

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF RESOURCES

ELCA DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

1. [“Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” social statement](#)
2. Ministry Policy Resolutions adopted in 2009 (These resolutions can be found in [Report and Recommendations of the Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group](#), in Appendix A)
3. [Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in the ELCA](#)
4. Articles in the [Journal of Lutheran Ethics](#)
5. [Journey Together Faithfully, ELCA Studies on Sexuality: Part Two](#)
6. [Background Essay on Biblical Texts for Journey Together Faithfully, Part Two: The Church and Homosexuality](#)
7. [Supplemental Resources for use within the Evangelical Lutheran Worship Service of Marriage](#)

RESOURCES FROM OTHERS

The following links are provided as an aid for those who wish to learn more about these organizations and the resources they provide. Inclusion on this list does not imply ELCA endorsement of all the resources that have or may be offered by these organizations. It is possible that some resources fall outside the range of ELCA practice when evaluated according to “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” or other ELCA policy documents.

- [Lutheran CORE](#)
 - [Marriage & Family Resources](#)
- [ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation](#)
 - [Building an Inclusive Church](#)
- Full communion partners resources: [Report and Recommendations of the Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group](#), in Appendix J-2, J-3

APPENDIX 2: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT⁹

INTRODUCTION

The 13th Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), meeting in August of 2013, responded to formal requests from synods for conversation and resource sharing related to ministry in light of changing family configurations. Acting upon the assembly's direction, the ELCA Church Council at its November 2013 meeting authorized the formation of a working group to bring a report and recommendation regarding ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families. This guide to conversation responds to one of the recommendations of that working group. However, these actions did not appear suddenly. They occurred in a context of social change and ELCA-wide discernment from the earliest days of the ELCA, which was formed in 1987. This brief overview of historical context is important in itself and may be useful as background for the conversations this resource hopes to facilitate.

CALLS FOR CHANGE

It is quite clear that during the last several decades many people in our culture and within the church began to experience and rethink the situation of those in same-sex relationships who seek lifelong companionship and commitment and sincerely desire the support of other Christians for living faithfully in all aspects of their lives. (See "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," p. 18) From as early as the late 1960s, medical research about human psychology and biology, among other factors, began to challenge assumptions about the origin of same-sex orientation and to challenge long-held social customs, law and policy. These challenges to long-held beliefs regarding same-sex couples led many in our church to consider again the meaning and application of Scripture as well as the Lutheran theological heritage. The ELCA conversation, like that in society, was extended and often hotly contested. While old certainties diminished and an old consensus deteriorated, it did not resolve differing and deeply held convictions. A new consensus within our church has not emerged.

'HUMAN SEXUALITY: GIFT AND TRUST'

In this context, "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," adopted in 2009, drew on a foundational Lutheran understanding of ethics. That understanding held that in the common purpose to love the neighbor, Christian freedom may permit a certain diversity of conscience-bound practices. The statement did not recognize all possible convictions or practices as faithful but established a range because "in this discernment about ethics and church practice, faithful people can and will come to different conclusions about the meaning of Scripture and about what constitutes responsible action" (p. 19). Further, it taught that our church as a matter of respect for the consciences of others "will include these different understandings and practices within its life as it seeks to live out its mission and ministry in the world" (p. 19).

⁹ This appendix is adapted with necessary revisions from the "Report and Recommendations of Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group," p. 2f. The report was received by the ELCA Church Council in November 2015 and referred to the churchwide organization for implementation (CC15.11.41).

NEW MINISTRY POLICY RESOLUTIONS

While the social statement did not require change in ELCA ministry policy, the 2009 Churchwide Assembly also adopted four ministry policy resolutions (available in the [Report and Recommendations of Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group](#) (M2SGF), Appendix A that created “structured flexibility” for ordination and for the conduct of marriage ceremonies for gays and lesbians. It did so by adopting four resolutions that later were articulated in [Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in the ELCA](#). Resolution 1 affirmed that the ELCA would strive to be a church that bore the burden of respecting others whose consciences and practices differed within the range of convictions set by the social statement. Resolution 2 made it possible for “congregations that choose to do so” [italics added] to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.” Resolution 3 and Resolution 4 directed the ELCA to “find a way for those in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church” [italics added]. These directives for ministry policy allowed structured flexibility in decision-making regarding approving or disapproving candidacy and call for those who are otherwise qualified.

THE ELCA CONTEXT

Multiple consequences from these two sets of Churchwide Assembly decisions flowed in mixed and ever-changing measures for the life of the ELCA. There was, and continues to be, joy, relief, sorrow, pain and anger within our church. There has been splintering and recommitment. There has been a loss of membership and financial support, and yet, for some, a renewal of confidence. There has been criticism and yet also affirmation for the changes made. Leaders and members often have been exhausted and/or enlivened by the opportunities and challenges. Some have mourned and others have sensed resurgence in the ELCA’s mission and ministry. These multiple and mixed consequences remain as this guide is prepared.

While many observations could be made about the ELCA experience since 2009, four in particular are relevant for this guide.

1. The ELCA in its documents remains deeply committed to ministry with all children of God.
2. The ELCA is learning what an extraordinary challenge it is to live into being a church that recognizes and honors a range of varied, diverse, even at times contradictory, understandings and practices. These challenges and opportunities continue to call forth the confident and daring faith Martin Luther described, a faith empowered by God to trust the Spirit to see us through as conversations continue.
3. In holding together both the responsibility and the challenge, it has become clear that the ELCA as a whole in 2009 was not fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities brought by the adoption of “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” and the ministry policy resolutions. In particular, we had not given full thought or consideration for what pastoral ministry to and with same-gender couples would look like across conviction sets in the ELCA.
4. These challenges and opportunities became all the more real for many congregations after the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that “the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both the Due Process Clause and Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.”¹⁰

¹⁰ SCOTUS: Obergefell v. Hodges, 2015.