

# Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust

## Specific Draft Edits and Explanations

This document lists the draft edits to the social statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust, along with explanations of each edit. The explanations are not intended to defend the draft edits but to demonstrate how the draft edits connect to the authorizations for reconsideration of the social statement. The full authorizations can be found at [www.elca.org/reconsiderations](http://www.elca.org/reconsiderations).

Edit: Lines 7-9

Original: "Sexual intimacy, together with promises of fidelity and public accountability, nurtures bonds that allow people to thrive and provides a rich context for the care and support of children."

Draft edit: Sexual intimacy, together with promises of fidelity and public accountability, is intended to nurture bonds that allow people to thrive and can provide a rich context for the care and support of children.

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage and the "import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals," which may or may not involve having children. This edit

proposes adding conditional language recognizing that marriage may not involve having or planning to have children.

Edit: Lines 11-22 and footnotes a, b, c, and d

Original: "Marriage is a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by God. The historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10: 6–9: 'But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one

flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one put asunder.’ (Jesus here recalls Genesis 1:27; 2:23–24.) (see Addendum)”

Draft edit: Christian marriage is understood as a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by God. The predominant historic Christian tradition has recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10: 6–9. The Lutheran Confessions assume and reflect this understanding of marriage. Ongoing interpretations of the Scriptures and the Confessions regarding sex, gender, and sexuality have introduced a complexity of considerations about which there is not universal agreement. At the time of this writing, within U.S.

society and within the ELCA, many, but not all, have come to accept marriage as a covenant between two consenting adults that should be protected by law regardless of sex, gender, or sexuality.

Explanation: The authorization for reconsideration directs the church to consider edits that reflect “current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples...” In this specific section, the authorization directs consideration “that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals.” The draft edits reflect these directives. In addition, for clarity, text that refers to disagreement on

complex issues has been moved from the end of this section (page 18 of the original social statement) to the front of the section, edited, and included here. In the draft edit, there are additional footnotes that 1) note the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges; 2) include the text of Mark 10:6-9; 3) reference more recent ELCA social teachings; and 4) cite recent data about public acceptance of marriage of same-sex couples. These footnotes reflect consideration of items as authorized by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.

Edit: Lines 37-39

Original: "It is a binding relationship that provides conditions for personal well-being, the flourishing of the partner, and the possibility of procreation and the nurturing of children."

Draft edit: It is a binding relationship that provides conditions for personal well-being, the flourishing of the partner, procreation and the nurturing of children.

Explanation: This edit clarifies language in the original sentence without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence and thus is within the parameters approved for this reconsideration.

Edit: Line 39 – footnote e

New footnote added: This church recognizes that there are multiple ways of nurturing children including but not limited to caring for one's own biological or adopted children.

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage and the “import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals,” which may or may not involve having children. This draft edit proposes adding conditional language that recognizes that marriage may not involve having or planning to have children.



Edit: Lines 41-42

Original: "...marriage provides a context of love, trust, honesty, and commitment..."

Draft edit: ...marriage is intended to provide a context of trust, honest, and commitment...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage. This includes growing awareness of marriages that may not foster trust, honesty, or commitment due to human sin. This draft edit proposes adding conditional language to reflect this, consistent with references to human sin in the social statement.

Edit: Lines 47-48

Original: "...the play and delight of physical love are crucial expressions..."

Draft edit: "...the play and delight of physical love are expressions..."

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage and the "import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals."

The draft edit acknowledges that this relationship may not involve physical expressions of love, either by choice or circumstance.

Edit: Line 56

Original: "The public promises of marriage between a man and a woman, therefore, also protect the community..."

Draft edit: "The public promises of marriage, therefore, also protect the community..."

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage and the "import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals."

Edit: Lines 86, 92, and 96-97

Original: divorced

Draft edit: distressed, separated, or divorced

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage. This draft edit expands without changing the substantive meaning of the text to include spouses experiencing marital distress or separation as of special concern to the church.

Edit: Lines 101-102

Original: "...marriage for a husband and wife."

Draft edit: ...marriage for both spouses...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage and the "import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals."

Edit: Lines 111-114

Original: "The legal contract creates a public arrangement within which a couple may safely and equitably share their assets and resources, arrive at joint decisions, anticipate children, protect and nurture them, and plan for a shared future."

Draft edit: The legal contract creates a public arrangement within which a couple can safely and equitably share their assets and resources; arrive at joint decisions; plan for a shared future; and may anticipate children, protect, and nurture them.

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage and the "import that

marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals,” which may or may not involve having children. This draft edit clarifies the conditional language that was in the original social statement and adds clarifying punctuation.

Edit: Lines 117-118

Original: “...God’s blessing on a man and a woman...”

Draft edit: ...God’s blessing on the couple...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings of marriage and the “import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals.”

### Edit: Line 124

Deleted paragraph from end of section

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings and civil law. Much of the original text of this paragraph reflects pre-2015 legal and social understandings of marriage in society and the church. Text referring to the diversity of beliefs within the church was moved to the opening paragraph of this section (page 15.)

### Edit: Lines 126-127

Original: "Lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships"

Draft edit: "A diversity of sex, gender, and sexuality in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous relationships"

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to “review wording” in this section “in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples.” In addition, the general authorization directs the church to review wording in light of current church understanding. The draft edit here reflects updated wording.

Edit: Line 129

Original: “...in new ways the need of same-gender-oriented individuals to seek relationships...”

Draft edit: “...in new ways the needs of individuals to seek relationships...”



Explanation: The authorization directs the church to “review wording” in this section “in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples.” In addition, the general authorization directs the church to review wording in light of current church understanding. The draft edit here reflects updated wording.

Edit: Lines 132-133

Original: “...understandings of human sexuality in medicine, social science, and corresponding public policy about same-gender relationships.”

Draft edit: "...understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality in medicine, social science, and corresponding public policy."

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to "review wording" in this section "in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples."

In addition, the general authorization directs the church to review wording in light of current church understanding. The draft edit here reflects updated wording based on more recent ELCA social teachings.

Edit: Lines 135-136

Original: "We in the ELCA recognize that many of our sisters and brothers in same-gender relationships..."

Draft edit: We in the ELCA recognize that many of our siblings in same-gender or gender-diverse relationships...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit is consistent with recent social teaching, while not changing the substantive meaning of the sentence. Two footnotes were added in the draft edit, both of which are described below.

Edit: Line 135 – footnote f

Footnote added: “As the ELCA’s social statement on *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* (2019) notes, terminology changes over time and may differ between communities. While here, the term ‘same-gender’ is used, we note that some prefer the use

of the term 'same-sex,' while in some circumstances other terms may be more appropriate."

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit references recent social teaching, while not changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Line 136 – footnote g

Footnote added: "The term 'gender-diverse' is similar to the term 'gender non-conforming.' However, 'gender-diverse' encompasses a wide diversity of identities and expressions in relationships between individuals, including gender non-conforming, non-binary, genderqueer, and transgender persons.

Definitions for these terms can be found in the glossary of *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, p. 75-80.

Explanation: This footnote offers a description of a term introduced in the previous draft edit. It also references current ELCA social teaching, which reflects “current church understanding” as noted in the authorization for reconsideration.

Edit: Lines 142-143

Original: “...lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships...”

Draft edit: ...lifelong, monogamous relationships of same-gender or gender-diverse couples...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests more current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 146-147

Original: "...convictions regarding lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships..."

Draft edit: ...convictions regarding lifelong, monogamous relationships between individuals of diverse sexes, genders, or sexualities...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests more

current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 148-150

Original: "It opposes all forms of verbal or physical harassment and assault based on sexual orientation."

Draft edit: It opposes all forms of verbal or physical harassment and assault based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings and civil law. This draft edit reflects current understanding of vulnerability to threats of harassment and assault without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 152-153

Original: "...support same-gender couples..."

Draft edit: ...support same-gender or gender-diverse couples...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 157-159

Original: "This includes a pastoral responsibility to those who are same-gender in their orientation and to those who are seeking counsel about their sexual self-understanding."



Draft edit: This includes a pastoral responsibility to those with diverse gender self-identities or sexualities and to those who are seeking counsel about their gender or sexual self-understanding.

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 163-164

Original: "...how to regard same-gender committed relationships..."

Draft edit: ...how to regard the committed relationships of same-gender or gender-diverse couples...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 181-182

Original: "...some are convinced that same-gender sexual behavior is sinful..."

Draft edit: ...some are convinced that sexual behavior between individuals of the same gender is sinful...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 184-185

Original: "They believe same-gender sexual behavior carries..."

Draft edit: They believe sexual behavior between individuals of the same gender carries...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 192-195

Original: "...some are convinced that homosexuality and even lifelong, monogamous, homosexual relationships..."

Draft edit: ...some convinced that sexual behavior between individuals of the same gender and even lifelong, monogamous relationships between two individuals of the same gender ...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests more current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 205-207

Original: "They believe that the neighbor and community are best served when same-gender relationships..."

Draft edit: They believe that the neighbor and community are best served when relationships between individuals of the same gender...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests more current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 216-217

Original: "... best served when same-gender relationships are lived out..."

Draft edit: ... best served when relationships between two individuals of the same gender are lived out...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to consider current church understandings. This draft edit suggests more current language without changing the substantive meaning of the sentence.

Edit: Lines 238-242

Original: "In contemporary society, the term 'family' includes a variety of forms, more akin to the older term of 'household,'

exclusively employed by Luther to include immediate family members, relatives, and others.”

Draft edit: In contemporary society, the term “family” denotes a variety of forms, such as married couples, partners, children, extended relatives, and others who may be part of one’s chosen family. This contemporary understanding is more akin to the older term of “household,” employed by Luther to include immediate family members, relatives, and others.

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to “consider references to diversity of family configurations” in this section. The draft edit suggests the breadth intended by the term “family” in the original text and in the authorization. The removal of the term “exclusively” reflects a more accurate

description of Luther's use of the term "household," a clarification that is included in the parameters of editorial reconsiderations.

Edit: Line 252

Original: "...dependence upon parents and others..."

Draft edit: ...dependence upon parents, caregivers, and others...

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to "consider references to diversity of family configurations" in this section, which often include non-parental caregivers.



### Edit: Lines 268-269

Original: "As such, society properly both regulates and shelters families..."

Draft edit: As such, society is responsible for both regulating and sheltering families...

Explanation: This draft edit offers clarifying language about society's role in relation to regulating and sheltering families.

### Edit: Lines 297-300

Original: "In this country and throughout the twentieth century, the legally married, heterosexual 'nuclear family' has been supported by strong conventions.<sup>31</sup> The nuclear family is well-structured to foster the development of trust in children and

youth. The experience of millions of people and recent social science findings demonstrate its ability to do so.<sup>32</sup> This does not mean, however, that it has always done so effectively.”

Draft edit: Throughout the twentieth century, the legally married, nuclear family has been supported by strong social conventions and is intended to foster trust in children and youth.<sup>32</sup> This does not mean, however, that it has always done so effectively.

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to “consider references to diversity of family configurations” in this section. The draft edits here reflect awareness of the “diversity of family configurations” and recent research into diverse family

configurations. Footnote 32 in the original social statement will remain in the draft edit.

Edit: Lines 300-306

Original: "Families can shelter sexism or domestic violence, and, in such situations, the safety of children or others who are harmed is of utmost importance.<sup>33</sup>"

Draft edit: Families can shelter sexism or domestic violence, and, in such situations, the safety of children or others who are harmed is of utmost importance.<sup>33</sup> Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions assume and encourage households similar in some ways to the nuclear family model. However, historically and currently, there are wide variations in household structure as

stated above, including extended family members and non-biologically related members.

Explanation: This draft edit moves text from footnote 31 in the original social statement into the main text. The language added here was adopted by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly as part of the original social statement.

Edit: Lines 309-313

Original: “There are natural and adoptive families, foster families, blended families, families with a missing generation, and families where the parents are the same gender. Millions of households in the U.S., and many in our church, are headed by

single parents—mostly women—whether widowed, divorced, or never married.”

Draft edit: There are biologically-related and adoptive families, foster families, blended families, families with a missing generation, families without children, and families where the parents are the same gender, to name just a few. Millions of households in the U.S., and many in our church, are headed by single or unmarried parents, whether widowed, divorced, or never married.

Explanation: The authorization directs the church to “consider references to diversity of family configurations” in this section. The draft edits reflect this authorization, noting families without

children and the diversity of households with single or unmarried parents.

Edit: Line 322

Original: "...regardless of family situation."

Draft edit: ...regardless of family situation or household structure.

Explanation: This draft edit reflects the authorization's direction to "consider references to diversity of family configurations" in this section.

Edit: Lines 326-327

Original: "...social and economic trends that counter the development of strong families."

Draft edit: "...social and economic trends that inhibit the development of strong families."

Explanation: This draft edit is intended to clarify the meaning of the sentence without changing the substantive meaning of it and so falls within the parameters of reconsideration.

Edit: Line 331-333

Original: "Family life also is supported when its members strive to meet reasonable expectations to forgive and to seek forgiveness and to bear each other's burdens responsibly."

These practices honor God and, when learned in the context of a loving and committed family, may lead to mature and healthy expressions of sexuality. When trust has been betrayed..."

Draft edit: Family life also is supported when its members strive to meet reasonable expectations to forgive and to seek forgiveness and to bear each other's burdens responsibly. When trust has been betrayed...

Explanation: This draft edit is intended to clarify the meaning of the paragraph without changing the substantive meaning of it and so falls within the parameters of reconsideration.



Edit: Lines 334-335 and footnote h

Original: "...forgiveness, loving correction, and reconciliation must be attempted."

Draft edit: ...forgiveness, loving correction, and reconciliation should be encouraged when appropriate to the specific situation.

Draft edit: Add footnote referencing the ELCA's social message on "Gender-based Violence" (2015)

Explanation: The authorization for reconsideration directs the church to consider "current church understanding" and "the diversity of family configurations." The draft edit here reflects current church understanding of the complexity of forgiveness

in situations of abuse. A footnote referring to the ELCA's social message on "Gender-based Violence," which discusses forgiveness, is included as a draft edit.

Edit: Lines 338-343

Original: "...historical teachings concerning sexuality has harmed individuals, deepened suffering, or torn families apart. This includes actions that abandon or shun people for unwed pregnancy or for a same-gender orientation. Hate crimes and violence against those who are regarded as sexually different sometimes have been perpetrated publicly in the name of Christ."

Draft edit: ...historical teachings concerning sex, gender, and sexual orientation has harmed individuals, deepened suffering, or torn families apart. This includes actions that abandon or shun people for unwed pregnancy or for sexual orientation. Hate crimes and violence based on the victim's actual or perceived sex, gender or sexuality sometimes have been perpetrated in the name of Christ.

Explanation: The authorization for reconsideration directs the church to consider "current church understanding." This draft edit reflects current church understanding as found in more recent social teachings (see the ELCA's social statement on Faith, Sexism, and Justice, 2019.)

Edit: Line 346 – footnote i

Footnote added: See *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, p. 2-5, 12-14.

Explanation: This draft edit would reflect the authorization to consider “current church understanding” without altering the meaning of the text.

Edit: Line 359 – footnote j

Footnote added: For more on domestic violence and gender-based violence, see *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, p. 76. See also “Gender-based Violence” (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015.)

Explanation: This draft edit would reflect the authorization to consider “current church understanding” without altering the meaning of the text.

Edit: Lines 365-366

Original: “...all who are dependent upon others in the family...”

Draft edit: “...all who are dependent upon others in the household...”

Explanation: This draft edit reflects the authorization’s direction to “consider references to diversity of family configurations” in this section.

Edit: Lines 375-376

Original: "...discernment about changing family configurations..."

Draft edit: ...discernment about diverse family configurations...

Explanation: This draft edit is intended to clarify the meaning of the sentence without changing the substantive meaning of it and so falls within the parameters of reconsideration.