



Cherish All Children

Pray + Educate + Connect + Act

E-Quipped for Prevention

September 2015: Connect with Your Community

Ecumenical Faith Community Gathering

Written by Ginny Rudloff, Minneapolis Prevention Coordinator

He replied, "...Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20

A while back I attended a [Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force](#) meeting. One of the morning's speakers was trying to get a sense of who was in attendance. He asked for a show of hands for members of government agencies, police, Safe Harbor service agencies, etc.

Then he said, "Who is here from the faith community?" and a significant number of hands went in the air. He looked around at the other speakers, and they all smiled and nodded. The phrase "faith can move mountains" flashed in my mind.

The faith community is a credible community voice for children. We demonstrate our commitment to children by protecting them, praying for them, and raising them to be servant leaders in their own communities.

We speak up for vulnerable people and advocate for their well-being. The faith community is not bound by official red tape and can raise money or provide volunteers through channels not open to government agencies.

At two separate sex-trafficking conferences last summer, there were workshops scheduled specifically for members of the faith community. People of faith are welcomed into the work of ending sex trafficking, and we can play an important role in community education, advocacy, and support.

At one of the conferences, I gave my contact information to the workshop leader. She sent a note out to a group of faith leaders asking that we get together to talk about what we're working on and to see how we might be able to collaborate. Next week we will gather to share resources and join forces on the important work of raising awareness and calling people together on the issue of sex trafficking.

People of faith are well-suited for this work. We already have an organization of people who care about the well-being of the community. We can host community forums, support agencies serving sex trafficked youth, talk to the legislators in our midst about our concerns for these young victims, rally a group of caring allies to show our support, and pray.

So how do you connect with other faith communities to do this work?

- Keep your eyes and ears open. When you go to a community event about sex trafficking, who is there? Identify yourself as a member of the faith community. Listen to people who are asking questions or talking. What is their faith connection?
- Talk with leaders in your community's churches. Are they trying to do anything about sex trafficking? Do they want to? Are they open to collaboration?
- Host a community meeting. Have open discussions about your congregation's ability or desire to work on this issue. What can your congregation offer? Are there any potential roadblocks? How can you combine your forces to help sexually exploited youth? What resources can you each bring to the table?

You may not be able to work on all projects together, but keep the door open for joint efforts. When the faith community can speak together as a unified group it is a voice powerful enough to "move mountains".

Making Connections in Your Community: Some How-tos

Written by Ginny Rudloff, Minneapolis Prevention Coordinator

In 2 Kings, Chapter 4, we learn about a widow whose children will be sold into slavery unless she can pay her debts. Elijah counsels her to ask her neighbors for all their empty vessels to fill with oil, the only thing of value she owns. After she had filled every available vessel in the community she was able to sell enough oil to pay off her debts and save her children from slavery. The community connected to help her avoid a terrible fate for her children.

Connections are an important part of our prevention efforts. As someone who has done a little fundraising, it has become increasingly important to show that you are working with others to carry out your mission. I believe there is a recognition that when like-minded people pool their energy, resources, and ideas they can be much more effective in accomplishing their goals and they can serve a broader population.

So how do you identify those people and organizations who share your concern? How do you connect with them?

1. **Be clear about what you do and who you want to serve.** If you say "we want to stop sexual exploitation of children," then tell them how you do it. "We take a multi-pronged approach of prayer, education, connection, and action."
2. **How do I find out if we can (or should) work together?** Do a little research. What is their mission statement? Who have they collaborated with in the past? Are they providing a service or working on a project that interests you? Can you join them? Can you support them? Sometimes you may be working on an issue together. Other times you may be providing support by recruiting volunteers, promoting the organization in your newsletter, offering financial support, or space in your church. Maybe you will work together on a legislative action project. How can they expand or enrich your ministry?
3. **Make the connection.** Call the organization. Who is the director or who is

working on the project that you are interested in? Schedule a meeting to talk about what your organizations are doing and to explore ways you can work together. Go to a training they are offering or join them in a community event.

4. **Be clear about what you can or cannot bring to the partnership.** A great way to hurt your credibility is to promise something you can't deliver. Make sure you have the backing of your congregation. Invite someone from the agency to meet members of your congregation and ask them to speak to a committee or Sunday forum. Determine if there is interest in the partnership.
5. **One connection can create another.** Your new connection may know other agencies in the community who share a concern for sexually exploited children. Ask. Ask. Ask. Who else is doing this? Who is working on this specific issue? How can you connect with them?
6. **Enjoy the connection.** You have found a new partner who brings new energy, ideas and support to your ministry. Be sure to feature them in your newsletters, brochures, or other communications and add them to your mailing list.

In the same way that community members came together to help the mother spare her children from slavery, connections multiply our effectiveness and offer the support and encouragement we need to continue in this difficult work.

END THE DEMAND for juvenile sex trafficking

By Ginny Rudloff, Minneapolis Prevention Coordinator

When Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church (LNL) started a Cherish All Children ministry four years ago, they weren't sure where it would take them, but they knew they wanted to be part of a movement which prevents child sexual exploitation.

They started with two projects which they knew the congregation would get behind, prayer and updating the church's safe place policy.

Director of Faith Formation Erica Larson and Pastor Drew Flathmann wrote petitions for the prayers of the people in which the congregation prays for children of the congregation on their baptismal anniversaries, as well as for the safety and well-being of all children. Children have become accustomed to hearing their names and understanding that they are cherished and welcome members of this community.

As the congregation became familiar with these petitions and with the [Prayers for Cherishing Children](#) prayer booklet, members have attended Internet safety training and forums on sex trafficking and have hosted an annual pasta dinner to send off Cherish All Children's Triathlon and 5K teams.

On Sunday, October 11, LNL is taking a step towards community outreach and connection. Safe Harbor legislation has changed the conversation about prevention. In addition to protecting children, state leaders are now talking about "ending the demand."

In an effort to bring that conversation to our community, LNL is hosting a [public forum](#) to learn more about the "End the Demand" movement and how the faith

community can be involved in the effort to stop juvenile sex trafficking.

One of the most challenging aspects of sex trafficking is that it is an uncomfortable topic which most people prefer to avoid. The church can be a safe place to have these conversations and can be the driving force to engage the community in action.

Connection comes in many shapes and sizes. Sometimes it is a supportive relationship between a congregation and a community organization. At other times it is one member of the congregation reaching out to a person or group. And sometimes it is the church bringing people together to discuss a community problem and figuring out how they can work together to address it.

Aristotle said the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This has been shown time and time again when people come together to work for the common good.

As you begin to look for organizations or people to engage in prevention, ask yourself the following questions:

- What connections have you made in your community?
- How can connections help the community focus on the message of prevention and work together to stop sex trafficking of children?
- How can people of the faith community foster collaboration in the community?
- Who are your allies? What can you agree on?

Connections strengthen and improve our efforts!

Making Connections: Our Saviour's Lutheran Church Horseheads, NY

Written by Donna Barto, Upstate New York Synod, Southern Tier Conference

I am president of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church Women of the ELCA group, and we give thanks for the good news we hear and the progress being made to help all vulnerable children. Our church is small but we pray for all children every Sunday. Our prayer chain prays for all children as well.

Recently we collected diapers and wipes, which were distributed to a local food pantry, a teen pregnancy center, and a couple of other centers that help women and children in an abusive situation.

The women donated \$100 to our local food bank, which provides for a backpack program. Our church makes contributions to the food pantry and food bank.

It saddens us when we hear how children suffer in the hands of others. We will continue to pray for all refugee children, that they and their families find a safe place in which to live.

Making Connections: St. Timothy's Lutheran Church North Greenbush, NY

Written by Liz Macris, St. Timothy's Parish Nurse

St. Timothy's began its Cherish All Children ministry with *Prayer* after hearing about

this ministry through Amy Hartman. We continue to assign members to pray for each child and youth in the congregation. We also adopted 50 children from Harlem to add to our prayer lists.

We adapted our prayer shawl ministry into a prayer blanket ministry, and at each upcoming baptism, the family is presented with a “prayer blanket” and a prayer-partner (with their prior consent).

St. Timothy’s moved into the area of *Education* with a National Center for Missing and Exploited Children speaker for the adults focusing on internet safety. We also brought a presenter to speak with each Sunday school class on prevention and safety, a presentation that was age appropriate and non-threatening for each class and very well received.

We have connected with Samaritan Hospital, Troy, NY (now SPHP group) and their Sexual Assault & Crime Victims Assistance Program (SACVAP), first by having a church team participate in the “Walk-a-Mile in Her Shoes” fundraiser to raise money for their program (for 3 years and will continue); then, the parish nurse was invited to serve on their Advisory Council.

Several years ago, St. Timothy’s acquired a closed church in the city of Rensselaer. Under the leadership of Pastor Dyer, and through God’s work and many hours of grant writing and planning, it was developed into a shelter/temporary home for homeless mothers and children. With supervision, guidance, support, and developing further guidance in a “Bridge” program so contact remains after they graduate from the center into an apartment, we are able to aid in their success, preventing future homelessness.

The church supports a local food pantry and each month someone signs up to deliver the collection to them. We also have special collections on request of the pantry for school supplies or special food requests during the year. In recent years a large group of church members was formed to serve the Albany Food Bank where they help monthly with sorting and repacking items and food which is then sent to all the Tri-City food pantries.

The church council facilitated and held an Open Forum with an invitation to all Rensselaer County agencies who work with or service youth and families. This was a great benefit to each agency represented and a benefit for the church council in future planning on our direction.

Through contacts to a church member, we became the first church in New York State to enter into a contract with a foster family program called “Fostering Futures” (originally “Fostering Hope”). We have a team of ten who support and assist the parents with their needs, enabling them to continue their care of foster children. This involves such tasks as home repairs, safety measures such as installing fire alarms, bathroom reconstruction, prepare meals, childcare, or play time as a respite or to allow parents to do transporting or medical appointments. The team meets monthly with the director of the program and one or both foster parents to evaluate success and determine future needs of the family.

This month the church signed on to be a Stakeholder for the “Enough is Enough Abuse,” working to prevent sexual assault. SACVAP was asked to adopt this program and facilitate for Rensselaer County. One of our members will be attending the first

Train the Trainers classes, and the church will offer meeting space, assist in advertising, etc. To date we have three members of the Women of the ELCA who will attend general Stakeholder meetings with the parish nurse.

In March of this year a member of the congregation made contact with Outreach Inc. This not-for-profit provides all the necessary food stuffs and equipment to allow for “dry” food packing. In the first ecumenical/financial effort, Blooming Grove Reformed Church, North Greenbush, NY and First Reformed Church of Wynantskill, NY were invited to participate with St. Timothy’s on a “Feeding 5,000” project. Each church committed to contributing an equal share of the money needed: 25 cents per meal, or a total of over \$1,200. There were over 50 volunteers manning the assembly lines, pretty equally divided between the three churches. During the event an anonymous donor paid an additional \$250, so in the end we package 6,000 meals. All meal packs went to local food pantries in Rensselaer County. The reaction from each church was fantastic!

Making Connections: Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church Minneapolis, MN

By Amy Hartman, National Director

“I can’t believe someone other than God cares enough about us to serve snacks each week.” - *Trafficking Survivor*

These are the words of Fiona (not her real name), a trafficking survivor who attends a Breaking Free survivor group each week. Several women from Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, myself included, serve healthy snacks at the beginning of their group.

While serving healthy snacks may not seem like much, it means a lot to these women, as shown by the quote from Fiona.

Another survivor told me that because of the snacks we serve, she has started to eat more carrots and other vegetables as a part of her regular diet.

We started with just two women serving snacks, which got quite expensive, so we invited more women to participate. We established guidelines with Breaking Free for those who are serving snacks, such as honoring the confidentiality of the participants and not revealing when or where the group meets. Currently, only women are allowed to be servers.

The group leader from Breaking Free also invites the women to write their prayer requests in a notebook. She shares those with me, and I pass them along to the snack servers with an invitation to pray for the women.

Our next steps include expanding the number of servers and inviting men to provide food even though they cannot serve it.

Two Different Routes to Connection

By Ginny Rudloff, Minneapolis Prevention Coordinator

Sometimes an opportunity just falls in your lap.

Cross of Peace Lutheran Church, a small congregation in rural Shakopee, MN received an endowment which required the congregation to spend a certain percentage on a local agency outside the church.

At the same time, a flyer about the grand opening of a new shelter for sexually exploited youth—called Passageways Emergency Shelter and Housing Program (which is a part of The LINK)—landed on Pastor Laila Barr’s desk.

She shared the invitation with the congregation and several members attended the event. These members were deeply moved by Passageways’ program of housing, mental health care, education, mentoring, health care, and positive youth development which transitions youth from victim to survivor to leader.

They brought a proposal back to the Church Council which decided right then and there to spend their endowment funds on Passageways.

Just a few miles away from Cross of Peace is Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church (SOLLC), a large congregation. In 2003 SOLLC opened the Shepherd’s Path Campus based on a vision to create an intergenerational faith-based community. It grew to include McKenna Crossing, a senior living facility, the River Valley YMCA, Safe Haven for Youth, and a community garden.

Safe Haven for Youth subsequently closed its doors and is now renting the building to Passageways. SOLLC owns the land and has a say in what facilities they want on their campus. They agreed that Passageways would be a good addition to their campus and their ministry.

The church is the drop-off location for donations to The LINK, and the River Valley YMCA offers all residents of Passageways free membership while in the program. Last fall SOLLC hosted a production of “bottom,” a play about sex trafficking in Minnesota written by blank slate theatre in partnership with the Interfaith Children’s Advocacy Network.

Lisa Rentschler, the CFO of SOLLC said:

I didn’t realize that sex trafficking was such an issue right here in Scott County. By bringing Passageways onto our campus it has brought forth more awareness of the issue occurring right here in our own backyard. We are now talking about these issues with our confirmation students.

I believe I was told the most critical age for sex trafficking is 10-12 year olds. It’s truly about awareness, and I’m not sure that kids are made aware of this in school or at home. Having a safe place, such as a church, to discuss this topic has been enlightening for many people at SOLLC.

Congregations should know that in many instances these sex trafficked youth come to a place like Passageways with just the clothes on their back. They can help by collecting much needed items such as clothes and personal hygiene items or donating Christmas gifts. There are numerous ways to help.

Kudos to both churches for reaching out to Passageways and sharing their resources to support this innovative program of restoration and healing for victims of sex trafficking.

Modern-day Exodus: Trafficking Victims

Written by Amy Hartman, National Director

The Confirmation class on Exodus at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Eagan, MN is getting a new twist this year.

Pastor Jen Rome, students, and parents are going to the Mall of America (MOA) to study the story of the Exodus, when God led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Paired with that story, they will learn about the reality of what comes closest to such slavery in their own community—youth sex trafficking.

Pastor Jen got this idea while attending a Cherish All Children presentation in August. Another pastor shared a story of a girl who averted a potential trafficker at the MOA because she had learned about trafficking recruitment tactics from a friend's research paper on trafficking.

At my suggestion, Pastor Jen talked to a staff person at Passageways, a program for sex-trafficked youth (see previous article). The staff person agreed to speak to the confirmation students about sex trafficking and also agreed that the MOA would be a good place to meet. The students will see that trafficking is something that happens in real life to real kids in real places; it's not just a cause the church has picked up and then gets confined to church.

Mt. Calvary youth are being asked to bring Walmart or Target gift cards for the youth at Passageways, to help provide items that the youth need for their day-to-day lives.

Won't you be my neighbor...

By Ginny Rudloff, Minneapolis Prevention Coordinator

In 2011 and 2014 the state of Minnesota passed two pieces of legislation that created an entirely new paradigm in the world of child sexual exploitation.

The first act, Safe Harbor, created a statewide, victim-centered response for sexually exploited youth. The definition of sexually exploited children was added to the child protection codes and "sexually exploited child" was removed from the delinquency codes. Now trafficked children are treated as victims of a crime rather than criminals.

In 2014, the state added funding for the No Wrong Door service model which provides statewide services and resources for sexually exploited youth.

Knowing that a variety of agencies were now serving sex trafficked youth, we decided to find out how Minneapolis Area Synod congregations could connect with them to support their work and to join in the work of healing and restoring dignity.

This project, called "Caring Neighbors," grew into a directory of organizations serving sex trafficked youth. The directory (which can be found on our [website](#)) lists contact information, a brief paragraph about mission, and a list of ways congregations can collect donations or volunteer.

Several congregations have already carried out a Caring Neighbors project and more are scheduled. Congregations report that their offerings of time or goods have been

received with very humbling gratitude. Their projects also gave them the opportunity to understand firsthand the trauma and damage these young people had endured.

If you don't live in the Minneapolis Area Synod, how can your congregation become a "Caring Neighbor"?

- 1. Find out what organizations are serving sex trafficked youth in your area.** You may be able to find them by calling 2-1-1, the number for finding local social service agencies. Do an Internet search for "agencies serving sex trafficked youth." In Minnesota I found a list of agencies on the Department of Health's Safe Harbor page. Call your local or state child welfare office for referrals. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (1-888-373-7888) can also connect you to services in your area.
- 2. Call the organization and ask to speak to someone who works with volunteers or donations.** Tell them your congregation is interested in supporting their work and ask for a meeting to learn more about the organization and find out how you can serve them.
- 3. Visit the organization.** What does their program do? What population do they serve? Where are they located? Is it close enough to your church for volunteers? How do they handle donations? Do they pick them up or do you drop them off; when and where? Ask them what they need and how your congregation can help. Many of these organizations receive government grants and cannot use those funds for food, clothing, hygiene products, etc. They almost always need donations of this kind. Some agencies provide housing and need home furnishings or gift cards. They are doing good work, but don't always have the means to provide these things. If they use volunteers, what is their policy about background checks. What kind of commitment do they require?
- 4. Ask them to visit your congregation to talk with an outreach committee or speak at an adult forum.** Most organizations love the opportunity to tell you about their work and can offer a number of suggestions for service projects or collection drives.
- 5. Determine what is feasible for your congregation.** Do you have enough volunteers to carry out a service project? If you engage in an on-going service project, will someone take responsibility for managing it? Maybe your congregation is better suited to running a collection drive. The agency can tell you their short- and long-term needs.
- 6. Promote your Caring Neighbors project.** Are you doing it in conjunction with some other event in your congregation, "God's Work. Our Hands" Sunday, a confirmation service project, an intergenerational service activity, or part of a community forum to learn more about sex trafficking? Set a goal for the number of volunteers or the number of items collected to give your members something to reach for.
- 7. Once you have carried out a project, stay in touch with the organization.** Ask to be put on their mailing list. Let them know that you are willing to help out again and foster a relationship of give and take. The agency could be a great resource for speakers or experts on personal safety and child sexual exploitation. Your congregation can be a great resource for volunteers,

donations, fundraisers, legislative advocates, and financial support.

Your congregation will have a newfound appreciation for the difficult and caring work done by agencies serving sexually exploited youth. If you engage staff from the organization, you will learn more about the lives of these young people before and after rescue. And you will carry out Jesus call to love our neighbors.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Matthew 25: 35-36

CEASE: Christian Coalition to End All Sexual Exploitation

written by Amy Hartman, National Director

“I’m not sure why I’m here,” said Darcy, a suburbanite who was attending a Christian Coalition meeting to address sex trafficking in the Twin Cities.

“I do,” replied one of the Coalition leaders. “We just heard from a Minneapolis Police Officer that traffickers are now moving girls out to the suburbs.”

Darcy took that to heart and spoke to her pastor about the trafficking of girls and women. Her pastor talked to the Hastings ecumenical ministerial association, and the other pastors were very interested in getting involved. They invited Peter Wohler of the [Annex Network](#) to speak to their association.

The ministerial association then sponsored a seminar in April 2015 called “Sex Trafficking in the Midwest” at which attendees heard from many different people who work with trafficking. Out of that meeting, several people committed to address trafficking on an ongoing basis.

Now Darcy leads that group, which is called CEASE (Christian Coalition to End All Sexual Exploitation).

They adopted a mission statement: *As a Christian coalition, we exist to educate our community about the existence of sexual exploitation, to establish projects and partnerships that resist sexual slavery where it exists, and to aid victims of trafficking in their escape, healing, and recovery.*

CEASE has four key strategies:

1. Provide educational programs in schools, churches, and the community.
2. Establish and staff a crisis text hotline.
3. Work with the police department and others to eliminate trafficking and care for victims.
4. Explore the needs of those leaving and support them in beginning a new life.

Recently, CEASE worked with the Dakota County Chiefs of Police Association to provide anti-trafficking training for all the police officers in that county. [Follow this link](#) to read more.

CEASE remains connected to the ministerial association, and they work together on

planning events. They plan to reach out to other groups in the community: the local homeless youth shelter, a shelter for victims of domestic abuse, a theater company working on a play about trafficking, and a group in Eagan called Trafficking Justice.

There are several people who really want to create a house for trafficking victims in Hastings. That is a one to two year process, so that is still in the idea stage. CEASE also wants to talk further with the Hastings police chief to explore more deeply how they can work together.

Darcy believes that the group is doing what God wants them to do. "The way this has unfolded—it's not a people thing. It's God at work."

[Click here](#) to contact Darcy Fuchs for more information.

How have you taken action to prevent exploitation?

Send your ideas to Erica Larson, E-Quipped Coordinator (elarson@lakenokomis.org), by October 15 for the November 2015 issue of *E-quipped for Prevention*. The topic for November is "Action" - God's people in action to prevent exploitation.

Please send stories of what you or others have done to make changes and take action in the community in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. Thank you!

Encouragement Circles - Just for you!

Getting your congregation involved in preventing child sexual exploitation can be challenging. One way to help yourself stay focused and energized and healthy is to be in an "Encouragement Circle."

An Encouragement Circle is 4-5 people who get-together by phone once a month. Each participant has an opportunity to share a joy, frustration, challenge, or idea and then ask the group for whatever help is needed. "Help" may be a listening ear, prayer, ideas, strategies, encouragement - the participant decides what he/she needs from the others in the group.

Interested? Contact ahartman@cherishchildren.org for more information.

Cherish All Children

Cherish All Children is an ELCA ministry that equips congregations to prevent child sexual exploitation.

[Follow us on Facebook.](#)

We believe that "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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