



Cherish All Children

Pray + Educate + Connect + Act

Wednesday Prayer – 4th Sunday after Epiphany

I am only a boy

Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord." Jeremiah 1:6-8

Last week I viewed the [Gillette advertisement](#) "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be" on YouTube. This ad challenged harmful masculinity, recently called toxic masculinity, asking men to be better. Having read a fair amount about this topic, as well as having witnessed the effects of it, I was still somewhat surprised by the backlash the ad evoked by some. When an accepted norm is challenged, the response is often defensive and angry. We question the validity and universality of the perceived criticism and wonder what it will mean for our own life. Looking inward is not easy.

In contrast, on Saturday, Cherish All Children hosted a community event, Raising Healthy Boys and Young Men: Ending Exploitation. Three keynote speakers worked for organizations that were started by men *for* men and boys; all for the purpose of helping each other explore the true definitions of masculinity as well as to prevent the sexual exploitation that can result from a false vision of what it means to be a man. Listening to the speakers, I was encouraged by the belief that more and more men are stepping up to speak out against sexual exploitation and they are carrying the message to boys. That is prevention in its purest form.

One young man, a college student, who started a non-profit [Athletes Against Sexual Violence](#), said repeatedly, "We need your help." He talked about boys and young men not having the language or the space to talk openly about these things.

To the men who are leading, may you leave behind any negative backlash. Hear the words in Jeremiah "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you."

Good and Gracious God, Bless the work of your good servants who seek to end sexual violence. Just as you encouraged Jeremiah, help them speak the words of your love for all humankind. May we all support this important ministry of education and prevention, and work together to raise up young people. Amen.

Written by Ginny Rudloff, retired Cherish All Children Prevention Coordinator and member of Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN, where she engages her faith community in prevention efforts.