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Report on the 2022 Global Interfaith Commission on LGBT+ Lives

Susan C. Johnson¹

It was my privilege to take part online in the 2022 Global Interfaith Commission on LGBT+ Lives. Sponsored by the Global Interfaith Commission on LGBT+ Lives and held in London, England, the meeting brought together interreligious and political leaders from around the world who are concerned with the rights and safety of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons.

There were several presentations, including one by Archbishop Linda Nicholls of the Anglican Church of Canada on Canada's actions to protect rights for gender identity and gender expression and to ban conversion therapy. There were also in-depth reports of the current situation for 2SLGBTQIA+ persons regarding conversion therapy in Hungary and the Caribbean.

The highlight of the conference was the unanimous passing on 22nd March 2022 of the *Principles to Safeguard LGBT+ Lives*², which sets out the following principles:

Empowerment

We believe all individuals are made in the image of God, whom many call the Divine, and should be free to live a life of dignity consistent with their sexuality and gender identity within their faith communities without fear or judgement.

Prevention

We believe that we have a duty of care towards all LGBT+ people and so we commit ourselves to listen to the experiences of our LGBT+ members in order to identify and eradicate any harmful practice that inhibits the flourishing of us all.

Proportionality

We recognize that for too long the needs of our LGBT+ members have often been ignored and side-lined, and so we commit to ensuring that LGBT+ people are always given fair voice.

Protection

We recognize that many LGBT+ people face significant discrimination, rejection and hatred, and so we commit to work to protect all LGBT+ people from harm, wherever it occurs in both religious and secular contexts.

Partnership

We recognize that for too long those of us who are LGBT+ have been excluded from decisions that impact our lives and so we commit to always work in partnership so that together we can work to prevent, detect and report spiritual abuse.

¹ Susan Johnson is the National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).

² Global Interfaith Commission on LGBT+ Lives, *Principles to Safeguard LGBT+ Lives*, March 22, 2022, <https://globalinterfaith.lgbt/safeguarding/>.

Accountability

We believe that no one is above the law and that there must always be transparency in all areas of safeguarding and so commit to work with our LGBT+ members to regularly monitor progress.

I found the conference inspiring. It was affirming to know that others around the world share concerns for the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people. As we live into the promises we made as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in the 2011 Statement on Human Sexuality,³ and as we wait to receive the work of the Task Force on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, it is good to be reminded that we have partners who, like us, are listening for the call of God as we seek justice for all of God's beloved children.

³ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, *ELCIC Statement on Human Sexuality*, July 15, 2011, <https://elcic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/APPROVEDELICISocialStatementonHumanSexuality.pdf>.