



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Canada**
Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love



November 7, 2024

Dear friends in Christ,

The government of Alberta tabled legislation at the end of October that seeks to reduce rights, safety and legal protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, particularly transgender and non-binary youth. This news is deeply disappointing for vulnerable people and families, as well as for the community of faith as we seek to love, uphold and support one another.

Legislation currently before the Alberta Legislature is stigmatizing for transgender and non-binary youth. It underestimates the capacity of youth to have awareness of their own identity and it undermines open conversation in families. Restrictions in schools on use of pronouns hinders safe space for youth as they explore emerging identities.

Misinformation guided by the proposed legislation is easily perpetuated. Hateful rhetoric and restrictions directly place health, safety and well-being at risk. Acts of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia—including religious-induced discrimination—are public expressions of hate crimes and violence.

In contrast, the ELCIC has learned, upholds and celebrates our uniqueness and diversity in God's family. In 2019, the ELCIC responded by establishing a task force to guide and encourage the church in addressing ongoing issues of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. The task force has a mandate to build awareness of transphobia in church and in society. This work is intended to deepen commitments made by the ELCIC made in the [2011 Social Statement on Human Sexuality](#), including the call to uphold dignity of all people regardless of gender identity and to meet diverse people with a core sense of respect for the value of each person as a unique child of God.

New language about sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression may feel overwhelming. Therefore, in 2011 the ELCIC also committed to supporting families and households in being places of love and formation, and to creating safe, respectful space for conversation, reflection, teaching and discernment on matters of sexuality. In this light, be encouraged to support each other in stress and worry.

We are all aware that issues of sexuality at times have been divisive in the church. Naming our differences is a starting place for ongoing learning. As we encounter messages that seem to promote polarization or bias, be encouraged to choose to deepen your own understanding of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Be encouraged to listen to one another with a spirit of openness and learning.

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*The ELCIC acknowledges that its buildings and ministries, from coast to coast to coast,
are on traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples.*

God's people are called to uphold dignity; this is a long-term commitment. The 2011 Social Statement offers this guidance: "We all have biases and prejudices. When we use our biases to try to articulate God's will, we run the risk of abusing power and authority. As in every age, we in our time need to examine our biases and prejudices. In so doing, we are open to growth in understanding of Holy Scriptures, and in the application of God's will for our time." "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger." (James 1:19)

Many people feel called to act for justice. Examples of such actions may be: contacting your Alberta Member of the Legislative Assembly, initiating dialogue in local circles, committing as a congregation or individual to read and reflect on Scripture and documents mentioned in this letter. In every action seek to safeguard the rights and belovedness of all, especially transgender and non-binary youth.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Trish Schermund".

The Rev. Trish Schermund (she, her)
Bishop of The Synod of Alberta and the Territories
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Susan C. Johnson".

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson (she, her)
National Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada