

RECONCILING IN CHRIST

Frequently Asked Questions



All people are welcome in our faith community. Why should we single out lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people?

Many LGBTQ people have learned by experience that they are not welcome in faith communities, even in those that state, “All are welcome here!” A general statement of welcome is often heard as meaning “everybody but me,” so it can take a special effort to communicate an authentic welcome to LGBTQ people. Many RIC communities find that the process of extending a welcome to LGBTQ people opens them up to other people or groups who also need a particular invitation to know that “all” includes them as well.

How does a Lutheran community become part of the RIC roster?

The community must make a public, specific indication of its welcome to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

- Congregations and worshipping communities typically pass an Affirmation of Welcome or Welcome Statement at a congregational meeting.
- Governing boards of organizations typically pass a similar affirmation or welcome statement. Synods indicate their intent of welcome by passing resolutions at synod assemblies.
- Colleges and seminaries demonstrate their intent by explicitly including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in their non-discrimination policies.

When was the RIC program started and why?

Beginning in 1984, the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program recognizes Lutheran congregations, synods, organizations, colleges, and seminaries that welcome people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Because lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people of faith are frequently made to feel unwelcome in many Lutheran settings, the RIC roster provides a list of Lutheran communities where people of all sexual orientations and gender identities can find safe, nurturing, and affirming settings in which to worship and learn.

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



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RIC Ceremony at Saint Mark Lutheran Church in Salem, OR

What is an “Affirmation of Welcome” or “Welcome Statement”?

The Affirmation of Welcome statement provides the foundation of the RIC program. It is a public document that specifically welcomes “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender” (LGBT) people or “people of all sexual orientations and gender identities” into full participation within community. We encourage creativity in this statement so that it reflects the diversity in all social categories of your community including but not limited to race, age, ability, gender expression, abilities, and ethnicity.

Are communities listed on the RIC roster required to contribute dues, assessments or apportionments to ReconcilingWorks or to include ReconcilingWorks in their benevolence budgets?

There is no requirement of an RIC setting to contribute to ReconcilingWorks. There are no dues or assessments. Many RIC settings choose, through their mission outreach, to contribute to ReconcilingWorks to enhance the work of welcome to all in the church. Communities may also choose to purchase additional resource materials through ReconcilingWorks.

If we become Reconciling in Christ, does that mean that we support everything that ReconcilingWorks says and does?

The RIC Program simply keeps a roster of Lutheran communities that proclaim a specific welcome for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities so they are more easily found by those looking for such a welcome. That’s all that’s indicated by being listed on the RIC roster. As partners in ministry, welcoming communities often find that their goals and values frequently align with the goals and values of ReconcilingWorks.

Does an Affirmation of Welcome or Welcome Statement have to refer to “Reconciling in Christ”?

No. While many communities do include a reference to the Reconciling in Christ program, it is not a requirement. The only requirement is that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are specifically included. The Reconciling in Christ program is a ministry of ReconcilingWorks.

What are the goals of ReconcilingWorks?

We believe that God values and embraces each person as a beloved child, that the Spirit gives a diversity of gifts for the common good, and that Jesus Christ calls us to work for justice. The ministries of ReconcilingWorks embody, inspire, and support the acceptance and full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, their families, friends and allies, within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical and global partners. Through our Reconciling in Christ program, ministries, resources, events and alliances, ReconcilingWorks: builds community for worship, education and support; fosters welcome and acceptance in all Lutheran settings; advocates for the ecclesial changes necessary to ensure full participation in all rites, sacraments, and ministries

of the church; and invites all people into Gospel lives of authenticity, integrity, and wholeness.

What is the relationship between ReconcilingWorks, the ELCA, and the ELCIC?

ReconcilingWorks is an independently organized 501(c)(3) organization. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) formally recognize ReconcilingWorks as an “Independent Lutheran Organization,” affirming our collaborative work in reaching out to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. We have a presence at the synod assemblies of both of these denominations, at the national (churchwide) assemblies, and Women of the ELCA (WELCA) and the ELCA National Youth Gathering, plus many other ELCA and ELCIC events. As an independent Lutheran organization, ReconcilingWorks has members of many Lutheran communions, primarily in the United States and Canada. The congregations and synods on our RIC roster are largely from the ELCA and ELCIC. As ReconcilingWorks continues our mission of working for the full participation of LGBTQ people in church and society, we seek additional partners in that mission. We advocate for change within institutional churches to ensure that all rites, sacraments, and ministries of the Church are open to all.