthy, respectful relationships, and model this in your own relationships.
- Check out what your children’s schools are teaching on the subjects of sexual violence and healthy relationships – this is a health topic, and curriculum exists.
- Hold coaches, teachers, and others who have significant impact on young people’s lives to a high standard. If something is not right – speak up!
- Open these conversations with your High School Youth Groups and Middle School Youth, and start to make a difference in raising this next generation.

HOW WE, AS THE CHURCH, COMMIT TO WORK FOR JUSTICE :

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted at its 2019 Churchwide Assembly, a social statement [*Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*](#).

Excerpts from the ELCA Social Statement *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*³

“We believe all people are created equally in the image of God. Every individual is dependent upon God, and all share in the God-given vocation to contribute their gifts to help all of creation flourish.” (pg. 2)

“Though God desires fullness of life and equity for everyone, as a church we recognize that women and girls in particular suffer a range of harm and injustice due to sex (biological), gender, or both. In addition to sex and gender, the experiences of individuals and groups are shaped and complicated by intersecting factors. These include race, ethnicity, national origin, nationality, (including American Indian and Alaska Native), religious identity, immigration status, sexuality, marital status, economic means, age, ability, embodied experiences, and education. This reality is known as intersectionality. This statement’s references to women and girls are intended to be inclusive of all people who identify as women or girls in the diversity of their individual and communal identities and expressions.” (pg. 3)

“The far-reaching harm experienced by women and girls is rooted in a pattern of

power, privilege, and prejudice, the key elements of any social system of oppression.” (pg. 3)

“Although men and boys often benefit from this social system, patriarchal structures and values also harm men and boys, including gay and transgender men. They are harmed when they are pressured to conform to narrow gender stereotypes or are unable to live out a false ideal of male superiority and control. People of all genders who do not conform to gender-based roles and stereotypes often are not seen or valued.” (pg. 4)

“In faith, this church confesses that Christianity has been complicit in the sin of patriarchy and sexism through certain beliefs, practices, and aspects of its history. At the same time, we believe God provides resources within the Christian faith and the Lutheran tradition to challenge the harmful beliefs and effects of patriarchy and to bring forth new ways of living.” (pg. 4)

Members are urged to recognize patriarchy and sexism as sinful and work toward systemic changes for all persons within church and society. By coming together in community to learn, deliberate, and assist in forming moral judgments on this social issue, we can work together to address harmful beliefs and practices.

1. How do we continue to perpetuate traditional gender roles and how might that play into destructive patterns or sexual violence?
2. How can you personally make a positive impact on the socialization of a boy or young man in your life?

Message of Hope

“I am definitely challenged to alter some of the language that I use with my players and boys. I will educate and challenge my male circles to do the same.”

From LiveRESPECT – Coaching Healthy and Respectful Manhood curriculum

¹Tony Porter, *Breaking Out of the Man Box – The Next Generation of Manhood* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2015)

²Men As Peacemakers, www.dontbuyitproject.org, Join the Movement, DBIP Overview

³Retrieved 8/23/19 from https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Current-Social-Writing-Projects/Women-and-Justice?_ga=2.27311167.2081244941.1566575838-1718494155.1554993845

How does the Bible inform our response as Christians?

Rolf A. Jacobson
Professor of Old Testament and
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A Simple Question

Let's start with a simple question: What does God expect from men in relation to women? The Bible has a simple answer: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Lev 19:18b; Mark 12:31).

For men, this means that women are your neighbor. Treat them as such. Hence the name of this study: *My Neighbor is Not for Sale*.

A Deeper Look

But let's go a little deeper in this rather simple question and answer. What would it mean to regard women who have been ensnared in the sex trade as our neighbors – entrusted into the care of our wider Christian communities? As we think about how Christian males ought to act and not to act, what sorts of values should we draw upon?

Some people used to say that "prostitution is a victimless crime." I know that this now seems criminally naïve and hopelessly insensitive. But people actually used to say that. Now we know, for example, that children are regularly lured into this dark world. To purchase sex from any child is to violate both God's law and our civil law. Safe Harbor laws increase the criminal penalties against those who purchase sex because these children – girls and boys – are victims and survivors. To purchase sex from a trafficked youth (or adult) is *not* a victimless crime.

Whenever a woman (or man) of any age is forced into the sex trade by means of violence and coercion, paying for and having sex with that "neighbor" is not a victimless act. To make it crystal clear: paying for sex with a neighbor who has been forced into it is not loving your neighbor – but precisely the opposite.

And as the ELCA message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation reminds us that "the sex system... tells itself and the world that it is only providing goods and services that consumers want" and that "it is only promoting business transactions between consenting adults," we can't know who has been forced and who hasn't. In this way, "the sex system weaves the threads of self-deception and self-justification into its tangled web of sin and

evil.” Therefore, we can conclude that every act of purchasing sex re-victimizes the very neighbor God has called us to care about.

A Biblical Perspective – 1 Cor 6:15-16

Let’s look at a familiar passage that is heard regularly in Christian congregations that follow the Revised Common Lectionary—1 Cor 6:15-16. Saint Paul wrote these words to the early church in Corinth:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you now know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her?

Some members of the church of Corinth may have justified purchasing sex from trafficked people under the slogan, “All things are lawful for me” (1 Cor 12:6). But St. Paul objected to this self-justification. He responded, “But not all things are beneficial!” His point was that when we think about our behavior we must remember the welfare of our neighbors. In this case, he urged men to remember that purchasing sex from a trafficked neighbor is *not* beneficial to the neighbor!

Many interpreters of this passage used to understand Paul’s warning against “uniting oneself to a prostitute” through the lens that purchasing sex is a sin against one’s own purity. But I think that there is a much more important moral lens through which to understand Paul’s admonition along these lines: *“By purchasing sex, I am joining myself to the crime of sex trafficking. I am participating in human sex trafficking by purchasing sex – it is that crime that I am uniting myself with.”*

It is not that I make myself impure because *she* is impure – after all, *she* is a victim. Rather, it is that I am making myself impure because I am participating in impure acts that violate my neighbor.

“Don’t do that,” says Paul.

A Christian, Masculine Culture of Respect for Women

So how do we take this issue from what the Bible instructs us into our everyday lives today? This issue needs to go toward creating a culture of Christian masculinity in which men hold each other accountable to entire sets of behaviors and beliefs toward women. In short, we need a Christian masculine culture that regards all women as fully equal neighbors.

What might an intentional Christian masculine culture look like? That question is worth a completely separate study, but here I will suggest a few basics. First, men must talk with each other and with our sons about women in such a way that we insist that every woman is created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) and that both “male and female” belong equally to Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28). Second, we must talk to each other and our sons about all the behaviors and industries – such as so-called “gentlemen’s clubs,” pornography, and hiring strippers – that provide gateway behaviors to trafficking or purchasing sex. These acts are, in themselves, “sexual exploitation.” We must make these behaviors socially unacceptable. Third, we must seek out and listen deeply to the stories of survivors of sex trafficking. Such victims must not be shunned – rather, their stories should be honored and so should they.

These can be hard conversations to have and hard stories to listen to, but as Minnesota Ramsey County District Attorney John Choi has said, “We need to have a really important conversation about how we’re raising our boys.” Better to have a hard conversation now than a tragic conversation later.

Biblical Response Discussion Questions

1. Respond to “What might an intentional Christian masculine culture look like?”
2. What role can our church play in shaping a healthy culture for all genders?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Gracious and holy God, we hear the cries of your exploited children, and we want to end the violence and suffering inflicted upon them. We pray for those who buy children to sexually exploit them, that they may be held accountable for their actions and learn how to live their lives with honor and respect for all. We pray for courage to speak truth and act in ways to shape a healthy culture for all genders. Amen.

RESOURCES

A Call to Men

www.acalltomen.org

A Call to Men's LiveRESPECT curriculum for middle school & high school boys

<http://www.liverespect.org/liverespect-curriculum/>

Breaking Out of the "Man Box" – The Next Generation of Manhood, Tony Porter, Skyhorse Publishing, 2015.

Men as Peacemakers

www.menaspeacemakers.org

Don't Buy It Project

www.dontbuyitproject.org

- Includes downloadable print materials and additional PSAs to view and discuss or distribute
- Everyday actions that can help shape the culture
- Coming out with a training module for men's groups or young men's groups

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA Social Statement Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action)

https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Current-Social-Writing-Projects/Women-and-Justice?_ga=2.27311167.2081244941.1566575838-1718494155.1554993845

Child Trends blogpost "Preventing sexual violence starts with what we teach our boys"
[Child Trends blog August 30, 2017](#)

The Mask You Live In

A powerful documentary by Academy Award-nominated director, Jennifer Siebel Newsom, this explores the messages we give boys that lead them to disconnect from their emotions, objectify women, and resolve conflict with violence. It starts the conversation of how we can raise boys to have a healthy sense of their own masculinity and find solutions to help us raise a healthier generation of boys and young men.

You can find this documentary on Netflix or Amazon, and host a showing complete with discussion questions to debrief. Cherish All Children can support you in this effort.

IV. A CALL TO ACTION

Using our Spiritual Gifts to Make a Difference



Joy McElroy
Executive Director

While this is the final session in our series to learn about sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and youth, it marks just the beginning of the work to be done. With this new knowledge, we hope you will be inspired to act, to get involved in the long-term fight against this injustice. The ELCA Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation states, "Love born of faith in Jesus Christ calls us all to attend to, discuss, resist, and reject the system of sexual exploitation."¹

We believe we are called as people of faith to work together on this issue, first by becoming educated and opening these conversations with adults and youth in our churches. This allows us to go forward together supporting young people in healthy ways, working in our own communities to shift cultural influences that put children at risk, and to act responsibly in the movement to end commercial sexual exploitation.

HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

EDUCATION:

You have already begun! The first step is to become educated about the issue and learn how faith communities can get involved. We also learn what is best left for specially trained social service providers, health professionals, law enforcement, and others. Continue this education by providing opportunities for children, youth, parents, and all members to learn about child sexual exploitation and how to prevent it.

- Take this resource and spread it more widely throughout your congregation. Sections can be used with your middle school and high school youth, inviting parents and caregivers to be a part of the learning and discussion.
- Invite local partners in as a panel of experts to share the work being done in your community and how the church can support these efforts.
- Attend or host a community event to learn more about preventing exploitation. Social service providers, county attorneys, police officers, and others will often participate to help spread the message of prevention.

- Engage the young people in your lives and in your congregation in further education. Cherish All Children are certified trainers of [Not a Number](#) interactive prevention curriculum. It empowers youth to identify healthy vs. unhealthy relationships and ways to stay safe. Online resources include information for youth, parents, caregivers, and professionals on the dangers of sexting, sextortion, pornography, and online predators, including how to develop a safety plan.
- There are many more [resources on our website](#) such as documentaries with discussion guides, books, and online resources for youth and parents.

PRAYER:

Cherish All Children offers many resources for your church to pray for the children and youth in your community.

- Pray each week, using our Wednesday e-prayer, which connects one of the upcoming Sunday lessons with a message and prayer to prevent exploitation. [View one of our Wednesday Prayers](#) and [sign up](#) to receive this resource.
- Begin a prayer ministry for children in your church. Some churches have partnered a child with an adult who will pray regularly for this child. Some pray in worship during the prayers of the people, to keep children safe from harm.
- [Prayers for Cherishing Children](#) booklets are available, which provide a collection of prayers for children, youth and young adults for each day of the month.
- [Lenten Prayers to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation](#) is another resource providing six weeks of prayer petitions to use during this season of the church.

ENGAGE YOUTH IN ACTION:

Support their healthy development and honor their desire to create positive changes in their world.

- Watch a film together and discuss how youth in your community experience these challenges in their lives, and what actions they might take to make a difference. *The Mask You Live In*, *MissRepresentation*, and *Screenagers*, are a few recommended documentaries with discussion guides available.
- Go to local events together that engage communities in prevention of exploitation and trafficking, such as races/walks, theater performances, university events.
- Volunteer with an anti-trafficking organization or an organization supporting youth experiencing homelessness or other risk factors that may lead to exploitation.
- Hold a fundraiser for Cherish All Children or for a local agency working on this issue or one supporting survivors.

ENGAGE ADULTS IN ACTION:

- Best practice is to identify an individual or group who will act as point person(s) to keep your community moving forward with continued education, action steps, and activities. Some churches have a “Cherish All Children Team” and we can help you get started and continue to partner with you.
- Identify if one area of this issue is most significant to your community at this time, and dig further into that specific subject area. This could include training for youth, Session II on Support for Survivors, or Session III on Ending Demand and Raising Healthy Boys and Young Men.
- Use our [Education and Resources](#) to host a film-discussion event, book club, or other event to engage your community further.
- Seek out local events such as social media safety training, theater companies performing on this topic, trainings, conferences, races and walks.
- Attend Cherish All Children events hosted throughout the year and connect with other churches hosting events and activities. Follow our Facebook page for updates.
- Connect with organizations in your community that work to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation. Build relationships to support their work of prevention or to support those who provide services to exploited youth. Check out our [Connecting for Prevention Directory](#) of organizations providing services to youth, or use this model to create one for your community.
- **ACT** to address societal practices that exploit children and youth.
 - **Be intentional** about how you live in community with others. **Speak up** when women, girls, boys, or LGBTQ persons are being disrespected or when men are not holding other men accountable.
 - Support public policies that address child sexual exploitation and trafficking, taking action to support critical legislation. See www.PolarisProject.org.
 - Identify ways you can support raising the next generation of young people, to respect and value all, and dismantle systems of oppression.
- Financially support Cherish All Children and other local organizations working to prevent sexual exploitation and trafficking or those supporting survivors.

Congregations can choose to begin this journey in the way that best suits them. Some begin with prayer while others get involved in local actions right away. What’s most important is that you do what you can to honor and cherish all God’s children, preventing them from exploitation and helping them live to their full potential.

Message of Hope

“So what can we do to fight sex trafficking? I think the most important thing we can do is get the word out...be educated about what sex trafficking looks like. If you can’t recognize the signs, you’re not gonna save your friend.”

From Brianna, 17-year old featured in *Chosen*, now dedicated to raising awareness about teen sex trafficking.

¹ www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Commercial-Sexual-Exploitation

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. How does your congregation already extend care to children in the wider community?
How could those efforts be expanded to include ideas from this study?
2. How might you engage the youth or young adults in your community to support one another in establishing healthy relationships?
3. In what way can you see your congregation engaging in prevention of child sexual exploitation using the Cherish All Children model and resources?

OUR NEXT STEPS:

How does the Bible inform our response as Christians?

Bishop Patricia Lull &
Anna Marsh
Executive Administrator
Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA

If asked to think of a story of a child in the Bible many would name the infant Jesus, whose birth stories are told in Luke 1:26-2:20 and Matthew 1:18-2:18. In our Christmas carols and children's pageants we picture Jesus surrounded by loving parents, curious shepherds and gift-bearing magi. But in Matthew's account we also learn that the life of the child Jesus was at great risk. To protect his young life from King Herod's death threat, his parents had to flee with him to the country of Egypt. Even the life of Jesus raises the question – *What do we need to do to make sure all children are safe?*

It is sobering to learn about children in our own communities who are at risk of sexual exploitation. In our congregations we are often reluctant to talk about social issues that remind us of the brokenness of our lives such as our own failure to protect all children. Deep patterns of human trafficking and sexual exploitation can seem too overwhelming to address when we gather for worship and learning.

As people of faith, we desire to align our lives and public actions with the testimony of the Bible and our theology as Christians. Yet when we read the Bible with children in mind, we find more stories about vulnerability than safekeeping, more threat than security. In the biblical world as in our own, children could be the victims of harsh economic and social realities.¹ Yet, we remain curious to discover what God has to say across the centuries about the value of children and our responsibility for protecting all children.

The Bible teaches us of the inherent dignity of all humans (Genesis 1:27) and commands care for the vulnerable of society (Deuteronomy 14:29). Both the Hebrew prophets and Jesus use powerful images of parental love to describe God's love for people (Hosea 11:3-4, Matthew 23:37).

In Exodus 20, Moses presents the Ten Commandments to the people. The fourth

¹ For example, Julie Faith Parker's *Valuable and Vulnerable: Children in Biblical Narrative* (2013) and Naomi Steinberg's *The World of the Child in the Hebrew Bible* (2013).

¹ Exodus 20:12, NRSV.

commandment is, “Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”² While this reminds us that parents deserve our honor and respect, as well as our care when they are elderly or frail, Luther’s explanation of the fourth commandment also exhorts parents to fulfill their responsibility for loving care of children: “Do not imagine the parental office is a matter of your pleasure and whim. It is a strict command and injunction of God, who holds you accountable for it.”³

Luther writes elsewhere of a responsibility to care for all the children in a community. In 1524 he admonished the local government officials to establish schools for both boys and girls:

Indeed, for what purpose do we older folks exist, other than to care for, instruct, and bring up...young people and to seek their best interests, when nature itself should drive us to do this and even the heathen afford us abundant examples of it.⁴

Why was Luther so insistent? He recognized that he was living in an age when a child’s potential economic value could overshadow everything else in their lives. There was an attitude that only the most gifted children in affluent families needed to be educated; most children could be put to work within the household or in the community. This commercialized the value of a child just as human trafficking turns some girls and boys into commodities today.

In a sermon in 1530, Luther again addresses this topic:

[God] has not given you your children and the means to support them simply so that you may do with them as you please, or train them just to get ahead in the world. You have been earnestly commanded to raise them for God’s service.⁵

Here, the reformer is not only talking about those who will grow up to be pastors or church workers. Luther advocated for a hardy understanding of our responsibility to be good citizens, serving God through the work of education, business, public service and the arts alongside the work of the church.

Mary and Joseph modeled what we are called to offer to all children in our communities –

³ LC 169 in Kolb and Wengert, 409.

⁴ *To the Councilmen of Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (1524), in LW 45:353.

⁵ *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School* (1530), in LW 46:222.

safety, respect and the opportunity to grow up unscarred by exploitation or violence. Believing that the life of every person matters to God – regardless of their age, skills or economic usefulness – can motivate our congregations to be actively engaged in caring for, protecting and cherishing all children. Rather than denying or ignoring the dangers that surround human trafficking, God gives us the will and the power to thwart all those who would hurt young lives.

We have an opportunity as individuals and as a church, to take an active role in the prevention of sexual exploitation of children and youth. The ministry of Cherish All Children provides congregations with education and tools to engage in this work in your own community. Their prevention model begins with prayer and educating ourselves on this issue, and then moves us to connect with others engaged in fighting this injustice, acting to keep all God's children safe.

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Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, Walther I. Brandt and Robert C. Schultz. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1955-

Kolb, Robert, and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000.

CLOSING PRAYER:

God of justice, stir in us a passion for service, that we reach out and do our part to support organizations committed to ending sexual exploitation. Whether big or small, may our actions come together to surround all your children, especially those who are vulnerable, victims or survivors, with the eternal hope of your love and grace. Amen.

RESOURCES

Cherish All Children

www.cherishallchildren.org

Love 146

Not a Number Training and Resources, and many more excellent resources for adults and youth

<https://love146.org/notanumber/>

Polaris Project

www.polarisproject.org

NOTES

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CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES



Joy McElroy

Executive Director
Cherish All Children

Joy McElroy became Executive Director of Cherish All Children in October 2017, transitioning the organization into Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. Prior to that, Joy was a Cherish All Children educator, engaging churches in the Saint Paul Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to prevent child sexual exploitation.

She has over 25 years of leadership experience in business, education and church organizations. Her life's work has focused on serving and raising up individuals, including a 10 year teaching position at the Promise Program for women seeking self-sufficiency, and creating, implementing, and leading an ELCA program "Youth Leadership in the City." She is dedicated to social justice issues, especially those impacting women, children, and youth.

Joy holds a master's degree in Human Resources from the University of Minnesota, with a focus on training and development. She lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota with her family, attending Christ Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill where she is active supporting many youth and community activities.

Diane Jacobson

Professor Emerita of Old Testament and Retired Director
of the Book of Faith Initiative for ELCA
Luther Seminary

Dr. Diane Jacobson is professor emerita of Old Testament at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, MN where she taught from 1982-2010. She also served as director of the Book of Faith Initiative for the ELCA from 2008-2015. Jacobson has been a frequent speaker throughout the Church, including the 2011 and 2013 Churchwide Assemblies, the Lutheran World Federation 50th Anniversary Assembly in Hong Kong, and



numerous synodical assemblies, rostered leaders gatherings, and churchwide consultations. Jacobson served on the consulting board and as a contributor to the Lutheran Study Bible (2009). Jacobson is, first and foremost, a lover of Scripture. "I'm in love with this Book," she says. "My calling is to teach Scripture for the sake of God's world, and to invite others into the wonders and rewards of exploring the Bible together."



Sarah McGuinness

Metro Homeless Youth Services Intern
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota

Sarah McGuinness received a BA in Religion from Augsburg College, Minneapolis, and an MA in Aging and Health Ministries from Luther Seminary, St. Paul. She has worked in health care, elementary education, and is currently serving as a Community Engagement Intern with Lutheran Social Service Metro Homeless Youth Services. She is an active member of Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Roseville, and serves on Cherish All Children's St. Paul Area Synod Ministry Team.

Karoline Lewis

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The Rev. Dr. Karoline M. Lewis (www.karolinelewis.com) holds the Alvin N. Rogness Chair of Homiletics at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, and is ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She is a regularly featured preacher and presenter at the Festival of Homiletics.



Her newest book is, *SHE: Five Keys To Unlock the Power of Women in Ministry*. Lewis is the author of "John: Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentary Series," the introduction and study notes for the Gospel of John in The Lutheran Study Bible, co-author of *New Proclamation: Year B, 2009*, as well as articles in The Christian Century, Feasting on the Word, Lutheran Forum, Word and World, Abingdon Preaching Annual, Currents in Theology and Mission, and Odyssey Network's ON Scripture. She is a contributing writer for WorkingPreacher.org, the author of the site's weekly column, Dear Working Preacher, and cohost of the site's weekly podcast Sermon Brainwave.

Rolf Jacobson

Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Professor of Scripture, Theology and Ministry
Luther Seminary

Rolf Jacobson joined the Luther Seminary faculty as assistant professor of Old Testament in July 2003. Prior to joining the seminary, he taught at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, as an assistant professor of religion.

Jacobson holds a master of divinity degree from Luther Seminary (1991) and a doctor of philosophy degree from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ (2000). His teaching interests include the Psalms, Old Testament prophets, biblical poetry, biblical theology, and biblical narrative. He emphasizes that the purpose of a biblical text is not just for preaching or teaching, but also for pastoral care, personal spiritual growth, and for the shaping of Christian mission and theology.

Ordained in 1991, Jacobson served for five years as associate pastor of Como Park Lutheran Church in St. Paul before continuing his education at Princeton Theological Seminary. At Princeton, he was the assistant editor for "Theology Today" and "The Princeton Seminary Bulletin." He also served as a teaching fellow.

Jacobson is an in-demand speaker and author, who produces theological and biblical works for both the church and the academic guild. He recently served as editor of *Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms*, whose authors included three recent Luther Seminary graduates. His articles have appeared in *Word and World*, *Theology Today*, *Interpretation*, *Teaching Theology and Religion*, and in many collections of scholarly essays. With Kelly Fryer, he wrote the "No Experience Necessary" Bible studies. He has been a contributor to Augsburg Fortress's Handbook series, *Workingpreacher.org*, *Lectionary Homiletics*, and the like. His credits also include appearances in many video curricula, including *The Lutheran Course*.



Bishop Patricia Lull

Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA

The Reverend Patricia Lull was elected bishop of the Saint Paul Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in May 2014. At the time of her election, Lull was serving as the Executive Director of the Saint Paul Area Council of Churches. Previous to that, she worked in campus ministry at Augsburg College, as Dean of Students at Luther Seminary, and as Director of Lutheran Campus Ministry for the ELCA.



A native of Fremont, Ohio, Lull attended the College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio, where she majored in religion. She completed her theological education at Yale Divinity School. Following her ordination in 1979, Lull's first call was at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Alpena, Michigan, followed by a second call at Christ Lutheran Church in Athens, Ohio during which she also served as Lutheran Campus Pastor at Ohio University.

Lull is deeply committed to inter-religious learning and to addressing issues of justice and poverty. She learned from her parents the importance of being deeply engaged in the community in which she lives and volunteers with Project Home, a shelter for homeless families in Saint Paul. She is a published writer and a frequent speaker on topics ranging from faith formation to leadership development.

Lull has lived in Saint Paul since 2001 and is a member of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Saint Paul.

Anna Marsh

Executive Assistant to the Bishop
Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA

Anna Marsh joined synod staff in July 2014. A graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College (2004) and Luther Seminary (2008) and an alum of Lutheran Volunteer Corps, she has also worked with the Minnesota Council of Churches and American Public Media's Speaking of Faith (now OnBeing).

She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Anna lives in St. Paul with her dog Effi.



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**Lutheran
Social Service**
of Minnesota



Cherish
ALL CHILDREN

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