



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) met at the Lutheran Center, Chicago, Illinois, November 12-15, 2015. The council centered its work around daily worship, frequent prayer and personal reflections on faith.

The action of the Church Council in reference to the Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group Report and Recommendations is as follows:

To receive the report with gratitude and refer the recommendations of the Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group to the appropriate churchwide organization units for implementation and to report back to the Church Council by the November 2016 meeting.

**Report and Recommendations of Ministry to and with
Same-Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group (M2SGF)**

Preface

Charged with the task to bring a report and set of recommendations, the ELCA Working Group on Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families has spent time each meeting with Paul's words to the Philippians in 1:27-2:10. (See inset for partial quote.) We repeatedly have pondered their meaning for us and our church as it lives in this time of ongoing discernment regarding how to look upon publically accountable life-long, monogamous same-gender relationships. Again and again we have been challenged by Paul's words as we consider our church's diversity of convictions and of pastoral practices. We have sought to let the mind of Christ guide us through deep differences with a humility that looks not to our own interests but to the interests of one another and this whole church.

While we have inevitably examined the range of conviction sets around our meeting table, we have not revisited questions about theologies of marriage or sexual orientation. We have not focused on questions about the legitimacy of ordination or performing same-gender marriage. This was not our charge; rather, we have investigated and labored, probed and focused on how our church could do ministry well within the diversity of convictions that are evident within most congregations and synods.

Our work led us to full consensus and is presented here in:

- I. A report divided into two parts that describes our efforts and provides the background leading to nine recommendations.
- II. A set of recommendations presented with accompanying explanations focused on pastoral responsibility for ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families.
- III. A set of appendices containing documents or links relevant to the report and recommendations.

I. Report

Part A: Why we were called together and what we did

1) The background and context for the formation of the Working Group

The 13th Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), meeting in August of 2013, responded to formal requests 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

Philippians 2:1-5

¹If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,...

recommendation regarding ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families. These official actions occurred in a context created by decisions from 2009 that, in turn, resulted from conflict and a *de facto* ELCA-wide discernment that began long before 2009.

As indicated in the ELCA social statement "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," (HS:GT) over the last several decades this church began to understand and experience in new ways the needs of those in same-gender relationships who seek lifelong companionship and commitment and sincerely desire the support of other Christians for living faithfully in all aspects of their lives. (HS:GT, p. 18) The new challenges to long-held understandings regarding homosexuality led many to consider again the meaning and application of Scripture as well as the Lutheran theological heritage. The decades-long discussions revisited what medicine and science were learning and raised questions about corresponding public law and policy. To state the obvious, the social and churchwide conversation was extensive and often heatedly contested, but it did not resolve differing and deeply held convictions. While an old consensus deteriorated and many views shifted, a new consensus had not emerged.

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 conflicting conscience-bound practices. The statement did not recognize all possible convictions or practices 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 "this church, on the basis of 'the bound conscience,' 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)

While the social statement did not require official change in ELCA ministry policy, the subsequent ministry policy resolutions adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly (see Appendix A) did create a new "structured flexibility." 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 that 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.

Multiple consequences flowed in mixed and ever-changing measures for the life of the ELCA as a result of the adoption of the social statement and the ministry policy resolutions. There has been 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 of 2015.

While many observations could be made about the ELCA experience since 2009, three in particular are relevant to this report.

- 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 from us the confident and daring faith Martin Luther described, a faith empowered by God to trust that such diversity can be held within one body.
- 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 all conviction sets in the ELCA.

The 2013 Churchwide Assembly assumed this context and urged the attention to ministry with same-gender couples and their families by adoption of Resolution CA13.03.12, which had been brought by memorials from over a dozen synods. The assembly resolution, by a formidable vote percentage, called for action (see Appendix B). In November of that year, the ELCA Church Council directed the formation of a working group to bring a report and recommendations.

2) Who was the Working Group?

The ELCA Working Group on Ministry to and with Same-gender Couples and Their Families met for the first time in June of 2014. The membership (bios are available in Appendix C) were constituted according to ELCA commitments to diversity of race and gender and reflected a variety of competencies and life experience. It is notable that this Working Group was the first ELCA working group intentionally created to bring the range of four conviction sets (from "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust") into extended conversation.¹

The Working Group devoted its initial attention to building relationships among members and crafting its charter both as a guide for its work and as a benchmark for accountability. The charter was affirmed by the Church Council in November of 2014 (see Appendix D), and it sustained the intent of the Churchwide Assembly and the Church Council action by:

- shifting the completion date to fall of 2015 as a realistic timeframe;
- focusing its investigation on ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families;
- committing each member to honor and respect others around the table whose understandings of pastoral responsibility to same-gender couples and their families are guided by differing convictions;
- calling for assessment of the general situation and needs in the church; and
- anticipating the development of specific recommendations to foster conversation and sharing of resources throughout this church in regards to practical ministry concerns.

¹ The composition of the ELCA Task Force for Studies on Sexuality (2002-2009) intentionally included a diversity of perspectives on homosexuality but was not, obviously, guided by a description of conviction sets. The 2014 working group membership did not include any individuals who had served on the task force, with the exception of one churchwide organization staff member.

3) What did the Working Group do and how did it operate?

While each of its four face-to-face meetings and its several conference calls included different tasks, the Working Group centered each meeting with worship, repeated exercises of Dwelling in the Word that reflected on Philippians 1:27-2:11, relationship building and common prayer. The group spent time reflecting on what it means to disagree well and committed itself to using communal discernment practices, including a modified consensus model for reaching decisions.²

The first meeting led members through presentations and exercises to understand the scope and nature of the task, grasp the ELCA history and context, craft a charter, assess what questions to ask and to develop a relationship of trust and respect among members of the working group. Subsequent meetings returned at times to similar concerns but were dedicated largely to receiving information from panels and reports. The last two meetings as well as several conference phone calls were devoted to discussion of possible recommendations and to frank discussion about what would be most beneficial and appropriate for the ELCA. Through its tenure, the Working Group gradually achieved consensus for the content of its report, recommendations and appendices.

During its tenure, the group or its teams exercised several forms of information gathering, including:

- an online public survey, which was available for six weeks in the fall and early winter of 2014 (see Appendix E);
- a request that the Conference of Bishops explicitly discuss these issues and share a report of that conversation (accomplished in March of 2014);
- a series of panels about pastoral ministry with reflections from a spectrum of conviction sets;
- reports from representatives of ecumenical partners;
- the compilation of ministry resources from various conviction sets (see Appendix F);
- a clergy focus group in April 2015;
- the discussion of emails and letters and conversations communicated to members of the Working Group;
- a review of the Working Group's draft recommendations by the Conference of Bishops and members of the Program and Services committee of the Church Council and executives in the churchwide organization.

Working Group liaisons provided periodic reports to the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops during its existence.

Part B: What we learned

1) What we learned about ourselves and about the challenges of being in conversation with others of differing convictions.

The Working Group was convened in accord with a range of convictions and with ELCA commitments regarding diversity. At the first meeting our conversation included what we each felt about the task assigned, reflecting both a sense of responsibility and significant apprehension. Many of us honestly wondered aloud how it would be possible to agree on recommendations, and all felt challenged by

² The importance of communal discernment approaches has been encouraged by many in the ELCA for some time, including by the L.I.F.T. report in 2011. What "communal discernment" means within the ELCA can best be understood from the findings of the Communal Discernment Task Force. See Appendix K.

Paul's admonition to be "in full accord and of one mind." Nevertheless, we each made a commitment to seek a way of being church together that looked "not to your own interests, but to the interests of others."

As noted previously, we committed to:

- "Dwelling in the Word" together repeatedly at each meeting (see Appendix G);
- be prayer partners with those of alternative convictions;
- commune together each meeting;
- hold to agreed ground rules for conversation; and
- learn and practice processes of communal discernment.³

We were honest throughout our time together about our differing convictions and why they mattered personally and theologically, but as a group, we sought to listen and to care for each other first. The question was often asked, what is it that we can learn from each other despite our different convictions? The reminder was continually lifted up that Christian unity is a gift of our baptism not a result of being in complete agreement.

But it was hard! We continually struggled with the challenge to get beyond our personal, implicit sense that "my beliefs are right and righteous." Such deeply held convictions, after all, arise from what one is taught early and/or emerges from one's understanding of the Scriptures, the gospel, the Lutheran Confessions, analysis of the issues, and personal experiences. Deeply held beliefs inform even one's very sense of self. We held no expectation during this process that others should abandon convictions, but we came to recognize how snap judgments accompanied our convictions and shaped even the way we heard each other. When one believes "the gospel supports my beliefs," it is hard to step back and try to learn from someone who disagrees.

We also learned both that words themselves can have many layers of meaning and that it was easy to talk past one another without even realizing it, despite best intentions. Within discussions, there sometimes were perceptions among some that not all positions were respected. In addition, we realized early on that members brought competing expectations and emphases to the common task. We also came to realize that we were trying to manage multiple visions about what it means to be the ELCA today and about the nature of faithful witness.

We name these specific struggles in order to be honest and to acknowledge the reality that other conversation groups in our church also may experience. Yet, through these struggles, we discovered again how much the Spirit can accomplish in and through us. We saw the Spirit lead to powerful expressions of care for one another and open unexpected ways forward. We experienced the Spirit at work in developing trust among us and in bringing convergence. We discovered anew that God can bring insight and consensus through struggles by empowering us to stick to the task with forgiveness and prayer. We also discovered that, in spite of our differences, we were able to come together on a wide range of ministry issues.

Our work together reinforced the effectiveness of communal discernment as an open and faithful approach in which active listening comes before seeking to establish one's turf or position. In doing so,

³ See footnote 2 for reference information.

we came to recognize that some differences were largely a matter of distinctive emphasis or language rather than genuine contradiction. We discovered that we agreed on some substantial matters. We learned to appreciate each other's deep concern for faithful witness and ministry and for our church's future despite our different theologies of marriage. It also became clear that there are some legitimate boundaries to draw regarding what is and is not wise and caring ministry. Most importantly, we discovered in greater depth and richness the bonds that unite us to each other because we trust we have been justified by grace and not by works or moral beliefs.

Through our struggles and striving together, we also have come, sometimes hesitantly, to appreciate both the challenge presented by and the wisdom of "Human Sexuality: Gift & Trust;" it is an approach that encourages living together as a church in a time of continued discernment and rapid social change. Despite whatever the document's shortcomings may be, it encourages all of us to respect each other and to remain in dialogue. It assumes God-given mission and communion is at least as important as any differences among us and calls all to ministry to and with same-gender couples and families. It emphasizes welcome, care and support within the boundaries and context of a range of varied convictions and sets the stage for some level of diversity of pastoral care within the ELCA.

Through these struggles and gifts, we came to appreciate and understand each other better and came to understand more deeply what it means to be attentive to each other's concerns while living as a church with the four conviction sets.

2) Important things we learned or recognized about the situation in the ELCA and the U.S.

(For more on the following items, see Appendix E.)

- a. Within the ELCA, multi-layered and deep differences remain that are closely tied to varied interpretations of the Scriptures, Lutheran Confessions, social analysis, scientific findings, and personal experiences. These inform what is viewed as appropriate pastoral care. "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" establishes the teaching of this church, and some regard it highly. Others do not. Others have avoided reading or discussing it because of the controversy and conflict it has caused, or may cause, within the church. As a result, many members do not understand what the document teaches in general and misunderstand specifically what it states about homosexuality and the conviction sets.

- b. Across our church it often is not widely understood that the range of convictions identified in the social statement (see Appendix H) do not legitimize *all* convictions or ministry practices. For instance, some in this church believe and preach that the Bible condemns "practicing homosexuals" as "abominations" (as an extrapolation of Leviticus 18:22). Others in this church believe that same-gender relationships should not be held to the highest legal accountability available. These positions and some others fall outside the four conviction sets and are not supported by the social statement. These two examples demonstrate the need for continual discussion regarding the teaching parameters in the document. Further, it is important to recognize that conscience-bound belief applies only to individuals; congregations do not have a conscience. (Congregations, however, have the authority to adopt policy – e.g., whether to allow same-gender marriages in the sanctuary – based on a prevailing conviction, preferably after a period of communal discernment.) In addition, the social statement's four conviction sets attempt to describe and do not prescribe belief to individual members of the ELCA.

- c. Several factors in the contemporary social situation create new urgency and, sometimes, tensions for our church. First, there is a widespread sense that many in our congregations do not wish to or do not feel safe in having conversations about ministry to same-gender couples and their families. There often is an assumption that most, if not all, in a congregation believe the same thing. In actual fact, the beliefs and practices among church members appear to be more varied than often recognized. Second, there is a growing recognition that same-gender couples and their families are found in a surprising number of congregations regardless of geographic and social location. Finally, the Supreme Court decision of June 26, 2015, (*Obergefell v. Hodges* 576 U.S.) has unmistakably changed how ministry will occur throughout the U.S. This constellation of social factors opens need and possibilities for our church at this time to equip and encourage safe conversation and to provide some needed resources.
- d. It is counter-cultural in this current social climate of polarization and partisan loyalties to heed Paul's approach that we must bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2) as we engage in an ongoing "discernment about ethics and church practice, [where] faithful people can and will come to different conclusions." (HS:GT, p. 19) There are those who have experienced intolerance or condemnation. Some who identify generally with conviction sets #1 and #2 have heard forms of the pointed question, "If you don't agree with what was passed in 2009, why are you still here?" The suspicion is that they are simply being tolerated because the majority in conviction sets #3 and #4 *know* they are correct. Some who identify generally with conviction sets #3 and #4 have heard that they are not truly "faithful" because those in conviction sets #1 and #2 *know* they are the only ones being true to Scripture and the confessions. The unfortunate result is a weakened church and ministry, and it is clear that this situation will not be reconciled quickly. However, good faith efforts toward safe and respectful conversations *about ministry practice* are a critical place to begin.
- Martin Luther, 1535 Lectures on Galatians: "To love does not mean, as the sophists imagine, to wish someone else well, but to bear someone else's burdens, that is, to bear what is burdensome to you and what you would rather not bear. ... Love is sweet, kind, and patient—not in receiving but in performing; for it is obliged to overlook many things and to bear with them. In the church faithful pastors see many errors and sins which they are obliged to bear."
- e. Finally, we as a church have occasion to recognize and celebrate that conversations and discernment about ministry across convictions have been and are happening in some congregations and ministry sites throughout the ELCA. Those examples can provide resources and insights on best practices that should be shared.

3) What we learned about conversations and disagreeing well.

(For more about these items, see Appendices J and I.)

Much of what we learned about conversations and disagreeing well has already been expressed above. Several key points about constructive practices bear identification here.

- a. It is important to establish covenant guides and have agreement on them for conversation. Several sources for these guides are available in appendix J.
- b. The purpose of conversations must be clear. The conversations we commend are not about changing others' convictions or others' self-identification, but rather focusing on ministry to and

with same-gender couples and their families. Such conversations will require taking time to seek understanding of differences, but the point is seeking practical ministry outcomes.

- c. To create an environment for safe conversation and to disagree well within that environment require effort and commitment that are theologically grounded as well as practically applied.

(For a fuller reflection on disagreeing well, see Appendix I.)

Aspects of an environment for safe conversation include:

- fundamental respect for the other person as a redeemed child of God despite differing convictions; and
- explicit rejection of verbal condemnation or marginalization because of differing convictions.

- d. Aspects of disagreeing well within this safe environment include:

- Fairness. I am disagreeing well when I can state the position of the person I am disputing with accurately enough that the other person recognizes that position as genuinely his/her position.
- Intellectual integrity. I am disagreeing well when I can state the strongest, most compelling argument *against* my position. In other words, I am disagreeing well when I can recognize and acknowledge where my own position is most vulnerable and where a contrasting position makes valid points.
- Honest humility. I am disagreeing well when, after thinking through my position and expressing it with true conviction, I acknowledge that as a fallen, flawed human being I may be wrong.

4) What we learned or recognized about ministry resources.

- a. The Working Group affirms the belief, widely held, that people are the most important "resource" in this church's life. In terms of "people resources" our church is blessed with many leaders from differing convictions, rostered and non-rostered, who have gifts. These gifts include abilities to lead safe and respectful conversations, to assess ministry needs astutely, and to imagine and implement wise and caring ministry practice. In terms of people "resources," it is also the case that leaders, rostered and non-rostered, may find themselves in situations where their personal convictions differ markedly from the needs or the convictions of a couple and the family that seek pastoral care. As a result, it is critical at this time in the church to re-emphasize the idea that rostered leaders may best provide pastoral care by referring a particular ministry situation to a colleague. It appears that this often may require that the synod office be ready to facilitate appropriate reference, including the possibility of referring to full communion partners.
- b. We have discovered that useful, written resources appear to be of two types:
- 1) The first has to do with how to start safe, respectful and constructive conversations about effective ministry in the context of diverse convictions, for instance within a congregation.
 - 2) The second type concerns trustworthy resources for pastoral ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families, such as the bullying of children of same-gender parents. While many of these needs are generic to all families, at this time of social transition some resources sensitive to the special situation of same-gender families would be useful but are rare.
- c. The findings assessed by the Working Group specifically include requests for liturgical resources. The decisions of 2009 left to the local congregation or ministry site the task of finding liturgies of

prayer and support consistent with a prevailing conviction set. The Working Group confronted several difficult and controversial quandaries on this matter. Among these quandaries, the most vexing is the dilemma regarding the call for marriage liturgies specifically for same-gender couples or for heterosexual couples who wish to affirm they are supportive of same-gender marriage in principle. On that question there are mutually exclusive perspectives that both offer compelling claims to be the perspective most true to the ELCA. (For more details, see the preface in [Recommendation 9.](#))

- d. Two other aspects should be noted regarding the availability of useful ministry resources, liturgical or otherwise:
 - 1) There is a lack of easy access to trustworthy resources. It can be difficult to find or assess resources that are sourced by, or are at least compatible with, Lutheran theology.
 - 2) In particular, there are few ministry resources of any kind that reflect conviction sets #1-#3 and are sourced by Lutheran theological commitments. That is, there are few Lutheran resources for convictions that do not accept or do not equate publically accountable, lifelong monogamous same-gender relationships with marriage.
- e. The Working Group has determined that additional ministry resources are needed. The situation is ripe for knowledgeable and skilled rostered and lay leaders to create, or to share resources they have created. Further, there is a need for availability and increased awareness of such practical ministry resources. (For a list of resources compiled by the Working Group, see Appendix F.)

Conclusion

Arising from what we have learned about the power of the Spirit, about ourselves, about the contemporary situation, about conversation, and about resources, we have proposed nine recommendations. As a Working Group, we have sought to be faithful to our charter and have full consensus on this report and each of these recommendations as a faithful rendering of our work. The nine recommendations may not represent what any one of us individually would personally hope for, but we offer them--in some cases with fear and trembling--out of our best understanding about what is balanced, needed and useful at this time for our church's ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families. Each recommendation, found in bold, is preceded by a preface that provides context and is followed by an explanation that provides reasoning. We share these with a fervent prayer that what we have learned and recommended will further ministry within the body of Christ.

George Watson, Chair
Tempie Beaman
Christine Blice-Baum
Mary Froiland
Aaron Fuller
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Erma Wolf
Carol Yeager

A sign-off means that each working group member attaches her or his name to this document in general support of it as the report and the recommendations achieved in this Working Group. Each member believes this text represents a faithful rendering of the work both to hear and to lead the church on this matter. Each member considers this to be a strong text even though it is not a perfect one or a text each one agrees with in every detail.

II Recommendations

A. General recommendations

1 **Recommendation 1**

2 *Preface*

3 The Working Group on Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families
4 believes that the differing and deeply held convictions about homosexuality and about the
5 appropriateness of the 2009 decisions remain significant and multi-layered within the
6 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). At the same time, same-gender couples and
7 their families are increasingly present throughout our church with needs and gifts for
8 ministry. Therefore, the Working Group believes this first recommendation should set the
9 tone for the ELCA as a precondition to the other recommendations. Moreover, it should be
10 noted that all these recommendations assume the range of four conviction sets as
11 recognized in "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (HS:GT, see Appendix H, pp. 21-22) and no
12 recommendation here is intended to revisit the decisions of 2009.

13
14 **The Working Group recommends that ELCA congregations re-familiarize themselves with the
15 ELCA's social statement "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" and Ministry Policy Resolutions (MPR),
16 both adopted at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. These documents emphasize ministry to and
17 with same-gender individuals, couples and families while placing this welcome, care for, and
18 support within the boundaries and context of a range of varied convictions. This context sets the
19 stage for some diversity of pastoral care within the ELCA congregations and other ministry sites.**

20
21 *Explanation*

22 "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" builds on other churchwide assembly actions over the
23 years to convey the ELCA's opposition to "all forms of verbal or physical harassment and
24 assault based on sexual orientation" and calls upon "congregations and members to
25 welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to advocate for
26 their legal protection." (HS:GT, p. 19) It describes and recognizes as boundary setting a
27 range of four convictions that is open to some variation in ministry practice while the
28 Ministry Policy Resolutions of 2009 commits the ELCA to find "ways to allow congregations
29 that choose to do so to recognize, support, and hold publicly accountable life-long,
30 monogamous, same-gender relationships." (see Appendix A, resolution 2) It is important at
31 this time for ELCA leaders and congregations to understand and to promote the emphasis
32 on ministry expressed in these documents. The purpose in this familiarization is not to
33 revisit the question of the differing conviction sets recognized in the social statement but,
34 acknowledging those convictions, to support and encourage ministry by all. Ministry begins
35 with receiving the couple and their family as they are in the integrity of their relationship so
36 as not to undermine it. Our church respects and honors that differing convictions may be
37 held by the members and leaders in a ministry setting.

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Recommendation 2

Preface

It has become clear to the Working Group that the range of convictions regarding same-gender relationships as recognized in "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" and the Ministry Policy Resolutions of 2009 may challenge the practice of ministry in ways that sometimes are distinctive from other situations of pastoral care. Both the varied ministry needs of each couple and family in particular contexts of each congregation or ministry setting and the diversity recognized in the social statement mean it is important in our church to utilize pastoral referral as a widespread practice.

The Working Group recommends that members and leaders throughout this church provide pastoral care to couples and families by referral when personal convictions and ministry needs are dissimilar (including the possible referral to full communion partners).

Explanation

Pastors and other rostered leaders often seek to follow Paul in trying to "be all things to all people," and there is an understandable reluctance to refer pastoral needs, such as a request for counseling or for a particular liturgical practice. The pastoral care of this church, however, does not rest entirely on any one individual or any one congregation but flows from its participation in the whole body of Christ. In light of this church's acceptance of a range of convictions and the reality of varied needs, it is important to re-emphasize the idea that rostered leaders are to provide *or* to provide *for* pastoral care that is appropriate to a couple or family. Providing for pastoral care may well require referral and should be encouraged as an acceptable pastoral exercise, including possible referral to full communion partners. This practice will be appropriate especially when personal convictions or congregational decisions are not in agreement with the needs or the convictions of the couple and the family in question (see also [Recommendation 6](#) and [Recommendation 8](#)).

B. Regarding conversations

Recommendation 3

Preface

In keeping with our call to be prepared to do ministry together, the Working Group lifts up the importance of communal discernment among members of this church.

The Working Group strongly encourages congregations and other ministry sites to engage in and/or continue conversations regarding ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families. Such life-giving conversations need to emphasize the theological commitments about the basis of our unity in the gospel alone, the avoidance of labels and stereotypes about those in differing conviction sets, and persistence in the spirit of love.

82 *Explanation*

83 Some congregations within the ELCA have been or continue to be engaged in constructive
84 conversations regarding ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families. Some
85 congregational conversations begin only when leaders are approached by a same-gender
86 couple and/or family seeking a faith home, often inquiring about a wedding at the
87 congregation and/or the parish pastor or seeking the baptism of members of the family.
88 The Working Group strongly encourages that conversations be undertaken before an
89 immediate decision must be made, since these are necessarily more stressful for all
90 involved and likely to be less beneficial than those entered into with time for prayer,
91 preparation and discernment.

92

93 **Recommendation 4**

94 *Preface*

95 The Working Group believes that a key condition for strengthened ministry to and with
96 same-gender couples and their families involves reflection and discernment within this
97 church that is focused on ministry practice. Such reflection and practice are, however,
98 complicated by the challenge of living as a church with a range of diverse yet deeply held
99 convictions as well as by the limitations of time and capacity for discernment within
100 congregations or other ministry settings. While the ultimate goal is a church that employs
101 widespread communal discernment (see Appendix K), the emphasis at this time most
102 usefully will be on conversations among trusted colleagues focused on the practice of
103 ministry.

104

105 **The Working Group recommends that the ELCA emphasize and seek to equip respectful**
106 **conversations among trusted colleague groups of rostered leaders that focus on the exercise of**
107 **practical ministry, particularly with same-gender couples and their families. It is expected that**
108 **these conversations will respectfully recognize the existing diversity of convictions as well as the**
109 **diversity of needs and gifts of same-gender couples and their families.**

110

111 *Explanation*

112 This recommendation does not seek to specify how ministry-focused conversations should
113 be structured but envisions that trusted groupings of rostered leaders provide the key
114 forum at this time. It encourages cross-conviction conversation in a spirit of respect that
115 fosters mutual support and the cross fertilization of practical ideas. Such conversations
116 might occur in conference meetings, text study groups, closed social media groups,
117 synodical gatherings or in many other venues. This recommendation invites synodical
118 leadership to encourage, foster and equip such conversations. While the emphasis here is
119 conversations among rostered leaders, such conversations should in time aid and enable
120 additional and constructive congregational conversation about ministry.

121

122

123

124

125 **Recommendation 5**

126 *Preface*

127 Consistent with the emphasis on increasing rostered leaders' capacity as indicated in
128 [Recommendation 4](#), the Working Group believes that first-call education offers an
129 indispensable venue for explicit and dedicated attention to these ministry concerns.

130

131 **The Working Group urges those responsible for First Call Theological Education as quickly as**
132 **feasible to find ways to create modules about ministry to and with same-gender couples and their**
133 **families as part of curriculum development. These modules should recognize the range of**
134 **accepted convictions identified in "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" while exploring concepts and**
135 **approaches for pastoral ministry that also are sensitive to the diversity of needs and gifts of same-**
136 **gender couples and their families.**

137

138 *Explanation*

139 While [Recommendation 4](#) encourages conversation and capacity-building among all
140 rostered leaders, First Call Theological Education appears to be an indispensable place for
141 education sensitive to cross-conviction conversation with a focus on ministry practice and
142 public witness. First-call education involves a large segment of this church's emerging
143 leaders and many of them experience some challenge in ministering among diverse
144 convictions and with same-gender individuals. This challenge is widespread since within
145 each ministry setting all four convictions may be present to some extent. First-call
146 education modules dedicated to these concerns would greatly enhance the overall capacity
147 of the ELCA's rostered leadership for providing appropriate and compassionate pastoral
148 care.

149

C. Regarding resources

150 **Recommendation 6**

151 *Preface*

152 It has become clear to the Working Group that rostered and lay leaders need a readily
153 available place to turn to for identifying "people resources" who can aid ministry to and
154 with same-gender couples and their families, especially in light of the emphasis on referral,
155 as suggested in [Recommendation 2](#).

156

157 **The Working Group urges synodical bishops and their offices during this next year to review the**
158 **ways they are prepared to serve as a clearing house for referral or requests for resources related**
159 **to ministry questions.**

160

161 *Explanation*

162 Synod offices naturally function as a center for referral and resources of many kinds. Many
163 synod offices already informally aid church leaders who are seeking help on the issues at
164 stake here, but this recommendation urges explicit attention within each ELCA synod office
165 as to the "who and how." Examples include, but are not limited to, identifying
166 congregations where same-gender marriages may be conducted, where intentional ministry

167 to same-gender couples occurs, and local individuals who have a track record for facilitating
168 safe and respectful conversations across convictions. There are multiple ways for managing
169 this kind of information, but the goal is to establish and convey the means for rostered
170 leaders to seek help with referral and other “people resources.”

171
172 **Recommendation 7**

173 *Preface*

174 The Working Group identified some practical resources that facilitate safe conversations
175 about controversial issues – including existing ELCA resources (see Appendix F). However, it
176 heard a desire for guidance on how to start conversations in the context of the distinctive
177 issues arising in ministry to and with same-gender families. Recognizing that in many
178 ministry settings all four convictions may be present, it believes a new resource would be
179 useful.

180
181 **The Working Group urges the churchwide organization to identify or prepare constructive**
182 **conversation resources attentive to the particular challenges of multiple convictions regarding**
183 **ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families and to provide these on the ELCA**
184 **website.**

185
186 *Explanation*

187 In many congregations or ministry settings some questions about ministry options would
188 benefit from a trustworthy resource that would guide conversation and discernment. This
189 resource could help explain to a congregation council, for instance, the ELCA’s stance of
190 recognizing an identified range of convictions and provide guidance for holding constructive
191 conversations based on principles about how to disagree well (see [Report Part B, 3c](#) and
192 Appendix I). The availability on the ELCA website of an identified or prepared resource of
193 this kind would provide leaders with a trustworthy guide. Resources published or lifted up
194 by full communion partners should also be considered.

195
196 **Recommendation 8**

197 *Preface*

198 Many in this church of varied convictions need access to trustworthy resources for pastoral
199 ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families, for example, regarding
200 bullying of children or marital counseling. Many of these needs are generic to all families,
201 but at this time, some resources would be useful that are sensitive to the special situation
202 of same-gender families. The Working Group has identified two: a) The need for additional
203 resources, especially among conviction sets 1-3 (as numbered in "Human Sexuality: Gift and
204 Trust"), that are dedicated or adaptable to the interests of same-gender couples and their
205 families; and b) the need for a database containing trustworthy resources.

206
207 **The Working Group encourages rostered and lay leaders to seek increased awareness of existing**
208 **practical ministry resources or to contribute to the development of additional resources. It is**
209 **important to keep in mind that so-called reparative therapy or similar practices fall outside the**

210 **scope of recognized convictions in "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust." ELCA members are**
211 **encouraged to consult the list of resources compiled by the Working Group, found in Appendix F.**
212 **Consultation with full communion partners may also be appropriate.**
213

214 *Explanation*

215 The churchwide organization does not have staff capacity for developing extensive
216 specialized resources, and most members in our church rely on sources from many other
217 places. This recommendation, then, does not direct the development of new Churchwide
218 Office generated resources but encourages knowledgeable individuals and organizations to
219 continue to provide resources as consistent with "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust." Pastors
220 and others doing ministry, likewise, are encouraged to draw on contemporary medical and
221 psychological knowledge as they seek to provide care.
222

223 Some in our church, however, indicate the need for a reliable starting place for finding
224 trustworthy print and online resources. Some resources have already been identified by the
225 Working Group as part of their investigation and are listed in Appendix F and this
226 recommendation intends that those will be kept available as part of its report for a two-year
227 period. The site should make it clear that this collection of resource links is not created by,
228 endorsed or authorized by the ELCA, nor is it comprehensive. The Working Group's list of
229 resources will likely grow dated within a two-year time frame and should then be taken
230 down.
231

232 **Recommendation 9**

233 *Preface*

234 The Working Group confronted several difficult and controversial quandaries regarding
235 whether or how to provide liturgical resources attuned specifically to the situation of same-
236 gender couples and their families. Among these quandaries, the most vexing is the
237 dilemma we encountered when considering a recommendation regarding liturgical
238 resources appropriate for same-gender couples** that could be used within the marriage
239 service. On that question there are mutually exclusive perspectives that both offer
240 compelling claims to be the perspective most true to the ELCA.
241

242 In trying to present fairly what we are hearing, here is a representative sample of
243 statements that call for providing or creating liturgical resources:

- 244 ➤ The ELCA social teaching document "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (see Appendix
245 H) commits the ELCA to a single conviction regarding same-gender couples and their
246 families, namely, acceptance, appreciation, and care for our sisters and brothers in
247 same-gender relationships and their families. And further, such acceptance,
248 appreciation, and care can be expressed only in the creation of a Lutheran liturgy for

** These liturgical resources also are sought by some heterosexual couples who wish to affirm they are supportive of same-gender marriage in principle.

- 249 same-gender marriage, which would symbolize the equal standing in the ELCA of
250 same-gender marriages and heterosexual marriages.
- 251 ➤ The Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) marriage liturgy reflects a theology of
252 marriage that assumes a male and female union. Therefore, the ELW marriage
253 liturgy cannot serve as an adequate platform for a same-gender marriage liturgy.
 - 254 ➤ ELCA pastors who are performing same-gender marriage services are asking for an
255 ELCA marriage liturgy. Creating or providing this liturgy would assist pastors in
256 providing ministry to same-gender couples.
 - 257 ➤ "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" supports those in the ELCA who conclude that
258 marriage is the appropriate term to use in describing benefits, protection and
259 support for same-gender couples entering into lifelong, monogamous relationships.
260 This is true even though it recognizes that the historic Christian tradition and the
261 Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a
262 woman.
 - 263 ➤ Some of our ELCA members have remained in the ELCA because of assurances that
264 the language in "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" was flexible enough to allow for
265 same-gender marriages in states where it was legal and that such relationships
266 would be honored and respected and held to the same standards as different-
267 gender marriages.

- 268
- 269 In trying to present fairly what we are hearing, here is a representative sample of
270 statements that call for *not* providing or creating liturgical resources:
- 271 ➤ The ELCA social teaching document "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (see Appendix
272 H) reserves the term "marriage" for heterosexual unions. If offices or units of the
273 ELCA were to create or to recommend a liturgy specifically geared to same-gender
274 marriage, they would be acting outside of the parameters of our social teaching
275 document. That document carefully avoided identifying lifelong, monogamous
276 committed same-gender relationships with heterosexual marriage, even though it
277 notes that there are those in the ELCA who conclude that marriage is the
278 appropriate term to use in describing benefits, protection and support for same-
279 gender couples entering into lifelong, monogamous relationships.
 - 280 ➤ The ELCA has a marriage liturgy that was commended for use by the ELCA Church
281 Council and received by an ELCA Churchwide Assembly. A new marriage liturgy
282 should have comparable commendation and reception.
 - 283 ➤ Some of our members have remained in the ELCA because they were assured that
284 our church would not use the word "marriage" for same-gender relationships and
285 would not create any new marriage liturgy; they would see a liturgical resource
286 appropriate for same-gender marriage as a betrayal of the promise to them.

287

288 In trying to present fairly what we are hearing, the dilemma can be expressed further in this
289 way. On the one hand, if the church does not provide liturgical resources for a same-gender
290 marriage service, it fosters the use of ill-conceived, unevangelical liturgies in our

291 congregations, which in turn can have an unfortunate effect on the faith of our people in
292 long-lasting ways. On the other hand, to use the word “marriage” for same-gender
293 relationships differs from the Lutheran Confessions, to which our constitution pledges our
294 church’s faithfulness. In short, the church *ought* to identify or provide resources so as to be
295 true to pastoral care realities of our context *and*, at the same time, the church *ought not*
296 identify or provide liturgical resources, so as to remain true to the church’s constitutional
297 and confessional commitment.

298
299 The Working Group concludes that there is no single solution to this dilemma that will serve
300 ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families to the satisfaction of everyone
301 concerned about this ministry and the full life of the ELCA. With consensus, we recommend
302 the following with fear and trembling before God, proceeding humbly, and asking
303 forgiveness for our shortcomings.

304
305 **In light of the dilemma presented in the above preface and with a commitment to**
306 **continue to live in the tension presented therein, the Working Group recommends that**
307 **the Office of the Presiding Bishop take lead responsibility for identifying or preparing a**
308 **small collection of supplemental liturgical resources for pastoral use that includes:**

- 309 • **A collection of prayers and words of support to welcome a married same-gender**
310 **couple in a pastoral setting in which a congregation has chosen not to conduct**
311 **marriage liturgies.**
- 312 • **Supplemental liturgical resources appropriate for same-gender couples for use within**
313 **the marriage service of Evangelical Lutheran Worship as a way to continue to live into**
314 **our commitment “to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to**
315 **recognize, support and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender**
316 **relationships” (see Appendix A, CA09. 05.24, Resolution 2).**

317
318 *Explanation*

319 Our church holds in common that all Christians are called to "lead a chaste and decent life in
320 word and deed," (Sixth Commandment, Small Catechism) whatever one's sexual
321 orientation. It remains the case that members of our church continue to hold diverse and
322 strong convictions concerning how to regard lifelong, monogamous, same-gender
323 relationships, including whether and how to recognize publicly their lifelong commitments.
324 The decisions of 2009 left to the local congregation or ministry site the task of finding
325 liturgies of prayer and support consistent with a prevailing conviction set. However, in the
326 current context the lack of liturgical resources consistent with Lutheran theological
327 commitments seems inadequate and the Working Group has concluded that two kinds of
328 resources would be significant for sustaining our church's ministry.

329
330 As articulated by "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust," there are those in the ELCA who
331 “believe that the neighbor and community are best served when same-gender relationships
332 are honored ... but do not equate these relationships with marriage.” (HS:GT, p. 20) The

333 provision of a collection of prayers and words of support would provide a means to
334 welcome a married same-gender couple where that is the prevailing conviction, *when*
335 *desired by that couple*. These resources would recognize that a legal ceremony was held
336 elsewhere and signal welcome for that couple and their family in their church home. These
337 resources should provide for flexibility of setting, e.g. the home, the pastor's office or public
338 worship.

339

340 On the question of marriage liturgy for same-gender couples, it is important to note that,
341 unlike some denominations of Christianity, the ELCA does not prescribe any liturgical rite
342 except that of ordination. The existing marriage liturgy in Evangelical Lutheran Worship
343 (ELW) therefore has not been "authorized" by our church nor is its use required, even
344 though the ELW itself has been received and used widely within the ELCA as a whole. The
345 liturgy there reflects established Lutheran theology and tradition and does provide some
346 options for alternative wording. However, deep and multifaceted differences remain as
347 represented in the preface above about whether or how that liturgy is adequate for
348 ministry needs in light of the decisions of 2009 and the context of 2015.

349

350 Mindful of the dilemma and the context, the Working Group believes the best way forward
351 for this church is to remain mindful of the commitments made in 2009. It recommends that
352 the Office of the Presiding Bishop take action to identify or provide liturgically sound
353 options for use within the marriage service of the ELW in order to better provide guidance
354 for members and congregations that "choose to recognize, support and hold publicly
355 accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships" (see Appendix A, CA09.
356 05.24, Resolution 2).

357

358 The identification or provision of such options embodies the freedom and flexibility in
359 worship that is a Lutheran inheritance and is consistent with the 2007 Churchwide Assembly
360 action of reception for the ELW (see Appendix L, CA07.02.04), which stated that:

361

- 362 • "worship takes place in particular assemblies within particular contexts, yet every
363 assembly gathered by the Holy Spirit for worship is connected to the whole Church;
- 364 • each Christian assembly worships in the midst of an ever-changing world; and
- 365 • worship is renewed in order to be both responsible and responsive to the world that the
366 Church is called to serve."

366

367 It is anticipated that these efforts to supplement our liturgical resources would be done in a
368 consultative process with liturgical representatives from diverse conviction sets and that
369 these resources would be available electronically on the ELCA website as options for
370 pastoral ministry.

III. Appendices

- Appendix A: Summary of 2009 Churchwide Assembly actions related to same-gender issues
- Appendix B: 2013 Churchwide Assembly action and subsequent Church Council action
- Appendix C: Short biographies of Working Group members
- Appendix D: Working Group charter
- Appendix E: Report of the Working Group survey by the ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation
- Appendix F: Resource bibliography list
- Appendix G: Dwelling in the Word: Appendix A of the Communal Discernment Task Force report
- Appendix H: Link to ELCA social statement “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust”
- Appendix I: Reflections on the Theology and Character of Disagreeing Well by Bishop S. John Roth, Ph.D.
- Appendix J: Covenant guideline examples from
 - ELCA resource “Talking Together”
 - The United Methodist Church covenant guideline example
 - The Minnesota Council of Churches respectful Conversations Initiative
<https://vimeo.com/40730696> and
<http://www.mnchurches.org/respectfulcommunities/respectfulconversations.html>
- Appendix K: Link to Report of the Communal Discernment Task Force
- Appendix L: 2007 Churchwide Assembly action receiving Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Only citations from ELCA statements are to be represented to 3rd parties as ELCA teaching.

The following is a summary of ELCA teaching in the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift & Trust* (HS:GT) and the guiding resolutions on ministry policy (2009 Churchwide Assembly) by Rev. Dr. Roger A. Willer, Director for Theological Ethics, ELCA. (Visit www.elca.org/socialstatements for further information)

What does the ELCA teach about homosexuality? (HS:GT, p. 18)

- 1) We as a church *oppose all forms of violence or legal discrimination* against people of a same-sex orientation.
- 2) We as a church are committed to *welcoming all people into our congregations and ministries, regardless of sexual orientation.*
- 3) On the matter of whether or how to regard publically accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, we recognize four broadly representative conviction sets or “conscience-bound beliefs” as set forth in the social statement. These four ~~describe the range of accepted convictions and~~ each are “bound to” (based on) strongly held but differing understandings of Scripture, church tradition, science, and pastoral care as each seeks to serve the neighbor. (HS:GT, p. 20) There are other conviction sets that this church does not recognize.

Conviction 1: “On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that same-gender sexual behavior is sinful, contrary to biblical teaching and their understanding of natural law. They believe same-gender sexual behavior carries the grave danger of unrepentant sin. They therefore conclude that the neighbor and the community are best served by calling people in same-gender sexual relationships to repentance for that behavior and to a celibate lifestyle. Such decisions are intended to be accompanied by pastoral response and community support.”

Conviction 2: “On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that homosexuality and even lifelong, monogamous, homosexual relationships reflect a broken world in which some relationships do not pattern themselves after the creation God intended. While they acknowledge that such relationships may be lived out with mutuality and care, they do not believe that the neighbor or community are best served by publicly recognizing such relationships as traditional marriage.”

Conviction 3: “On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that the scriptural witness does not address the context of sexual orientation and lifelong loving and committed relationships that we experience today. They believe that the neighbor and community are best served when same-gender relationships are honored and held to high standards and public accountability, but they do not equate these relationships with marriage. They do, however, affirm the need for community support and the role of pastoral care and may wish to surround lifelong, monogamous relationships or covenant unions with prayer.”

Conviction 4: “On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that the scriptural witness does not address the context of sexual orientation and committed relationships that we experience today. They believe that the neighbor and community are best served when same-gender relationships are lived out with lifelong and monogamous commitments that are held to the same rigorous standards, sexual ethics, and status as heterosexual marriage. They surround such couples and their lifelong commitments with prayer to live in ways that glorify God, find strength for the challenges that will be faced, and serve others. They believe same-gender couples should avail themselves of social and legal support for themselves, their children, and other dependents and seek the highest legal accountability available for their relationships.”

Only citations from ELCA statements are to be represented to 3rd parties as ELCA teaching.

The following is a summary of ELCA teaching in the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift & Trust* (HS:GT) and the guiding resolutions on ministry policy (2009 Churchwide Assembly) by Rev. Dr. Roger A. Willer, Director for Theological Ethics, ELCA. (Visit www.elca.org/socialstatements for further information)

What guides ELCA ministry practices for same-gender couples?

General directives were established by four resolutions adopted at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly of 2009. (Just below) Resolution numbers one and two, taken together, mean that individual congregations or ministry sites are to determine the nature of their ministry with and to same-gender couples, dependent on the context. For instance, whether and how a wedding or civil union or other ritual will be carried out is a matter for the local Christian community to determine within the legal setting of a state. Resolution three permits congregations or ministry sites who choose to do so, to call individuals as rostered leaders who are in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships. Resolution four urges upon Christian brothers and sisters to respect those with whom they disagree and commits the ELCA to allow structured flexibility in decision-making about candidacy and the call process.

Resolutions adopted by CWA 2009

Resolution 1:

“Resolved, that in the implementation of any resolutions on ministry policies, the ELCA commit itself to bear one another's burdens, love the neighbor, and respect the bound consciences of all.”

Resolution 2:

“Resolved, that the ELCA commit itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships.”

Resolution 3:

“Resolved, that the ELCA commit itself to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church.”

Resolution 4: (Summary)

- called upon members to respect the consciences of those with whom they disagree;
- declared the intent to allow structured flexibility in decision-making about candidacy and the call process;
- eliminated the prohibition of rostered service by members in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same-gender relationships;
- recognized and committed to respect the conviction of members who believe that the ELCA should not call or roster people in committed same-gender relationships;
- called for development of accountability guidelines;
- directed that appropriate amendments to ministry policy documents be drafted and approved by the Church Council;
- And urged that this church continue to trust congregations, bishops, synods and others responsible for determining who should be called into public ministry.

Appendix B: 2013 Churchwide Assembly Action and subsequent Church Council Action

Working Group Background Documents Churchwide Assembly and Church Council Actions

From the 2013 Churchwide Assembly

Memorials Category A4: Same-Gender Couples and Their Families (CA13.03.12)

To receive with the gratitude the memorials of the Eastern North Dakota, South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Saint Paul Area, Sierra Pacific, Northwest Washington, Metropolitan Chicago, Minneapolis Area, Metropolitan New York, Northeastern Pennsylvania, Indiana-Kentucky, Southwestern Minnesota, Southwestern Pennsylvania, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C., synods regarding Conversations about Ministering to Same-Gender Couples and Families;

To affirm the commitment made in the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* for “pastoral responsibility to all children of God,” recognizing “familial relationship as central to nurturing and sustaining trust and security in human relationships and to advocate for public policies that support and protect families” (pp. 19, 24);

To invite and encourage conversations and resource sharing among this church’s congregations, rostered and lay leaders and the Conference of Bishops on changing family configurations and their impact on society and the ministry of this church; and

To request the Church Council, in keeping with the recommendations of the Addressing Social Concerns Review Task Force, to authorize a group to explore this concern and to bring a report and possible recommendations to the fall 2014 meetings of the Conference of Bishops and Church Council regarding appropriate next steps in carrying out these commitments to pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families.

From the November 2013 Church Council

Ministering to Same-Gender Couples and Their Families (CC13.11.64)

To affirm the 2013 Churchwide Assembly action to invite and encourage conversations and resource sharing among this church’s congregations, rostered and lay leaders, and the Conference of Bishops on changing family configurations and their impact on society and the ministry of this church;

To authorize a working group to explore this social concern and to bring recommendations regarding appropriate next steps in carrying out these commitments to pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families;

To request a sub-group of the Program and Services Committee of the Church Council, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and Office of the Presiding Bishop, to identify and recommend individuals to serve on a working group, with voices representing the breadth of viewpoints identified in the social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, and including, specifically, representation by members of the LGBTQ community;

To authorize the Executive Committee to appoint a working group; and

To request that the working group bring progress reports to the Conference of Bishops and Church Council beginning in fall 2014 and that a final report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2015 Church Council meeting.

Appendix C: Short biographies of Working Group members

Ms. Tempie Beaman (Diaconal Minister)

Ms. Tempie D. Beaman, a member of Ascension Lutheran Church, Los Angeles for 25 years, is a Diaconal Minister and a graduate of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary '11. In 2014, she was called to serve as the Executive Director of My Friends House, Inc., a community organization working to end hunger and promote healthy living. Diaconal Ministry is a ministry of Word and Service and Ms. Beaman lives out her call in each of the expressions of the ELCA--Churchwide, Synod, and congregation and her community. On the Synodical level, Ms. Beaman served two terms on Synod Council and one on Executive Committee. Over the years, she has served on the synod's nominating committee, reference and counsel committee, African Descent Strategy Team, as synod representative on the Lutheran Social Services of Southern California board, and as conference representative to the Mission Table for Evangelical Outreach. While attending seminary, Ms. Beaman was on the staff of the Disaster Services Division of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest as the agency's primary disaster preparedness and response person for Southern California and Hawaii. She was instrumental in training faith-based agencies, institutions and congregations of all denominations to develop emergency plans and led the Inter-Lutheran Emergency Response Team (I-LERT) in developing a coordinated response strategy.

Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Christine Blice-Baum

The Rev. Christine Blice-Baum is a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force serving as a Deputy Joint Base Chaplain, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia. Chaplain Blice-Baum received both her bachelor's and master's degrees in music from Youngstown State University in Ohio. She also holds an M.T.S. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary, a M.Div. in parish ministry from Wartburg Theological Seminary, a Doctor of Music Arts in Church Music from the Manhattan School of Music, New York and a Master of Military Art and Science from Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Chaplain Blice-Baum began her service in ordained ministry as a parish pastor at First English Lutheran Church, Oshkosh, Wisconsin and St. John Lutheran Church, Albany, New York. After her calls in those congregations, she served as campus Pastor and music faculty member at Thiel College, Greenville, Pennsylvania before transitioning to the USAF Chaplain Corps where she has served at nine assignments at military installations in the United States, Europe and Asia as well as three deployed locations in Turkey and Iraq.

Bp. Mary Stumme Froiland

Bishop Mary Froiland serves as bishop of the South Central Synod of Wisconsin. She graduated with a BA in Philosophy and English from Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and received an M.Div. from Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Bishop Froiland served three parishes, the first in Petersburg, Ohio, one in Beloit, Wisconsin, and prior to being elected Bishop in 2013, served Luther Valley in Rural Beloit for 13 years.

The Rev. Aaron Fuller

The Rev. Aaron Fuller, born in Pusan, South Korea, was adopted and raised on a family-sized dairy farm near Staples, MN. The Rev. Fuller is a bi-vocational pastor serving two congregations in Portsmouth, VA. He is a Chaplain (Lieutenant) in the U.S. Navy Reserve. He holds a B.S. in Naval Architecture from the U.S. Naval Academy and a M.S. in Secondary Education from Old Dominion University. The Rev. Fuller completed his M.Div. with a concentration in Children, Youth, & Family Ministry (emphasis on Young Adults & Vocation) from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. Previous to his entry to seminary, he served for more than eight years on active duty in the U.S. Navy as a submarine warfare/nuclear power officer.

The Rev. Amsalu Geleta

The Rev. Amsalu Geleta, a native of Ethiopia, graduated from Mekane Yesus Seminary in 1995. He served as a teacher and Dean at Christian Education College in Nekemte, in Western Ethiopia. The Rev. Geleta earned an MPhil in Religious Studies at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, an MTH from the Virginia Theological Seminary, and a Doctor of Ministry in Missional Evangelism from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. He served as the interim director of Pastoral Care at Inova Alexandria Hospital and as Chaplain at UMMC. His first call was to St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Springfield, Virginia where he served for almost seven years before accepting a call to Christ Church in Baltimore, Maryland. The Rev. Geleta has been active in both Synodical and Churchwide ministries. He served as a member of the ELCA Church Council and its Executive Committee.

The Rev. David P. Gleason

The Rev. David Gleason is a retired pastor living in Delaware. After receiving his B.S. in secondary education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the Rev. Gleason graduated from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg with a M.Div. in parish ministry. He served as a parish pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, East Berlin, Pennsylvania; Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, Gaithersburg, Maryland; and Palm Lutheran Church, Palmyra Pennsylvania before serving 24 years as pastor of First Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Rev. Gleason contributed in the working group until March 2015, when he stepped away for health reasons.

Mr. Cliff Haaland

Mr. Cliff Haaland was an operations coordinator and emergency response leader for an oil refinery. Upon retirement, he served as Caring Ministry Director for his congregation and coordinated Lutheran Disaster Response for the Montana Synod. For many years he and his family were active members of American Lutheran in Billings, Montana, and he has also participated on the synodical level. In 2014, Mr. Haaland moved to Madison, Wisconsin to be near family. They are members of Luther Memorial Church in Madison, where Mr. Haaland is currently serving on the congregational council.

Mr. Smith "Smitty" Heavner

Mr. Smith Heavner is from Simpsonville, SC, where he lives out his bi-vocational call to healthcare and ministry. Mr. Heavner is a registered nurse and a graduate student studying clinical and translational research as part of an inaugural class seeking to build a research cohort inside the healthcare system he serves. During his undergraduate studies, he became active in Lutheran Student Movement-USA (LSM) and ultimately served as National President, seeing the organization through the ELCA's major restructuring in 2010. Mr. Heavner also represented LSM to the North American Regional Council of the World Student Christian Federation and helped to re-launch the decades dormant US chapter of Student Christian Movement. More locally, he has long lent his professional skills and amateur talents to his childhood and home congregations (University Lutheran-Clemson and Christ the King-Greenville, SC, respectively) providing blood pressure screenings and health education and offering music in worship.

Ms. Kayla Koterwski

Ms. Kayla Koterwski is a youth representative on the ELCA Church Council from Tea, South Dakota. Her home congregation is Peace Lutheran. She was a voting member at the 2013 Churchwide Assembly from the South Dakota Synod.

Bp. S. John Roth

Bishop S. John Roth serves as bishop of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod. Before becoming bishop, he was pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Illinois, for 23 years. Bishop Roth has a M.Div. from Christ Seminary-Seminex, a Th.M. from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a M.A. and a Ph.D in New Testament studies from Vanderbilt University.

Mr. George Watson (Chair)

Mr. George Watson is an attorney in the Detroit area and has been the Secretary of the Southeast Michigan Synod since 1991. He also serves on the Churchwide Committee on appeals and is a member of the ELCA Attorneys Association. Mr. Watson received a B. A. in History from the University of Michigan and a Juris Doctor from Wayne State University. He is a member of St. Martin Lutheran Church - Port Huron and an Associate Member of St. James Lutheran Church - Grosse Pointe Farms where he sings in the Choir and serves as an Assisting Minister.

Ms. Suzanne Wise

Ms. Suzanne Wise was chair of the Communal Discernment Task Force and a member of the Addressing Social Concerns Review Task Force (ASCR). Before retiring, she was President of Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas. Ms. Wise has a strong passion about actual service to others as a way of “addressing social concerns” that often is taken for granted or neglected or forgotten.

The Rev. Erma Wolf

The Rev. Erma Wolf is currently pastor at American Lutheran Church in Hawarden, Iowa. She graduated with an M.Div. in parish ministry from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Prior to her call as a pastor at American, the Rev. Wolf served three congregations in Nebraska, Minnesota and South Dakota.

Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Carol Yeager, US Air Force

The Rev. Carol Yeager is a Lieutenant Colonel reserve chaplain in the US Air Force serving as the IMA to the Deputy Commandant at the AF Chaplain Corps College at Fort Jackson, SC. Chaplain Yeager also serves Friendship Lutheran Church in Taylorsville, NC. She received her B.S. in Political Science from the University of Illinois. She entered the US Air Force and served 10 years as a line officer before attending seminary. She attended Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa and was ordained in 2002. Chaplain Yeager has served as a parish pastor at Grafton Lutheran Church, Grafton, ND, Luther's Lutheran Church, Richfield, NC, and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Elizabeth City, NC. Her Air Force Chaplain assignments include Grand Forks AFB, ND, Langley AFB, VA, Seymour-Johnson AFB, NC.

Appendix D: Working Group charter

Charter for Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and Their Families Working Group

I. Organization and Purposes

A. Church Council authorizing action (CC13.11.64)

To affirm the 2013 Churchwide Assembly action to invite and encourage conversations and resource sharing among this church's congregations, rostered and lay leaders, and the Conference of Bishops on changing family configurations and their impact on society and the ministry of this church;

To authorize a working group to explore this social concern and to bring recommendations regarding appropriate next steps in carrying out these commitments to pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families;

To request a sub-group of the Program and Services Committee of the Church Council, in consultation with the Conference of Bishops and Office of the Presiding Bishop, to identify and recommend individuals to serve on a working group, with voices representing the breadth of viewpoints identified in the social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, and including, specifically, representation by members of the LGBTQ community;

To authorize the Executive Committee to appoint a working group; and

To request that the working group bring progress reports to the Conference of Bishops and Church Council beginning in fall 2014 and that a final report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2015 Church Council meeting.

II. Background Information

(Excerpt from Memorials Committee Recommendation, 2013 CWA Pre-Assembly Report, Part VII)

The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted a social statement on human sexuality that recognized the ELCA's "pastoral responsibility to all children of God," including specifically "to those who are same-gender in their orientation and to those who are seeking counsel about their sexual self-understanding." (*Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, p. 19). Moreover, the statement reaffirmed the ELCA's commitment to support "same-gender couples and their families and to advocate for their legal protection," including "legislation and policies to protect civil rights and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public services."

In this statement the ELCA "draws on the foundational Lutheran understanding that the baptized are called to discern God's love in service to the neighbor. In our Christian freedom, we therefore seek responsible actions that serve others and do so with humility and deep respect for the conscience-bound beliefs of others." (p. 19)

The social statement also noted that "consensus does not exist concerning how to regard same-gender committed relationships, even after many years of thoughtful, respectful, and faithful study and conversation" (p. 19). Four different "conscience-bound" beliefs regarding same-gender sexual behavior were identified. Nonetheless, despite these different convictions the ELCA "draws on the foundational Lutheran understanding that the baptized are called to discern God's love in service to the neighbor. In our Christian freedom, we therefore seek responsible actions that serve others and do so with humility and deep respect for the conscience-bound beliefs of others." (pp. 19-20)

The actions requested by the group of synod memorials concerning "conversations about ministering to same-gender couples and families" are built on commitments made by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly in adopting the social statement on human sexuality.

III. Charter of Responsibilities

A. This working group shall explore ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families and the impact of that ministry on society and the ministry of this church in order to bring recommendations regarding next steps for conversation and resource sharing within the ELCA. Being grounded in Scripture, faith, prayer, and the understanding of the body of Christ, the means to accomplish this work includes:

1. Attending to what social science is discovering regarding changing family configurations including the increase in legalization of same-gender marriage, attitude shifts within this church on same gender couples and the impact of these changes on the ministry of this church.
2. Identifying the diverse ministry efforts and resources already available within the ELCA and discovering what may be missing in terms of efforts and resources experienced within the ELCA.
3. Developing specific recommendations that address all four convictions [*identified in the sexuality social statement*] to foster conversation and sharing of resources throughout this church through such means as:
 - a. Identifying or making available a variety of enhanced resources, such as stories or ministry practices arising from various contexts, for individual, congregational and synodical engagement with pastoral ministry (including resources developed by others).
 - b. Providing guidance for means to create conversation within the Conference of Bishops.
 - c. Expanding communication and information distribution efforts among all elements of the ELCA ecology, especially through the use of new and emerging media.
4. Developing specific recommendations that address all four convictions for “appropriate next steps in carrying out commitments to pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families.” This may include:
 - a. Guidance for pastoral expectations for how we work with, walk with and minister to same-gender couples and their families as well as minister to clergy who serve in this church.
 - b. Guidance for lay persons for how we work with, walk with and minister to same-gender couples and their families.
 - c. Guidance for identifying and equipping resource persons who can enable and encourage conversations about this church’s ministry with and to same-gender couples and their families.
 - d. Guidance for what should be said, if anything, to those who choose not to participate in conversations and resource sharing.

B. Throughout its work, the working group shall:

1. Consult with the Conference of Bishops and the Program and Services Committee of the Church Council.
2. Attend and listen to all four bound-conscience convictions regarding human sexuality.
3. Engage the full diversity of experience, expertise and wisdom among ELCA members in how to understand and provide pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families.
4. Consult with synods and congregations who are already providing pastoral care to same-gender couples and families, and sharing resources.

IV. Membership and Leadership

1. The working group shall be composed of 10-15 members, consistent with the ELCA's representational principles, and represent the breadth of the four bound conscience convictions, including representation by members of the LGBTQ Community.
2. The working group shall be appointed by the Executive Committee in consultation with the Program and Services Committee.
3. Staff members shall be appointed by the Presiding Bishop.
4. The term of service for all members shall be until the completion of the group's work.
5. The working group may invite additional staff, advisors, consultants and guests.

V. Meetings and Funding

1. The full working group shall meet in person up to two times during fiscal 2014 and up to two times in fiscal 2015, as needed.
2. Additional meetings of the working group or sub groups may be held either in person or by conference call.
3. The work of this working group shall be funded by strategic initiative funds.

VI. Timetable for Actions

1. A progress report shall be presented to the fall 2014 meetings of the Conference of Bishops and Church Council. Progress reports may be presented to subsequent meetings.
2. A final report and possible recommendations shall be brought to the Church Council at its fall 2015 meeting.

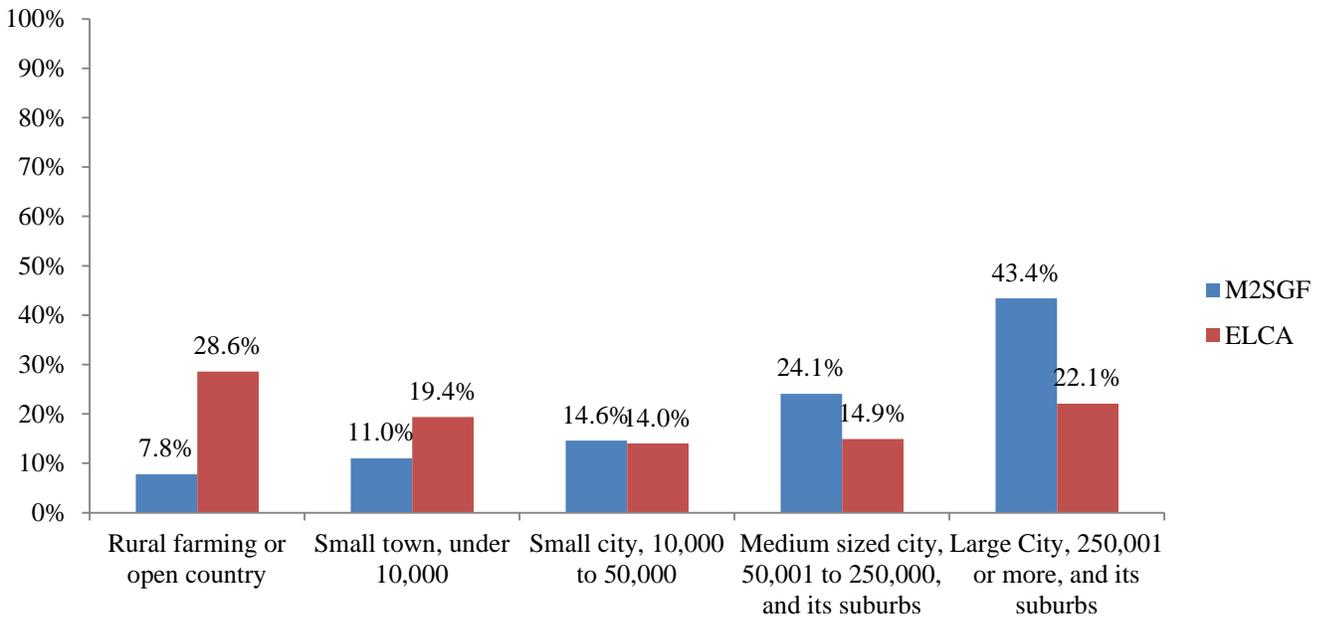
**Appendix E: Report of the Working Group survey
 by the ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation**

**Conversations and Resources Regarding
 Ministering To and With Same-Gender Families
 John Hessian, Research and Evaluation
 Office of the Presiding Bishop
 January 2015**

A questionnaire evaluating the current context of conversations and resources in ministering to and with same-gender couples and their families (M2SGF)¹ was available for six weeks in the fall and early winter of 2014. The evaluation was promoted virally and initiated through the following channels: the ReconcilingWorks network, Lutheran CORE, elca.org and by the members of the M2SGF working group. The intent of the survey was for the members of the M2SGF working group to learn more about the breadth and scope of the diverse ministry efforts and resources throughout the ELCA. The questionnaire is Appendix 1.

A total of 626 responses were received to the survey. The setting for the vast majority of the respondents was a congregation (577 people or 92%). The other 48 respondents (8%) were in various settings (campus ministry, hospitals, seminary, synod offices, churchwide organization, street ministry, etc.). As can be seen in Figure 1, the plurality of respondents are from large cities and their suburbs. This is in contrast to the ELCA’s baptized membership, of whom less than a quarter are living in large metropolitan areas and over a quarter are in rural contexts.

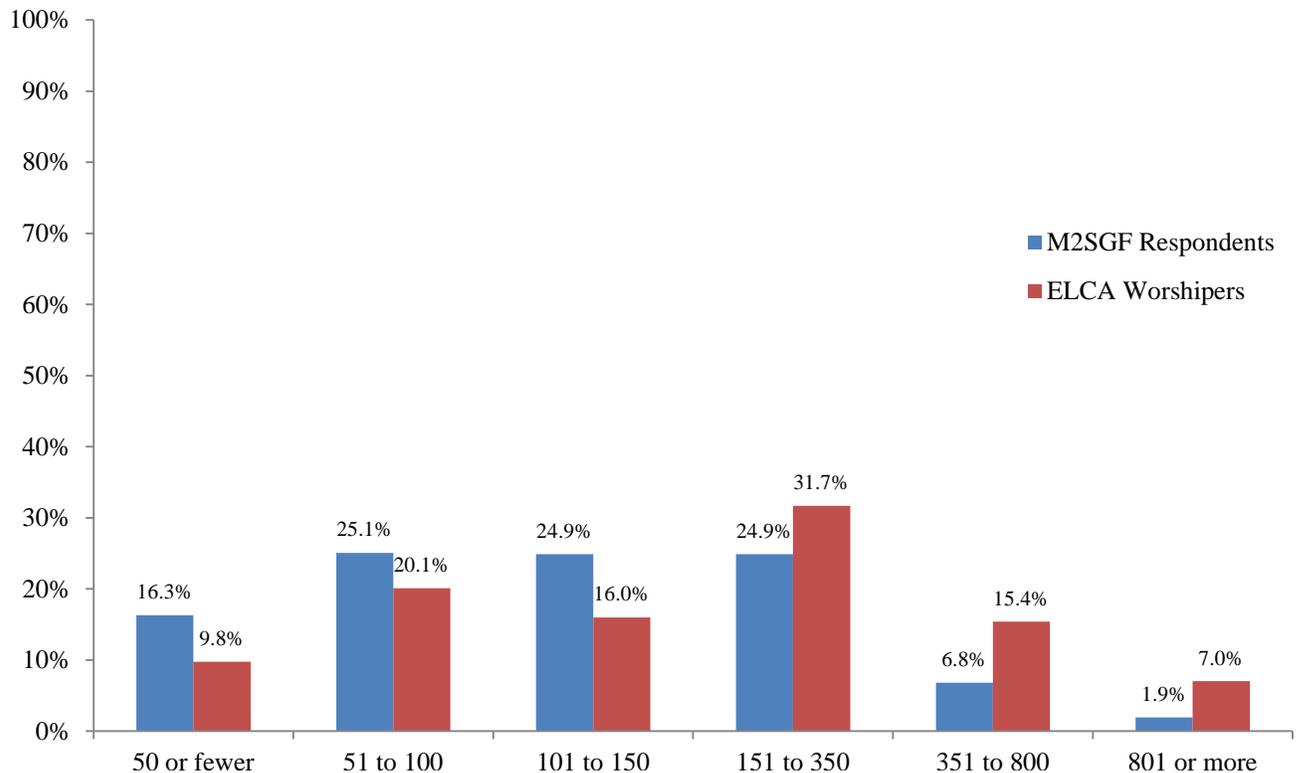
Figure 1: Community Context of M2SGF Respondents and ELCA Baptized Membership



¹ The M2SGF group was formed out of Churchwide Assembly (CA13.03.12) and Church Council (CC13.11.64) actions “to explore this social concern and to bring recommendations regarding appropriate next steps in carrying out these commitments to pastoral care for same-gender couples and their families” and that “a final report and possible recommendations be brought to the November 2015 Church Council meeting.”

Figure 2 compares the weekly worship attendance of the congregations attended by the M2SGF respondents to typical ELCA attendees. For example, 16 percent of M2SGF respondents attend congregations with 50 or fewer in worship, and sixty-six percent attend congregations with 150 or fewer in worship. For worshippers as a whole, ten percent attend worship in congregations with 50 or fewer and 46 percent attend congregations with 150 or fewer in worship.

Figure 2: Percent of M2SGF Respondents Compared to All Worshipers by the Size of Their Congregations (based on worship attendance)



Figures 1 and 2 show that M2SGF respondents are largely from small congregations in medium to large cities and their suburbs while typical ELCA members are largely from small congregations in rural areas and small towns.

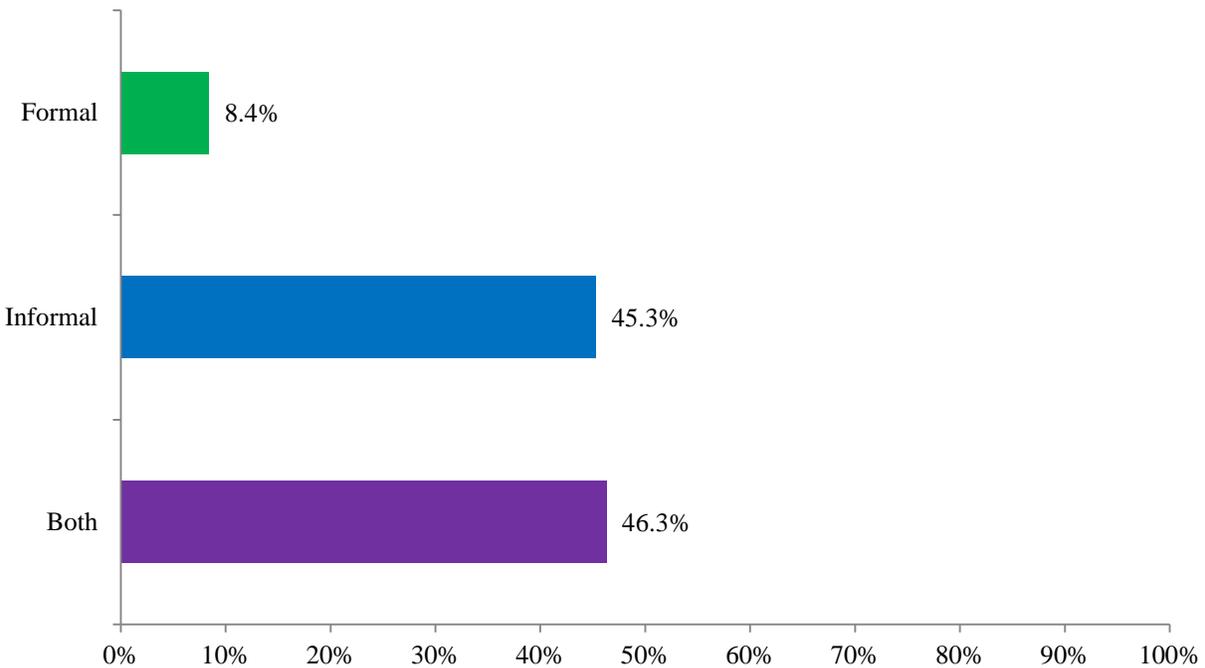
Question 2 of the survey asked the following question: In the last year, have there been noticeable conversations in your ministry setting (formally or informally) or organized study (adult forums, Bible studies) about ministry to same-gender couples and/or their families? The answers are almost evenly divided.

Question 2: Were there conversations or study in the last year about ministering to same-gender couples and their families in your ministry setting?

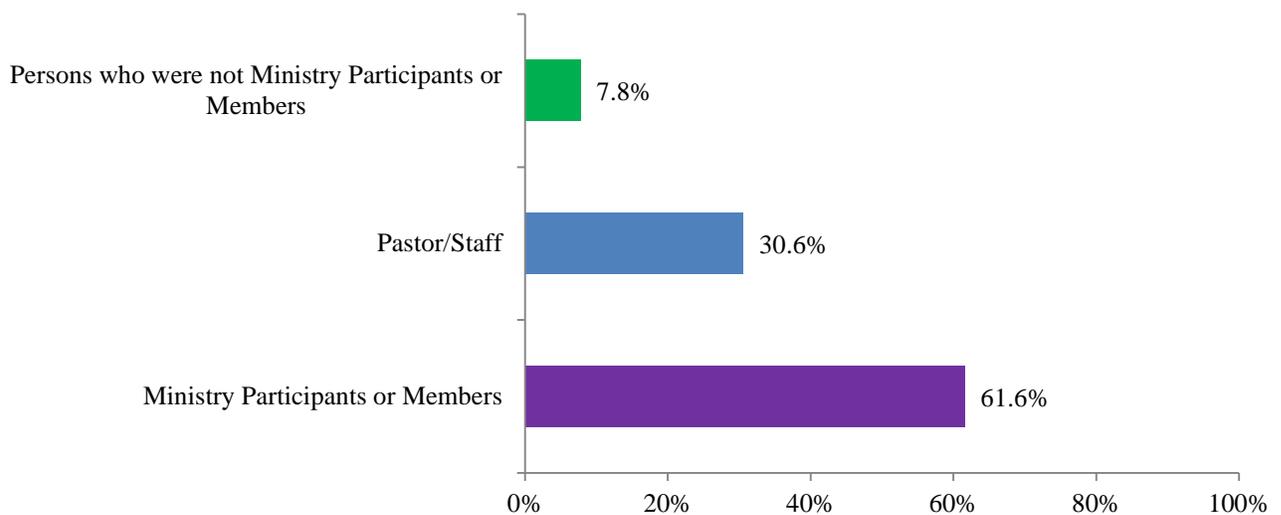
Yes	51.4%
No	48.6%

Questions 2a – 2c relate to those who answered “Yes” to question 2. Question 2a assesses the nature of the conversations (formal, informal or both). Question 2b identifies the initiator of the conversation, and Question 2c assesses the impact of the conversations.

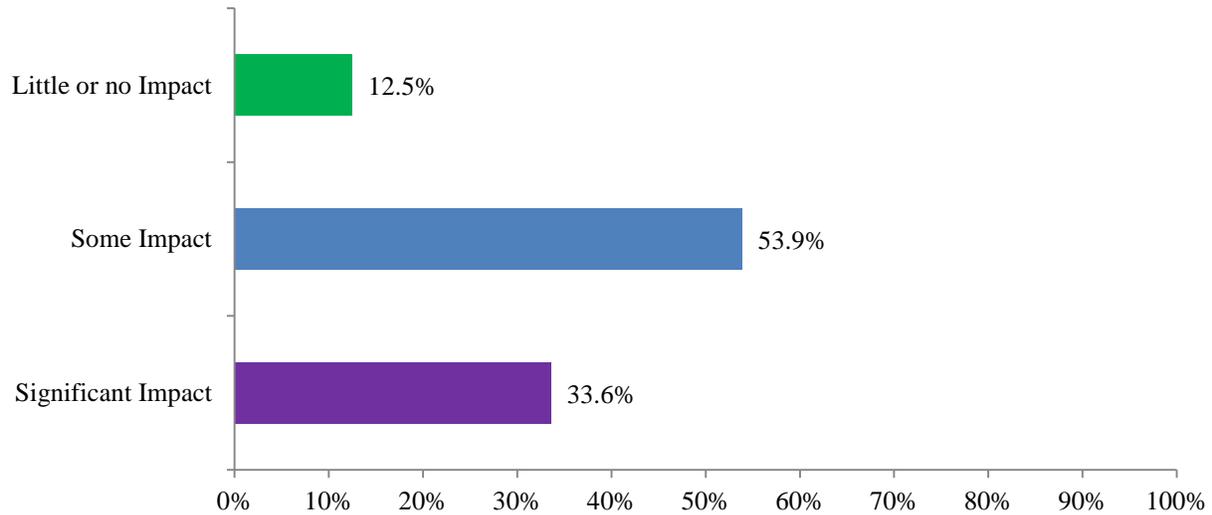
Question 2a: Were the conversations formal (organized group study) or informal (occasional informal conversations between ministry staff and ministry participants or members)? (N = 322)



Question 2b: Who was the primary initiator of the discussion? (N = 320)



**Question 2c: How much of an impact have the conversations had in your ministry setting?
 (N = 321)**



The primary initiators of these conversations are, more often than not, ministry participants or regular members. The conversations are typically not started by the pastor or outside people and tend to be informal. Also, members feel the conversations usually have some or even significant impact on their ministry settings. (Please see the comments in Appendices 4, 5 and 6 to get a sense of the impact these conversations have had.)

Question 3 asked if the conversations were among people of the same or differing convictions.

Question 3: Were the conversations primarily among people of like minds or did the conversations involve people of differing convictions? (N = 319)

Primarily People of One Mind	58.3%
People of Differing Convictions	41.7%

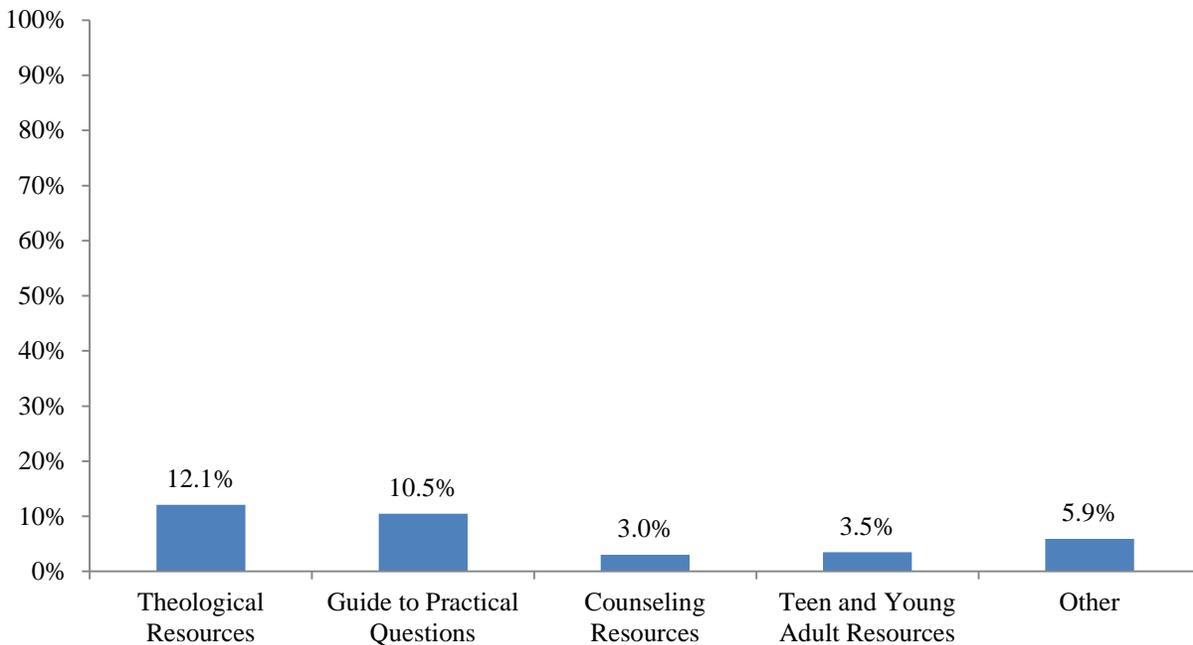
Question 4 asked if formal printed resources were used in these conversations.

Question 4: At any point in the conversations, were formal printed resources used to help facilitate? (N = 320)

No	64.7%
Yes	35.3%

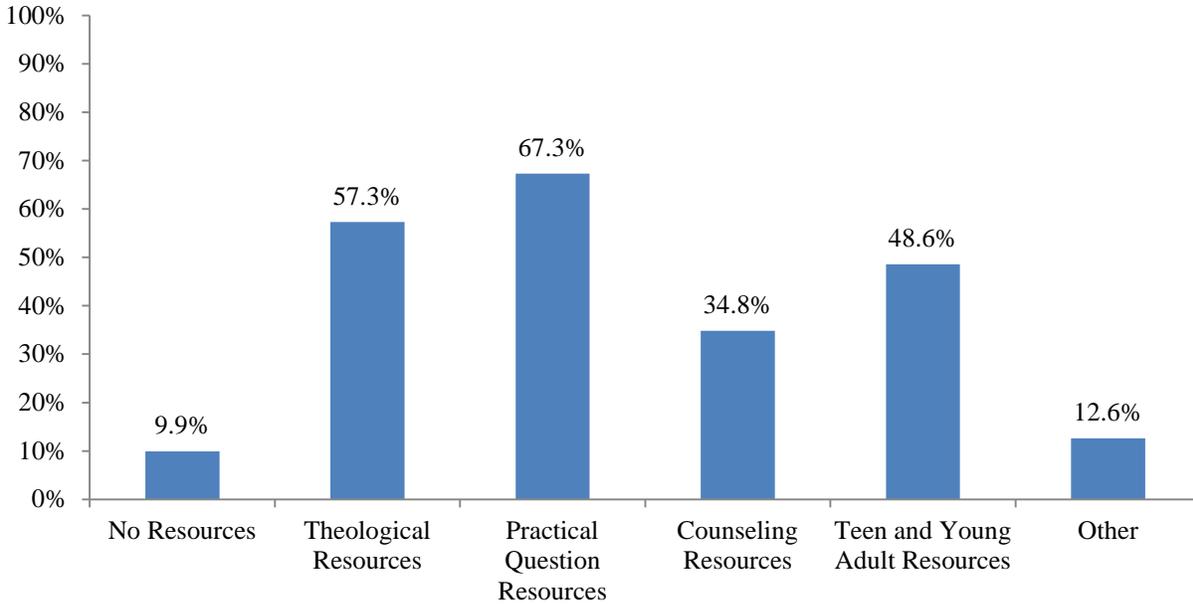
The conversations are usually not aided by formal printed resources. However when the conversations utilize resources, a variety have been used. The responses to question 4a identify the diversity of resources used in the roughly one-third of conversations that utilized formal printed resources. (See Question 4a). The open-ended “other” responses to question 4a (n = 35) were varied as well. (See Appendix 2 for the full text of the comments.)

Question 4a: What resources were used? (Please check all that apply.)



Question 5 was designed to find out what resources would be helpful moving forward. It is apparent that most of the respondents feel some resources should be developed. Only 10 percent of the respondents felt no resources would be helpful and two-thirds felt some practical resources could help their ministry settings. The responses themselves are included in Appendix 3.

Question 5: Please indicate what resources, if any, would be most helpful in assisting the people in your ministry setting to have productive conversations about ministry to or with same-gender couples and/or their families. (Please check all that apply.)



Question 6 asked if there were intentional ministry to or with same-gender couples. Of the 217 people who responded in the affirmative to the question, 199 provided open-ended responses. The overwhelming response related to being a Reconciling in Christ congregation (n = 112). This means their congregations/settings “invite people of all sexual orientations and gender identities to participate fully in their ministries’ congregational and worship life together.” Any response related to “welcoming all” or being “fully inclusive of LGBT people” are grouped with this response. Basically, this means that LGBT people are considered normal in the life of the congregation/ministry setting, and have the same experience and opportunities as all members. One respondent indicated, “I’m not sure what you mean by ‘intentional.’ Our gay and lesbian members and same-gender couples participate in all aspects of ministry, from council leadership roles to service ministry in the city.” (See Appendix 4 for the full text of the comments.)

Question 6: Is your ministry currently engaged in intentional ministry to or with same-gender couples and their families? (N = 618)

No	64.9%
Yes	35.1%

Question 7 surveyed if there was support for family members of those in same-gender relationships. Slightly more than half of the responses indicated they were not.

Question 7: Is your ministry currently providing support to family members who have a relative that is in a same-gender relationship?

No	55.3%
Yes	44.7%

Two hundred seventy-two people answered that their ministries were providing support to family members with a relative in a same-gender relationship, and 215 provided specific information about that support. The most frequent response (n = 56) was that these family members and couples were treated the same as all other members. The theme of having full and normal participation is repeated in the responses to question 7 just as it was to question 6. Here are some representative comments: “They are part of the norm.” “[They are] part of the general ministry of congregational life.” or “The support looks like the family support provided to any other congregant. Sickness, continuing ed, death, life, marriage.”

The second most frequent response was about pastoral care/counseling (n = 44). There were 37 responses that went a little further and said that they were intentionally welcoming/affirming, an ally or “publicly intentional” in their welcome. There were 11 comments from respondents in non-affirming situations. In these contexts, they were helping “families struggling to understand the new reality” or family members who are “less supportive or in a challenging region of the country.” One respondent said, “My church provides support to all people for all burdens. Reconciling the dissonance that is created when someone loves a relative but wishes they weren’t gay can be a burden, and while other church members don’t feel it is a burden... we are still there for each other. We are the body of Christ and the focus of the support is to help people realize that the ‘we’ means everyone.” (See Appendix 5 for the full text of the comments.)

Other Comments

There were a total of 164 comments on how the conversation could be enhanced. (See Table 6.)

The most common response was that resources were needed to start conversations or for education (n = 27). Here are some comments. “We are just starting this process. I wish there were guides on having small group conversations. Something like sample questions.” “It is very important that congregations have these resources so that folks who have not been intentional about learning about this kind of ministry have resources to utilize.”

The second most common response was that having gay couples in church was normal or that they were a Reconciling in Christ Church (n = 26). “This congregation settled the issue several years ago, is open and welcoming to gay individuals/couples, has made that known to the community, and is ready to move on.” “We’re past the conversation. We’ve been welcoming since 1992.”

Although they were not well-represented in the responses, a few people with significant reservations about the direction of the ELCA shared their objections. Ten respondents felt that promoting position four was hurting the church; five felt that they were being judged because they were against gay marriage but they still support and love all people (love the sinner, hate the sinful behavior). Following are some of their comments: “More needs to be done to integrate perspectives 1 and 2 (page 20) of the social statement into the total program of the ELCA.” “This initiative is a great example of what’s wrong with the ELCA and the direction it’s heading – so far removed from the Bible. We need to focus on bringing people together and not labeling groups and catering to one group over another. Stop your liberal, divisive agenda. Focus on having real, Bible-based, discipleship-focused church. Communities will grow organically from authentic, meaningful relationships with the church and its people. They don’t grow

from manufactured, man-made agendas.” “Same-gender marriages are not normal; I don’t think we should be promoting or stamping our approval on these marriages. I do believe we should work with same gender couples and have them in our church and love them like brothers and sisters.” “Please quit shoveling this stuff at us. These people are welcome in our church but we do not need to condone their sins.”

Fourteen responses were that their ministry settings do not discuss this and/or discussing it would possibly cause more harm than good. “I am, at this point, reticent to ‘poke a skunk.’” “Church policy is strictly a don’t ask, don’t tell policy, [it] could still blow up into the congregation leaving the church if the pot was stirred about same gender couples.” “Generally, people have avoided conversation about ‘the gay issue’ in attempts to avoid any more potential controversy from members who left our congregation and may be planning to return.”

Table 6: Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

We need resources/ways to start the conversation and/or educate people	27
We are all children of God. Same-gender couples are normal in our setting. We are Reconciling in Christ.	26
The ELCA is only focused on position 4. The ELCA needs to integrate positions 1 and 2 into the life of the church.	10
There are no conversations in our setting and/or these conversations could cause division.	14
Specific LGBTQ marriage rites/liturgies need to be developed.	6
We love and support all but believe homosexuality is sinful behavior.	5
More needs to be done for transgendered people.	3
Anxiety needs to be reduced.	3
There are no or very few gay people in our setting.	3
ReconcilingWorks resources should be used.	3

(See Appendix 6 for the full text of the other comments.)

Conclusion

An online questionnaire designed to help the members of the M2SGF working group better understand the breadth and scope of ministry efforts and resources about same gender relationships and families in the ELCA was available in the fall and early winter of 2014. There was intentional promotion of the survey to those in the church holding all four bound conscience positions regarding human sexuality. The respondents to the survey were often from smaller congregations in medium to large cities or suburbs. Only about half have known of any conversations in their ministry settings about same-gender couples/families, and the conversations were mostly informal, initiated by people in the pews and not aided by any formal printed resource. The vast majority of respondents would like some resources, and the most useful resource would be a guide “to answering practical questions.” Currently, almost two-thirds of the respondents said they have seen no intentional ministry to or with same-gender couples and over half are not aware of any support for family members of gay individuals in their settings. This could be because no openly gay members attend their congregations or they are simply not aware of them. Of those with intentional ministry and support for families of people in same gender relationships, the common theme was that LGBTQ members have full and normal inclusion in the life of their congregations/ministry settings. Finally, there was a minority of respondents who felt that bound conscience positions one and two were not fully valued in the life of the ELCA.

Questionnaire on Conversations and Resources regarding Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and their Families

This questionnaire was developed by the Ministry to and with Same Gender Families (M2SGF) working group. M2SGF was established in response to a 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly action. The working group is tasked with exploring the current context of conversations and resources in ministering to and with same-gender couples and their families. The questionnaire will, in part, assist M2SGF in learning more about the breadth and scope of the diverse ministry efforts and resources throughout the ELCA. We are intentionally seeking responses from each of the four convictions outlined in the ELCA's social statement on human sexuality. To learn more about the working group, please click here (<http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/blogs/NewsBlog/56>). Thank you for your participation!

If you have questions about questionnaire content, please contact Jodi Slattery at Jodi.Slattery@elca.org. If you have questions about questionnaire functionality, please contact Adam DeHoek at Adam.DeHoek@elca.org. Thank you for your participation!

1. Is your primary setting for ministry a congregation or another setting?

A congregation

Another setting (Please describe):

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**Questionnaire on Conversations and Resources regarding
Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and their Families**

1a. Please describe the area where your congregation is located.

1b. What is the average weekly worship attendance of your congregation?

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**Questionnaire on Conversations and Resources regarding
Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and their Families**

2. In the last year have there been noticeable conversations in your ministry setting (formally or informally) or organized study (adult forums, Bible studies) about ministry to same-gender couples and/or their families?

- No
- Yes

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Questionnaire on Conversations and Resources regarding Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and their Families

2a. Were the conversations formal (organized group study) or informal (occasional informal conversations between ministry staff and ministry participants or members)?

- Formal
- Informal
- Both

2b. Who was the primary initiator of the discussion?

- Ministry participants or members
- Pastor/Staff
- Persons who were not ministry participants or members

2c. How much of an impact have the conversations had in your ministry setting?

- A significant impact
- Some impact
- Little or no impact

3. Were the conversations primarily among people of like minds or did the conversations involve people of differing convictions?

- Primarily people of one mind
- People of differing convictions

4. At any point in the conversations, were formal printed resources used to help facilitate?

- No
- Yes

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**Questionnaire on Conversations and Resources regarding
Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and their Families**

4a. What resources were used? (Please check all that apply.)

- Resources addressing theological matters
- A guide to answering practical questions
- Resources for counseling
- Resources for talking to teenagers and young adults
- Other (Please describe):

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Questionnaire on Conversations and Resources regarding Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and their Families

5. Please indicate what resources, if any, would be most helpful in assisting the people in your ministry setting to have productive conversations about ministry to or with same-gender couples and/or their families. (Please check all that apply.)

- I don't believe any resources would be helpful.
- Resources addressing theological matters
- A guide to answering practical questions
- Resources for counseling
- Resources for talking to teenagers and young adults

Other (Please Describe):

6. Is your ministry currently engaged in intentional ministry to or with same-gender couples and their families?

- No
- Yes

What is the intentional ministry you are doing?

7. Is your ministry currently providing support to family members who have a relative that is in a same-gender relationship?

- No
- Yes

What is the focus of the support being provided?

8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Would you be willing to share your contact information with the group working on this topic?

- Yes, I'm interested in sharing my contact information with the working group
- No, I'm not interested.

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**Questionnaire on Conversations and Resources regarding
Ministry to and with Same Gender Couples and their Families**

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust
Sermons disseminated through social media.
An article copied and distributed
voting information on marriage
resources on vocabulary
A two-page outline that provided a historical context for our town hall style discussion of same-sex marriage.
RIC documents
synod statement on performing SG marriages in church
books
Rec Works brochures
GCN video
the Bible
Reconciling Works Training in Sioux Fal,SD in Sept.
The Bible
The study commissioned by the ELCA
historical info, quotes from bishops
Video chronicle of both sides of the issue
Book Study
ReconcilingWorks "Conversations about Marriage" resource
resources from reconciling works
RIC/ReconcilingWorks materials
sunday bulletin clearly welcomes all
Wedding resource by you all
The Welcoming Statement task force utilized resources from Reconciling Works. They then created resources of their own in order to engage and educate the congregation.
Drafted text for national synod vote
The Bible
Reconciling WORks INformation/RIC program
Internal documents from rich history of advocacy within congregation
Building an Inclusive Church manual
Articles written by Phsycologists, Articles about Lutherans Concerned
Resources from ReconcilingWorks. See http://www.reconcilingworks.org/resources/ric-resources-menu-item . We especially used their resource called "Our Congregation Is Already Welcoming, Why Do We Need to Say So?" Also, we had a speaker from ReconcilingWorks present on marriage during our Adult Forum hour, with about 60 people attending.
Review of orders of blessing/marriage that have been used with same gender couples
liturgy, devotional book, videos, blogs
Mission statement and local newspaper
ReconcilingWorks literature

resources which assume positions 1 and 2 in the Sexuality social statement and how to minister to same gendered people from that perspective.
bible study
same gender marriage service
Ideas of what a congregation should cover including what it means to love your neighbors.
Resources regarding biblical matters
A gender non specific wedding rit
It's not an issue here- we have many same gender couples and families and it's not new
Resources for probing real, underlying issues behind opposition
we have moved on
Rites for celebrating same-gender weddings
pastoral care resources
I don't believe any resoures are necessary.
Marriage conversations resources
Resources for studying the issue.
resources to talk to kids. our cong is RIC for years.
Resources for describing how change happens
Formal liturgies for same gender life events
A guide to making church building queer- and trans-friendly
Not sure
Liturgical support for weddings, etc.
addresses with transgender individuals who could be contacted for talks in, for instance, a seminary
examples of other congregational experiences
Finding other queer people to share their journey of faith.
Marriage service templates
resources for families
resouce for conseling ministers
Reconciliation resources with deeply hurt lgbtq individuals
ACTUAL STATEMENT
Not sure what would be helpful
inclusive language for church forms, donor acknowledgement, etc.
coming home materials for LGBT families, and for LGBT college students
wedding service materials
worship resources
Resources specifically for pre-marital counseling for same-gender couples
Ideas for adapting or tweaking traditional aspects of worship, Christian community, and hospitality
Left ELCA for UCC Open and Affirming
resources for talking about this in our own congregation
Wedding ceremony resources
Curriculum that respectfully presents the biblical interpretations of both sides of the Christian spectrum to help people understand why their friends believe what they do.. and to help them discover their own beliefs.
N/A
parenting guide
where in the Bible is homosexuality condoned?
liturgical resources
preparing for transgender guests
Resources discussing how many people in one's own life are LGBT.

Divorce and Relationship Break-up issues
Guide to becoming a more inviting environment.
links to Youtube videos focusing on Christians who are LGBT
healthcare & end-of-life resources
our congregation already accepts same-gender couples and people we know are gay, lesbian, etc
Review of what the current policies of the ELCA are
Worship resources, Marriage Rite
Resources for liturgy, blessing of same sex marriages
Resources addressing the origins of homophobia
I do not believe in same sex couples
Marriage ceremony
development of marriage resources for same gendered couples
Materials to support biblical teaching and not promoting modern secular agendas.
Education on LGBT clergy
We are fully LGBTQ friendly
We do have same sex couples in the congregation but there are not discussions concerning
Rite for same-gender marriage ceremony, adult education resources
Resources for families with young children
stories of LGBTQ Christians
resources for conscience bound congregations
Resources supporting marriages versus holy unions
Marriage rites and other blessings
We need resources that relate personal stories from the perspective of GLBT couples and families themselves so we can hear FROM THEM about what sort of ministry would be most helpful. My congregation is not much interested in hearing from straight people tell others how to live their lives. Also, we need liturgical resources for marriage that are appropriate for GLBT couples. The marriage rite included in the ELW could be used with only a few words changed, but copyright law does not allow us to make changes, even small ones.
Booklet to explain why some scriptures expired in the last 6 years, after thousands of years of applicability
Liturgical license to utilize the ELW marriage rite for same gender couples
liturgy and progressive language guides for older folk
Transgender resources advocacy groups
Resources around various cultural perspective on same-gender relationships
resources to provide up to date language to help folk understand terms like queer and questioning, etc
ELCA approved rites for same gender weddings for use in states where they are legal and rites for same gender relationships for those those who are in publicly accountable life long monogamous same gender relationships

Question 6: What is the intentional ministry you are doing?

Response
The usual - visiting shut-ins, hospital visits, Bible study, etc.
The couple is active in our faith community. And they are treated as two in our congregation.
at this time just intentional pastoral care
Counseling, performing weddings, reaching out to LGBTQ community.
Same gender couples are fully integrated into our congregational life and ministry. All discussions and programs for couples fully include same-gender couples.
Reconciling in Christ Ministry
Same gender couples and families participate in ministry like everyone else. They get married here, they have children, they are baptized, etc. There's really no difference. We hang a rainbow flag outside to indicate to passersby that we are open in this particular way (since being RIC means nothing to a non-Lutheran).
Informal outreach to one same gender couple that has worshiped with us before and expresses an interest in returning in the future.
assisting LGBT Persia, families, caregivers address loss and grief.
RIC congregation
We are an RIC congregation with many active same-gender couples and families. They serve in leadership and can now legally marry in our state.
We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation and our signage and website make it clear immediately that we are open and welcoming.
We live it.
We are a Reconciling in Christ Lutheran Church; we have an active ministry with very active LGBTQ members and in the community at large.
Reconciling in Christ... conversation and commitment to welcome..no intentional 'programming' at this point.
Reconciling in Christ designation
hiring a queer woman as pastor
We are a Reconciling congregation. I am an out, married, gay pastor. Through public sharing of that I have done a fair amount of counseling with people outside the congregation.
We are RIC. The pastor often has confidential conversations supporting individuals and families. The congregation regularly notes/advertises/attends events relative to LGBT families/concerns. Prayers and preaching reflect our RIC status.
Conducting marriage services for same-gender couples
Reconciling In Christ program through ReconcilingWorks. Our congregation has an intentional welcome and commitment to serving all of God's beloved.
welcoming, supporting relationships, marriage
As a person, a parent, and a straight ally, I am attending PFLAG meetings and local meetings regarding faith and sexuality issues.
Treating a family as a family and not as a token or "special case."
Music hunger relief winter relief for homeless mission support in El Salvador, Slovakia, Madagascar School Supplies for impoverished families Food pantry
Pastoral care with a married couple, of which the husband has come out Premarriage work with a same-sex couple
The church is skirting around the conversation because they are waiting from direction from the church wide office. We have LGBT families, and people who have family members who are LGBT who feel marginalized because the church is treating them like they are less than human
I wish we had an intentional ministry around this topic! I am brand new to this congregation, and it is not RIC. Some people would like to have that conversation, others are opposed. I fully support full inclusion of LGBTQ people and families into the church.
Reconciling in Christ

Question 6: What is the intentional ministry you are doing?

Response
Although we are moving to an RIC vote in January after which efforts may be more intentional in and around our neighborhood. Right now our same gender couples are all childless.
Our congregation is Reconciled in Christ, and welcomes and supports people of all genders, gender relationship statuses, ages, social status, etc.
RIC information is available; RIC logo is present on all our publications and website
Have taken a formal vote for inclusion and have a welcome statement posted on all doors.
Being a Reconciling in Christ congregation, participating with Reconciling Works' local chapter.
we are an RIC congregation & the pastor does same-gender weddings
intentional inclusion; outreach activities; full participation within the congregation
We are just starting to talk about becoming RIC.
Welcoming them as Christ in our midst.
Reconciling in Christ sine 1987 LGBTQ play integral roles as participants, members and leaders of the church We perform and host same gender marriages.
Political advocacy for state-wide same-gender marriage initiative
I work with the United States Air Force, helping support their LGBT community on base. We provide space the LGBT Community Service projects and perform same-gender marriages for them.
We have a group in our congregation whose task it is to intentionally welcome community members.
Same Sex Weddings RIC Congregation Senior Pastor is President of local ReconcilingWorks Chapter
Pre-marital and post-wedding counseling
Outreach; AIDS ministry.
Our congregation is comprised of approximately 50% GLBTQAI individuals. Most of these people are in committed relationships. Every ministry we do includes the question of how this includes/embraces this community.
We are an RIC congregation. Everything we do is intentionally integrated.
We have a couple planning a wedding.
Many things. First, and primary is welcoming with specific activity to encourage welcoming all, posters, small group and informal discussion of lifestyle and Christian attitude.
-The chapel has been used for a same gender marriage and community members have attended earlier in October 2014.
Not that I am aware of
This is a new ministry for me. Currently working with RIC congregations/pastors and will branch out from there.
It is a part of everything we do. A large percentage of the congregation is LGBT and we are at the forefront in working for equality in our community.
Active booth at Bend Pride, host PFLAG, and are public in our affirmation of marriage equality and full inclusion of the LGBT community
RIC; inclusive language in liturgy; Welcoming statement; acknowledging same gender weddings of church members;
Everyone is treated the same
I am currently a teacher, but have a masters degree from a lutheran seminary. I am simply answering questions about the small congregation I attend in the Ohio River valley.
We have at least one same-sex married couple in our congregation currently with three foster children. Also some members of our congregation, including our Pastor, have helped to establish a local gay and lesbian community resource center for advocacy and support.
Our church is openly welcoming toward same gender couples and families including weddings.
We have been a Reconciling in Christ congregation since 1999 and have LGBT people who serve in all aspects of the life of the church
Counseling, pastoral care, weddings, blessings, etc. Many of the staff members and volunteers in the ministry I am involved are in same gender relationships. We have a deliberate outreach to the LGBTQIA community that is active and well known.
offer same-gender weddings (long history) former pastor wrote guide for weddings recognition in directory listings, anniversary prayers partnered lesbian pastor on staff; spouse received benefits

Question 6: What is the intentional ministry you are doing?

Response
WE are RIC, Pastor has posted Reconciling Works flyer in bulletin through October
many marriages after the legalization of same sex marriage working on transgender issues
RIC congregation; welcoming statement; welcoming SG weddings; welcoming SG couples and their families into the life of the congregation
Weddings. We have an out gay pastor.
Reconciling In Christ congregation performing same-gender weddings of couples who are members
intentionally seeking out to engage the LGBTQ community. Marching in Pride parades
My pastor is doing marital counseling with same-gender couples.
RIC
We have two same sex couples involved with our ministry and are open to same sex weddings.
Hosting same-gender marriages. It's been an RIC congregation since 1992 and marriage equality has been a reality here for at least two years. Holy Unions were hosted prior to that.
On leave from call. Part of this process will be getting divorced and coming out of the closet.
This is tricky to answer - we have been RIC for almost 30 years and same gender couples are an important part of our community and well integrated. I think we need some resources for people transitioning. We have forums on Queer theology, an annual forum by Reconciling Works staff, we include references to same sex couples in prayers, sermons, etc. We have been "marrying" same sex couples for about 15 years.
It's a book study at the Campus LGBT Center
Our church in suburban Detroit is a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation that is truly welcoming to ALL.
I am a gay priest, married to my partner, called by two congregations. Our websites and some other materials specifically indicate that we're welcoming. Several parishioners have LGBT children or siblings.
I am an out lesbian pastor in a same-sex relationship. They are learning how to care for us as a couple/family. We also are attracting LGBTQ people, and I am an important point of contact/support.
We are RIC. We offer periodic learning events and actively reach out to the LGBTQ community
It is on the cusp and we are exploring what would be most helpful.
RIC for 7 years; 10% LGBTQ members; weddings/blessing services (not legal weddings in our state); supporting 2 out seminarians
intentionality is all are welcome. But we do not have a "group" or intentional ministry to or for LGTBQ.
We have a "Rainbow Ministry" focused on intentional welcome. We operate a booth during the local GLBT Pride Festival providing information about our congregation and inclusion in general. We also operated a "Sacred Space" booth this year. At that booth we did not advertise our church but we offered blessings, prayers, communion and conversation with anyone who wanted to stop in. Our state also addressed same-gender marriage this year and we provided adult education around this.
Advertised as RIC, connected with same gender couples
We have been RIC for 25 years and are fully inclusive and welcoming and society catching going down the path to where we've been for a couple of decades is great!
Providing a long-term, intentional worshipping community where same-gender couples and their families are welcomed into the wilderness to be called, equipped and sent by God.
The pastor publicly, through letters to the editor, makes sure the freedom of the Christian is taught so that others know gay marriage is acceptable to many Christians.
Reconciling in Christ
Conversations with fellow co-workers who are LGBT. Letting them know that I am a CLM and that my ministry is to let them know that, God made them exactly the way he wanted too and that God loves them. From that point the conversation could go anywhere.
nothing at this point
Inclusion and unconditional love.
we have several same gender families and are ministering to/with them just as we do with other families.
We are an RIC congregation and participate in Pride Events in our city.

Question 6: What is the intentional ministry you are doing?

Response
None on this topic
Welcome Statement scattered around Reno
Inclusiveness is a hallmark of our congregation's ministry.
Performing weddings
We have a "former ELM roster" pastor. Much of the "intentional" ministry is focused on the campus ministry. The ministry among adult individuals is primarily less formal and more relational. And, then we have our general family ministries, which includes, but does not specifically address, LGBT families and their unique factors.
working toward becoming Reconciled in Christ
Reconciling in Christ/Reconciling Works
We have been RIC for almost 20 years,we are located in a city open to a diverse population, we have a number of members both single and couples openly gay and in relationships. They are part of the congregation's ministry,active and involved.
NA
While our congregation does not have an intentional ministry for same-gender couples and their families, we have had same-gender couples in our congregation for many years, and they and their families are integrated into existing ministries. I don't have a good sense of whether an intentional ministry is needed at our church.
Being a Reconciling In Christ congregation that invites and welcomes LGBT
The same kind of intentional ministry that we do with all of our members and couples.
RIC congregation
Recently became an RIC congregation and looking how to live that out.
Support and counseling for same-gender couples in the "sandwich generation"--They have aging parents and adult children with medical, housing and income issues.
Meals on Wheels, Soup Kitchen, Sr. Companion, Communion delivery, driver, bible study.
There are a small group of us who firmly stand in support of diversification. Our minister, however, is reluctant to "make waves". Will not take a stand and remains neutral for political reasons.
weddings, welcome, and inclusion our pastor is gay and married we have been an RIC congregation for 14 years
Reconciling Congregation active in that purpose in varying ways
We have gay and lesbian members, including our pastor, but not couples.
We are welcoming of all
Publicize weddings, make sure our Sunday school materials show diverse families
All aspects of family and marriage counseling are available to all members, including LGBTQ.
hosting social events
Our congregation is an RIC congregation with a very explicit statement of welcome to LGBTQ people, who are involved in the leadership of the congregation at every level.
RIC ELM
We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation that advertises that fact liberally, participates in the local Pride activities with other RIC congregations, and has a lesbian staff person who organizes an LGBT gathering with the pastor once/month. We have had numerous gay and lesbian couples marry in our church, mostly members but some friends of the congregation.
I'm speaking about Advent Lutheran, NYC, where I've been part of the clergy team (but have now relocated to Minneapolis!) At Advent we have celebrated weddings for gay and lesbian couples, prayed for them in worship, honored their anniversaries, etc. Our full-time pastor has counseled same-gender couples, posts pictures of their weddings along with others in her office, baptizes babies born to same-gender couples, and all pastoral care available to any members.
Emphasis on welcoming all without mention, currently, of sexual orientation
We are, at this time, being publicly opening and welcoming. We have been hosting fundraising events for organizations that support LGBT youth in the city. We have had the opportunity to be featured in community newspapers.
We have same-gender couples who are members, and have had commitment ceremonies (before same-sex marriage was legal in PA) at the church. They are respected and well-liked members of the congregation.

Question 6: What is the intentional ministry you are doing?

Response
There is a same-gender parents small group that meets regularly.
We are a radically inclusive and hospitable RIC congregation. We had a same sex wedding going on in the church at the same time we were hosting a Boy Scout campout! We have a huge sign that says "ALL ARE WELCOME!" and we mean it.
We participate in Atlanta Pride, some same-gender couples have received counseling
Welcoming, inviting and acceptance in our Church ministry
RIC
We are helping a couple who plan to marry in our church.
Reconciling in Christ congregation
welcoming to all, weddings, blessing services, watching use of "traditional" language
Music Worship
We have been a Reconciling in Christ congregation for 10 years. We are openly welcoming to all people. We had a movie night centered around "The Bible Tells Me So" with our members and members of another local congregation who wanted to further explore the issue. We walk in the local Pride Parade to show our support of the LGBTQ community. We have an RIC service every year and our special music is provided by a local LGBTQA choir. We are continuing to explore ways to further reach out to the LGBTQ a community with the message of God's unconditional love.
Discussion regarding our pastor's role and use of the church in same gender marriages in light of recent legislation allowing same gender marriages within the state.
all are welcome
Our congregation has had talks about same gender marriage in our church for the past year; we are now doing a survey which showed that 63% of the votes indicate fully supportive of same-gender marriages being done at our church. No formal changes have been enacted at this time.
Feeding the homeless.
We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation
As the only out lesbian Lutheran pastor in the synod, and as a hospital chaplain, I'm involved in the LGBT community as a spiritual resource, and in the Lutheran and hospital community also as a resource. Pastors frequently call on me when they have questions or concerns.
We celebrate Pride month, do an annual National Coming Out Day service, support local orgs. working on full inclusion.
LGBTQ social group, congregation has hosted same sex marriage ceremonies, etc.
We have had several same-sex weddings
We're an RIC congregation with full inclusion well established. Our full welcome is on our website and everything we publish.
We are a reconciling congregation
My ministry is engaged in intentional ministry by being intentionally welcoming to all people, including explicitly welcoming LGBTQI people through welcome statements, having an out gay pastor with a husband in the congregation and treating LGBTQI people as regular members of the congregation, not a special interest group.
Our daughter is bisexual and living in NE Mpls. I would like to know of Lutheran churches in the area that may have a number of same-gender couples and also single people who are homosexual.
Active in local chapter of Lutherans Concerned, internship program for LGBTQ seminarians, pastoral care to LGBTQ persons and their families.
RIC congregation. Conduct union ceremonies.
We have many same-gender families in our congregation who have been fully welcome and present for years. We don't have any intentional ministry towards them, but this is not o say they are not present in our church.
Just accepting all who walk through the door
We have many same gender couples and we minister to all. Many of our church staff are in same gender relationships
Intentional outreach to Same-gender loving people and their families.
Promoting Reconciling in Christ Congregations

Question 6: What is the intentional ministry you are doing?

Response
We proudly proclaim ourselves a REconciling in Christ congregation. We welcome sgc/families. Although I am a short-term Interim pastor (therefore no opportunity for knowing folks over a long period of time) I sense that people here are open and strongly supportive of all.
Several of our congregations have intentional outreach to same-gender persons and families. Our synod encourages such outreach.
Weddings, general congregational participation, support for ReconcilingWorks
welcoming as we do everybody
We have been blessing same-gender couples for years, before the state recognized their marriages, and before the ELCA's decisions in 2009. We have been an RIC congregation since 1987. About half of the weddings in our congregation are same-gender.
A Welcoming Statement is written (2012) and a core value of inclusion established.
HIV/AIDS ministry
Including and welcoming them in all aspects of ministry.
We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation (for 20 years). Our pastor performs covenant ceremonies. We join with other ELCA congregations at the annual gay pride parade, and individuals are involved in legislative advocacy for LGBT individuals.
Same-sex marriages in a state that legally allows. Intentional call to gay pastor (2 years ago). Continued consideration/outreach to provide amnesty to GLBTQ immigrants or those seeking asylum.
We are a Reconciling Works congregation and have active LGBT members
LGBT worship once a month.
Word and Sacrament
The church is losing out.
Welcoming and affirming church
We hold same sex marriage services, mainly to the unchurched community.
RIC, Helping to start a LGBT center in our city
RIC congregation; participation in worship of same gender couples
Support group
Everything we do is designed to be welcoming of same-gender couples and their families. Especially because we daily encounter people who think they are not welcome in God's family. We work with an outreach program to homeless LGBTQ young adults and their families. We host gospel nights at which transgendered people perform gospel songs. We have done Bible Studies with applicable themes.
We hosted the Sonoma County Interfaith Gay Pride worship service this year. We observe RIC Sunday. We post wherever we can that we are an LGBTQ friendly congregation.
Same-sex couples are welcome to be married in our sanctuary - a duly voted upon policy by entire congregataion that is clearly noted on church web-site. Same-sex oriented persons are already a part of our staff and are openly welcomed for called pastoral positions.
We are intentionally welcoming: we are an RIC congregation. We have several members who are in same-gender marriages. (The other spouse in one case is a member of a congregation in a different denomination. In the other case the spouse is ordained member of clergy at another church, also different denomination. Our support is informal. We would like
LGBTQ youth and young adult of color - Gatherings and program called "cinema and conversation"
I'm not sure what you mean by "intentional." Our gay and lesbian members and same-gender couples participate in all aspects of ministry from council leadership roles to service ministry in the city.
We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation.
Looking toward becoming a welcoming congregation with vote at upcoming annual meeting.
We will be voting to allow same sex marriages and to becoming a Reconciling Congregation

Question 6: What is the intentional ministry you are doing?

Response
We host the ReconcilingWorks chapter, do outreach at the Pride Parade, and advertise as an LGBTQ-friendly wedding venue. We host a ministry to a neighborhood with significant numbers of people who are homeless or marginalized, and host an AIDS memorial interfaith service for people who have died of AIDS in the prior year.
My congregation presents a public welcome to all GLBT people, including couples and families, via the Reconciling in Christ program.
Children and youth
Political advocacy for human rights, outreach to couples to engage in social justice ministry.
ministry in San Francisco (ie weddings, pride festivals, justlutheran.blogspot.com, adoption blessings, blessing creating a new family, house blessings, transition blessings, name change baptism remembrance, etc)
We serve all in need as a non-profit organization.
We have been an RIC congregation (Lutherans Concerned / Reconciling Works) since 1999. We called an openly-gay/partnered Pastor in 2004 with a mandate to minister to those not being served in other churches, and specifically to LGBT people of faith.
We are an RIC community. Weached in the SF Gay Pride Parde and are supportive of a new PFLAG Group recently ford on our city.
In process of becoming Reconciling in Christ
Outreach to all people and specific advocacy to and with lgbt people
Very, very, very beginning stages of intentional discussion again. This congregation was affected by the studies leading up to and the 2009 Churchwide action concerning changes to "Visions and Expectations." Our congregation is divided, I would estimate 80% supporting ELCA decision, 20% not.
Gay Men's group
We're a Reconciling In Christ congregation, Our welcome is printed in every bulletin, a rainbow flag hangs in our lighted sign, several same-gender weddings have taken place here
Welcoming new families and offering a church home to them.
English Handbell Choir
We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation. A significant portion of our membership/attendance comprises LGBT individuals, couples and parents of same. We are intentionally welcoming and affirming.
Reconciling
ReconcilingWorks
At this time our congregation is engaged in intentional ministry to the community--we are just beginning to make ourselves a part of the community. This includes intentionally welcoming all people.
We simply have a number of members (including one of our pastors) who are in same-gender relationships. They are not singled out for intential ministry, other than being fully included in the community.
Right now it is now really Intentional...however through our youth and children's ministry..we are providing support for children of same gendered couples...
Nothing formal. PASgtors make fequent mention of LGBT people and divirsity
We have become a RIC welcoming church.
RIC congregation with same gender people involved in every aspect of church life. Membership might be 50-50% gay and straight.
New ministry for me. Currently working with RIC congregations/pastors and will branch out from there.
Gay people are integrated into every part of the congregation.
Ministry in the city of San Francisco
welcoming LGBT marriage with LGBT
Open welcome

Question 7: What is the focus of the support being provided?

Response
We do not provide support to them as having relatives of such people, but just as people.
Marriage counseling for heterosexual couples prior to marriage. I don't even know where to begin for a gay couple.
Affirmation
christian love and counsel, word and sacrament
To encourage continued engagement in the family with those relatives, and to listen to the concerns and questions of the family members.
consistent welcome worked with several of these families to become an RIC congregation
Word and Sacrament ministry, pastoral care
Our focus is full support and acceptance of same-gender relationships in society so that such relationships are no longer seen as anything other than a regular subset and variation on relationships and not needing distinct support as though they were odd in any way.
The support looks like the family support provided to any other congregant. Sickness, continuing ed, death, life, marriage.
Being supportive of family members who are supportive of their children.
Again, this implies that this is a special thing. I don't even understand this question. We do have a shelter for homeless queer youth who have been rejected by their families. In my experience, they are the ones who need the support. They are the most vulnerable. Their families are rarely open to reconciliation sadly.
Being there in a non-anxious presence.
We are unaware of any families in this situation, which says much more about our awareness than their realities.
Bereavement
People know those involved in same-gender relationships, want them involved in the community, but are uncertain about support for marriage, especially in the church.
Pastoral conversation; providing resources for families who are struggling to accept the new reality of their changing family.
a couple of people happen to be gay/lesbian. Nothing extra special is done beyond seeing each person as a beloved child of God.
We support all families and are host to a newly formed PFLAG group.
counseling and conversation
pastoral care/counseling modeling of acceptance
pastoral care
We have connected parents of children in same-gender relationships for mutual support.
Accompaniment
Our congregation is extremely GLBT friendly and has been for decades--support is for extended family members that may have other extended family members that are less supportive or in a challenging region of the country.
it is dependent upon the member's need
Sermons, individual conversations, adult forum
Pastoral counseling
love
Our focus is to create a place of welcome and comfort, a place to worship, and a place for them to, openly, be who God has created them to be. Our focus is also affirming the love that LGBT people share with their significant other by legally marrying them under God and the law in the State of Minnesota.
solid statements of support (RIC)
Treating people like human beings. (We use inclusive language, do an ALL encompassing welcome at the beginning of every worship, march in the PRIDE Parade annually, observe RIC Sunday, have RIC logo on our church signs, supported the Freedom to Marriage in our state publicly, etc.
Not sure how to answer this question. There's the usual pastoral counseling and sometimes it involves how to support parents in general. Sometimes those parents have LGBTQA children. There's also the usual home bound visits.
Pastoral care to support same-sex marriages (several).

Question 7: What is the focus of the support being provided?

Response
talking about a person in a hushed whisper is not ministry. Further marginalizing people by creating a survey to see how to "minister" to them is not living God's love for all beloved children.
There is no formal ministry at this time, but as the pastor, I do provide support to all families, including those who have relatives in same-gender relationships.
Our substitute pastor is in a same-gender relationship and an associate member of our church.
But nothing formal.
Our congregation includes many members in same-gender relationships, and their families. They receive the support of our pastors and members, just like folks in opposite-gender relationships.
We celebrate weddings for same-gender couples
I don't know.
one-on-one conversations
Sharing experiences, creating a safe and welcoming community
Walking with the families giving whatever support they require as an ally and pastor
Encouraging them as they visit and worship with their children.
care for parents of newly 'out' GLBT youth
We host Rainbow Speakers, formally PFLAG of Monterey
Pastoral Care.
Pastoral Counsel
When needed. Our focus is to provide support for all family relationships, including same-gender. While we do not have a singular program focused in this area, our ministry is broad and established enough to include such focus without hesitation.
General support.
Counseling, fellowship, Bible study
Acceptance
The family is supportive of the engaged couple, who have been in committed relationship for 8 years.
Don't know... Confidential to recipients
Informal talks to same gender couples.
Not that I aware of
Same-sex relationships are integrated into the full congregation. Other than acknowledging discrimination they may face outside our community of faith, they are not treated any differently than mixed-gender relationships
The focus is to make them feel truly welcome in a place that is health and safe for them.
Celebrating significant milestones Being intentionally welcoming
We are so far beyond this that the questions hardly apply to us. Same gender relationships have become a non-issue for our congregation. As a pastor I do counsel people in the community who are struggling with this.
On a case by case basis, helping those that grew up up in non-affirming settings make sense of the scriptures, now that they are affirming.
my church provides support to all people for all burdens. Reconciling the dissonance that is created when someone loves a relative but wishes they weren't gay can be a burden, and while other church members don't feel it is a burden...we are still there for each other. We are the body of Christ and the focus of the support is to help people realize that the "we" means everyone.
Counseling with the pastor, informal support from selected congregational leaders
We have strong allies in all generations. If someone is struggling there is someone available that they can relate to
General ministry of congregational life.
Some members of our congregation, including our Pastor, have helped to establish a local gay and lesbian community resource center for advocacy and support.
pastoral care provided by pastor
Open conversation. Inquiring about wellbeing

Question 7: What is the focus of the support being provided?

Response
Support only in being a welcoming community
Counseling, pastoral care, blessings, conversations, etc.
Keeping the like mindedness of each individual as a whole body of God's Love and not being judge and jury of their wants and beliefs of same gender situation,,
Pastor of congregation is gay, recently got married. A group of women from the congregation organized the reception.
general awareness and affirmation, encouragement
Pastoral care
pastoral counseling
conversation and acceptance
Our organist is part of a same-gender marriage. There are individual and small-groups who include the couple in fellowship, ensure that they are invited to gatherings, and pray for them on a regular basis.
We are open and affirming as are the members with family members in same-gendered relationship
caring for the pastor and her same-sex partner
I have talked and reached out to a member who is gay.
Constant affirmation to all kinds of healthy relationships is the norm here. Recognized and celebrated -- verbally and in written form, in congregational directory, etc.
Love, listening, care, attention, whatever is needed for the situation. There is openness and safety to talk about these things, as is evidenced in who we are together.
Pastor and members are all supportive of one another.
Being a sounding board and advocate for them and their family members
I believe so. On an "as needed" basis, I would imagine.
general pastoral care
conversation, friendship ("me, too"), hearty welcome for those family members when they visit
Providing a space where people can be honest about this experience. Providing a space of acceptance and relationship where their journey as a family member is listened too and honored.
general support through caring ministry
We normally are in a position where the type of counseling/support is warranted from an unchurched person or one who has turned away from their religion due to violence and inappropriate use of the bible being used to condemn and denigrate persons.
General pastoral counseling.
Reconciling in Christ
One to one and a gay men's group
Inclusion and unconditional love.
Pastoral Care
A support/advocacy group
counseling
Mainly counseling, prayer and verbal support.
we have a group called "the G men" who meet on a monthly basis, they bring to our attention areas of concern where we might be more welcoming and embrace those searching and in need.
open welcome into the worshipping community--no questions asked, no judgments made
We have same-gender couples in our church, and pastor meets with them as asked. The church is supportive even though we do not have intentional programming.
There are members who have relatives in a same-gender relationship. The support isn't anything major or official ... just the simple gifts of freedom and the safe space to talk about their relatives' relationships the same as anyone else.
Creating a welcoming and supportive atmosphere
Welcoming and sharing of info regarding our congregation's inclusivity focus/statement/actions. When appropriate, we share key congregational contact persons/groups. PFLAG meets at our church & is led by church members.

Question 7: What is the focus of the support being provided?

Response
The same kind of support we strive to give all our members.
RIC and advocacy. We support those families just like all other families
My friend and I are trying our best to help with acceptance of the GLBT folks in our congregation and our community. My friend and I have been made to feel very uncomfortable in our church because of our beliefs.
understanding, unconditional love, open conversation, weddings, welcome
personal and congregational
I don't know.
I suppose. We support all our families. Gay, straight, those with GLBT children/family members.
Welcoming space in services.
Radical, constant support and modeling of inclusivity
marriage and inclusivity
Our congregation includes many people in same-gender relationships and with family members in same-gender relationships and those families are included in the general ministries of the congregation in ways that make it clear that their families are held in equal regard.
Depends on the need.
staff member who is in a same-gendered relationship.
I really don't know what support is available.
Pastoral care/private conversations
Our congregation has baptized the children of a same sex couple who is the daughter of a member.
The congregation accepts/supports the reality of our families. There is seldom open conversation about this, rather a live and let live kind of spirit....
for all parents, we provide caring conversation, grace-filled preaching, and life-encouraging gifts in the bread & wine of communion.
Inclusion into life of congregation and encouraging nonjudgmental.
We minister to each other during knitting group, church basement activities.
By providing support I mean we treat same-gender couples the same as anyone else.
Pastoral counseling
Conversation, listening, availability as they and their child figure out relationship, family, and community issues.
Informal
I am sure that we are but I don't know about specifics.
Open for the conversation
We love, welcome, and invite regardless of sexual orientation.
Opportunities for family members to talk.
Accepting and support to families with various definitions
12 week weekly exploration of what the Bible says about homosexuality.
working toward full acceptance
Unconditional support and affirmation
Basicly it is discussions/messages on Facebook with people on my Friends list who have LGBT family members and are stressed at the disclosure. i try to guide them away from the hate that certain segments of society wants them to inflict on theiir family member and show them how Christ dealt with sinners in LOVE.
We provide a worshipping community where people know that they are loved and accepted and where the conversation around LGBTQ issues is not avoided. As the Pastor I am involved in the local PFLAG group. We are currently looking at other ways to reach out.
Marital support & equity regarding healthcare & end-of-life care & decision-making for same gender couples.
Not positive, but I believe our pastors do offer conseling and support to those families who have a gay family member. I believe that is a great thing to do and I'm glad we do it.

Question 7: What is the focus of the support being provided?

Response
Informal conversation and accompaniment.
unstructured except for affirmation
Listening, offering emotional and spiritual support, as well as community resources (printed materials, PFLAG, people for this person to talk to)
We are in community with each other, praying for and with each other, eating together, etc.
Being supportive and listening to concerns of the family.
We have many students who are in Same Sex relationships. Their families are welcome on campus.
Acceptance
Individuals to talk to
we have no openly LGBT members
Yes, in the sense that the ministry supports all its members, including ones whose family members are in all kinds of relationships and family situations.
general care and thoughtfulness
As a mother I am concerned about the recent separation of our daughter and her partner for 6 years.
Pastoral care, blessing of unions.
Personal counseling
Ministering to them
We accept these relationships as part of the norm
Encouraging parents of LGBTQ people
Conversation, answering questions, addressing fears and concerns
Informal support. No programs have developed specifically to address same-gender relationships.
Informal support. Support for everyone, including people in same gender relationships.
Long-term acceptance
Most of our congregations don't find a need to do this in an intentional way.
I am the Gay family member and I am married to my partner. Our congregation has long been accepting of us and others, but I always do what I can to encourage everyone. We can also offer valuable support to heterosexual couples, as our experiences are really quite similar.
Conseling
informal
We publicly and intentionally honor same-gender relationships. We also recognize that God does not call everyone into marriage as a normative state.
Listening and pastoral counseling.
Pastoral conversation...and one wedding!
Nothing specially targeted for "family members who have a relative"....but the Welcoming Statement has drawn into the congregation parents of gay sons and daughters.
pastoral support and counseling
congregational support
Pastoral care and a focus on inclusion in all aspects of ministry.
As it would be for other couples.
Christian love that neither Jesus nor God (or my congregation) judge GLBTQ as other than loved children of God.
We show empathy to those family members and explain to them that, contrary to popular secularism, the "same-gender" participants are indeed still sinning.
It's shameful the church is so judgemental and medieval in its attitude that it doesn't reach out to those people.
Pastoral care.
Listening ear.

Question 7: What is the focus of the support being provided?

Response
We have same sex members with children in our congregation. They were part of our worshiping family before Church-wide ever knew such folks existed. Our support is as friends.
personal support
Personal contacts
COLAGE
We provide a place where they can talk, ask questions, and express themselves openly.
They are fully welcomed in our congregation
Emotional support in the form of frequent socializing with families who have same-gender relationships very much in evidence.
Not sure
Our support is informal. As an RIC congregation, we are intentionally inclusive and welcoming. Simply being a part of the congregation provides support to those who have a relative in a same-gender relationship. We do not have formal support (such as a support group.) Pastoral counselling is always available.
Still in the beginning stage. But have reached out to some parents,
It is the same support given to all families in the community of faith, i.e., prayer, compassion, love.
Unknown
preaching the good news of Jesus to transform lives
Pastoral conversation
Non anxious Pastoral care
For many in my congregation who have family members who are GLBT, it's very important to them that we are a welcoming church and we are willing to say so out loud and in public.
Hope not. Why should we encourage people to continue sinning. Everyone of us is a sinner, but it is rare that a sinner will claim God's Word suddenly doesn't apply anymore.
Materials and consultation with pastors who are working with same-gender couples in pre-marriage counseling.
love and care - it's a normal thing here, so the care is the same as any family
We provide food and health screenings to all
All usual congregational support to individuals. For example, we have gay and lesbian couples in the membership, some of whom have or currently do elder-care.
Meaningful worship which is GLBT welcoming.
none that I am aware of - shouldn't that be private anyway?
Housing advocacy and resources for counseling to those who have a need for gender resources or abuse issues
Pastoral support to LGBT individuals and families. Pastoral support to "anti-LGBT" individuals and families. Theological discussion and prayer. Continued followup and discussion.
Yes and no. We're supportive of such family members in terms of pastoral care needs but have no formal support system.
Holy unions, church support, inclusion...
Unconditional acceptance for people in general! We are a Reconciling in Christ Congregatiin
All are welcome. All are considered God's children. Parents have become a part of our congregation and have referred others to it for this reason.
Reconciling
LGBTQ outreach coordinator providing referrals
Loving acceptance, gentle guidance, open conversation
I believe this support happens informally.
Support and prayer
Individual contacts and supj[port. No organized program
One on one, pastoral care, flag meetings, openings -- an ecumenical support group.

Question 7: What is the focus of the support being provided?

Response

love - the same as everyone else in the congregation

providing a listening ear; being very clear that everyone is welcome; letting family members know that if anyone is rude or mean to come directly to the pastor and I will have a conversation with the rude/mean individuals. Providing various resources

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response
More needs to be done to integrate perspectives 1 and 2 (page 20) of the social statement into the total program of the ELCA.
recognize that we are all not in the same place on same gender matters
I think it's important that our conversations include talking about ways of love and support without affirming what many still deem as sinful behavior. I think we also need to talk about ways to minister to celibate homosexuals as well.
My congregation needs first to encounter a same-gendered couple before they are going to need resources to minister to them.
It is difficult to talk with other pastors and synod folks about these conversations. The assumption is that because I and my congregation were opposed to the 2009 decisions, we must be against acting in Christian love to those who are LGBT, or in same-gender relationships. I wish I could have more constructive conversations with my colleagues when these pastoral questions come up. I feel like I am on my own.
Currently I am on a team in the Montana Synod to create a teaching document for the Human Sexuality Social Statement. Just being part of this process has helped me tremendously to speak about same-gender relationships.
The 2009 "vote" has caused much division, with the great majority initially acknowledging there is absolutely NO Biblical basis for so-called same sex "marriage"! If the "state" wants to set up civil unions, so be it, BUT to say that those engaged in homoerotic relationships can be "married" is an impossibility from a scriptural view!
I'm confused, should we treat same gendered relationships differently than others? Is not respecting each individual as a child of God, beloved by God not sufficient? Or am I somehow naive?
Right now we just need to get the conversation started. We are a major Don't ask don't tell style church.
I'm not sure. I guess my hope is that such conversations would help families to accept their children regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity (i.e. if they are transgender).
My brother has married his partner; my daughter has a partner. I work with people without judgment. But neither my brother nor daughter lives in my state, so the question of how to support is not immediately germane.
Need resources for managing anxiety, as some people believe just talking about these issues leads us down a path toward disunity
N/a
Mostly need folks to be more non-anxious on this issue. Hear often about the steady decline or slippery slope our nation is on. Anything to address the historical nature of homosexuality and bringing it forward into today would help.
this congregation had extensive dialogue, heated debate, voted on the issue, settled the issue several years ago, is open and welcoming to gay individuals/couples, has made that known to the community, and is ready to move on.
I'm not aware of anyone struggling with their sexual orientation or identity at this time.
We live as a family in our church community. We are not a "gay church" but a diverse community. We have families that contain LGBT members but they are members first. We attend to each others needs regardless of what they are.
It would be helpful if the ELCA actually were bolder in support of LGBTQ issues such as discrimination, violence, homelessness, etc.
My particular context is a consolidation of three congregations, one of which was terribly divided by the ELCA's decision on human sexuality, the other where there was nary a ripple and the third probably wasn't even aware there is such a thing as LGBT's. Because of the raw-ness still from the aftermath of the first congregation, I am, at this point, reticent to "poke a skunk."
More use of out, LGBT clergy! Most non-LGBT people, though of great help, have not walked in our shoes.
This initiative is a great example of what's wrong with the ELCA and the direction it's heading -- so far removed from the Bible. We need to focus on bringing people together and not labeling groups and catering to one group over another. Stop your liberal, divisive agenda. Focus on having real, Bible-based, discipleship-focused church. Communities will grow organically from authentic, meaningful relationships with the church and its people. They don't grow from manufactured, man-made agendas.
ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation has a marriage resource, and other resources on ministering to same gender couples. I know that they are always wishing to expand resources, make resources better and get those resources in the hands of pastors and lay leaders along with the corresponding training. I would be in close contact with them if you truly wish to minister to same gender couples using appropriate language and practices.

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response
In the congregation where I am a member, the pastor believes that orientation is not wrong but intimate relationships are. I disagree with him but do not wish to undermine his pastoral authority.
We're pasted the conversation. We've been welcoming since 1992.
My husband--we are a same-gendered married couple--is out as a gay and married pastor of the ELCA and serving as interim to a large suburban congregation with many young families. I am present as would any other pastor's spouse and attend every service and function. Our presence has provided the Quiet Witness, and it has been powerful. This has been our third congregation to do this.
The human dignity and worth of LGBT people and families have been on display and up for debate for far to long. LGBT can be evicted from their homes and fired from their jobs in 29 states and we as the church question how to minister to them. We are called to care for and love our neighbors not drag them into the public square and put their human worth up for debate. The Church should be a place of sanctuary, not a vessel of harm and shame for LGBT.
I think framing the question of inclusion around families is a good way to start the conversation. People in my congregation are hesitant to talk about LGBTQ issues, but may engage easier around how to support families. It may be helpful to have someone outside the community come lead these conversations.
All believers are part of the body of Christ. It's crucial that the ELCA become a force for sharing Christ's inclusive message, and welcoming all sisters and brothers.
I think its really important to address why some people are against LGBTQ inclusion if it doesn't involve them...there's usually a pastoral care issue therein...maybe something that requires professional counseling.
We are just starting this process. I wish there were guides on having small group conversations. Something like sample questions.
We could use resources on becoming a queer- and trans-friendly congregation (in addition to materials on same-sex couple households). Queer people and families come in a lot of forms and we do not want to exclude anyone by assuming that all queer families include two parents - who want to be married - and kids.
The Reconciling in Christ program, Building An Inclusive Church, and other Reconciling Works resources have been very helpful in our decision to become a RIC congregation and to extend our ministry to include blessing all lifelong monogamous relationships regardless of gender. Resources to help congregations navigate those conversations in the midst of changing laws regarding same gender marriage would be helpful.
Pamphlets for family members addressing theological and practical questions
Conversations around establishing networks of same-gender families when an inclusive congregation still has a rather small yet growing number of such families. How does the "welcome" extend when a few families might still feel isolated?
Resources to encourage congregations to have the conversation.
Materials for guiding intentional, group discussions (including acceptance of Transgender persons) would be welcome. Our LCM college group is likely to have interest in open discussion topics like this. We currently have a young adult Transgender person who is a regular worship attender.
My congregation is mostly retired persons, but our pastor is open to working with same gender couples should the opportunity present itself.
My partner & I have been members of this church for years. We got legally married a few months ago out of state. Upon returning our pastor recommended a blessing of the rings service in our church to recognize us and invite our friends. It was a grand occasion.
I think it would be helpful to show more normalcy of same gender couples in the everyday life and to integrate them into the average parish settings.
Resources for same-gender wedding counseling would be great. Also, the way question 7 is asked it sounds as if having a relative in a same-gender relationship is equivalent to having a relative who is in a 12 step program.
As a new young adult pastor, one of the reasons that the congregation wanted to call me was to help them think about how to be more open to the needs of everyone in this community. On day 3 of this call, I'm still trying to figure out the game plan for how we do that but I know that ministry to same gender couples and families will be part of that.

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response

the process is different for everyone. Some churches (mine) are in a great place. others struggle. you have to evaluate the specific community and assess what actions should be taken. In a welcoming inclusive church...it's not as necessary to talk about same gender relationships (unless you're also talking about opposite gender relationships). If you're at a church that is exclusive and doesn't welcome lgbt people, then its definitely appropriate to discuss those things. Also, change doesn't happen over night. The more demanding you are that people be inclusive the longer it will take for people to genuinely get there. You have to be patient with them while they are patient with you...it's a tricky balance to find.

Respectfully. Also treat it like it is normal and not taboo.

"Safe" middle of the road people willing to tell their story of gentle transformation. People super committed to LGBTQ inclusion won't help our congregation. Normal people who can engage the conversation, hear and lower anxiety, and make it be no big deal. I don't have energy to fully lead this conversation as the Pastor. An alternative is to start conversations subtly within the congregation for those who are interested. A lot of folks are too unhealthy to actually engage it. Another idea is to bring in a high profile speaker to the community to have dialogue and share stories. For our conservative folks we have to find a way to value their faith and place in the world.

With tender loving care in an old struggling congregation.

Families know we are open and welcoming. We have not had an issue about it.

The ELCA needs to continue to take the lead on LGBT Equality issues in America.

Conversations are very divisive and there are many people that are not educated on the issues.

PLEASE EXPLICITLY INCLUDE THINGS THAT AFFIRM TRANSGENDER PEOPLE! The acronym LGBT includes the T as well, and for trans folks, marriage rites are NOT the most critical need. Affirmation of transgender people could include rites for new names, anointings/blessings/prayers to affirm a gender different than one's birth, etc. I pray that the church will think more broadly about its outreach to all of the LGBT community and can be a place that welcomes and affirms trans people - who don't have a lot of safe places out there.

As a long-time RIC congregation our LGBT members and guests are fully integrated into the life of the congregation, and no special actions are being taken at this time. However, the sermon frequently mentions LGBT (along with other minority/marginalized groups) and if pastoral care is requested it is provided.

church policy is strictly a don't ask, don't tell policy, could still blow up into the congregation leaving the church if the pot was stirred about same gender couples.

I think for sure that teens and young adults should not be talked to about it,, but have resources available to them when they become curious about it,, and a confidential situation between all involved whether adult, teen or elder,,

For what it's worth, we're a Reconciled in Christ congregation with a number of LGBT members. When I first started there, the new pastor was lesbian, and was there for 17 years before retiring to take a Seminary position. Gay is considered normal.

I am the only out person in my congregation--and recently married my wife. Everyone is very welcoming and supportive. Yet now what? Not great being the only person even so....looking for ways to be more intentional beyond MY presence!

Our congregation is enriched by the presence of our same-genedered couples. Together we uphold one another.

Just need resources we can use to begin having these conversations in our congregation

Keep it in the forefront. Be affirming and supportive.

I believe my congregation has deliberately avoided having this conversation given other divisions. More "upper level" discussions such as articles in The Lutheran and synod rsolutions would keep the topic active while we work out other issues.

We need to stop tip toeing around the whole bound conscience thing.

Resources on how to start and continue the conversation - congregation is largely supportive but afraid to "make waves" - how to overcome that hurdle

Although we have been actively RIC in practice for 7 years, it's mostly been welcome and inclusion of those who come to us, less an intentional outreach to those who may be marginalized.

Our council president is a married gay man. We have been blessed to do baptisims for same sex couple's children. For us it is a way of being not a ministry.

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response
Invite people representative of the LGBT population to share their story and reach out to LGBT non profit organization to receive education about proper terms and recommendations to make church forms, materials, etc friendly to the population. Ex: Spouse/partner; Married/committed relationship
As a pastor, my personal view and my congregations' view do not always match. Nor, do I believe they necessarily must. Just because we are not having the conversations (congregation's choice) does not mean that it is not desired on my end. But it has been slow.
This seems to be for staff not members of the congregation
The biggest conversation is in regards to rites for blessings or marriages and blessings of families.
Council recently approved unanimously a statement on same gender marriage to include this ministry.
1) It is important for the ELCA to be "God's Grace" (surprising, joyful/tickled, embracing, utter and genuine) expressed and recognized by its work/practice throughout the World (local as much as Global) in contrast to what today's population sees as "Religion." 2) LGBT couples and families, which may include non-Church and "recovering, formerly-Churched" along with "by nature" and adopted children/young adults, heavily reflect our society and its challenges. 3) For me, the humble, self-evidence of (Lutheran-styled) Grace (as social justice/action and interpersonally), and the fact that Lutherans' God is not "too small" (to reference JB Phillips) bound to single interpretation, or leader, or creed have been a welcoming change from the norm. That said, I think the intention should be more "adoptive," emulating God's adoption and yet also drawing parallels to and from society and the practice throughout time.
I'm wondering about a rite of marriage for same-sex couples. We have included gay clergy on our roster in committed relationships, but we still have not resolved the issue of a more inclusive marriage ceremony. That is an issue in working with gay couples, which we are trying to do as an RIC congregation.
I'm not sure. We gained new members after the church's big vote a few years ago, when 2 local churches left the ELCA, but we are not a RIC congregation, which I find unfortunate. It's a slow process.
Another congregation renting space in our building decided to find another place when rainbow flags were hung by the doors. This might have been an opportunity for conversation, but we didn't know how ... and the others might not have chosen to engage in dialog.
Please, as you all work on this issue, do not assume this issue is resolved for all congregations. This has potential to rip the proverbial scabs off of wounds.
I believe the ELCA has made a mistake by following a secular lead. The church is supposed to lead, not follow.
We will be having one on one conversations with church leaders & long time active members in the coming months based upon our RW training.
A same-gender couple with a child attend our church
Our town and congregation are very accepting as a whole. We've been RIC since the 1980s. I think recourses for counseling and liturgies to celebrate their milestones and life passages would be helpful. I have seen the ELW marriage rite used with some adaptation for same sex couples and both services were lovely. However, lists of readings/hymns/prayers/prefaces that aren't so man/woman focused would be helpful. I also think prayers and possible liturgies for youth as they make sense of their sexuality and come out would also be meaningful. Also resources to talk about the gift of sex with youth that go beyond sex is only for procreation. For both straight and LGBT youth this would be incredibly valuable. They would learn that their bodies are a gift from God and they should share them with others carefully, intentionally, and lovingly.
Our church has been RIC for over 25 years.
As a small congregation, most of our conversations are congregationally informal, with discussions in various moments in the life of the church. We are not a programmatic church, so it is difficult to have "intentional" ministry as we attempt to support each other in all avenues.
Our (Texas) congregation's boomers and silent generation members need basic help associating with same-gender couples: vocabulary, relative degrees of privacy and out-ness, aspects of parenting, etc. Most have never met a same-gender couple, to their knowledge.
I am no longer in a position to influence an ELCA church. As a council member I motioned to become RIC 7 years ago another person said "people vote with their feet." This year my wife and I did just that and am now a member of an O & A UCC church. Upon arrival a former Methodist said she had done the same. It is not relevant that there are no GLBT-Q members in our families. What is relevant is to love one's neighbor. Perhaps the great commission in the sense that there are GLBT-Q believers that just need to be assured that they are safe and welcome.

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response
Our minister has initiated conversations almost with an apologetic demeanor. I think if she had more conviction regarding the issue, it would be extremely helpful. I'm not all that sure how she feels.
It is very important that congregations have these resources so that folks who have not been intentional about learning about this kind of ministry, have resources to utilize.
reconciling congregation has this in the forefront
Any ideas you offer would be so appreciated.
The conversations have stopped in the last two years, prior to that there was a lot discussion.
Openly lesbian pastor
We are all sinners and all children of God. All people are welcome in the church to seek salvation. But- we must repent of our sins. Being told that we must accept a sinful behavior is wrong.
My primary setting for ministry in the past 17 years has been as professor in an ecumenical seminary. I have presided at several same-gender weddings (and before weddings, commitment services and holy unions). When we offered workshops on weddings, I always included same-gender resources, liturgies, and counseling materials. Unitarian Universalists have some of the most in-depth resources in print. Of course these would need to be modified for use in Lutheran settings, but we don't need to do everything from scratch. Many couples want a marriage rite that is close to the service available in ELW; some want changes including more feminist language. I think we need suggestions for honoring couples' anniversaries, counseling for gay and lesbian couples considering parenthood, resources for parents whose children come out, and theological resources. In my wedding workshops I have often used the theological statement developed by Paul Tiedeman and Anita Hill at St. Paul Reformation Church many years ago. It's not a bad place to start. I'd be happy to talk to the working group about my experience at Union, at Our Saviour's Atonement and at Advent (both congregations in NYC).
We have recently become officially RIC. We have had families with LGBT children in the past and have some LGBT members at this time. While we have no specific ministry our congregation is fundamentally welcoming.
Our congregation experienced significant membership loss after the ELCA social statement on Human Sexuality in 2009. Our previous pastor seemed to agree with the members who left our congregation and picked favorites with them. A new called pastor began ministry in September of 2013. Generally, people have avoided conversation about "the gay issue" in attempts to avoid any more potential controversy from members who left our congregation and may be planning to return.
We have a number of same-gender couples in the congregation, though they are mostly childless. We have one couple looking to adopt, and we also have a couple with a young daughter where one member of the couple is transgender. For us, it would be helpful to have resources regarding how to structure family ministries creatively, getting away from the mom's group/dad's group assumptions. Also resources for helping kids with same-gender parents feel prepared to answer questions from their peers about their family situation.
Need info on the biology, physiology, psychology, continuum of LGBTQ individuals and couples.
Loved Nadia Bolz-Webers recent video on FB. We need clear leadership from the ELCA. Now that marriage is legal in Iowa, our pastor should be able to perform the ceremony.
We need support material and understanding for those members who believe that same sex sexual active is a sin. We also need support for those who are gay and do not want to be involved in sexual relationships because of their faith.
While there are many issues and conversations to have. But as a gay person who is involved in the church I feel like sometimes I am either not supposed to talk about being gay because of the setting or am specifically pointed out for being gay.
The first thing would be to publicly confront the passages randomly selected from Leviticus that are commonly used in many Christian congregations to denounce and disparage homosexuality. These same "Christians" carte blanche ignore bordering passages of which they are all guilty and which they conveniently ignore.
I would like to see a guide for a group of people, open to anyone in the congregation and community, whatever their beliefs about same-gender relationships, to talk openly about issues and concerns, hear from others who see life differently, and work toward Christlike care for all. (Similar to anti-racism workshops?)
It would be helpful to have one resource (perhaps drawing from Journey Together Faithfully, the social statement on sexuality, through Reconciling in Christ process, the work of Matthew Vines and others from the evangelical welcoming movements) that could make the biblical, theological and psychological/mental health pastoral care case for "position four" that spoke not in lofty and complicated nuances but in plain, down to earth, accessible language that would help those who want to move from "positions three to one" to "position 4".

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response
The conversation was during the call process and subsequent visiting the community while searching for housing. I know that conversation has taken place in the past and know that it will continue, now with me, the new pastor in place. I'm not sure where to start or where to go in the conversation.
I love how inclusive my congregation is. The more loving we are, the more people show up. We now have a gay married couple and a lesbian couple expecting a baby. And everyone loves these people.
My congregation is of the "don't ask, don't tell" variety and I think that these conversations need to be brought out into the open. I have tried to start an LGBT support group but have not received any support from either my senior or assistant pastor
Conversations about the similarities between same-gender and opposite gender couples would help. We are all one.
I wish my congregation would start this conversation, but they haven't!
It's time to abandon this focus that has no biblical support and move back to supporting ministries that have the biggest impact. This is a distraction and has negatively affected our membership and our ecumenical relationships.
Take the whole story before judging a biblical passage - and consider when it was written before thinking that homosexuality is sinful.
Well there is the ministry of Matthew Vines called The Reformation Project which I would love to see the ELCA support in its goal of affirming same sex LOVE. Meaning commitment to each other not wanton sex outside marriage. Also if the ELCA could make clear its stand on passages of scripture he feels are being misinterpreted. If I could cite that the ELCA is onboard with the goal of that group it would carry a LOT of weight to convince people there are Christian churches who will accept their LGBT family member and also will not judge them as failures for not preventing the life the family member has.
Start & end all conversations in prayer. Constant reinforcement that conversation be respectful of those with differing opinions.
How do the four positions speak biblically?
I don't know why we bring this topic into our church. I feel that a small group has "hijacked" the church I grew up in and has pressed the congregation into performing same-gender marriages in our church. Same-gender marriages are not normal; I don't think we should be promoting or stamping our approval on these marriages. I do believe we should work with same gender couples and have them in our church and love them like brothers and sisters.
Same-gender couples are loved and supported as all couples are. We forget sometimes that ongoing conversation needs to be had as new members arrive. For us there is a broader dialogue about hospitality, inclusion, and diversity that helps, but intentional theological and practical conversations still need to happen.
Our congregation is led by an out lesbian pastor--these conversations are natural and integrated into many aspects of our work together. It would be helpful to have lgbtq welcome integrated into other materials, rather than always being specifically distinct. Though, we do need (NEED) marriage rites that are endorsed by the churchwide entity. Other worship materials that recognize the spiritual toll of injustice would also be helpful (and this would serve a far larger audience than the lgbtq community).
These questions are somewhat awkward and don't seem to be getting at anything important. It's unclear what this data will do for the working group...
We're probably ready for more info on political advocacy.
While I understand that people all over the country are in different places about LGBTQI ordination and same-sex marriage, I think the most positive thing the ELCA could do for this conversation is to include LGBTQ people in the church by treating them as normal members of their church communities and their relationships and families as valuable. This can be done in ELCA publications, conversations and on a congregation-by-congregation basis. Treating LGBTQI people as an issue instead of as our friends, neighbors, pastors, family members and selves only perpetuates the problem we have as a church of making this group of people (who are not alien, but are among our congregations already and have been for many years) seem alien and threatening to those who are fearful of change.
I cannot give her advice directly, but I'm interested in helping her find a Lutheran church that would give her support at this time.
Raise up voices of LBGtQ people both inside and outside the church when developing these resources.

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response
My church formally voted to allow same-sex marriages to take place at our congregation, following the state's decision to legally allow same-sex marriage. Our vote was unanimous, but we're probably an enigma in the ELCA. As more and more states legalize same-gender marriage, churches need resources on what their options are with regards to the changing laws.
our congregation is way ahead of the curve
The conversations about LGBTQ inclusion/welcome should be paired with conversation that is relevant and helpful for people of every gender identity and sexual orientation. Comprehensive sex-education.
Please quit shoveling this stuff at us. These people are welcome in our church but we do not need to condone their sins.
In the e-mail, there was a question about changing ELCA marriage liturgy. Let's wait until same gender marriage is legal in all states. And, same gender couples wanted to have the same rights as traditional married couples. I believe they would be insulted if the marriage liturgy was dramatically changed.
The only resources I can think of that we might need are ones that will enhance the welcome of same-gender couples in congregations in which not everyone agrees that they should be welcomed. It is very difficult to say "You and your spouse are welcome here, but not everyone you meet may feel that way." Our challenge is not how to work with same-gender couples as much as it is how we work with congregations where some members are welcoming and some are not. Sometimes all it takes is one negative comment to sour the welcome a congregation makes a great effort to express.
I rather disagree with the premise of this survey that LGBTQ should somehow be treated differently or require a separate ministry from "regular" people.
we have one same gender couple who are members.
For congregations still wrestling with this issue, I think getting to know real people in real situations is the most effective tool we have.
printed resources would be helpful
I am strongly against the ELCA developing and voting on a separate liturgy for same gender weddings--or an new liturgy that could be used for both hetero- and same-gender weddings. We never voted specifically on the current ELW marriage liturgy. I don't think the Churchwide Assembly should ever vote on specific liturgies.
There is a very warm welcome to lgbt folks in our congregation, but we need liturgies available for same-sex couples to more formalize our support. (Both couple blessings for those states not currently allowing gay marriage, and inclusive marriage rites for those that do.)
We are an RIC congregation and could benefit from resources on next steps/living into being RIC - having a welcoming, accessible building and ministry.
I agree we are just beginning with the bulk of the ELCA congregations unsure/uncertain and afraid to proceed when dominated by a blend of the four convictions.
We have had very good discussions in a few of our adult forum offerings over the past few years on this topic. I believe those discussions have served to bring our congregation together and support the goal of full participation and inclusion of all couples and families, irregardless of sexual orientation.
Please deeply consider how to reinforce all four convictions with the same vigor. Since the 09 decision only one of the four has received any attention. Further we have many other blended families and those need care as well.
The ELCA needs to have leadership that support and promote the teachings of the bible instead of modern secularism.
I look forward to having the council address the "continuing resolution" added to "get them through" the difficult time they were having prior to my arrival, used in an attempt to "appease" those members threatening to leave, who left anyway.
As I would like more same sex couples to join the church, I would find it hard to focus on this area, at the exclusion of the hetero families with children that need and desire recognition for their children.
More written info of acceptance from ELCA
We have published a small catechism that is directed at the LGBTQ community. It has proved a valuable resource to people who come asking questions and looking for a message of hope, love, and mercy.
I know through previous casual conversation that there is a wide range of opinions regarding this subject in this community of faith. I am wondering whether opening a conversation would be prudent at this time, or is it better to let sleeping dogs lie?

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response
Your intro states that you are "intentionally seeking responses from each of the 4 convictions in the ELCA Social Statement." Based on the past 5 years watching the ELCA, and the loss of 1 million members, I really don't think you are concerned about 3 of the 4 convictions. If you ever truly want to listen, I believe there are many members who would like that. However, I don't believe you are honestly concerned about reconciling with the 1 million souls who have left the ELCA in the past 5 years.
We have had an early position of support and advocacy for GLBT individuals, spouses, couples, and families. However, now this focus has been reduced, as we turn to other issues of social justice.
This congregation has been at the forefront of advocacy for LGBTQ persons since 1984. That support has neer wavered in the past 30 years.
We need strong leadership from the Presiding Bishop, Conference of Bishops, and Synodical Bishops to define how we are going to implement our social statement and revised ministry policies. Otherwise, pastors have no "cover" to do anything and we are subject to everyone's individual feelings on the matter.
If we had resources to help with adult education or youth education on the topic of same-gender relationships, that would be helpful. It's not clear that a support group is needed. As the congregation as a whole becomes more supportive, our members in same-gender relationships are regarded and treated in the same way as a member in an opposite-gender relationship. Experiencing this is in and of itself providing support to members who have a relative in a same-gender relationship.
I am gay pastor of color with a loving family. I do not have many model leadership to learn from. But I find some support which is helpful. My interest is in the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality. I learned that sometimes LGBTQ of color feel not fully welcome in the progressive predominantly monocultural churches. I know that it will be a challenge for me to find a call, but I believe in the centrality of the gospel and its practice in our church. I hope that the outcome of this survey will be useful into making gospel a reality or experienced truly by many in our community!
I feel like many (NOT all) in my congregation are decades back in time...and happy to be there. It does not seem likely that this conversation will take place in the near future, though I would welcome it.
I think it will be important for this task force to make it clear that we are talking about same-gender COUPLES. The church needs to be proceeding from the FACT that these couples are couples, and not be in the business of supporting anyone who is trying to break up these couples or somehow pretend they don't exist as couples. We need to be welcoming. Yes, there are differences of opinion in our church about these things, but there is still a need for leadership, and we must choose to do what is best for families. The task force's work isn't about everybody finding their own opinion represented, but rather should be about supporting GLBT couples and families.
Be honest to people and let them know that what they are doing is wrong and help them to overcome their predispositions. We know it will be hard for them, but they can do it!
While my congregation simply includes same-gender families into the congregation without additional or specific intention, our experience when we travel is very different. We often are not welcomed in ELCA settings when we travel, which is offensive. While our daughter is two young to note it yet, the fact that this would happen in the ELCA or any church preaching the Gospel is quite the abomination.
I understand that there may be a need to minister to same gender couples. However we have many other types of blended families and some members who feel strongly that the most conservative expression in the CY09 be also reinforced. Please deeply consider why only one of the four expressions gets attention. We have many traditional marriages that could use some focused ministry too.
I do not feel materials representing positions 1 or 2 can really be supportive of same-gender couples and their families. I am not pleased with this direction from the Task Force.
Don't assume people are against it or need to change their mind. Our conversations are about sadness of other church spaces that discriminate -in and outside of the ELCA. Also, the word gender is being used incorrectly in your language. Some transgender education, might help to understand how this language can be harmful to individuals outside of the group I think you are trying to talk about. I understand why this word is chosen as a better choice than some others... but it's also harmful.
We could use smaller/shorter resources that may be helpful to visitors as to why our congregation and the larger church are open to same-gender individuals, couples and families.

Question: 8. Please include any other comments you may have on how the conversations could be enhanced.

Response
Practical resources for pastoral leaders -- specific support materials for adolescents. We've only lost two families specifically over "the ELCA decision." However, the topic is constantly under discussion in unhealthy ways. I want guidance (beyond my own personal instincts) on how to bring this to the forefront of conversation knowing that just doing that will add more anxiety to a struggling conversation. I would like the LGBT issue to not to be the scape-goat for people to blame for leaving this congregation, when they have been in the process of leaving for the last 20 years. People have other issues that they fundamentally won't address.
My Pastor and my church family are very welcoming and loving. They make us feel we are part of the congregation in every way. I'm not sure there is any way to improve the conversations. We are very pleased.
Emphasize character, values, and talents rather than sexual orientation!
Partner with ReconcilingWorks. There is nothing to be gained by reinventing the wheel regarding study materials and human resources.
By encouraging the pastor and congregation council to permit open discussion of same-gender relationships in adult and youth study sessions.
The issue is NOT sexuality, but marriage. The issue is not "same sex in monogamous relationships" but a cogent, theologically sound set of norms for ordination.
Make sure that bisexual and transgender folks are included the welcome, too. Things have changed radically for same-sex couples in the past decade--including welcome in many congregations. People who are transgender still face so much hostility--and we desperately need the church to be a place of compassion and understanding for them, too.
Need Help dealing with children and middle school youth in a same-gendered family...particularly the bullying they have experienced
help find ways to talk about it without alienating people who are adamantly against same sex couples
A year-long intentional program of education and stories to move forward. The pastors and council are probably afraid of too rapid a pace of moving because of losing more members when we have already dropped a lot.
stop assuming people are against the issue or need their mind changed
We have welcomed gay and lesbian members for some time, but there were more questions and inflammatory comments with our first openly transgendered person. The difficulty for me as pastor was conducting conversations around transgendered persons without making the transgendered person in our assembly into an object or example for everyone else. These conversations would have been good to have had along with the formal conversations we had around welcoming people who identify as lesbian and gay from the beginning.

Appendix F: Resource Bibliography List

The Ministry to and with Same-Gender Couples and Their Families (M2SGF) working group utilized the following resources in its comprehensive study. These resources have been grouped into 3 general categories: 1) resources on how to hold conversations on difficult topics. (these are general and not necessarily tied to the topic of sexuality); 2) resources more specifically on ministry to and with same gender families; and 3) resources related to same gender couples including premarital counseling and liturgical resources. These resources have been drawn from a variety of sources including the ELCA's ecumenical partner denominations, other denominations, and the US Military Chaplaincy.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Internet searches will lead to more resources as they are being developed continually. No attempt has been made to categorize these along the lines of the four convictions referenced in "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust." In searching out additional resources, it is important to remember that there are resources available that are not consistent with any of the four convictions of the social statement (such as resources that talk about reparative therapy or call the fluidity of sexuality an "abomination".) Such resources should be avoided.

This list of resources has neither been endorsed nor authorized by the ELCA:

Resources on how to hold difficult conversations

1. *Our Congregation is Already Welcoming. Why Do We Need to Say So?* –article from Reconciling Works discussing why congregations would want to be part of the RIC network.
2. *Your Congregation is Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Now What?* –booklet from Reconciling Works with practical ideas to move forward with inclusive ministry.
3. Building an Inclusive Church; A Welcoming Toolkit 2.0—helping congregations become a community that openly welcomes people of all sexual and gender identities.
<http://www.welcomingresources.org>
4. *Freedom to Marry 101: What's it all about?* Study conducted by the Oregon Synod of the ELCA.
5. *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education.* Textbook on sexual education for grades K-12.
6. *Our Whole Lives (OWL) Curriculum.* Sexual education materials for grades K-12, young adult and adult students.
7. *Affirming Word: Gay and Straight Conversation.* Bibles study offering LGBT affirming readings from the Bible.
8. Transcript of the TED talk delivered by Rev. Brenda Bos, pastor at Christ Lutheran in San Clemente, California, on welcoming LGBTQIA members into a congregation.
9. <http://www.mnchurches.org/respectfulcommunities/respectfulconversations.html>. Minnesota-based project that gives video instruction on how to have a respectful conversation.
10. Report from the Episcopal Church's Task Force on the study of Marriage.
11. www.gaychristian.net. Website which encourages discussions past the usual rhetoric among gay Christians who either believe committed same-gender relationships are possible, or that gay Christians are called to celibacy.
12. Joe Dallas, *When Homosexuality Hits Home: What to Do When a Loved One Says They're Gay.* (Harvest House Publishers, 2004)
13. "Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministries." (1997) A publication of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.
14. Tom Eckstein, *Bearing Their Burdens.* (lulu.com, 2011)

15. Barbara Duquid, *Extravagant Grace: God's Glory Displayed in Our Weakness*. (P & R Publishing, 2013) Not specifically about homosexuality, but was recommended for its strong message on God working with grace in and through where one feels weak, shame, fear, etc.
16. Robert A. J. Gagnon and Dan O. Via. *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003)
17. Katie Day. *Difficult Conversations: Taking Risks, Acting with Integrity*. (Alban Institute, 2001) On talking about difficult issues.
18. Stanley J. Grenz. *Welcoming But Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*. (Westminster John Knox Press, 1998)
19. [*Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues*](#); Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, produced by the Department for Studies of the Division for Church in Society. August 1999.
20. [*Talking Together as Christians Cross-Culturally: A Field Guide. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*](#), written by Ronald W. Duty. Revised edition, 2009.

Resources for ministry to and with same gender families

1. September 3, 2013 memo from Howard D. Stendahl, Chaplain, Major General USAF on issues relating to ministries with same-gender couples.
2. February 11, 2013 memo from the Secretary of Defense on extending benefits to same-gender domestic partners of military members.
3. You Shall be my People. Stories, Questions, and Resources for Conversations About Marriage for Same-Gender Couples. www.ReconcilingWorks.org/MarriageConversations
4. <http://thenextfamily.com/> a diverse community where modern families meet.
5. *Your People shall be My People: Stories, Questions, and Resources for Conversations about Marriage for Same-Gender Couples*. From Reconciling Works.
6. www.religiousinstitute.org. A multi-faith organization dedicated to advocating for the sexual health, education, and justice in faith communities and societies. Stemming from the main website is *Acting Out Loud*, a guide for faith communities that want to move beyond welcome toward a wider embrace of LGBT people and their families.
7. www.Spiritualfriendship.org. website promoting discussion of celibacy, friendship, the value of the single life, and similar topics.
8. www.mudbloodcatholics.blogspot.com. Blog of a celibate catholic young man
9. www.livingout.org. website with discussions on the experiences of Christians who are faithful to traditional Biblical beliefs, but experience same-sex attraction.
10. www.aqueercalling.com. A blog written by two women who share their experiences of being in a committed celibate relationship.
11. <http://www.newwaysministry.org/> A gay-positive ministry of advocacy and justice for LGBT Catholics, and reconciliation within the larger Christian and civil communities.
12. <http://www.transfaithonline.org/engage/> Website led by transgender people and focused on issues of faith and spirituality.
13. A Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families. The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1999. Can be downloaded at <http://www.lcms.org> Go to the website and search for the pdf by name. A number of those holding position 1 spoke of this document as being helpful, particularly in applying the Lutheran theological framework of law/gospel.
14. www.integrityusa.org largest grassroots organization for LGBT concerns in the Episcopal Church.

15. www.openingssc.org South Carolina based network of support for LGBT and straight allies coming from diverse spiritual traditions to open hearts, minds, and doors.
16. <http://www.chicagoconsultation.org> Episcopal and Anglican bishops, clergy, and lay people supporting full inclusion of LGBT Christians in the Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion.
17. Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010)
18. Eve Tushnet, *Gay and Catholic: Accepting My Spirituality, Finding Community, Living My Faith*. (Ave Maria Press, 2014)
19. Christian Sexual Morality Tracts, Set One and Set Two. Published by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. (ALPB, PO Box 327, Delhi, NY 13753) www.alpb.org
20. St. Gregory the Great. *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007) Especially Part III, "How the Spiritual Director Should Teach and Advise the Laity."
21. *Pastoral Care Companion*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House. Page 104 ff. Prayers, Scripture to use in pastoral care with homosexuals.
22. Richard C. Eyer, *Pastoral Care Under the Cross: God in the Midst of Suffering*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House 1994, 2014) Chapter on "Bearing the Cross of Homosexuality." (Note: Each chapter begins "Bearing the Cross of")
23. *Enrich and Transform: Welcoming LGBTQ Candidates into the Call Process*. A guide offered by Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries in response to congregations and synods who have asked for resources to help open their doors more widely to the gifts of LGBTQ

Resources for same gender couples: premarital counseling and liturgy

1. United Church of Christ Order for Inclusive Marriage, adapted from the UCC Book of Worship Order for Marriage to provide language that may be used for any marriage, regardless of gender.
2. Services of Blessing of Relationships: Prepared by St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN.
3. *The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant: Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Sex Relationships*. Extracted from *Liturgical Resources 1: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing*. Authorized for provisional use by the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church.
4. Episcopal Church's resolution 2012-A049 regarding resources for blessing same-sex relationships.
5. <https://goo.gl/iQwdWU> Prepare-Enrich: relationship inventory and skill-building program.
6. *Going to the Chapel: A quick and Easy Guide for Attending the Ceremony of LGBT Friends or Family Members*. Written by the Rev. Michael Fick, Ebenezer Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL.

Appendix G: Dwelling in the Word: Appendix A of the Communal Discernment Task Force report

Appendix A: Dwelling in the Word

Here are the steps for 20 minutes of Dwelling in the Word:

1. Pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in your meeting that day.
2. Start with Philippians 1:27, 2:5–11, knowing that at some point, you may want to select your own passage, a story that is related to the story of your group’s work. But start with Philippians 1:27, 2:5–11. It is a good piece for discernment together. Have Bibles available at every meeting so that the story can be read by different people each time you meet. Or make copies of the passage for everyone.
3. Begin your meeting with one person reading this passage aloud to the group. Then allow some silence to unfold as people let the words have their impact.
4. Find a person in the group you know least well (we call this person a “reasonably friendly looking stranger”).
Listen to that person as he or she tells you what they heard in the passage. They may mention something they’d never heard before, something odd or something comforting, or something about which they’d like to ask a Bible scholar.

Next, instruct folks in this way:

Listen well, because your job will be to report to the rest of the group what your partner has said, not what you yourself said. Some people even take notes to help them focus and remember.

5. Then, turn folks loose with their partners for 6–10 minutes. Notice how they are paying attention. When you draw them back together to report what they have heard, ask for what they learned from their partners.

Now, wrestle together as a group with what God might be up to in the passage for your group on that day.

Philippians 1:27, 2:5–11

1:27

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

2:5–11

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Appendix H: Link to ELCA social statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust

From the ELCA website www.elca.org:

[“Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust”](#) expresses the ELCA teaching on human sexuality. The statement is grounded in the biblical witness to the relationship God establishes with creation as a model for relationships between human beings. God is absolutely trustworthy and faithful, and therefore, with regard to sexuality, both human behavior and social structures are considered in relation to how they foster trust, commitment and protection for the flourishing and wellbeing of all people. In light of human sexuality as a gift and a trust, the statement considers the ways social structures and institutions shelter, sustain and protect personal, family and social relationships of trust and trustworthiness.

The statement provides guidance on key matters such as marriage, family, homosexuality, protection of children and youth, sexuality and the self, sexual intimacy and cohabitation. It addresses sexuality in relation to society, the work place and within the church.

Full link: <http://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Human-Sexuality>

**Appendix I: Reflections on the Theology and Character of Disagreeing Well
by Bishop S. John Roth, Ph.D.**

I have grown to deeply appreciate the members of the Working Group. All of us were asked to come to this Working Group committed to work together collegially and to strive to be mindful of the spectrum of convictions on same gender relationships reflected in the four convictions presented in *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (HS:GT). The members of the working group took that charge to heart and bent over backwards to be gracious toward and sensitive to the concerns of those whose convictions differed from theirs – and this shows in the proposed recommendations themselves. This was genuine caring, genuine striving to find a way to be church together with a view to ministry to and with same-gender couples and their families. I cannot overstate how impressed I am with the Christian love and care displayed in our Working Group meetings.

If there is any forum in which consensus on recommendations on ministry to and with same gender couples and their families could be reached, this Working Group is the forum. We could reach consensus on Recommendations 1 through 8. But even in this forum, we struggled with reaching consensus on Recommendation 9.

My take away from this is that if we reach this impasse even in this Working Group, the best of conversation environments, we need different lenses through which to look at complex social/ethical matters including ministry to and with same gender families in order to be church together.

Let me say a few words about lenses.

There is not a practical solution – a process, a technique, or a resources solution – to properly address complex social/ethical matters. In my view, the solution begins with recapturing two truths dear to Lutheranism; these are the lenses: (1) the proper distinction between Law and Gospel and (2) the truth of *simul iustus et peccator*.

Most of my adult life in the church has been characterized by denominational conflicts. It began with the upheaval in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in the 1970s. Many know that I am a graduate of Christ Seminary – Seminex.

One reality in that history stands out: as right about the gospel as I believe I and those on our side were at the time on those issues, I have to say that neither we on the one side nor those on the other side learned how to disagree well. And the fracturing continues.

Potentially divisive issues will always come up. We cannot live as church together unless we disagree well.

It seems to me that disagreeing well has at least three characteristics.

- 1) *Fairness*. I am disagreeing well when I can state the position of the person I am disputing with accurately enough that that other person recognizes that position as genuinely his/her position.
- 2) *Intellectual integrity*. I am disagreeing well when I can state the strongest, most compelling argument against my position. In other words, I am disagreeing well when I can recognize and acknowledge where my own position is most vulnerable and where a contrasting position makes valid points.

3) *Honest humility*. I am disagreeing well when, after thinking through my position and expressing it with true conviction, I acknowledge that as a fallen, flawed human being I myself may be wrong.

This third characteristic is essential. And living this third characteristic – to be able to say honestly “I may be wrong” – doesn’t happen unless I fundamentally entrust my righteousness to Christ, because I am *simul iustus et peccator*.

But being church together across human sexuality convictions requires more than disagreeing well.

The four HS:GT convictions are in some respects mutually exclusive. Anyone identifying with conviction number 1 necessarily is maintaining that anyone identifying with conviction number 4 is wrong; and vice versa, anyone identifying with conviction number 4 necessarily is maintaining that anyone identifying with conviction number 1 is wrong.

How can we be church together with people whom we conclude are wrong about human sexuality?

The question comes down to this. Can I grant that a person can be wrong about human sexuality and yet be fully trusting in Christ and Christ alone for forgiveness and reconciliation with God? In short, do I believe that a person can be wrong about the human sexuality and right about the gospel? If my answer is “yes” – if I am convinced in my bones of “yes” – then I will willingly, gladly, be church with the person who shares my trust in Christ alone for forgiveness and reconciliation with God and yet whom I believe to be wrong about human sexuality.

But if I cannot answer that question “yes,” i.e., if in my heart of hearts I believe that to be wrong about human sexuality necessarily contradicts the gospel, that if someone is wrong about human sexuality, that someone cannot be right about the gospel, then I will at best be only grudgingly willing to be church with the person whom I believe to be wrong about human sexuality.

The proper distinction between law and gospel drives us to the conclusion that a person can be fully trusting in the “happy exchange” of Christ’s righteousness for my unrighteousness and be wrong about human sexuality. And be church together. As AC (Augsburg Confession) 7 says, “For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word¹.” *Simul iustus et peccator*: we are church together.

¹Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord : The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (42). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Ground Rules for Conversation

To fulfill the hopes people have for conversation in their congregation, and to lessen their anxieties and fears about it, certain ground rules for conversation are helpful. These will help to build trust among participants and create a safe space in which good conversation is possible.

The purpose of this honest sharing is to open up discussion of things that need attention, rather than to close off discussion.

Follow the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"—even when you disagree with them.

Listen respectfully and carefully to others. This is your best way to begin to understand them. This also helps keep the "public space" of this conversation safe for candid conversation. By listening

carefully to others, you help to build relationships of trust. You also move beyond our private feelings and thoughts to public space where it feels safe to share your differences, and where you can probe for values and positions that you hold in common.

Speak honestly about your thoughts and feelings. Honesty about your thoughts and feelings expresses respect for others. Personal thoughts, feelings, values, and experiences are as legitimate a part of the conversation as factual information. Conversation can be quite passionate and still be respectful, civil, and constructive.

Speak for yourself, rather than as a member of a group. You do not necessarily know what everyone else in the group is thinking or feeling—even if you've known someone for a long time and think you know them well. Use "I-statements" rather than "You-statements." Likewise, it is not fair to expect other conversation partners to represent a whole group. Remember that they are only speaking for themselves.

Realize that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the conversation and has given each participant a part of the truth you are seeking to discern. But you won't hear that if you judge too quickly what is being said!

A true conversation needs give and take. Give others plenty of opportunity to speak and respond. Help keep the discussion focused by sticking to the subject at hand.

Maintain confidentiality about matters people share with the group when it is asked or obviously appropriate. This helps to build and maintain trust.

Keep an open mind and heart. Try to understand others as much as possible from their point of view as they express it. Even those who disagree with you are not necessarily your enemies. Christ has broken down dividing walls of differences and hostilities (Ephesians 2).

Exercise care for group members who become upset over what is said during the conversation.

The outcome, quality and safety of the conversation is everyone's responsibility.

In a conversation of this kind, listening is as important or more important as talking.

Genuine listening is not a passive activity, but an active, demanding one. Listen not only for the content of what is said, but for the way it is said—such as the language used, the tone of voice, the kind and level of feeling expressed, the body language and facial expression of the person speaking, whether they make eye contact, and so on. Also be attentive for what is not said. Being more conscious about this kind of deep listening will help us to hear and understand better what other people are saying.

Appendix J Part 2: The United Methodist Church covenant guideline example

"What We Can Do" Planning Team

Rules of Engagement

- actively engage in hospitality
- practice active listening for understanding
- while different Biblical and pastoral understandings remain among us, we can still be Christian colleagues; in fact, as we grow to better understand our differences, we can grow in our appreciation of one another
- treat everything you hear as an opportunity to learn and grow
- we assume everyone has Christian integrity and seeks to be faithful
- practice collegial respect
- care for yourself (use chaplains if necessary)
- [agree to disagree in love]
- we are not here to debate who is right or wrong
- ponder what you hear and feel before you speak
- use "I" statements (i.e., share your own experience, not others')
- what is shared in confidence at the table is to stay at the table: please do not tell another person's story
- be sensitive to differences in cultural and gender communications styles, body language, and silence

† Adapted from Mennonite Peace Center; Eric Law/Kaleidoscope Institute; Disciple Bible Study Leaders' Guide

Appendix J Part 3: Minnesota Council of Churches Respectful Conversations Initiative

[Respectful Conversations Project](#)

“Conversations about divisive issues can sometimes be emotional, pick-a-side and fight-it-out discussions that leave us feeling worse about the people we disagree with, and sometimes worse about ourselves. But there is a way to talk that feels open, honest and impartial, where you can actually be heard and learn about the people with whom you disagree.

Respectful Conversations are designed not to change minds, but soften hearts.”

<https://vimeo.com/40730696>

“As part of the Minnesota Council of Churches Respectful Conversations Project, we demonstrated the "do's" and "do not do's" of having a civil discussions. They are hosting events around the state where congregations will come together to talk about the upcoming Marriage amendment. These are set up for people to share their ideas and understand one another.”

Appendix K: Link to Report of the Communal Discernment Task Force

[Report of the Communal Discernment Task Force](#)

Communal Discernment is:

- *Prayerful*
- *Discerning, discriminating*
- *Undertaken as fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 4:22-23)*
- *Impassioned, enthused*
- *Visionary, curious, imaginative, playful, creative*
- *Vulnerable, honest*
- *Transparent, genuine*
- *Compassionate, merciful, courteous, respectful*
- *Hospitable, welcoming*
- *Appreciative, loving*
- *Relationship focused*
- *Spacious, leisurely*
- *Comfortable with silence*
- *Appropriately detached*
- *Intentional, habitual*
- *Conversational*
- *Undertaken with a good sense of humor*
- *Process (not outcomes) oriented, but courageous and patient with implications and consequences*
- *Circuitous, non-linear*
- *Fair-minded*
- *Sensitive to timing*
- *Attentive to group dynamics*
- *Studied, well-reasoned*
- *Like all human involvements, captive to sin*
- *Undertaken with astute self-knowledge*
- *Patient with conflict*
- *Steeped in tradition, and attentive to contemporary contexts*
- *Fluid, organic, emergent*
- *Ecumenical and conversant with wider worlds beyond the church*
- *Global and diverse in perspective*
- *Mission-minded and focused*

Appendix L: 2007 Churchwide Assembly action receiving Evangelical Lutheran Worship

ASSEMBLY ACTION: CA07.02.04

YES-965; NO-71

1. To remember with joy that one of the six primary purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is to “worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service” (ELCA constitutional provision 4.02.d.);
2. To applaud the 1997 statement of this church, *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*, for the way that statement has contributed to the development of worship resources and continues to provide guidance for the ministry of Word and Sacrament;
3. To recall with gratitude the action of the Church Council in 2000 that authorized the “ELCA Next Generation of Worship Resources,” the churchwide effort that came to be known as Renewing Worship;
4. To acknowledge the subsequent action of the 2005 Churchwide Assembly regarding the ways in which the Renewing Worship effort:
 - a. reinforced the importance of widespread participation in the ongoing work of worship renewal;
 - b. affirmed a collaborative approach to the development of worship resources, drawing on the wisdom of individuals, congregations, pastors, musicians, synodical bishops, teaching theologians, and other leaders, institutions, and agencies;
 - c. demonstrated this church's commitment to thorough liturgical and theological review of materials intended for use in worshiping assemblies; and
 - d. encouraged and allowed for the completion of the new primary book of worship, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*;
5. To express gratitude for:
 - a. those who have provided leadership and oversight for the various facets of the development of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*;
 - b. the widespread participation in introductory events; and
 - c. the many individuals and synodical teams who have provided leadership in introducing *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*;
6. To convey appreciation—through the national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada—to the pastors, bishops, and many individuals and congregations throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada who contributed to the development and introduction of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*;
7. To receive with thanksgiving *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and celebrate the ways in which it:
 - a. bears the rich tradition of Christian worship practiced among Lutherans and, at the same time, seeks to renew that tradition in response to a generation of change in the Church and in the world;
 - b. reflects a body of prayer and song that are worthy to hold in common, consistent with the commitment to the treasury of Christian worship affirmed in the Lutheran confessions;
 - c. is grounded in Lutheran convictions about the centrality of the means of grace;

- d. continues to emphasize that freedom and flexibility in worship is a Lutheran inheritance; the book, therefore, is designed to make more transparent the principle of fostering unity without imposing uniformity;
 - e. represents the gifts of the breadth of the Church of Christ, and prizes the words and songs Lutherans hold in common with other Christians, while at the same time extending the particular accents of the Lutheran heritage as gifts to the whole Church; and
 - f. reflects the understanding that worship is fundamentally about what God does, bringing to expression how God nourishes the people of the Church for mission and accompanies them as they bear the creative and redeeming Word of God, Jesus Christ, to the whole world; and
8. To commit the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the ongoing work of renewing worship, understanding that:
- a. worship takes place in particular assemblies within particular contexts, yet every assembly gathered by the Holy Spirit for worship is connected to the whole Church;
 - b. each Christian assembly worships in the midst of an ever-changing world; and
 - c. worship is renewed in order to be both responsible and responsive to the world that the Church is called to serve.