

## Course Description

**Course Number:** MN 383W

**Course Title:** When Faith Hurts: Recognizing and Responding to the Spiritual Impact of Child Abuse

**Name of Instructor:** Victor Vieth

**Semester and Year:** Fall 2021, Elective, 1 credit; letter grade or credit/no credit

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course assists current and future faith leaders in developing the skills to recognize and respond with excellence to cases of child sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect. Special emphasis is placed on the spiritual impact of child abuse and the importance of coordinating pastoral care with medical and mental health care. Students will also learn best practices for church child protection policies, including policies for managing a sex offender within the congregation.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To draw on biblical and confessional resources to articulate a Christian and Lutheran theological basis for prioritizing the needs of maltreated children within the church and community.
2. Develop culturally sensitive skills in responding to troubling texts often used to justify hitting a child as a means of discipline, to withhold medical or mental health care, to avoid reporting a case of child abuse, or to keep the confidence of a sex offender or other perpetrator.
3. To assist students in recognizing signs of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, including an overview of normal and concerning sexual behaviors of pre and post adolescent children.
4. To understand the physical, emotional and spiritual impact of child abuse and to have a working knowledge of adverse childhood experience and poly-victimization research.
5. To become conversant in best practices for child protection policies and the coordination of pastoral care with medical and mental health care in cases of child abuse.

**PROCEDURE:** Lecture, classroom discussion, group exercises.

### **EVALUATION:**

1. Class preparation and participation in group exercises
2. Students must review and critique a sample church child protection policy.
3. Written 6 page paper at end of course.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY: (all required)**

1. Victor I. Vieth, *On this Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse on the Life and Words of Jesus* (2018).
2. Basyle Tchividjian & Shira M. Berkovits, *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches & Ministries* (2017).
3. Casey Gwinn & Chan Hellman, *Hope Rising: How the Science of Hope can Change Your Life* (2019).
4. *Child Abuse & the Church: Prevention, Pastoral Care, and Healing*, 45 *Currents in Mission & Theology* 6-60 (2018).
5. Victor I. Vieth, *Child Abuse & the Lutheran Confessional: A Call to Elevate Christ's Teachings on Child Abuse Above Church Traditions*, 46 *Currents in Mission & Theology* 50-55 (2019).
6. Victor I. Vieth, *Augustine, Luther & Solomon: Providing Pastoral Care to Parents on the Corporal Punishment of Children*, 43 *Currents in Mission & Theology* 25-33 (2017).
7. Victor I. Vieth, *What Would Walther Do? Applying Law & Gospel to Victims and Perpetrators of Child Abuse*, 40(4) *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 257-273 (2012).