

**SUBSTITUTE/REPLACEMENT RESOLUTION ONE ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT
(AND MEMORIAL TO THE 2019 ELCA CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY)**

After discussion between the Reference and Counsel Committee and the Submitter, this revised resolution replaces the original document.

Submitted by the Rev. Paul Bailie

1 WHEREAS, more than fifty years of research has repeatedly shown that hitting children as a
2 means of discipline is ineffective and increases the risk a child will be aggressive, defiant, and
3 have impaired relationships with their parents;

4
5 WHEREAS, corporal punishment increases the risk a child will develop mental health disorders
6 and have cognitive challenges;

7 WHEREAS, corporal punishment is more likely to be used when a family is experiencing
8 stressors or when a parent has depressive symptoms;

9 WHEREAS, corporal punishment is associated with changes in the anatomy of the brain
10 including a loss of gray matter, white matter, and elevated levels of cortisol;

11 WHEREAS, more than fifty percent of substantiated physical abuse cases result from physical
12 discipline;

13 WHEREAS, Christian teachings on Biblical passages pertaining to corporal punishment have
14 contributed to the widespread hitting of children in the United States and around the world,

15 WHEREAS, a number of Christian leaders and publications have urged the Christian community
16 to address the issue of corporal punishment in the light of scripture and the growing body of
17 research documenting the harm of hitting children as a means of discipline;

18 WHEREAS, Jesus instructed Christians to welcome children as we would welcome God (Mt
19 9:36-37) and warned us not to harm children (Mt. 18:6-9; Luke 17:1-2; Mark 9:42);

20 **THEREFORE, be it resolved:**

21 **1. The Northeastern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America**
22 **encourages its members to adopt discipline methods that do not include the corporal**
23 **punishment of their children.**

24 **2. The Northeastern Ohio Synod of the ELCA encourages its congregations to offer**
25 **opportunities for dialogue and education on effective discipline of children including**
26 **Bible studies on the Christian obligation to discipline children in a manner that does**
27 **not hurt them.**

28 **3. The Northeastern Ohio Synod memorializes the ELCA to develop and adopt a Social**
29 **Message on the corporal punishment of children and/or a social statement on Child**
30 **Protection with a major section on the corporal punishment of children.**

31 **Sources:**

- 32 • Robert D. Sege, Benjamin S. Siegel, *Effective Discipline to Raise Children: Policy*
33 *Statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics*, 142(6) PEDIATRICS (December
34 2018): <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/6/e20183112>
- 35 • Elizabeth T. Gershoff and Andrew Grogran-Kaylor, “Spanking and Child Outcomes:
36 Old Controversies and New Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 30 (2016):
37 453-469.
- 38 • Adam J. Zolotov, et al, “Speak Softly—and Forget the Stick: Corporal Punishment and
39 Child Physical Abuse,” *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 35 (2008): 364-
40 365.
- 41 • John P. Hoffman, Christopher G. Ellison, and John P. Bartkowski, “Conservative
42 Protestantism and Attitudes Toward Corporal Punishment,” *Social Science Research* 63
43 (2017): 81-94.
- 44 • Victor I. Vieth, “Augustine, Luther and Solomon: Providing Pastoral Guidance to
45 Parents on the Corporal Punishment of Children,” 44:3 *Currents in Mission &*
46 *Theology* (July 2017): 25-33.
- 47 • Editorial, “Thou Shalt Not Abuse: Reconsidering Spanking,” *Christianity Today* (Jan.
48 2012).
- 49 • William J. Webb, *Corporal Punishment in the Bible: A Redemptive-Movement*
50 *Hermeneutic for Troubling Texts* (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter Varsity 2011).

Response and Recommendations from the Reference and Counsel Committee:

To be presented at the Assembly