



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

“Jesus said, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs’” (Matthew 19:14).

Dear church,

Christ is risen!

This Easter Sunday, we celebrated the good news by proclaiming “Alleluia!” for the first time since Ash Wednesday. In four short syllables, that word — “Alleluia!” — encompasses all our joy in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To a world beset by fear and violence, it is a bold declaration of faith in God’s promise that sin and death will not have the final say.

Yet there are times when “alleluia” springs forth not as a shout but as an anguished whisper, an expression of our yearning for the fulfillment of that promise. Even as the church celebrates Easter, we remember many among us who still long for the church to bear witness to that promise.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. This month, I invite us as a church to be the people we are called to be — witnesses to God’s desire for the well-being of all, especially the vulnerable children and adult survivors in our midst.

At least 1 in 7 — and as many as 1 in 4 — children in the United States experiences abuse or neglect. Many of them will face lifelong consequences of physical and emotional trauma, including higher rates of depression, thoughts of suicide, substance abuse and even cancer and heart disease. When the church has failed them, many others will face the deep spiritual trauma of guilt and of anger toward the church and God.

But it does not have to be this way. Trauma need not have the final say.

The ELCA social message “[Child Protection](#)” (2025) describes the harsh realities of child maltreatment, acknowledges the Christian church’s complicity in this sin and names steps the ELCA is called to take to prevent harm and accompany survivors. It offers words of promise and challenge to each of us as we commemorate this month:

To survivors of child maltreatment: Even amid your pain, anger and doubt, be assured of God’s unending love and unfailing promise for your well-being.

To preachers and teachers in congregations: Share the good news of Jesus Christ by studying and teaching the theology of childhood described in the social message.

Remember that every worshiping community in the ELCA likely includes victims of child maltreatment. Preach and teach Jesus' model of welcome and care for children.

To council members and congregation staff: Take time this month to review your child protection policies and practices. Read and discuss the policies recommended in the social message.

To rostered ministers: As stated in the social message, this church expects you to report suspected instances of child maltreatment. Learn more about your state's legal requirements for clergy as mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect by visiting www.childwelfare.gov/resources/clergy-mandatory-reporters-child-abuse-and-neglect/. Encourage your congregations to advocate for public policies endorsed in the social message.

To counselors, chaplains, teachers, school administrators, social service providers and all those who work for the safety and well-being of children: Thank you, and may God continue to bless your efforts.

In this Easter season, let us pray that all our neighbors may experience resurrection hope and that, for children of all ages, everywhere, a resounding shout of "Alleluia!" may be the last word in God's story.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yehiel Curry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America