

Congratulations!
You are Reconciling
in Christ!



Now
what?

ReconcilingWorks believes that welcome is a journey not a destination. So if your congregation, college, seminary, or ministry has been Reconciling in Christ (RIC) for 30 years or 1 month, there are always ways to deepen and expand our welcome to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and families by making welcome a lived experience. This booklet is designed to provide a few options on how to continue your journey of welcome to LGBTQ people and families.

How do you proclaim a welcome to your members?

1. Include openly LGBTQ people in visible worship and other leadership roles.
2. Include and recognize all couples in the same ways as male/female couples. Put both people's names on any mailing envelope from the church as you would for a heterosexual couple. Invite all couples (including LGBTQ couples) to church functions such as partners clubs, dances, retreats, etc.
3. Celebrate Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Sunday in your worship on the last Sunday of January of each year. ReconcilingWorks prepares suggested worship materials for this celebration. Alert your pastor that such materials will be available each year. If the designated Sunday does not work, use some or all of the materials on another Sunday. Take up a special offering to support the work of ReconcilingWorks through the RIC program.
4. Celebrate the anniversary of the adoption of your welcoming statement in worship.
5. Perform baptisms of children of parents of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions
6. If your congregation has not done significant education about transgender people and the issues they face, invite a member of the transgender community



to facilitate a workshop, invite transgender people to serve on a panel for discussion, show a film, or plan a film series dealing with transgender people and conduct discussions about the films, etc.

7. Before your congregation is in a call process, facilitate discussion (perhaps among the congregational council) about the ways that your congregation has been prepared to accept the gifts of an openly LGBT pastor or other rostered leader.
8. Include the RIC program of ReconcilingWorks in your annual budget to become a sustainable giver as a way to promote the growth of the RIC program. Contributions may be made to ReconcilingWorks, 1669 Arcade Street Suite 2, Saint Paul, MN 55106-1054. Please note the RIC Program in the memo line of the check.

How do you proclaim a welcome to your visitors?

1. Include the text “A Reconciling in Christ Congregation” as part of your bulletin masthead below the congregation’s name, or add a shortened version of the welcome statement so it is explicit. For example: “We welcome people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions. [Name of congregation] is a Reconciling in Christ congregation.” Be sure to explain what Reconciling in Christ means somewhere within the bulletin.
2. Provide training for your greeters and ushers on welcoming people of all gender identities and expressions and sexual orientations.
3. Gather a discussion group to examine the gendered language in your bulletin, newsletter, sermons, liturgies, and hymns. Talk about the assumptions these language choices imply and who might feel constricted or excluded by the gendered wording. Explore creative ways to avoid such exclusively binary-gendered language as “men and women,” “sisters and brothers,” and “mothers and fathers.”
4. Personal pronouns are the set of pronouns a person wants others to use when talking to or about them. Remember, not all people use “he/him/his” or “she/her/hers” pronouns. For some “they, them, theirs,” “xe, xem, xyrs,” or “ze, hir, hers” are gender inclusive pronouns which most accurately reflect that person’s identity. Ask people what pronouns they prefer. If someone uses she/her/hers pronouns, it does not automatically mean they identify as a woman. You cannot assume someone’s gender identity based on the person’s pronouns.

Name tags which encourage people to write their names and personal pronouns are a great way to proclaim a welcome to visitors. You can find name tags like these by searching “preferred pronouns name tags” in your favorite online search engine.



How does your building proclaim a welcome?



Christ Lutheran Church (Santa Fe, NM) rolls out the welcome mat for members and guests.

1. Facilitate discussion among all church staff regarding how they will welcome people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions.
2. Display your RIC certificate in a prominent location like the narthex, perhaps above the guest book. Professionally framed, it becomes a permanent part of the church decor. If your certificate is missing or needs replacing, contact **info@reconcilingworks.org**. Display your welcoming statement in its entirety along with the RIC certificate elsewhere within your building.
3. Post the RIC logo (the Rainbow Heart), rainbow flag, or other rainbow symbol outside your church. It should be large enough that those driving by can clearly see it. Look for opportunities to visibly display your congregation's welcome – especially on your outdoor sign(s), street-facing windows, and entryways. The RIC logo (the Rainbow Heart) window cling is great for this purpose. Contact **info@reconcilingworks.org** to purchase a window cling.
4. Tour your property, paying attention to what messages your pictures and other art send. Will visitors see individuals and families like themselves in the photos and artwork on display?
5. Ensure that a gender-neutral, single-stall bathroom is available in all areas of your building.

How do you proclaim a welcome to your community?

1. Discuss local, statewide, or federal laws and their impact on the LGBTQ community in an educational forum.
2. Advertise in the local LGBTQ community directory, if there is one.
3. Make a connection with your local PFLAG (Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) organization. Introduce yourself and your church. Let the PFLAG chapter know you welcome LGBTQ people, their friends, and families at worship.
4. Have a visible presence at LGBTQ rallies and events, with clergy in clerical garb and lay members in congregational shirts. Have a visible presence at annual LGBTQ Pride events:
 - Organize a group to march in the parade. Include a banner for every RIC congregation in the area.
 - Organize a group to give water and a greeting to marchers along the parade route.
 - Staff an information table about your congregation at the Pride festival.
5. Have a pastor or lay representative speak to LGBTQ community or business groups.
6. Either as an individual congregation or in collaboration with other welcoming congregations in your area, sponsor a worship service focused on celebrating welcome to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. RIC Sunday (the last Sunday in January), National Coming Out Day (October 11), and the date of your local LGBT Pride celebration are all excellent opportunities. Advertise thoroughly in your community in newspapers and the LGBT press.

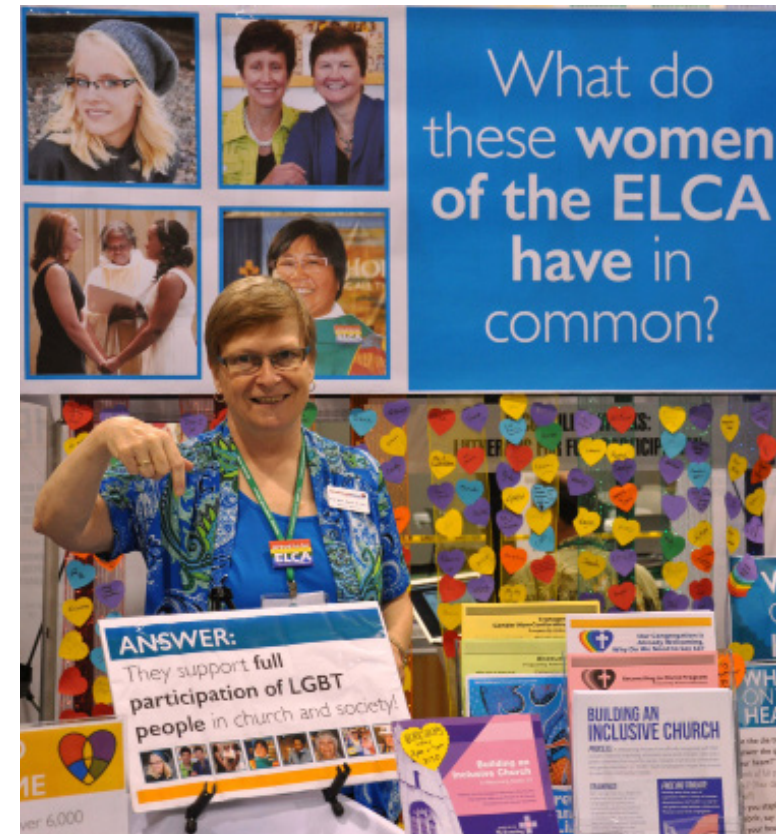


RIC Churches march in the Seattle Pride Parade.



How do you proclaim a welcome to your synod?

1. Ask the clergy and other leaders in your own congregation for suggestions of other clergy or congregations they know that may be supportive. You could schedule visits with these additional clergy to learn about the mission and ministry occurring in these congregations. Listen for the ways that a ministry of hospitality and reconciliation fits within that congregation's ministry. Ask what place LGBTQ people have in the life of that congregation and in the synod. Tell your story of how your congregation has been enriched by the RIC process.
2. Visit with your synod's bishop or other synod staff members. Listen for their vision for the future of ministry within the synod. Share with them how this ministry of welcoming could help further that vision by reinvigorating ministry across the synod. Ask for their help in expanding the number of welcoming and open congregations in the synod.
3. Serve as a mentor congregation to other area congregations who want to become RIC.
4. Host a Building an Inclusive Church (BIC) training and invite local Lutheran and ecumenical partner congregations. www.welcomingresources.org/communityorg
5. Alone or with other RIC congregations or a ReconcilingWorks chapter, sponsor a synod assembly display and/or hospitality gathering at your synod assembly to share your ministry of welcome with others. Contact ReconcilingWorks at info@ReconcilingWorks.org to request a display kit.



Rev. Anita Hill staffs a booth at the 2014 Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering

How do you share your RIC community's story?

1. Include a link to ReconcilingWorks.org on your congregation's website.
2. Include positive stories of LGBTQ people in sermons and congregational newsletter articles.
3. Include RIC information in your new-member classes. Include stories about the process that led up to the vote on your welcoming statement and discussion on the ways that this welcoming continues to be lived out in the mission and ministry of the congregation.
4. In sermons and newsletters, lift up the faith journey that parents and families of LGBTQ people have taken.
5. Tell your congregation's story of hospitality and reconciliation in a letter to the editor or an article in the local LGBTQ, secular and/or church press.
6. Post a declaration on your personal Facebook page such as this: "I am glad to be in a congregation that publicly welcomes people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. Ask me how your congregation can become one too!"
7. Tell your congregation's story of hospitality and reconciliation in a letter to the editor or a "My View" article in The Lutheran magazine.
8. Contact local media outlets and pitch a feature story to a reporter or editor about your congregation and its welcoming ministry (or the process you went through to become RIC). Members of other congregations may see your story in the media and feel safe to take the same steps too after your congregation has taken the first steps in the community and talked about it publicly. Consider these media outlets: Christian media, your city's daily newspaper, weekly neighborhood or town newspapers, radio stations (Christian and secular), web-only news outlets, and television stations.



St. Peter's Lutheran Church
(Port Jervis, NY)



Here are some important dates for Reconciling in Christ communities to remember when proclaiming a welcome to the LGBTQ community.

January

Reconciling in Christ Sunday. Many communities celebrate their LGBTQ welcome the last Sunday in January. Visit RWKS.org/RICSunday for resources.

May

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (May 17)

June and July

Pride Season (Many LGBTQ Pride festivities are during the Summer. June is LGBTQ Pride Month in the United States.)
Freedom to Marry Anniversary of when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the freedom to marry for LGBTQ couples. (June 26)

September

Bisexual Visibility Day (September 23)
National Suicide Prevention Month

October

Bullying Prevention Month
Coming Out Day (October 11)
Spirit Day (third Thursday in October)

November

Transgender Awareness Month
Transgender Day of Remembrance (November 20)

December

World Aids Day (December 1)

Tools and ideas

Visit **ReconcilingWorks.org/resources** for the following:

- Resources for your RIC journey
- Resources for ministering to same gender couples and their families
- Tools for understanding sexual orientation and gender identity
- Tools for dismantling injustice
- Liturgy, preaching, and worship resources
- Churchwide engagement resources
- Clothing, t-shirts, coffee mugs, and buttons which proclaim your welcome

ReconcilingWorks believes 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 and expressions, their families, friends and allies, within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical partners.

ReconcilingWorks.org

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ReconcilingWorks
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