

## **MN 383W-L2 WHEN FAITH HURTS: RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO THE SPIRITUAL IMPACT OF CHILD ABUSE**

Wartburg Theological Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa) – ELCA Seminary Shared January Course

Instructor(s): Victor I. Vieth & Craig L. Nesson

Class Meets January 13-17, 2025, with pre- and post-work

Residential or Synchronous Zoom only

2 Semester Hours; letter grade or credit/no credit (pass/fail)

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.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To draw on biblical and Lutheran confessional resources to articulate a Christian and Lutheran theological basis for prioritizing the needs of maltreated children within the church and community.
2. To better understand Martin Luther's experience of physical abuse and how this experience influenced his theology.
3. To better understand the significance of Wilhelm Loehe's legacy in meeting the Christian obligation to protect children from abuse and to help them flourish.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. To become familiar with the SAMSHA standards for trauma-informed care and to be able to apply these standards when reading and teaching accounts of trauma in the sacred texts.
8. 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.
9. To better understand how to apply the Lutheran concept of clergy-penitent privilege when working with survivors and offenders.
10. To better understand the mindset of sex offenders and to coordinate pastoral care with sex offender treatment.
11. To better understand the potential role of a chaplain in a Children's Advocacy Center

### **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

### Required reading:

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. *Child Abuse & the Church: Prevention, Pastoral Care, and Healing*, 45 *Currents in Mission & Theology* 6-60 (2018).
4. 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).
5. 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).
6. 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).
7. Victor I. Vieth, *The Need for a Trauma-Informed Lutheran Theology: A Case Study on Lutheran Study Bibles*, 51(3) *Currents in Theology & Mission* 52-66 (2024)
8. Victor I. Vieth, *Providing Pastoral Care to Survivors of Child Abuse*, 24(2) *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* (2024)
9. Victor I. Vieth, *A Bird in the Air or a Nest in the Hair? Pastoral Care for Adults Expressing a Sexual Attraction to Children but who Deny Acting on these Thoughts*, 49 *Currents in Theology and Mission* 33-45 (2022)
10. Victor I. Vieth, *Until the Blood Ran: A Call to Re-Appraise the Experience of Child Physical Abuse in the Life and Works of Martin Luther*, 47(4) *Currents in Theology and Mission* 60-73 (2020)
11. Pete Singer, *Toward a More Trauma-Informed Church: Equipping Faith Communities to Prevent and Respond to Abuse*, 51(1) *Currents in Theology and Mission* 62-76 (2020)
12. Craig L. Nesson, *Grounding Child Protection in Six Core Commitments: Theology & Ethics*, 23(6) *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* (December 2023/January 2024).
13. Craig L. Nesson, *Rational for a Social Statement on Child Abuse & Child Protection*, 48(2) *Currents in Theology and Mission* 43-56 (2020)
14. Victor Vieth, et al, *Keeping Faith: The Potential Role of a Chaplain to Address the Spiritual Needs of Maltreated Children and Advise Child Abuse Multi-Disciplinary Teams*, 14(2) *Liberty University Law Review* 351-380 (2020).
15. Pamela J. Miller, Judith S. Rycus, & Victor Vieth, *Intrafamilial Child Torture: Victim Impact and Professional Interventions*, *Child Maltreatment Policy Resource Center* (2022).