



Frequently Asked Questions on the Reconsideration of Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust

Revised February 2026

Background

What is *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*?

Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust is a social statement of the ELCA that was adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly by a 2/3 vote of assembly members. An edited version of the social statement was adopted by the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. A social statement is a teaching and policy document that provides broad frameworks to assist in thinking about important social issues in the context of faith and life.

Why are elements of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* being reconsidered?

The 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly authorized two reconsiderations (Memorial C3 and Motion K) of the social statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust (www.elca.org/socialstatements), both by two-thirds majorities. The assembly did

not authorize a reconsideration of the whole statement or dictate a particular outcome. Both possible reconsiderations arise from legal and social changes since the adoption of Human Sexuality in 2009.

What was the first reconsideration?

The focus of Reconsideration #1 was editorial, which means the task force looked at minor, clarifying word changes only. As the authorization indicates, civil law governing same-sex marriages, public acceptance of such marriages, and diversity of family configurations have changed dramatically since 2009. Given these changes since 2009, the church completed a process of communal moral deliberation on proposed edits. This edited text was adopted by a more-than 2/3 majority at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and can be found at [ELCA.org/reconsiderations](https://elca.org/reconsiderations).

What is the second reconsideration?

The focus of Reconsideration #2 is substantive rather than editorial, examining the coexistence in the 2009 statement of four different but valid convictions that Lutherans can faithfully hold about same-gender relationships (the shorthand for this concept is “bound conscience”). Again, the authorization sets in motion a reconsideration of these ideas but does not determine the outcome. The outcome

must align with the main arguments of the 2009 statement and the process of reconsideration will follow standard ELCA procedure for churchwide discernment.

Where Are We Now?

What is happening in the process now?

Following the Churchwide Assembly's adoption of the edited text in 2025, the task force began work on the second reconsideration. The task force will provide study materials to congregations and synods in 2026. A draft text will be published for public comment in 2027.

Is the 2009 version of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* still an official social statement?

No. The 2025 text, adopted by the Churchwide Assembly, is the official social statement. The updated, official version can be found at resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/sexuality-2/.

Process and Protocol

What is “reconsideration”?

Reconsideration is the technical term for the process by which the ELCA can think again about specific elements in a social statement. Reconsideration is not a wholesale rejection of a previous social statement. Instead, this process allows the church to thoughtfully, prayerfully, and communally re-examine particular parts of a social teaching document.

What is the protocol for the reconsiderations?

ELCA social teaching and its development are governed by “Policies and Procedures of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for Addressing Social Concerns,” available at resources.elca.org/faith-and-society/policies-and-procedures/. The process begins with selection of a task force and follows the designated procedure through two cycles. Each cycle will end with possible proposals for a churchwide assembly to consider. The work is directed by Theological Ethics staff in the Office of the Presiding Bishop. Because all social statements are adopted by two-thirds vote, any changes also require two-thirds vote by a churchwide assembly. The entire social statement is not being reconsidered, only those sections specified by the 2022 assembly.

What are the steps in each reconsideration cycle?

There are five designated steps and a possible sixth. One task force will address both reconsiderations, one after the other.

- 1) In 2024 the ELCA Church Council appointed a single task force of 16 individuals chosen through a public application/nomination process. (Applications become available in late October 2023.) Task forces are composed of ELCA members intentionally chosen for the diversity of their viewpoints, gender, race/ethnicity, geography, age and other factors.
- 2) The task force has received and will receive presentations by specialists and continues to engage in study and conversation to probe the questions at hand.
- 3) For each reconsideration, the task force is required to provide a draft for public comment on any proposed wording changes and include a survey to collect public feedback.
- 4) Task force members review all public input, such as emails or survey responses to drafts, and then send a proposal to the ELCA Church Council.
- 5) The Church Council takes action on any proposal and forwards their recommended action to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly (Reconsideration #1) and to the 2028 Churchwide Assembly (Reconsideration #2) for action (two-thirds vote required).

A reconsideration cycle may include hearings, longer periods of discernment, or development of study resources if the task force considers any of these wise.

Will the task force gather comments and perspectives from across the church?

Yes! Members of the task force will review all emails and letters received and, as noted in step 3 above, there is a specific, extended public comment period based on a draft for each process.

Why will the process take so long?

ELCA protocol for reconsideration requires a period of approximately two years in order to permit ELCA-wide discernment that makes room for feedback from anyone who chooses to participate. Since there are two reconsiderations, the extended time is necessary to provide for the thorough study and ELCA-wide discussion. In addition, the work of the task force for reconsideration began while an existing task force was already developing the social statement on Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All, which was adopted by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

The Task Force

Does the task force represent a diversity of views?

Yes, task force members represent a wide diversity of backgrounds, contexts, and perspectives. The representation on the task force follows ELCA standards for

representation. While some task force members may choose to share information about themselves through their online bios, the ELCA will not share non-public information to protect their confidentiality.

How can I share my concerns, questions, suggestions, or perspective with the task force?

At any time during the process, you can email Reconsiderations@elca.org. Due to volume, not all emails will receive a response, but emails will be shared with members of the task force.

How will the task force share information with the church?

Updates about the task force's work will be posted to [ELCA.org/reconsiderations](https://elca.org/reconsiderations). In addition, the task force will regularly report to the ELCA Church Council.

Announcements about study resources, public comment periods, and other opportunities will be shared via standard forms of ELCA communication, such as social media posts and news releases.

What This Means...and What It Doesn't

Will the task force reconsider the whole 2009 social statement?

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly did not authorize a reconsideration of the whole social statement or dictate a particular outcome. The outcome must align with the main themes of the 2009 statement, and the process will follow standard ELCA procedure for churchwide discernment.

Will the task force propose new ministry policies for the ELCA?

The task force has not been authorized to propose changes to current ministry policies. The work of the task force is focused on the subsection of the social statement identified by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. ELCA social statements set forth ELCA teaching on issues of social ethics. As such, questions of the nature of ministry and ministry policy do not fall within the scope of social statements. Rather, the ELCA has policy documents to address and establish how this church understands ministry questions such as the nature of ecumenical relations, Word and Sacrament, or guidelines for who can serve as rostered ministers. Both ELCA social teaching and ministry policy are grounded in the scriptures and the Lutheran theological heritage and guided by practical reason. In this sense, ELCA social teaching provides the theological and ethical frameworks that govern how ministry policies are set forth.

Addendum: 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Actions

Wording of Reconsideration #1-- editorial (Memorial C3)

To authorize a social statement reconsideration to revise Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust (2009) so that its wording reflects current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples in accordance with “Policies and Procedures of the ELCA for Addressing Social Concerns” (2018). While references would be reviewed throughout the whole statement, the following sections are designated for reconsideration as described here: [reference may be found at www.elca.org/socialstatements]

- “Marriage: shelter and context for trust” p. 15. This would not reconsider the idea of marriage as shelter and context for trust but would consider the import that marriage legally is now a covenant between two individuals;
- “Lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships” p. 18f. Revision here would not change this church’s current understanding that recognizes four identified positions of bound conscience within its life. p. 19, but would review wording about “publicly accountable, lifelong monogamous same-sex

relationships” in light of public acceptance of marriage of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples;

- “Loving families: ground and source for social trust” p. 21f. Review here would consider references to diversity of family configurations; and

To authorize the Office of the Presiding Bishop and Church Council to approve the parameters and expense budget of this process and identify the revenue source(s) to provide for this revision to be considered as early as the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Wording of Reconsideration #2 – substantive (Motion K)

To authorize a possible revision of the social statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust which reconsiders the church’s current concept of the four positions of bound conscience. This revision would focus on pages 19-21 (“lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships”) and any other references to the four positions of bound conscience.