

ELCA Task Force on *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* Reconsiderations Information about Membership Commitment and Expectations

The Task

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 larger than two-thirds majorities. The assembly did not authorize a reconsideration of the whole statement or dictate a particular outcome. Both reconsiderations were requested because of legal and social changes since the adoption of *Human Sexuality* in 2009. The full text of the reconsiderations can be found [here](#). Social statements are the ELCA's primary documents to address significant social issues. They are intended to aid reflection and shape conscience and to set forth the ELCA's teaching and policy on the major social institutions and questions of contemporary life.

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. The task force will provide primary leadership for the process of reconsideration, considering the two reconsiderations in order, first one and then the other. In this, the task force will use an established process of widespread participation in theological and moral deliberation.

Individuals Sought

Members of the ELCA are sought who can bring a range and diversity of knowledge, insight, political perspective, lived experience, and competencies related to the topics of sexuality, human relationships, and conscience in contemporary church and society. Such individuals would include, but are not limited to, those familiar with Bible, government, law, politics, social sciences, human sexuality, advocacy, social action, social ministry, congregational life, and ethics. Interested individuals should complete an application form by January 31, 2024. The form can be accessed online or downloaded and mailed at <https://forms.office.com/r/bBCqtBdhzG>.

The Task Force

Approximately 15 individuals will be selected for a task force that reflects a balance of competencies and the various constituencies and multiple perspectives within the ELCA. The selection process will give attention to ELCA commitments to diversity regarding gender, sex, race, age, geography, ability, and other factors. Individuals are sought whose perspectives and personal styles are passionate and energetic, yet thoughtful and collaborative.

Membership Commitment in Brief

The task force will begin its work in late Spring 2024 and complete its work in January 2028. Task force membership requires attendance at meetings (typically, two a year) held at the Lutheran Center in Chicago. Between meetings, task force members will commit to being responsive to communications and available for consultation or conversation with the Theological Ethics staff of the ELCA churchwide organization. This assumes commitment between meetings to do assigned readings and willingness to provide leadership at selected events. Beyond this baseline of commitment, individual participation varies according to the phase of the task force's work and the particular competencies of individuals, such as writing skills.

Membership Commitment: Detailed

The ELCA holds high expectations for and grants significant trust to a task force that conducts the development of a social statement because it does this work on behalf of the whole denomination. The process comprises several phases during its existence, and each contributes significantly toward a faithful outcome:

- *Listening*: Listening occurs in ad hoc situations and at organized listening events at which church members have a chance to share their insights and concerns about the social statement's topic, the reconsideration process, and the focus of the reconsiderations. Task force members are expected to host at least one listening event.
- *Study*: This entails readings outside of meetings and engaging with presentations from specialists.
- *Resource production*: The task force may provide resources of various kinds if it deems that necessary.
- *Draft*: Task force members provide direction for the development of a proposal for the two reconsiderations and to provide leadership to generate feedback on the reconsiderations. Task force members are expected to attend/host at least two hearings, preferably more.
- *Proposed*: The proposed reconsideration is the final phase of task force work. Task force members offer direction for revisions to the draft based on feedback and then sign off, sending the revised draft to the Conference of Bishops and Church Council for review and further action.

Potential members of the task force must be prepared to devote significant time and energy toward the tasks with which they might be entrusted. Over the course of the task force's life, membership commitment entails:

- Attendance and contribution at each of 7 or 8 face-to-face task force meetings. (Typically, there are two per year. Other meetings are held virtually.)
- Leadership in the various feedback activities such as hearings on the drafts.
- Reading in advance of each meeting—such preparation includes articles or essays and stakeholder response forms and reports (following the draft comment period, for instance).
- Other leadership tasks as opportunities present themselves.