Draft of a Social Message on Gender-based Violence

For Study and Response
Prior to Nov. 26, 2014

The response form can be downloaded from or filled out online at www.elca.org/socialmessages

Theological Discernment Team
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Preface

Gender-based violence has been a largely ignored epidemic in human society. This message [if adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)] seeks to bring the epidemic into the open for the sake of survivors and perpetrators, for education and deliberation, and as a call to action. Each of these goals requires different kinds of written expression, namely the difference between personal words and stories, description and analysis, and endorsement and recommendation. These three kinds of expression are interwoven throughout because each is necessary and each depends upon the other as this message begins to present a whole and faithful account.

I. A starting place: words to those who suffer or inflict gender-based violence

A survivor may say to other survivors:

We are created, loved and redeemed by God through Christ. Our bodies, hearts and minds are beloved by a gracious God who, the Bible tells us, creates each person imago dei (in God's image) and God weeps with us because we have been hurt and betrayed. God fiercely opposes gender-based violence because those who commit it have treated us as their objects and heinously violated our bodies, hearts and minds. Such violation is not right.
Sometimes it seems as if faith is only about our hearts and minds, but faith also has to do with our bodies. One of our church’s pastors writes: “Bodies which have been assaulted and abused are loved by Christ, anticipated in his death, redeemed through his incarnation and resurrection, and will be healed and restored in God’s own time. Such a teaching insists upon God’s own reverence for the flesh. The body remains precious despite the injury done to it.” Our flesh is beloved. Our flesh is also known, for Jesus was also exposed, tormented and wounded. He also cried out to ask why God had forsaken him in his deepest moments of need and fear (Mark 15:34). We are not alone.

Members of the ELCA may say to those who commit gender-based violence:

God condemns such violence. God weeps when you use the gifts of strength, thought and action to inflict gender-based violence on another person. Your actions wound those you hurt, as well as God and God’s creation. The power you seek is evil, but God calls you to the true life and richness found in kindness, compassion and mercy. You may yourself be a survivor of gender-based violence or other violence. The Apostle Paul writes that God asks us not to pass along violence (Romans 12:9-21). God calls you to repent, seek forgiveness and amend your life with the help of others.

Members of the ELCA may say to survivors:

God says no to such violence. God condemns what someone has done to hurt you and to have power over you. God’s love gives life. Through God’s promises, we have life. God promises that nothing shall stand between you and the good news of God’s love, grace and healing in Jesus Christ, not even the one(s) who hurt you. This is the good news of grace for you. We know that bodies matter because not only has God become one of us in Christ, but we also know that Christ is present in all human experience, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ promises life.

The promise of the resurrection life in Christ is not just about the future — what will happen when you die. It is for your healing, your embodiment right now. God’s intent is the healing of your body, psyche, emotions and spirit—all of you, your whole being. Healing is possible because God’s presence and power is to bring new life again and again. And it is through the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments of baptism and holy communion that God shapes us, as bodies and as the body of Christ together, to bind us to God’s self and one to another. We are the body of Christ. Together.

II. What is gender-based violence? Definition, voices and descriptions

Words of healing are crucial. Speaking that serves healing must ask what gender-based violence is and why it happens. We now turn to this task.

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Gender-based violence is physical, sexual or emotional harm directed at a person because of their biological characteristics [green indicates a word present in the glossary], perceived or self-identified gender, or significant difference from socially and/or religiously constructed definitions of masculinity and femininity. Gender-based violence includes coercion and deprivation of freedom. Gender-based violence occurs in a multitude of forms and may be experienced at any point in a person’s life.

We listen, with God, to the voices of those who have suffered gender-based violence within society and within the ELCA.²

In society

My fiancée punched me in the face in a hotel elevator and dragged me out. It was caught on video.

A man broke into our house at night and raped me in bed.

Because I was gay, a group of men severely beat me and then hung me on a country barbed-wire fence to die.

My husband controlled all the money and always told me I was worthless.

I had no way to leave.

In the ELCA

A week after my hysterectomy, my husband dragged me off the couch by my hair and screamed, “Get off your ass and get to work!” Then he kicked me in the abdomen. I bled profusely while our daughters hid in their closet.

A trusted peer and friend sexually assaulted me at a Lutheran youth event. My mentor had little response. Nothing was ever resolved.

I tried to counsel an abusive husband and abused wife. During a session, he killed her and himself with a gun.

When I was a teen, my pastor made me feel special. He coerced me into a long-term sexual relationship with him.

Four or five men gang-raped me after I marched in a Gay Pride parade. A pastor going by on his bike covered my naked body with his jacket.

We listen, as members of Christ’s body, becoming aware that:

The body of Christ suffers from gender-based violence.

We are wounded, bleeding and dying. The body of Christ is in crisis.

Our hope rests in Jesus Christ, who by the power of the Holy Spirit activates and enables the church to denounce and resist evil, create safe communities, and work toward reconciliation and healing.

² These descriptive summaries actual events and personal stories.
There are many types of gender-based violence. Each of the forms puts at risk a person’s freedom, body and life and violates that person’s psychological and spiritual integrity.

The scope of gender-based violence is enormous. People of all classes and of all ethnicities in all nations suffer violence inflicted on them by others for gender-based reasons. Gender-based violence happens in both private and public situations. It occurs in families, other social relations, the church, the state, education, and in society more broadly. It affects people of every age and of every gender.

While many different people are affected by gender-based violence, women and girls\(^3\) are especially targeted. Nationally, 25 percent of women over the age of 18 have experienced sexual or physical violence at the hands of a current or former intimate partner. Globally the percentage rises to 30 percent.\(^4\)

This targeting shapes and constrains their lives as becomes clear from the vulnerability of girls. Of the 18.2 percent of women who have survived rape or attempted rape, 12.3 percent were younger than age 12 when they were first raped and 29.9 percent were between the ages of 11 and 17. Girls ages 16-19 are four times more likely than the general population to be the victims\(^5\) of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault. And 93 percent of juvenile sexual assault victims know their attacker.\(^6\)

### Types of gender-based violence

Gender-based violence can include sexual and other physical assault, including murder; rape; harassment, sexual and non-sexual; sexual and physical abuse (by clergy, coaches, teachers, superiors, strangers, family members, caregivers or friends); stalking; intimate relationship violence, regardless of gender, including employment, housing, educational intimidation and obstruction, rape and murder; elder abuse or child abuse; sex-specific torture; reproductive coercion; female genital mutilation (also known as female genital cutting); early and forced marriage; honor crimes; mail-order brides; dowry violence; practices used to decrease the number of girl babies, such as prenatal sex selection, infanticide, or child neglect; sex tourism; forced prostitution; human trafficking for sex; pornography; and violence during armed conflict, including rape, enslavement, torture and murder.

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\(^3\) "Women and girls" is here used as an inclusive term.

\(^4\) For statistics as of the writing of this message, see Appendix.

\(^5\) The literature refers to both victims and survivors. This document uses both terms. The term victim stresses that harm has occurred; the term survivor indicates the reality after violence.

\(^6\) For statistics as of the writing of this message, see Appendix.
Worldwide, women, girls and gender non-conforming people live with the memory and/or the fear of gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence.

What is universal about gender-based violence is that gender is a central motivating factor, yet it is not the only one. Every act or threat of gender-based violence, every perpetrator, and every survivor is influenced by intersections of identities and of privilege and oppression, such as race and ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity, social class, and economic situation.

These intersections show up in both social systems and in individual mindsets. For example, race and ethnicity and age are significant factors in gender-based violence. In the United States, some women of color experience higher rates of intimate partner violence and rape than the rate of all women together. Gender-based violence also is not limited to injuries inflicted by men on women and girls. There is increasing awareness of sexual and physical violence against men and boys; intimate partner violence against men by women; and intimate partner violence within same-gender relationships. Such violence is wrong. Some of this violence is gender-based; some is not.

III. Context and sources of gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a global problem and continues unabated; it happens everywhere. The United States is part of this global problem. As a Lutheran body in the United States, this church primarily addresses our U.S. context as the one in which we have immediate call and responsibility. This national context includes attention to the fact that gender-based violence occurs within ELCA congregations and affiliated institutions and organizations.

While focused nationally, however, this social message does acknowledge the global character of the problem and the importance of working worldwide to address gender-based violence. The ELCA celebrates the relationships of ongoing accompaniment concerning gender-based violence with global partners. It is through shared service, advocacy, theological dialogue, and ecumenical and inter-faith

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7 See Appendix for statistics as of publication.
8 See, e.g., Lara Stemple and Ilan H. Meyer, “The Sexual Victimization of Men in America: New Data Challenge Old Assumptions,” American Journal of Public Health 104, no. 6 (June 2014): e19-e26. This research focuses on male victimization in institutions such as mental health and criminal justice. There is also growing public knowledge of male victimization by clergy, coaches, teachers, caregivers and peers (such as through sexual harassment and hazing). Notable in this research is that when men and boys are in situations in which they are vulnerable to the power of others over them, it can lead to physical and emotional harm to them. Age, race and class can be contributory factors in situations of vulnerability. For greater insight into violence against gender non-conforming men, see Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, with Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling, Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011), 3.
relations that it becomes possible to care wisely for people’s immediate needs and to address root causes of gender-based violence.9

The causes of gender-based violence are complex and multiple. How human beings think and act socially and religiously are closely intertwined with the dynamics of power and control. While each act of gender-based violence may be an individual’s action, it is shaped by power dynamics that function to subordinate another person and coercively control them. This dynamic is possible in every relationship; thus, everyone is potentially affected by gender-based violence.

Regardless of who is the target of gender-based violence, this dynamic of power and control is rooted in the values of a particular social system; globally, this social system is patriarchal. Gender-based violence is recognized internationally as essential to maintain gender inequality.

Thus work to end gender-based violence must be focused on understanding mindsets about gender, power and violence, and how human beings act out what we think as individuals influenced by communities and institutions. Ways of thinking affect us all — survivors, perpetrators and bystanders. Not only individuals, but families, communities and societies suffer. We, the body of Christ, suffer.

While there is a common root to gender-based violence, there are local expressions of it worldwide. Each act of violence is particular — someone harms someone else — yet each act occurs within or is supported by a social system. In other words, every act of violence has a context and varies across time and place.

Even though gender-based violence is not exactly the same in every location, these are not isolated instances. To truly understand gender-based violence and to create safety and well-being, it is necessary to understand the particularities of each act of violence, the array of the many forms of this violence, and its place in the context of patriarchal social systems. A patriarchal social system is male-dominated, male-identified and male-centered; it operates with a high value on control of women and “non-dominant others.” Though there has been much social progress toward gender equality in the United States, patriarchy is still the dominant social system in the United States and within Christianity.

The definition of patriarchy as a social system is not a description of every person, social relationship, Christian congregation, etc. It is, instead a description of a nexus of social relations, habits,
laws, ideas and beliefs, often religious, in which everyone participates in varying measures.\(^{10}\) A patriarchal social system both relies upon and results in significant male dominance and female subordination.

This dynamic is kept in place through tools of power and control. Gender-based violence functions as one such tool, whether as threats, actual acts or inadequate responses to such acts. For example, sexual harassment in schools and workplaces serves to intimidate girls and women from asserting themselves and from developing their gifts fully. Rape also serves as a means of control, whether within dating, marriage or war. As particular targets of rape, women thus learn to live in fear, wrestling with this ceaseless threat and its implication that they are objects of control.

A culture of patriarchy requires and depends upon female subordination and thrives through structural, theoretical and religious gender inequality. Whether recognized or not, patriarchal values permeate how U.S. society operates.

In light of this systemic factor, this message contends that a critical step to decrease gender-based violence is to change social and religious understanding and practices that make the violence possible. Specifically, gender-based violence must come to be understood in its context of social structures, gender roles and gender-based discrimination. Longstanding efforts such as rights-based arguments made within the law, therapy and pastoral counseling are essential and beneficial. Years of activism, research and scholarship demonstrate, however, that these alone cannot address the depth and tacit approval of this society’s gender-based violence.\(^{11}\)

While no one solution will bring an end to gender-based violence, the ELCA recognizes and affirms that restoring health and well-being to all of God’s people requires a multi-faceted approach. This

\(^{10}\) A patriarchal social system is dominated by the voice and authority of men. In such a social system, what is most highly valued is identified as male-oriented. A patriarchal social system is centered on males; the world is portrayed with men as the main actors in life and reflects their ideas and values. To maintain male priority in a social system, all “others,” including women, gender non-conforming people, and non-dominant men must be and are socially devalued or diminished or controlled. One implication of a patriarchal social system is that the people who are “good” are the ones who endure gender-based violence and remain silent about it, do not challenge male privilege, and do not transgress binary gender boundaries. See Allan A. Johnson, *The Gender Knot*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2005) and *Privilege, Power, and Difference* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

\(^{11}\) See Elizabeth M. Schneider, *Battered Women & Feminist Lawmaking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 20-56. Advancement of international human rights — women’s rights as human rights — is important in the creation of global change based on universal claims. Working to end gender-based violence and other gender-based discrimination through human rights arguments and standards can provide empowerment for people’s legal consciousness, sense of identity, psychological health and political and moral agency. Addressing gender-based violence depends in part on human rights-based arguments. Nevertheless, human rights assertions alone cannot create the conditions to weaken the prevalence and intensity of gender-based violence. Rather, lessening gender-based violence depends upon changes in social and religious consciousness; thus, part of this church’s work is to address the ways we see and think about God, the world and ourselves. If there is no social and religious change, people who are harmed by gender-based violence will only be able to continue to ask for mercy and protection in a world that sees and thinks about them as deserving the violence.
reality means the ELCA is called to speak and act prophetically to address the root causes and values, structures, and results of our patriarchal social system.\textsuperscript{12}

The way forward is multi-faceted because every act of gender-based violence is unique and specific. Each survivor needs to be met at the point of their pain; each perpetrator needs to be held accountable for the violence they commit.

At the same time, addressing gender-based violence requires careful attention to social and religious contexts since these contexts and the personal experiences of violence are mutually related. Decreasing gender-based violence will therefore require action in many aspects of life and its intersections, including in social movements, politics, law, education, families and religion. For this church, the way forward begins with confession of sin.

\textbf{IV. Confession of sin}

The ELCA as part of the body of Christ confesses its sin. We are called to confess both as individuals and corporately as part of the church catholic. We, as part of this church, are in a body that has victims and perpetrators. The confession of both our individual sin and our corporate sin allows the truth to be told and orients our efforts to address all aspects of gender-based violence (1 John 1:5-9). The church confesses together.\textsuperscript{13}

To sin is to trespass our relationships of trust and love with God and with other humans and all of creation, yet sin is also a web in which we are corporately bound. Sin produces suffering and destruction.\textsuperscript{14} Far too often, far too many of us have failed God and others:

- We have failed to care for victims and survivors of gender-based violence;
- We have failed to do what is necessary to prevent it; and
- We have failed to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

We are called to confess that gender-based violence is about \textit{us}, as people in the body of Christ in the ELCA. We are not simply in a position of rescuing or caring for people outside of this church. Rather, we participate in the forces of sin and are called to confess that we often have failed to recognize our own participation in gender-based violence, as individuals and as a church.

\textsuperscript{12} Readers are referred to the ELCA social statement anticipated in 2019 on this and related issues.

\textsuperscript{13} Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the call to communal confession very well: “It is not enough for individuals to repent and be justified….\[T\]he church must likewise repent and be justified. The community that is from God to God, that bears within itself eternal meaning, endures in God’s sight and does not melt into the fate of the many. It is willed and created and has become culpable; it must seek repentance, believe in and experience justification and sanctification, and experience judgment and grace at the limits of time.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, \textit{Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 119.

We are called to confess that far too often we have remained silent, or allowed ourselves to remain oblivious to gender-based violence, or even resisted acknowledging what is happening. We are called to confess that as a church we often deny the realities of gender-based violence and resist hearing God’s call to take it seriously.

We are called to confess that far too often too many of us have actively or passively contributed to the ways that religious ideas, people and institutions have encouraged or permitted gender-based violence. And we are called to confess that corporately we are ourselves caught in the web of interwoven systems that deny or reinforce gender-based violence in church and society.

This church also looks with thanksgiving to God through Christ as the source of salvation and the hope for our lives. Such confessions are not the end but beginnings. We in this church who confess give thanks for the promise of forgiveness and the opportunity to amend our ways. We will pray that such confession would turn us to new paths that completely alter our understanding of and our response to gender-based violence. We will pray that such confession might turn us to work that better conforms this church to the life-giving ways of God.

V. Religious contributions to the problems

While religious consciousness and practices are not the sole contributors to gender-based violence, this church acknowledges how religious factors often contribute extensively. First and foremost, people of faith have responded too often with silence. Behind the statistics of gender-based violence are incredibly unspeakable atrocities, but they are so common that they have come to be expected. Sometimes silence flows from not seeing. Sometimes it takes the form of oblivion — when we choose to be uninformed — or to turn away deliberately, so that we do not see what we do not want to see.

Religious people and institutions also deny and resist. It is easier to deny what we hear, see and otherwise know than to face it. It is easier to resist naming what has happened or what is happening than to name it. For example, when intimate partner violence is misidentified as marital misunderstanding or anger mismanagement, what is really at play is denied and resisted. In such cases the dynamic of power and control that is strategically used by one partner to harm another is not seen or acknowledged. These different forms of denial and resistance are a failure to care for victim/survivors of gender-based violence.

In this regard, the “ministry of nice” that prevails in many congregations leads, too often, to discrediting hints or reports of gender-based violence by victims. People of faith can be, in that sense, too often like the Levite or the Priest (Luke 10:25-37) who walk past one who has been injured, because we

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We do not want to “involve ourselves.” We may be afraid of confronting people, appearing to take sides in relationships, or triggering traumas for others by talking openly about gender-based violence.

But God calls God’s people to do more: God calls us to stop, listen, see, name and minister in the midst of ugliness and pain, among and to those whose lives are affected by gender-based violence.

Denial and resistance also cause us to fail to demand accountability from those who commit gender-based violence. When the church fails to hold perpetrators and society (i.e., the law and criminal justice system, healthcare, childcare, education, etc.) accountable to prevent, address and redress gender-based violence, we also resist God’s call to care and so participate in the perpetuation of gender-based violence.

Even when religious people or institutions respond, we may participate in the forces of gender-based violence through faulty or inadequate responses. Certain religious responses fault victims, do not hold perpetrators accountable, and perpetuate the violence.

Remaining ill-equipped to respond to and to prevent gender-based violence also perpetuates the situations and forces that maintain cycles of violence. Those ministering to a person abused by an intimate partner cannot provide appropriate care if they do not understand the cycle of power and control in abuse or do not seek out the help of professional advocates. Likewise, faith-based views that emphasize saving a marriage at the expense of safety and well-being enable abusers and deny the needs and safety of the person who is abused.

People of faith also participate in perpetuating gender-based violence when we hold onto social and church histories, harmful biblical interpretations and theologies, and ways of thinking and acting that deftly reinforce gender-based violence. For example in the United States there is a history of treating women as incompetent and incapable of rational thought. This pattern served to reinforce their lesser status and deprived them of legal and economic rights necessary to make their own decisions and care for themselves and sometimes their children.¹⁶ In a similar vein, as Lutherans we need to face our own

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¹⁶ Only by 1993 was marital rape declared illegal in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Historically, the common law doctrine of “couverte” stipulated that a free married woman did not have a separate legal existence from her husband. Married women could not own property in their own names, sign binding contracts, file suit, or, except under specific circumstances, control their earnings; in the event of their husband’s death, they were not able to act as guardian to their own children. See “Women, Enterprise & Society: Women and the Law” (manuscript collection), Harvard Business School and President and Fellows of Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass., 2010, web, http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/wes/collections/women_law/. Slave women had no legal existence apart from those who claimed to own them: they were traded, used and sometimes forced to have children by those with power over them. See “Women, Enterprise & Society.” Early laws and judicial decisions gave “legitimacy” to these concepts by permitting physical “chastisement” by husbands of their wives, permitting marriage to be asserted as a defense to rape, and by denying aid to victims based on their theory that judges should “not interfere with family government in trifling cases.” It would take more than 100 years before a state would enact a law criminalizing a physical assault by a husband on his wife. See Bradley v. State, 2 Miss. (Walker) 156 (1824) in “History of Battered Women’s Movement,” SafeNetwork: California’s Domestic Violence Resource, 1999, http://www.icadvinc.org/what-is-domestic-violence/history-of-battered-womens-movement/.
history, including the use of Martin Luther’s writing on “domestic discipline” and the long church history
of blaming victims for violence.¹⁷

At the heart of Lutheran biblical interpretation is Luther’s own ardent priority: interpretation of
Scripture should reveal God’s grace to humanity. Interpretation of Scripture should “carry Christ” to the
listener or reader.¹⁸ Yet sometimes scriptures have been and are used to emphasize the “value” of
submission, praise suffering as a “good,” and urge forgiveness without accountability. People suffer from
such harmful interpretations.

This church is speaking out against interpretations of Scripture that cheapen the treasure of faith,
give license to those who harm and fail to stand with victims. Yet some ask whether more remains to be
done in terms of biblical interpretation. Some urge this church to reckon more deeply with the biblical
legacy of violence against women, as well as the practical effects and considerations of the language of
faith.¹⁹

Some are asking this church in its concern about sources of gender-based violence to wrestle
more particularly with the predominance of male references to God. They believe that predominantly
masculine and male-associated language for God denies the fullness of who God is and perpetuates the
assumption that men are closer to the image and likeness of God. Other people of faith do not see
significant connections between such language and violence.

Likewise, some raise questions about the complex array of ways in which Christian theology,
including the Lutheran theological tradition, sometimes contributes to gender-based violence. For
example, the sacrifice of the cross sometimes is interpreted to mean that suffering “like Jesus” is good; in
instances of gender-based violence, this can be incredibly harmful theology.

How people of faith think about God and our relationships with God and with one another needs
careful consideration. As a church, clarity and refinement is needed as we seek to draw upon life-giving

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¹⁷ See, e.g., Mary Pellauer, “Lutheran Theology Facing Sexual and Domestic Violence,” 2nd ed. (Chicago:
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2011),
Luther’s strong writing on the “proper” submission of women to men and his ambivalence on child abuse and wife-
beating. Although he exhorts husbands to be peaceable, he writes, “[T]he female sex inclines naturally to what is
forbidden to it, to reign, to rule and to judge. From this there come marital discord, blows and beatings” (“Titus,
1527,” Luther’s Works 29:57). See, e.g., Joy A. Schroeder, Dinah’s Lament (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) for
a disquieting explanation of Christian theological victim-blaming through medieval Christianity.
¹⁸ The ELCA has an important opportunity to lift up and support reinterpretations of texts that have for centuries
been used to keep women and girls in social and religious positions “below” men and boys, such as creation and sin
in Genesis and New Testament epistles commonly referred to as the “domestic texts.”
¹⁹ Texts that portray violence against women that the ELCA at-large has not addressed include, for example,
Abraham’s use of Sarah for his own safety (Genesis 12:10-20); Lot offering his daughters to rapists in order to
protect male guests (Genesis 19:1-11); Schechem raping Dinah (Genesis 34:1-19); and the second wife who was
betrayed by her husband and raped and murdered by a gang of men (Judges 19). Texts that reveal God in diverse
ways include Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 49:15; Matthew 23:37; and Luke 15: 1-10.
As a church, there are many ways in which we are called to break our silence. As part of the body of Christ, we must do so. Silence needs to end in organizations and schools and among congregations, pastors, leaders and members. Gender-based violence is a human problem to which God turns us in exceeding love through Christ’s life, death and resurrection. The whole church is called to condemn this sin, to care for everyone who is harmed, and to question and change mindsets, systems, theologies, policies and practices that support gender-based violence.

**VI. Social forces**

Intertwined with but often distinct from religious contributions to gender-based violence are social forces that influence and support gender-based violence. Among these social forces are a wide range of commercial sexual exploitation, the media, economics, racism, fears of sexualities and bodies and the legal system.

*Commercial sexual exploitation*

The ELCA defines commercial exploitation as organized, for-profit sexual exploitation. It includes audio or video sex, prostitution and human trafficking, wherein approximately 80 percent of all victims are women and girls. It also includes pornography and stripping which expresses, among others, deep desires for power over and fears of women. Pornography demeans and devalues people who have been thoroughly objectified, typically through violence. Most often, the objects of pornography, even when a male is in the scene, are female. In pornography, violence is strongly linked to sex and sexuality.

*Media*

“Public imagery of women is the text for all the other forms of violence [based on gender].”

Although not as violent as pornography, there is a steady message that women are subordinate to men communicated through advertising, news and magazines, gaming, music, movies and television. As “entertainment” many games, shows, movies, and music commonly incorporate images of violence against women or girls as central elements in their story-lines. Viewers of mainstream media are exposed repeatedly to subtle or not-so-subtle messages that women and girls are largely sexual objects, or deserve

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22 See Cooper-White, 78. According to Cooper-White, exceptions are gay male pornography.
23 Cooper-White, 66.
and enjoy pain and humiliation, or are so irrational that they need to be dominated. This legitimates the “everydayness” of gender-based violence.

**Economic forces**

There are at least three general ways that experiences of gender-based violence and money are intertwined. First, people who have experienced or are experiencing gender-based violence may lose their jobs, which often leads to the loss of other securities, such as transportation, housing, food and children.

Survivors of gender-based violence may be so significantly harmed that they are unable to work or they may suffer severe depression from the experience. They may miss work repeatedly for court dates and other legal appointments and/or they may be seen as a risk by employers simply for having been victimized. Any of these situations may be the reason for the loss of a job for a survivor.

Second, some victim/survivors feel compelled to remain in situations of gender-based violence in order to maintain economic stability. For instance, someone abused by an intimate partner may be compelled to remain in the abusive relationship because the partner earns the necessary income, often the only economic means to care for children. In other instances, victim/survivors remain in jobs or situations in which they are sexually harassed, coerced into sexual relations, and/or abused by colleagues, supervisors, or peers because the job or the education are their only means to economic stability.

Third, some victim/survivors of gender-based violence are psychologically, emotionally and physically forced or coerced into gender-based violence by people who want to make money at their expense. Such is the case in the systems of human trafficking, prostitution, pornography, mail-order brides and other forms of forced marriages.

**Racism**

Racism is an inherently evil force that has shaped not only the history of the United States, but also individual lives and the social fabric of the present. Racism is rooted in the sinful idea that skin color means there are categories of people who have different value and ability. In the United States, therefore, racism profoundly affects gender-based violence in at least two important ways.

First, multi-ethnic women and American Indian and Alaskan Native women are far more often the targets of gender-based violence than all women together. Second, racism may affect how victims of color think about turning to the U.S. legal system for justice. When a racial or ethnic community is marginalized, the risks to expose each other to the U.S.

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24 See the film, *Miss Representation*.
26 See Appendix for statistics as of publication.
legal system may be perceived to be high. A survivor in the same marginalized racial or ethnic community as the perpetrator, therefore be less inclined to press charges. This perception may account for the fact that women of color are less likely to report intimate partner violence than the average rate of reporting for all women nationally. There is a racial and ethnic situatedness to making the decision about whether or not to report crimes and bring charges against someone.

Fears of sexualities and bodies

Although often not recognized there is a connection between violence against women and girls and violence against anyone who does not conform to dominant gender and sexual expectations. For example, violence against gay men because they are gay is a form of gender-based violence. Violence against anyone who does not act according to normative expectations is also a form of gender-based violence. For anyone who does not conform to dominant gender and sexual expectations, their lives are shaped by the memory of, or fear of, violence.

Laws and the legal system

Within the last 50 years, laws pertaining to gender-based violence have proliferated compared to other times in human history. There is increased realization that people should not have to experience gender-based violence in various forms. For example, it is now illegal to sexually harass a co-worker, to rape a spouse, and to abuse a spouse. This church affirms such developments.

Nevertheless, research reveals continued gender bias in the law and the legal system. For example, though the rate of prosecution for domestic violence is increasing, in many jurisdictions a substantial proportion of domestic violence defendants are given deferred prosecution or dispositions that do not involve findings of guilt. A trio of studies found, however, that at least 25 percent of the defendants that received deferred sentences will re-abuse or reoffend. Rape is overwhelmingly a crime committed by men against women and girls. A recent study found, however, that only approximately half of sexual assault cases that resulted in an arrest were ever prosecuted. Prosecution was more frequent

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27 See *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (Chicago: ELCA, 2013), for a discussion of risks such as dramatically higher incarceration rates, effect on employment prospects and others, 13.


30 Ibid.

31 See C. Spohn and D. Holleran. “Prosecuting Sexual Assault: A Comparison of Charging Decisions in Sexual Assault Cases Involving Strangers, Acquaintances, and Intimate Partners.” [https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdfs1/nij/199720.pdf](https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdfs1/nij/199720.pdf). Among the author’s observation was that sexual assault prosecutions were most likely when prosecutors believed “the evidence is strong, the suspect is culpable, and the victim is blameless.” “In cases that involved friends, acquaintances, and relatives, prosecutors were significantly
when the victim was viewed by the prosecutor as “blameless” and less frequent where the victim was viewed as having engaged in “risk-taking behavior” or where her “reputation or character were questioned.”\textsuperscript{32}

The nature of violence against women on college campuses is a further demonstration in which multiple factors combine to support gender-based violence.\textsuperscript{33} One factor is the inaction of institutions. Recently, the Department of Education found it necessary to write to all colleges to remind them of their obligations under federal law to provide a “prompt, thorough, and impartial” inquiry into allegations of gender-based violence and their obligations, consistent with state law, to determine “whether appropriate law enforcement or other authorities should be notified.”\textsuperscript{34}

Rape is, however, not solely a crime by men against women. Although until 2011 rape was defined exclusively in this way by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the FBI now uses a much more comprehensive definition of rape. The research indicates that various obstacles in reporting sexual assault or rape deter prosecution in some cases. In cases of gender-based violence against gender non-conforming individuals or people in same-sex relationships, the law and the legal system continue to be even more consistently biased. In other words, laws and the legal system do not yet properly ensure the freedom, autonomy and full participation as citizens necessary for all people.

\textbf{VII. Confession of faith}

God’s beloved creatures suffer gender-based violence at the hands of each other. Such violence violates human dignity, divides humanity, abuses power, and gets in the way of proclamation. Christ is the beginning for Christians of any response to gender-based violence. God’s grace through Jesus Christ binds the Christian church to God and the body of Christ one to another.

The church remains at the cross -- that is, remains steadfast -- when it takes the necessary risks to proclaim faith in Christ and to resist and transform the roots of gender-based violence. It remains steadfast when it seeks to renounce the idolatry and hatred of gender-based violence, to set clear boundaries against evil, and to be the suffering flesh, the body of Christ that is the church.

God through Jesus Christ promises grace. Because we receive grace, we extend grace. It is that simple. The promise of grace has meaning for our being and action right now. God gives, not takes, in

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{33} \texttt{http://www.publicintegrity.org/2010/02/24/4360/lack-consequences-sexual-assault}
\textsuperscript{34} One in five women is sexually assaulted in college, but colleges often fail to respond appropriately. In a study of data submitted to the Department of Justice by 130 colleges, the Center for Public Integrity found that just 10 to 25 percent of perpetrators were expelled from college, leaving many victims of sexual assault to attend classes or live on the same campus as their rapist. \texttt{http://www2.ed.gov/print/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201104.html}.
grace; by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are likewise open to each other’s needs. God’s grace is immediate and active in us and de-centers how much the ELCA may wish to preserve the way things are. Through the incarnation, God stretches into human life, particularly our sorrow and experiences of nothingness. Jesus Christ shares fully in our deepest need and vulnerability on the cross. Jesus was betrayed, laid low, made into non-being, and was ripped apart by being fully exposed on the cross; his whole body suffered from the evil of violence.

Whoever is likewise laid low, made into non-being, and ripped apart by gender-based violence is fully known by God. God is there, in the depths of suffering. Because we all receive God’s grace, we are all equal before God. This refutes the belief that a human being has the authority to make someone else into an object, especially through violence. This is reason to put our hope in Christ.

In the resurrection, God promises new life through the Spirit, providing the hope of divine compassion, which is generated in us as we stretch out toward each other. To confess Christ means that the body of Christ knows and sees itself as the violated body, as the body that is marked in the flesh, together. Not them, us. We are marked. Our bodies are reoriented by this confession.

Word and sacrament bind us to God and to each other. The preached word is the proclamation of God’s grace through Jesus Christ. Sacraments are enacted word, God’s communal acts that are the very meaning and root of our relationships. The sacraments disrupt our expectations of how life should be. In Baptism, water symbolically washes us and our foreheads are marked with the sign of Christ, the cross, a symbol of the place of the lowest in the world. Through this symbol of the margins, the body of Christ is held together in its vast plurality.

In the Eucharist, Christ becomes part of our bodies; through this eating and drinking, we are bound to Christ and to each other. Through it, we participate in the sorrow and pain of the whole body of Christ — “all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing.” And through the work of the Holy Spirit, we experience the body of Christ as relational — “one inseparable body and flesh.”

Thus through preaching and the sacraments, we are with each other, to be knit together in our vulnerabilities through Christ, who is active in our real bodies. This church and its members are therefore free to take the risks of the cross to love and serve and seek justice for people who experience gender-based violence.

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35 “Word and Sacrament I,” Luther’s Works 35:54.
36 “Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6-8,” Luther’s Works 23:149.
VIII. The ELCA’s calling

The ELCA’s response in the face of gender-based violence is first and foremost to be prophetic, to declare that faith in the God who creates, redeems and sustains means saying no to such violence. As the ELCA affirms, “We care for the earth and serve the neighbor in society with the joyful confidence that God’s faithfulness alone sustains the Church and renews our faith, hope, and love.”

God calls this church to recognize the needs of victims, survivors, bystanders and perpetrators and to work within its power to address what causes and enables gender-based violence. God calls the church to respond with care, accountability and education as well as to give attention to the social order through advocacy. Addressing gender-based violence is gospel-centered work; it is ministry.

Respond to and prevent gender-based violence with care

The ELCA commits itself to respond with swift and appropriate care and intervention with anyone experiencing gender-based violence. Situations of gender-based violence such as ongoing abuse are often volatile and can quickly escalate. In order to respond with safety and care for everyone involved, the ELCA is called to strengthen and empower individual, congregational and institutional responses.

Congregations

The ELCA calls upon and encourages congregations to:

- safely provide information for visitors and congregants on access to crisis care and safety plans.
- put in place and enforce congregational policies and practices that promote safe and healthy congregations.
- support survivors through local expert care giving and advocacy agencies with donations of goods, money and volunteer services. Survivors have very practical needs: safety; shelter, food, and clothing; mental health care; legal counsel; work and transportation; and child care and education.
- be clear with anyone experiencing gender-based violence that God’s grace through Jesus Christ means that God condemns how they have been hurt.
- be clear with perpetrators that God calls them to repentance, accountability and the obligation to make amends.

38 The ELCA affirms, “This church must participate in social structures critically, for sin also is at work in the world. Social structures and processes combine life-giving and life-destroying dynamics in complex mixtures and in varying degrees. This church, therefore, must unite realism and vision, wisdom and courage, in its social responsibility. It needs constantly to discern when to support and when to confront society’s cultural patterns, values, and powers. . . . As a prophetic presence, this church has the obligation to name and denounce the idols before which people bow, to identify the power of sin present in social structures, and to advocate in hope with poor and powerless people.” See “The Church in Society,” 4.
provide safe spaces for people to tell the truth of what happened to them and for them to be believed.

We commend congregations that:
• care for survivors and people who might be vulnerable to gender-based violence through any of the above means.
• support efforts to repent and recover on the part of those who have committed gender-based violence.

We call upon rostered and lay leaders of congregations to:
• be prepared to respond to crises with the help of experts in the fields of gender-based violence through training, education, dialogue and collaboration with local and national partners. This will include education on appropriate interventions when gender-based violence occurs, including how not to blame victims, preach forgiveness improperly, or reinforce unhealthy dynamics that enable gender-based violence to occur.
• collaborate with local experts in care and advocacy in order to respond to survivors’ needs.
• care for people experiencing gender-based violence by believing them and helping them to find the resources they need.
• preach about gender-based violence in order to speak the truth and care for others.

We urge members in congregations in which other members experience gender-based violence, or such violence occurs to:
• speak the truth about what has or is happening.
• support networks of care and support.
• support, rather than blame, victims.
• love unceasingly, in the midst of pain, violence and ugliness, as a visible manifestation of the love of Christ for all.

Synods
The ELCA commends and encourages synods that
• require training and education of their leaders on responding to and preventing all forms of gender-based violence.
• partner with local experts and agencies to provide services to survivors and education for the community.
We encourage synods, their congregations, and other ministry sites on their territory to:

- support education for congregations and pastors about laws and practices concerning mandatory reporting of domestic and other forms of gender-based violence.

Social ministry organizations

The ELCA commends social ministry organizations that:

- provide care through protection and support of the many needs of survivors for safety and well-being.

Respond to and prevent gender-based violence with accountability

Accountability assists in creating justice. This church is called to create, strengthen and use policies and practices with strong means of accountability. This church is called to respond to assailants by calling them to account for their actions. People who inflict gender-based violence need to be accountable to the person they harmed, the families of survivors, society, and sometimes to the community of faith. The ELCA has a role to play in changing the fact that the majority of perpetrators of gender-based violence remain free and in communities. Accountability contributes to interrupting cycles of violence.

Accountability for their actions is the first priority with assailants, yet many also need pastoral care in a community of faith. When it is possible, pastors and other leaders may assist perpetrators with confession and repentance even though this does not require or automatically assure forgiveness from the survivor.

Congregations

The ELCA calls upon and encourages congregations to:

- Hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, including church leaders.
- Understand and uphold ELCA “Visions and Expectations.”

Synods

The ELCA encourages synods, their congregations, and other ministry sites on their territory to:

- provide and make public their policies on sexual harassment at public and sponsored meetings and events.
- put in place transparent policies and practices that provide for safety, confidentiality and due process for survivors and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

Churchwide organization and ministries

The ELCA encourages the churchwide organization to:
• review its organizational policies and practices to ensure that they provide for safety, confidentiality and due process for both survivors and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

• review ELCA “Visions and Expectations” to ensure the text adequately expresses standards and expectations regarding gender-based violence.

Educational institutions

The ELCA encourages church-related educational institutions to

• review or put in place policies and practices that ensure safety, confidentiality and due process for both survivors and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

Social ministry organizations

The ELCA encourages church-related social ministry organizations to

• review or put in place policies and practices that ensure safety, confidentiality and due process for both survivors and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

Respond to and prevent gender-based violence through education

Through ongoing education, the ELCA is called to respond to and prevent gender-based violence. Some of this education is practical. It is also faith-based. Life-giving witness to the gospel in theology and teaching gives life; it does not contribute to practices, laws and beliefs that enable gender-based violence. Thus the ELCA is called to work among many and varied partners to discern roadblocks and resources within the Lutheran theological and practical tradition through dialogue, study and action.

Congregations

The ELCA calls upon its congregations and their leaders to

• Engage in education through dialogue, analysis and careful study of the social and religious factors that contribute to gender-based violence, including understandings about the roles and characteristics of men and women, ideas about and images of God, ideas about salvation, the cross, suffering, sin and grace.

• Learn about and be prepared to respond to the specific contexts, needs and characteristics of various forms of gender-based violence.

• Learn about secular theories and practices to address gender-based violence and dialogue with others.

• Support and teach about healthy relationships, including sexual relationships.

Educational institutions

The ELCA encourages church-related colleges that have not done so to
• review their curriculum to break the silence by ensuring that matters regarding gender-based violence are treated fully in courses appropriate to the subject matter.

• review the possibilities for events that encourage awareness among students of the nature of gender-based violence and the means to dialogue.

• give appropriate attention to policies intended to curb gender-based violence and to foster appropriate responses that avoid “re-victimization” of those who have suffered gender-based violence on their campuses.

The ELCA encourages seminaries to

• include theological and practical preparation among seminarians that considers the problems and resources found in Scripture and the Lutheran theological tradition.

IX. The ELCA’s social witness

Bonded to Jesus Christ, this church announces that the God who justifies expects all people and social institutions to do justice and to foster practices that serve the common good. Such witness is given as Christians live out their callings as citizens or through the ELCA’s various institutional efforts as a public church.

This church is called to a social witness that is prophetic and includes robust advocacy. That is, it is called to join its voice with and for those whose voices are often shunted aside in speaking about what is needed to reduce gender-based violence. Such ministry must include advocacy for laws that prevent gender-based violence, care for victims and survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and empower efforts toward continual safeguards and change through local, state, federal and global initiatives.

In the interplay of the social order a vast number of organizations and agents need to be challenged toward prevention and reduction of gender-based violence. These include employers and corporations, sporting organizations, public education, the healthcare system, public and private social caregivers, the judicial system, the United States Armed Forces, members of the media, and leaders in emerging social medias.

The changes needed will vary, obviously, according to the particular character of each organization or system. Yet in each case the goals should reflect the development and application of practices that protect, provide care, hold perpetrators accountable, and challenge mindsets. This church, aware of its own sinfulness, will seek to witness to and urge the pursuit of such goals within the social order, an order that ultimately answers to the God of justice.
650 Toward that end:

651 **Congregations, leaders and members**

652 *The ELCA calls upon congregations, leaders and members to*

653 • be local advocates within schools, judicial systems, healthcare and social services for
654 transparent and appropriate responses to survivors and perpetrators and for measures to decrease the
655 possibilities of gender-based violence.

656 • collaborate with others to advocate for improvements.

657 • advocate for legislation that prevents and responds to gender-based violence.

658 • advocate for improved crisis response in their communities through dialogue and
659 partnership with various public services.

660 • advocate for improvements in social discourse and practice about the intersections of
661 gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation and age.

662 • serve as witnesses and advocates for individuals going through legal processes.

663 • speak words of both gospel and law that counter religious contributions to gender-based
664 violence.

665 • call for accountability from prosecutors, the judicial system, and those in power when
666 they fail to respond, appropriately, to gender-based violence in society or their institutions.

667 **Churchwide organization**

668 *The ELCA calls upon those who speak publically on its behalf to*

669 • advocate for legislative and administrative efforts that reduce gender-based violence,
670 provide care for victims and survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and empower people to work for
671 continual safeguards and change through local, state, federal and global initiatives.

672 • make clear in appropriate public address that this church opposes religious contributions
673 to gender-based violence.

674 **Social ministry organizations**

675 *The ELCA calls on social ministry organizations to*

676 • work from their experiences in ministry with survivors toward the passage of preventive
677 laws and the encouragement of alternative models of responding to gender-based violence.

678 • expand means that empower survivors of gender-based violence to be leaders for change,
679 advocates and caregivers on behalf of others also hurt by gender-based violence.
Commitments for a new beginning

The way forward for reducing and ending gender-based violence is long and multi-faceted. Each survivor needs to be met at the point of their pain; each perpetrator needs to be held accountable for the violence they commit. At the same time, addressing gender-based violence requires careful attention to social and religious contributions since these and the personal experiences of violence are mutually related.

This church commits itself to listen, with God, to the voices of those who have suffered gender-based violence within society and within the ELCA. This church commits itself, by God’s grace, to walk new paths that alter past understanding of and inadequate responses to gender-based violence. This church commits itself to stand for changes in the social order that will foster the flourishing of every person’s life since all people have been made imago dei (in God’s image, Genesis 1:17).
Glossary

**Biological characteristics:** The physical and physiological traits that we often associate with either males or females, but observation and research show that such physical and physiological traits do not exclusively belong to one or the other. These traits include not just genitalia, but also body hair, facial hair, height, muscle mass, body fat, body shape, breast tissue and the size of hands and feet, to name a few. These traits often shape how people are perceived or identify in terms of their gender.

**Gender:** Categories into which cultures/societies separate behaviors and characteristics that are usually considered masculine or feminine. The most common gender identities are woman and man, but other identities exist and are becoming more widely used and understood.

**Gender non-conforming:** Within this message, we use gender non-conforming to refer to people whose gender identity, gendered way of acting in the world, and biological characteristics do not completely fit within predominantly expected ways of acting as a man or a woman. There are many different identities and experiences included under the umbrella of gender non-conforming.

**Intersection:** The way that one form of oppression or privilege can be shaped by and can shape other forms of oppression or privilege. This means that the oppression experienced by a lesbian woman of color will be different than that experienced by an economically impoverished gender non-conforming white person. Factors that can intersect with and thus influence the individual experiences of gender-based oppression include: age, ability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality/citizenship, social class, economics and religion. Human identities are made up of many different intersections.

**Justice:** An underlying human sense about fairness, right treatment and reciprocity; there are many kinds of justice people have in mind when they use the word. Some of them include: retributive justice, corrective justice, distributive justice, restorative justice, structural justice, fair or equal treatment under the law, ending oppression based on power differences, or biblical righteousness. In this document, the term justice emphasizes the latter half of these meanings but always with the biblical emphasis on justice as right relationship with God and within community.

**Patriarchy:** The social, institutional, legal, political, educational, economic, religious and interpersonal systems of society that best serve men and the interests of men with status and power. While all people within a patriarchal system participate in it, the system functions with men at the center. This means that, sometimes unconsciously, people participate in systems that control and oppress women, girls, gender non-conforming people, LGBTQ people, and all those who are not normative, heterosexual men.
Appendix: Global and National Statistics

- Globally, an estimated 30 percent of women who have been in a relationship have experienced sexual or physical violence at the hands of their intimate partner.\textsuperscript{i}

- Nationally, 25 percent of women over the age of 18 have experienced sexual or physical violence at the hands of a current or former intimate partner.\textsuperscript{ii}

- Globally, race and ethnicity significantly affect the frequency of intimate partner violence.\textsuperscript{iii}

- Nationally, almost 33 percent of female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner.\textsuperscript{iv}

- Globally, one in five women will be a victim of attempted or completed rape in her lifetime.\textsuperscript{v}

- Nationally, one in six women will be a victim of attempted or completed rape in her lifetime.\textsuperscript{vi}

- Nationally, 97 percent of rapes committed against adults (both men and women), are committed by men.\textsuperscript{vii}

- Nationally, 60 percent of sexual assaults are not reported to the police and 97 percent of rapists will never spend a day in jail.\textsuperscript{viii}

- Nationally, 83 percent of girls aged 12 to 16 have experienced some form of sexual harassment in public schools.\textsuperscript{ix}

- Nationally, of those people who express a gender non-conforming identity while in grades K-12, 78 percent are made the victim of harassment, 35 percent are made the victim of physical assault, and 12 percent are made the victim of sexual violence.\textsuperscript{x}

- Nationally, 25 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people have been the victim of rape, and 72 percent have been the victim of other forms of sexual violence.\textsuperscript{xi}

- Nationally, an estimated 20-25 percent of lesbian and gay people experience hate violence within their lifetimes.\textsuperscript{xii}

- Nationally, of gender- and sexuality-based hate crime homicides in 2012, 53 percent of victims were transgender women.\textsuperscript{xiii}

- Nationally, of gender- and sexuality-based hate crime homicides in 2012, 73 percent of victims were people of color.\textsuperscript{xiv}

- Nationally, in 2013, white men were more likely than any other racial and ethnic demographic to be perpetrators of gender- and sexuality-based hate violence. Of all men who perpetrate gender- and sexuality-based hate violence, the majority by age were 19 to 29 years old.\textsuperscript{xv}

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\textsuperscript{i} World Health Organization, “Violence against Women: Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women,” WHO, last modified October 2013, \url{http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/}.

\textsuperscript{ii} According to this survey, almost 64 percent of women who reported being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked since the age of 18 were targeted by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend, or date. Likewise, those reporting assaults within the past year averaged more than three assaults per year. See Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 2000), iii.

Draft of a Social Message on Gender-based Violence, fall 2014; This a DRAFT for public comment. It is not an ELCA message.


iv World Health Organization, “Violence Against Women.”


viii Percentage was calculated from data in Tjaden and Thoennes, Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women, 47.


xii Of the 25 percent of lesbian, gay and bisexual people who have been the victim of rape, survey statistics showed that all of them were lesbian or bisexual women. Both percentages were found from our own calculations of survey data from Mikel L. Walters, Jieru Chen, and Matthew J. Breiding, The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation (Atlanta, Ga.: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013), 6-11.


xiv Ibid., 8.

xv Ibid.

xvi The most recent studies of hate violence show that in 2013 39 percent of perpetrators were perceived as white by victims, as opposed to other various racial or ethnic backgrounds, 72.45 percent were male as opposed to female or transgender, and 30.7 percent were between 19 and 29 years old. See Osman Ahmed and Chai Jindasurant, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV-Affected Hate Violence in 2013 (New York, N.Y.: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2014), 51-53.