

# Saskatchewan Synod

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EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

## PASTORAL GUIDELINES REGARDING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE OR BLESSING

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist congregations and pastors in the process of setting local policies regarding same-sex marriages or blessings.

1. **Congregations** choosing to implement the national policy permitting same-sex marriages or blessings (ELCIC National Convention, 2011) are advised to do so only by official action taken by the congregational council or a congregational meeting.
2. In order to protect same-sex **couples** who may be requesting marriage by the congregational pastor, it is important that the individuals involved are not caught in the middle of a congregational dispute. Consequently, the decision to proceed with the implementation of this ministry should be made (a) before consenting to any such requests and (b) independent of any specific request.
3. As **pastors and congregations** discern the possible implementation of this ministry, discussions should be undertaken with sensitivity and respect for divergent points of view so as not to undermine the common ministry of the congregation. In case of strife and division in a congregation, the congregational council shall seek the advice of the bishop of this synod (Synod Constitution, Article VI, Section 5).
4. If a **pastor or congregation** cannot, in good conscience, conduct weddings for same-sex couples, it is a pastor's responsibility to assist such couples who request this service to find another setting where they can be served.
5. **Parish pastors** receiving requests to marry same-sex couples should be mindful of the context to which they have been called. Consequently, pastors are advised not to implement the national church policy without consultation and support of the decision making body of the congregation.
6. **Pastors** who are retired or serving in non-parish ministries are advised to consult with the bishop before agreeing to officiate at a same-sex marriage service.

These guidelines are advisory in nature and subject to review by Synod Council. These guidelines will be updated as relevant ELCIC and Saskatchewan Synod policies and related documents are updated.

Bishop Cindy Halmarson  
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