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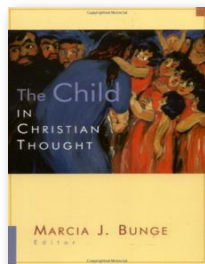
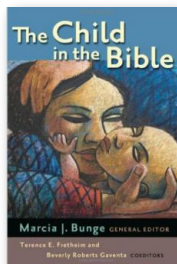
Agenda

- Biblical basis for addressing child abuse as a high priority
- Physical, emotional & spiritual impact of child abuse
- Best practices for training
- Best practices for policies
- Best practices for spiritual care with survivors
- Resources for pastoral care with survivors
- Resources on working with offenders
- How is the WELS doing in meeting best practices?



2

Biblical basis for addressing child abuse



3

God Hears The Cries Of Children



"But God heard the boy (Ishmael) crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from Heaven... 'Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants.'"

— Genesis 21:17-18

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God Expects All Of Us To Act



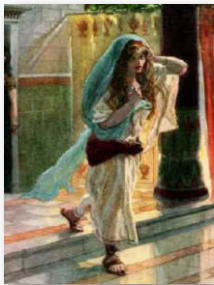
Suppose the people of the community close their eyes to the fact that the man sacrificed his child to Molech. And suppose they fail to put him to death..."

— Leviticus 20:4

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God Understands The Anguish Of Victims



"She (Tamar) put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went... And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman."

— 2 Samuel 13:18-20

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God Holds Offenders Accountable



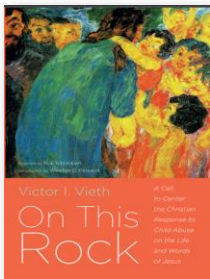
"Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!'"

— 2 Samuel 12:7



7

Children As God's Messengers



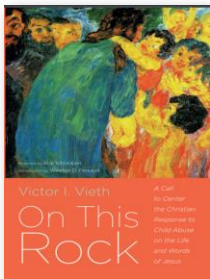
"Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.'"

--Jesus (Mark 9:36-37)



8

What Did Jesus Mean?



- Jesus is referencing ancient Jewish customs of respect to messengers
 - Strange (2004)
- A true disciple of Jesus must "love and serve children"
 - Gundry-Volf (2001)



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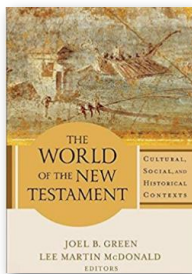
The Context In Which Jesus Said This



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Child Physical Abuse

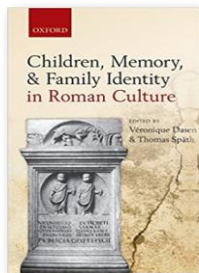


- Children had "limited reason" and thus teachers, parents and masters beat them
- Children must be beaten frequently (Sir 30:1)
- Children exposed to torture or "sadistic spectacles"

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Child Neglect

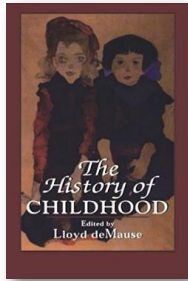


- Legally permissible to expose children
 - Poverty
 - Illegitimate
 - Deformed
- "Rescued" children often became slaves or were sexually exploited

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Child Sexual Abuse



- Children "lived in an atmosphere of sexual abuse"
 - Lloyd deMause
- Sexual abuse in gymnasiums
- Pederasty
- Sexual abuse of slaves
- Mishnah had low penalty for sexually abusing child below the age of three

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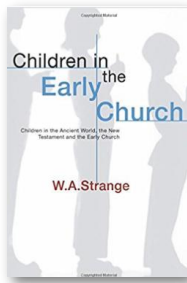
The Impact Of The Incarnation



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A New Dignity For Children



"If the incarnate Christ had assumed the experiences of childhood, as well as those of adult life, then childhood took on a new dignity and importance."

– W.A. Strange

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The DNA of Jesus

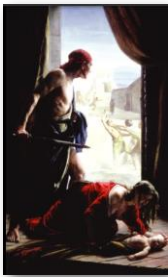


- Mathew's lineage of Jesus includes the "movers and shakers of Israel"
 - Betsworth (2016)
- But this lineage also includes three sexually exploited women (Rahab, Tamar, Bathseeba)
- Jesus' own mother faced "public disgrace"
 - Mt 1:19

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A Near Victim Of Child Abuse



Jesus survived a mass infanticide (Mt 2:13; 16) and "would later rise up in defense of children."

– Dr. Paul Offit (2015)

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Jesus and Children



- Knew the games they played
 - Mt 11:16-18
- Prayed for them
 - Mt 19:13-14
- Blessed them
 - Mark 10:13-16
- Took them in his arms
 - Mark 9:36-37; 10:13-16
- Healed them
 - (e.g. Mark 9:2)
- Raised them from the dead
 - (e.g. Mark 5:41-43)

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Teachings On Children



- Children should be cared for
 - Mt 7:9-11
- Illustration of faith
 - Mt 18:1-4
- Given divine wisdom
 - Mt 11:25
- Scolds any in the church who keep children away
 - Mark 10:13-16



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Teachings On Child Abuse



"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea."

– Mark 9:42



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What Does This Mean?



- "Little ones" is Greek adjective mikros or "smallest child"
- Stumbling block means damaging someone's faith
- Millstone is stone turned by an animal to grind seed to flour
- Anything that harms a child's faith is viewed harshly by God
 - Paavola (2013)



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Some Bible Commentaries adopt this view



- Jesus is referring to child sexual abuse
- This conclusion is based on Mark 9:42 combined with subsequent verses pertaining to sins committed by various parts of the body and the Oxford Bible commentators' review of "references in rabbinic literature"



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A Broader Interpretation Leads To Similar Conclusion

- "Child abuse causes children to stumble in the faith in many ways. Later in life it can trigger sinful behavior to cope with the painful memories. It often confuses the person spiritually and theologically: 'If there is a God, why didn't [God] help me? If God promises to answer our prayers, then why didn't [God] stop my abuse? I prayed about it many times.'"
- "Jesus recognized children were valuable and vulnerable" and thus the "strong warning."
 - Schuetze (2015)



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Gregory Henry Payne

"Amid all the differences of opinion and doctrine that we find among the early founders of Christianity, there was one thing on which they were unanimous, and that was the attitude toward children. It was a ceaseless war they waged on behalf of children—those early and oftentimes eloquent founders. From Barnabas, contemporary of the Apostles, to Ambrosius and Augustine, they did not cease to denounce those who, no matter what their reasons, exposed or killed children."



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The New "Old" Faith Community



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Prevalence of abuse, physical and emotional impact



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How prevalent is abuse?

- Emotional abuse (humiliation, threats) (11%)
- Physical abuse (hit hard enough to receive injuries) (28%)
- Contact sexual abuse (28% women, 16% men)
- Mother treated violently (13%)
- Neglect—physical (10%)
- Neglect—emotional (15%)
 - CDC ACE Study on 450,000 adults

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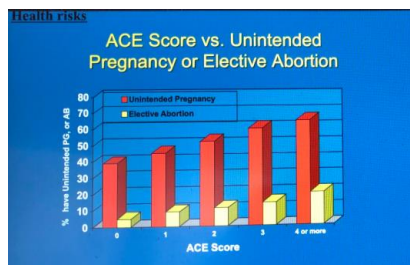
Physical & emotional impact of abuse

- Cancer
- Heart disease
- STDs
- Liver disease
- Smoking
- Alcohol abuse
- Obesity
- Drug dependence
- IV Drug Use
- Early intercourse, pregnancy
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Hallucinations
- Sleep disturbances
- Memory disturbances
- Anger problems
- Domestic violence risk
- Job problems
- Relationship problems



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Unintended pregnancy & elective abortion



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The spiritual impact of abuse

Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy
2009, Vol. 1, No. 2, 130-145

© 2009 American Psychological Association
1082-989X/09/\$12.00 DOI: 10.1037/a0016211

Changes in Personal Religion/Spirituality During and After Childhood Abuse: A Review and Synthesis

Donald F. Walker, Henri Webb Reid, Tiffany O'Neill, and Lindsay Brown
Richmont Graduate University

Psychologists have begun to consider the potential role of traumatic experiences on the victim's spirituality and religiousness as well as the role personal religious and spiritual faith might have in recovery from abuse. In this review, the authors were particularly interested in these issues as they pertain to childhood abuse. The authors identified 34 studies of child abuse as they relate to spirituality and religiosity that included information on a total of 19,090 participants. The studies were classified according to both the form of abuse and the form of religiousness or spirituality that were examined. The majority of studies indicated either some decline in religiousness or spirituality ($N = 14$) or a combination of both growth and decline ($N = 12$). Seven studies gave preliminary indications that religiousness/spirituality can moderate the development of posttraumatic symptoms or symptoms associated with other Axis I disorders. The authors discuss implications for both therapy and future research.

Keywords: childhood abuse, religion and spirituality



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The Impact Of Abuse On Spirituality

- A study of 527 child abuse victims (physical, sexual or emotional) found these victims had a "significant" spiritual injury
- The injuries included feelings of guilt, anger, grief, despair, doubt, fear of death and belief God is unfair.
- However, the victims reported praying more frequently & having a "spiritual experience."

Lawson, et al., Child Abuse & Neglect (1998)



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Impact of clergy abuse



- Victims of clergy CSA 4 times more likely to see their beliefs in God negatively impacted.
- This was a "significant predictor for experiencing most of the mental health and social problems analyzed."
- These victims were more than twice as likely to have "suicidal phenomena"



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RESEARCH

1 in 10 Young Protestants Have Left a Church Over Abuse

As the generation most likely to report experiencing misconduct and least likely to tolerate it, Christians under 35 stand to shape how congregations respond.

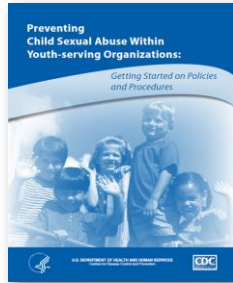
KATE SHELLNUTT | MAY 21, 2019 10:00 AM



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Current CDC training standards

- CDC recommends training for:
 - Employees/volunteers
 - Children
 - Parents
- CDC recommends course content



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Meeting CDC standards for training



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Free training (choice #1)



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Virtual or in person (choice #2)



- April 12-13 (virtual)
- October 16-17 (virtual)
- Can also contract with Zero Abuse Project for individual training for your church or group of churches
 - ½ day
 - 1 day
 - 1.5 days
 - 2 days
- FFTC has some grant funds to assist if need be



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Personal safety for youth



EMPOWER ME! Abuse Prevention Education Kit (#1018)

All Products / [Promoting Resources](#) / EMPOWER ME! Abuse Prevention Education Kit (#1018)

K-6th Grade Child Abuse Prevention Education Kit

As an agency that has been training parents, professionals, community members and children for more than 20 years, we know talking about personal safety can be done in a positive and empowering way. This kit is designed to help facilitate those important conversations so kids can walk around smart, not scared.

Designed for:

- Youth-serving organizations
- Schools
- Faith-based organizations



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One Of Many Resources

NEW GROWTH PRESS PRESENTS

GOD MADE ALL OF ME
A Book to Help Children Protect Their Bodies
by Justin and Lindsay Holcomb

About the Book

Protect Your Child with Truth from God's Word

Parents can help to keep their children safe by teaching them how God made each person special. From that special truth parents can use God Made All of Me to teach children what parts of their bodies are private, what is inappropriate touching, and how to respond to unwanted contact from anyone else. God Made All of Me is a simple yet, beautifully illustrated story that will be a welcome for families to openly talk about the possibility of sexual abuse, thus helping to protect children from "harmful" other adults might want them to keep and watching which kinds of touching are right and very wrong. Written by Justin and Lindsay Holcomb who counsel victims of childhood sexual abuse and are also the parents of young children, God Made All of Me is an important resource that every family will need to have in their home library.

Release Date: July 21, 2015
Audience: All Children



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Another Resource (In Your Materials)

In the Footsteps of Mary and Joseph: The Role of Adult and Child Education in the Prevention of Abuse

Alison Feigh¹

"Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear."
—Nelson Mandela²

All major religious traditions prioritize the importance of addressing the needs and concerns of marginalized individuals and communities.³ Creating safe spaces for children to grow and question is not just a good idea, it also aligns

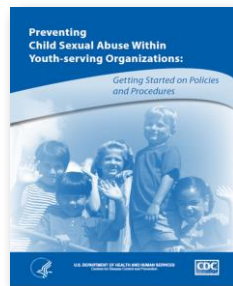
When Joseph, Mary, and the Wise Men learned the baby Jesus was in danger, the Bible tells us that each of these adults took concrete steps to prevent abuse (Matt 2:1–21). Years

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CDC standards on policies

- Screening/selection of employees & volunteers
- Guidelines on interactions
- Monitoring behavior
- Ensuring safe environments
- Responding to inappropriate behavior
- Training of employees, caregivers, youth



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Screening And Selection

- CDC recommends five pre-employment screenings:
 - Informing applicant of policies, requiring written acknowledgment, and asking questions
 - Written application with questions pertinent to abuse
 - Personal interview with additional questions about reporting, etc
 - Verbal, not just written references

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Background Checks

- Criminal background checks (but note that most predators have never been caught—Abel study, etc)
- Google search and search newspapers where counselors/employees may have worked



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Monitoring Behavior

- Two deep leadership—at least two adults on "all trips and outings"
- No one on one contact (if there is some reason for a private discussion with a child, do it in the view of others)
- Respect for privacy—do not watch a child change clothes or shower nor should a child see a counselor naked



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Policies And Guidelines

- Separate sleeping accommodations for counselors and children (if overnight trips, etc)
- Limit or prohibit events at workers homes
- Appropriate attire (no skinny dipping, etc)
- Windows and open doors
- Sexual comments, jokes, and behaviors around children strictly prohibited
- Prohibiting corporal punishment
- Limiting cameras, imaging, digital devices
- Bullying prohibited



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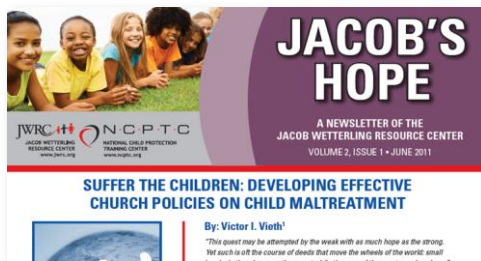
Resources



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In your materials



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Also in your materials (Berkovits 2018)

Preventing Abuse in Christian Organizations That Serve Youth: Ten Policies to Create Safer Environments¹

Shira M. Berkovits²

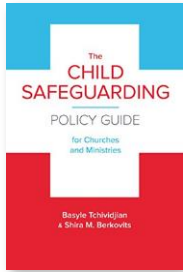
It is critical for leaders of youth-serving organizations (YSOs)³ to adopt child-protection policies proactively before they are faced with a problem. Policies clarify acceptable and unacceptable behaviors that guide adults⁴ to model safe interactions with children. When a policy is well communicated, it becomes integral to institutional culture and its violations are easily identifiable, making it possible for bystanders to intervene and institutions to respond. Without policies, leaders may forget or dismiss important response steps, become more susceptible to pressures, and introduce

A good policy can function as a deterrent, sending a clear message to potential abusers: Abuse is not tolerated here and will be reported immediately.

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An Essential Resource



Companion guide for
Synagogues to be
published in 2023



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Where do you start?

- Form a child protection committee
- Have committee members go through training
- Work through the child safeguarding policy guide
- Have your policies reviewed by me or another child abuse expert
- Have your congregation approve the policies
- Develop a procedure to enforce policies and periodically update them
- Preach about child abuse
- Conduct a Bible study
- Provide spiritual care for the hurting



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Meeting The Needs Of Survivors



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The Role Of Spirituality In Coping With Abuse

- Researchers have found a victim's "spiritual coping behavior" may play a positive or negative role in the ability to cope with the abuse
- Victims of severe abuse and very young victims are more likely to remain "stuck" in their spiritual development (i.e. remain angry with God)
- Nonetheless many victims reporting "greater resolution" of childhood abuse were able to "actively turn to their spirituality to cope...rather than attempt to cope on their own."

Gall, Spirituality and Coping with Life Stress Among Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, 30 Child Abuse & Neglect 829 (2006)



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More Research

- Religious and spiritual forms of coping "contribute to decreased symptoms, greater self esteem, and overall greater life satisfaction."
 - Bryant-Davis (2012)
- Religiousness can moderate posttraumatic symptoms for child abuse survivors
 - Walker (2009)
- In a study of 2,964 female child sexual abuse survivors, researchers noted "significantly more posttraumatic symptoms" in survivors with no current religious practices.
 - Elliott (1994)



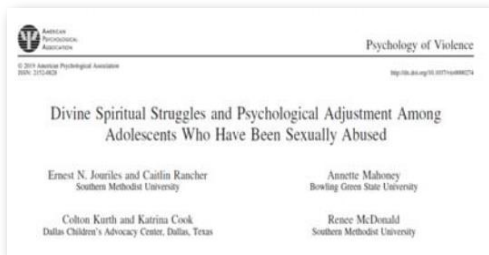
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Spirituality and ACEs



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Spirituality & resilience



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Gower (2020)



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Recommendations

- Avoid the temptation to focus on victim's "sins"
- Assist the victim in accessing medical and mental health care
- Stay within your field of expertise
- Refrain from platitudes
- Don't require forgiveness
- Cautiously respond when victim wants to confront perpetrator
- What does the victim need to survive (e.g. thoughts on hell, Jesus as a victim)

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The Importance Of Sacred Texts

- Many maltreated children abused or neglected by an offender who used a sacred text
- This damage can be "powerfully undone when challenged using other passages from clients' religious and spiritual tradition."
- The case of the minister using Genesis

Bottoms, et al (2003); Walker, et al (2014)



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Collaboration With Mental Health

- Clergy as consultant
- Therapist as consultant
- Referrals
- Limited collaboration
- Full collaboration
 - Therapy and spiritual guidance offered as integrated whole

Blich Et Al, 2000



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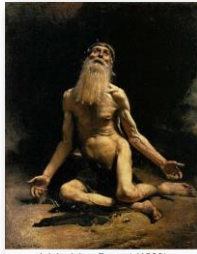
Diane Langberg (2017)

"One of the other vital functions of the church, and one that I think we've forgotten, is the art of lamenting. People who have suffered severe trauma, such as sexual abuse, need to lament. Often, I will send them to the Psalms or to the Prophets, but I help them find words from Scripture to express their pain, their fear, their doubts, and sometimes even their anger at God. We see often in Scripture where the psalmist or the prophets call out to God, 'Where are you?' or 'Why don't you hear me?'"



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Sometimes God Doesn't Answer The "Why" Questions



Job by Léon Bonnat (1880)

Pargament (2006)

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What Survivors Want

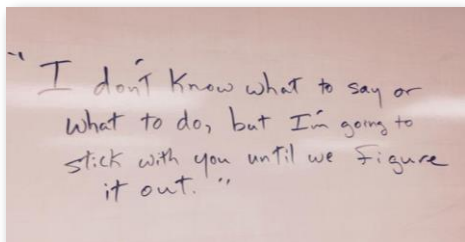
1. Offer an "unequivocal apology"
2. Symbolic gestures (i.e. a memorial or rock garden)
3. Changes in policies (two deep leadership, proper screening, immediate reporting to the authorities—no exceptions)
4. Archive the past (victims want the assurance there will never be a revisionist history)
5. The practical (faith community should help access mental health and medical services)
6. Listen and act (the hymn that hurt)

Clark (2009)

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Nate Frambach



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Have Realistic View Of Recovery

Advocate & Author

What many people think a survivor's path looks like:



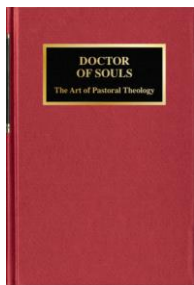
The Realistic Version:



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How is WELS doing?

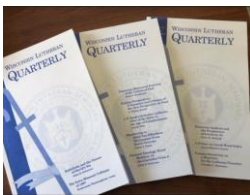


- MLC training for more than a decade
- WLS training including new course on child abuse
- "Doctor of Souls" content on ACEs and spiritual care for survivors

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Theological engagement



- Pastoral Theology Brief: Matthew 18
 - Schuetze (2015)
- Ministering to Adult Sex Offenders
 - Vieth (2015)
- Bathsheba & the Nature of David's Sin
 - Schuetze (2019)
- Trauma Sensitivity as a Heuristic for the Lutheran Preacher
 - Bourman (2021)

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WELS sermons on child abuse



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Time of Grace three part sermon series



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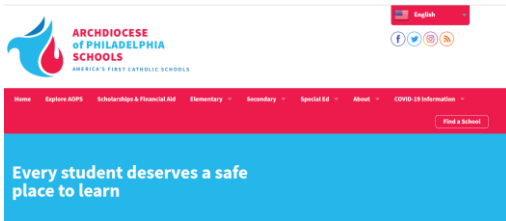
The lay of the land

- WELS churches and schools who have received and implemented recommendations from our training have policies that not only meet the current CDC standards but also the higher child protection standards that are forthcoming
- However, many churches have no policies or policies below the CDC standards (old or new)
 - For instance, only 150 out of 423 WELS schools are accredited by WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools and early childhood ministries are the least likely to be accredited
 - The accreditation handbook has some child protection policies (e.g. background checks, incident reports) but would not meet CDC standards (old or new)
- Very few, if any, of our churches and schools meet the CDC education standards

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We're far behind Catholic schools on training youth



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What we are asking

- Urge all WELS churches and schools to meet or exceed forthcoming CDC standards for child protection policies
- Promote Freedom for Captives special ministry and make sure pastors & teachers know we can provide technical assistance and education
- Urge WELS churches & schools to take FFTC training
- Implement personal safety training in our schools
- Encourage pastors and teachers to learn about the spiritual impact of trauma and apply this research when working with survivors



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Advice For Theologians



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Faith Communities Can Build Resilience



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Sources Of Resiliency For Abused Children

- Educational characteristics
 - Engagement in academics
 - Engagement in extra-curricular activities
 - Positive relationship with instructors



Summers (2006)

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Other Resiliency Factors

- Community characteristics
 - Positive relationship with caring, non-abusive adult
 - Adults or peers who disapprove of antisocial behavior
 - Involvement with religious community
 - Peer support
 - Safety of community
 - Access to health care



Herrenkohl et al. (2008)

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"Till the night be passed"



"Silence in the
face of evil is
itself evil. Not
to act is to act."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer