

Pastoral Care Talking Points for ELCA Bishops

Supporting LGBTQIA+ Rostered Leaders in a Challenging Political Climate

This one-page guide offers pastoral care talking points for bishops and synod leaders to use in conversations with LGBTQIA+ rostered leaders and rostered leaders with LGBTQIA+ children. The focus is on listening, affirmation, and tangible support for leaders and their families during a time of heightened political and social stress.

Purpose & Posture

- Offer **pastoral presence/care**, and evaluation or problem-solving if needed
- Affirm the **dignity, belovedness, and call** of LGBTQIA+ leaders
- Listen for **impact and needs**
- Communicate clearly: *they are not alone, and that your synod team is here for them*

Opening the Conversation

You might begin:

“I wanted to check in—not as a supervisor, but as a pastor. This is a heavy season, especially for LGBTQIA+ leaders and their families. I want to hear how you are doing and how the synod can support you.”

Tips: Speak gently, allow silence, and resist rushing to reassurance

Listening Questions

How are you?

- How are you really doing in this season?
- What has this political climate stirred up for you personally?
- Where are you feeling grounded? Where are you feeling weary?

Ministry & Call

- How is this climate showing up in your ministry context?
- Where do you feel supported? Where do you feel exposed or vulnerable?
- What feels life-giving right now? What feels draining?

Family & Safety (as appropriate)

- How are your loved ones experiencing this moment?
- Are there concerns about safety, belonging, or sustainability?

Naming Needs & Support

- What kinds of support would be most meaningful right now?
- Are there resources—pastoral, mental health, financial, legal, or relational—that would be helpful?
- Would flexibility, time, advocacy, or regular check-ins be supportive?

Normalize this:

“You don’t need to have answers today. Naming needs can take time.”

Affirmation

- Name gratitude for their leadership and courage
- Acknowledge the additional emotional labor LGBTQIA+ leaders often carry
- Affirm their call and gifts explicitly

Example:

“Your leadership matters deeply to this church, and you should not have to carry this alone.”

Closing & Follow-Up

- Ask permission to check in again
- Name any next steps you will take
- Reaffirm confidentiality
- Offer prayer (optional, never required)

“Thank you for trusting me with this. My door remains open.”

Pastoral Reminder: *Your presence matters more than perfect words.
Listening itself is an act of care and advocacy.*
