

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE: PROTECTING THE DIGNITY OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

Participant Handout

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Key Scriptures

Genesis 1:27

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Psalms 139:13–14

“For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

What is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)?

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) refers to procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is most often carried out on girls during childhood or adolescence and is recognized internationally as a harmful practice that can affect health, well-being, and human dignity.

Why Does FGM Continue?

FGM continues in some communities because of cultural traditions, social expectations, beliefs about marriageability, and ideas about

womanhood and community identity. While these traditions are important to many communities, increasing numbers of families, faith leaders, and community members are working together to find alternative ways to celebrate girls without causing harm.

Impacts of FGM

FGM can have serious consequences, including:

Physical Impacts

- Severe pain
- Excessive bleeding
- Infection
- Complications during childbirth
- Long-term health challenges

Emotional and Psychological Impacts

- Fear and anxiety
- Trauma
- Emotional distress
- Loss of trust

Social Impacts

- School interruption
- Pressure to conform to community expectations
- Reduced opportunities for some girls and young women

What Does Our Faith Teach?

As Christians, we believe:

- Every person is created in the image of God.
- Every girl and woman has God-given dignity and worth.

- Jesus welcomed and valued children and young people.
- Christians are called to protect the vulnerable and seek justice.
- God’s love calls us to promote healing, compassion, and human flourishing.

The United Methodist Church Teaches

“We affirm the dignity and worth of all women and girls...”

(Social Principles, 2020/2024, ¶163D)

The Church also calls for communities to:

“Advocate for an end to harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage, polygamy, and female genital mutilation.”

(Book of Resolutions, 2020/2024, Resolution 3355)

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to be created in God’s image?
2. How does Psalm 139 affirm the dignity of girls and women?
3. What challenges do girls and young women face in your community?
4. How can churches help protect and support girls and women?

What Can We Do?

- Learn more about issues affecting girls and women.
- Support girls’ education and leadership.
- Encourage respectful conversations about dignity and justice.
- Stand against harmful practices and gender-based violence.
- Pray for girls, women, families, and communities.

Personal Reflection

One thing I learned today:

One action I will take this week:

Prayer Request: