

## **Resolution on Child Protection**

WHEREAS, the South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America rejoices that as “Jesus invited the children” (Mark 10: 13-16), so are we to welcome, fully embrace and incorporate children, teaching and learning from them; and

WHEREAS, children are a treasure and gift of God entrusted to the care of families, church, and society (Luther’s Works) and the church is called to faithful tending, intentional stewardship, and sacred responsibility; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA recognizes a call to uphold “Each person is created in God’s image. We respect this God-given right to dignity and, inspired by the life of Jesus, show love and compassion for all people. Through proclamation of the gospel, through worship and as servants of God working for healing and justice in the world, we uphold and seek to protect the dignity and human rights of all people...As Christ’s church, we value the richness of God’s creation and offer a radical welcome to all people, appreciating our common humanity and our differences,” including the children in our midst, <https://www.elca.org/about/vision-and-purpose>; and

WHEREAS, in the United States, at least 1 in 7 and as many as 1 in 4 children experience abuse or neglect; and

WHEREAS, the offenders of child maltreatment can be parents, nonparents, unrelated caregivers, siblings, or other children: and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church has perpetuated the spiritual injury of survivors of child abuse and the harm caused by child abuse; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, that all congregations, ministries and institutions of the South Carolina Synod are provided with tools and strongly encouraged to implement and clearly communicate, at the very least, the following policies:

screening and background checks including, but not limited to, SLED checks and Sex Offender Registry checks for all staff and volunteers working with children and/or youth; and

six months of involvement with the congregation before being allowed to work with children and/or youth; and sign-in and sign-out lists for events and a clear limit on who can sign a child out from an event; and

requiring signed permission forms for the sharing of photographs or videos to the general public, including e-news, social media pages of the congregation, ministries and institutions; and

restricting access to non-visible areas of a building during events or overnights, including storage and maintenance rooms; and

observing the “second adult” rule in any meeting space or vehicle, not related by marriage or first-degree family relationship; and

observing open-door policy; never having an adult one-on-one with a child or youth - if necessary, meet together in a public place and keep communication lines open with parents/caregivers; and

at least two unrelated adults be involved in any verbal or written communication with children and/or youth via digital, mobile, and online mediums, such as texts, chats, video calls, or emails; and

not limiting access of children or youth to resources and supplies during events such as, food, beverages, personal care items, and activity supplies which are specifically provided for their use and benefit: and be it finally

*Resolved*, that congregations, ministries and institutions provide training in recognizing and reporting child maltreatment, including mandatory reporting and resources for walking through that process as a faith community.

*Adopted by South Carolina Synod Assembly, June 12-14, 2025*