

CHERISH OUR CHILDREN incorporates the following Arenas for Action from the ELCA *Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation*.

- Equip the saints for action through awareness of this social evil.
- Find out what exploitation is happening in your community.
- Prevent exploitation through education.
- Address the demand for the system of sexual exploitation.
- Support social agencies that work with exploited youth and adults.

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"Every child is a reflection of the heart of God. At the core, at the heart of youth and family ministry, will not be programs, will not be new structures, will not be new technology. At the core will be entering deeply into these relationships with God and each other. It will mean looking into young people's faces as though they are actually there. This ministry is going to be counter-cultural; it will take time in a world that doesn't have enough time."

- Rollie Martinson
Professor, Luther Seminary

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*O God, do not keep silent;
be not quiet, O God, be not still.
See how your enemies are astir,
how your foes rear their heads.
With cunning they conspire against your people;
they plot against those you cherish.*

Psalm 83:1-3 (NIV)



CHERISH OUR CHILDREN is a Pacifica Synod endorsed, congregation-based ministry of prayer, education, relationship-building, and action to implement the ELCA *Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation*.

ELCA Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

This *Message* was adopted by the ELCA Church Council in 2001, as a result of memorials passed by synod assemblies in several synods.

"Commercial sexual exploitation includes prostitution, pornography, and stripping. It includes: viewing pornographic videos, downloading pornography from the Internet, visiting strip clubs, engaging in phone sex, using escort services, and participating in sex tourism."

"Love born of faith in Jesus Christ calls us all to attend to, discuss, resist, and reject the system of sexual exploitation."

(Message, pp 1-2)

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The CHERISH OUR CHILDREN Bishop's Task Force was formed in 2007 to implement this *Message*.

What this Task Force seeks to accomplish:

- Congregations are more aware of young people and their needs.
- Congregations are more intentional about how they care for and support young people.
- People of all ages are better equipped to detect and safely address recruitment.
- People of faith are leaders in the effort to dismantle the system of sexual exploitation.

Pacifica Synod goal:

That 50% of the congregations in this synod be actively involved in CHERISH OUR CHILDREN by 2012.

Other CHERISH OUR CHILDREN Synods:

Southwestern Texas
Southwestern Minnesota
Western North Dakota
Southeastern Iowa
Northern Texas/Northern Louisiana
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Minneapolis Area

CHERISH OUR CHILDREN Components

Congregational Leadership Team

Each congregation will create a CHERISH OUR CHILDREN Leadership Team to develop and support this ministry in the congregation.

Prayer

- CHERISH OUR CHILDREN Leadership Team is involved in intentional prayer for 40 days.
- "Cherish Prayers" implemented - this is intentional prayer by a specific adult for a specific child or young person, ages birth to 25.

Education

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

Relationship-Building

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

Action

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

Congregations committing to the implementation of the

CHERISH OUR CHILDREN Ministry:

St. Paul, Fullerton
King of Glory, Fountain Valley
Peace, Corona
Shepherd of the Hills, Whittier
Shepherd of Life, Lake Elsinore
Our Redeemer, Garden Grove