

I am the vine.



Cherish All Children

Pray + Educate + Connect + Act

Wednesday Prayer Fifth Sunday After Easter April 25, 2018

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

The first house I bought was 75 years old when I became its third owner. The previous owner resided there for more than 50 years and was a master gardener. The house had been beautifully re-habbed, but the yard that was once a showplace had become a jungle in my predecessor's declining years. We could see day lilies, iris, peonies and hydrangea but they were deeply embedded in a tangled mass of sweet pea, raspberry and grape vines.

As I tried to bring order out of the chaos, it was the grape vines that proved to be the most challenging. I often thought of this passage as I chopped and pulled at the thick vines and the tenacious branches that criss-crossed the yard, clinging fast to everything in their path and growing back year after year.

As we work toward connecting with vulnerable children and youth, the metaphor of the vine and branches is a good goal for us to work toward. Drawing our strength from the vine of Jesus Christ through worship, Bible Study and prayer, we can branch out with the life-giving gospel message of hope and forgiveness to our children and youth and those who are struggling to break free of sexual exploitation. There will be times that our message is rebuffed, but we must continue to educate and encourage others to join us to reach out again and again. Rooted in Christ, we can bear the fruits of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control and bring new life to those who see only despair day after day.

Gracious God, Source of Life, we give thanks that you feed and nurture us daily through the vine of Jesus Christ. As we strive to branch out from his word, we pray that your power sustains and strengthens us to carry

out your will in the world, especially in our ministry of outreach to those who are vulnerable to or suffering from sexual exploitation. We pray that the seeds that we plant will bear fruit and the gospel message that we share will bring hope and new life to others. Amen

Today's content was written by Kay Kinkel, MS, MSW, who was formerly rostered as an Associate in Ministry in the ELCA, and now is a Liscensed Graduate Social Worker.

Please also lift up in prayer:

- **All God's children** - that their lives and futures are filled with your love.
 - **Exploited children** – to find safety and healing; **Vulnerable children** - to find safe people and places; **Perpetrators** – to stop their abusive and exploitive behaviors; and **Bystanders** – to intervene on behalf of children.
 - Cherish All Children leaders, congregations, synods, and all those working tirelessly to protect and cherish all God's children.
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Cherish All Children is a social ministry that equips congregations to prevent child sexual exploitation.

**"Love born of faith in Jesus Christ calls us all to attend to, discuss, resist, and reject the system of sexual exploitation."
(ELCA Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation, pg. 1)**

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