

2017 SYNOD ASSEMBLY RECONCILINGWORKS DISPLAY HOST GUIDE

During the synod assembly, you will have many opportunities to be a spokesperson on behalf of ReconcilingWorks. Here are some tools, tips, and helpful ways to talk about the work and mission of ReconcilingWorks to welcome, include, and celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people and their families.

What should I place on the display table?

Place the panels (3) and all material sent by ReconcilingWorks along with any other local information you feel will be helpful (e.g. list of local Reconciling in Christ congregations; see RWKS.org/ric). Many also use treats and decorations (e.g. candy, balloons, and rainbow Mardi Gras beads).

Meeting People

Engage in graceful conversations to support welcome, inclusivity, and celebration. It is most effective to stand in front of the table rather than behind it. This often allows for a more personal conversation. Keep in mind this may be the first time that some folks have heard of ReconcilingWorks (some know the organization as Lutherans Concerned). If you need to be away from the table for a while, leave a note letting folks know when you will return and a sign-up pads in a visible location for people who may have stopped by while you were gone to record their names and contact information so that they may be reached later. For some, this is a “safe” time to ask questions and review materials.

Questions? Would you like to purchase additional materials?

Please call the ReconcilingWorks office at 651-665-0861 or email us at info@reconcilingworks.org.

SHARING THE STORY

We share the story of ReconcilingWorks to raise awareness, build support, and develop our capacity to do the work of welcome and inclusion. We also know by sharing our own personal stories we are able to connect with people by finding shared experiences and values. You can't argue with personal experience. Sharing stories moves your message from merely theoretical to deeply human. Here are three areas to keep in mind when you are talking to people about ReconcilingWorks:

- 1. CONVERSATIONS MATTER. CONVERSATIONS WORK** Conversations motivate strong supporters to engage more passionately, strengthen quieter supporters and keep them with us, move undecided and conflicted people to join us, and clear up confusion.
- 2. TOOLS AND SKILLS** Be prepared to be caught off-guard – there are people who will ask or say inappropriate things. Make it personal – share why your faith and values call you to support this work. Deliver your message with confidence – inviting people to fall in love with something you are passionate about is a good thing. Remember, this is not an argument or debate – no matter what, God is love and names everyone “Beloved.” Debating, especially if debating scripture, does not help move people to a place where they will be able to shift in their position of welcome, inclusion, and celebration of LGBTQ people and their families.
- 3. BIBLICAL/SACRED TEXT THEMES AND VALUES** Name the individual themes and values we hear Christ teach and preach about in the Gospel. For example: we are called to love God and love others; we are not to judge others; and we should treat others as we would want to be treated.

GRACEFUL ENGAGEMENT

As Lutherans, we start by grounding our conversations in grace through graceful engagement. graceful engagement is a way of practicing holy conversation, where each person is treated like a child of God. It is about listening, sharing one's own story, hearing another's perspective, finding commonalities and shared experiences.

Graceful Engagement is:

Living together in relationship and compassion. Fully valuing other people and their beliefs, even when they are different from our own. Listening more and speaking less. Meeting people where they are, not where we want them to be.

Graceful Engagement is not:

Debate.
Forcing our opinions on others through argument.
Exclusion or outright condemning those with whom we do not agree.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is ReconcilingWorks

Here are a few different versions of possible “elevator responses”:

1. We work for welcome, inclusion, and celebration.
2. We are a national nonprofit who strives to make sure people know God’s love is freely given to all!
3. We accompany Lutheran congregations and ministries in their journey of welcome, inclusion and celebration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people and their families.
4. We believe each person is given a variety of gifts for the common good. We work to make sure lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people are able to share those gifts in their place of worship and in their community.

In 2009, the ELCA passed policy change; what more is there to do?

1. *The journey of welcome is a lifelong path with many milestones. The 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly was one of those milestones, when the assembly adopted policy changes that allow for partnered LGBTQ ministers to serve on the clergy roster of the ELCA.*
2. *As important as that milestone is, we still need to work with the church to increase the number of Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregations to ensure LGBTQ people and their families have a safe place where they feel welcome, included, and celebrated.*

3. *There is also an ever-changing, growing need for outreach and education as society and culture update laws and understanding on how to care for and protect LGBTQ people and their families. We have more milestones to reach until welcome, inclusion, and celebration for LGBTQ people is a lived experience in the Lutheran church.*

What can I do to help in my congregation?

1. *Work with your congregations to get the RIC logo displayed outside on your congregation’s sign to let passers-by know you are welcome.*
2. *Think about how your congregation uses photos, artwork, or other graphics in your church building or website: Will LGBTQ people see images that include families like theirs?*
3. *Get the word out in your community that your congregation is welcoming.*
4. *Pull together an RIC team and create opportunities to celebrate your RIC status. Celebrate RIC Sunday.*
5. *Join with other RIC congregations in your area and march in your*

local pride parade. The goal is to make sure you’re sharing your welcome with your community so you can build relationships with those looking for a safe place to worship.

How can my congregation become RIC?

Intentional conversation about publicly welcoming LGBTQ folks is important. We would suggest a training called “Building an Inclusive Church,” which provides tools and teaches 11 steps to help congregations in their journey of welcome and inclusion of LGBTQ people. It’s offered by ReconcilingWorks.

My congregation is already welcoming, how do we make it official?

There are three easy steps to take:

1. *Create and pass a welcome statement that specifically names either “LGBT people” or “people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.”*
2. *Send us an official email or letter with the welcome statement.*
3. *Complete a survey that will help ReconcilingWorks support your congregation and other RIC congregations in the journey of welcome.*

Working at the intersection of oppressions, ReconcilingWorks embodies, inspires, advocates and organizes for the acceptance and full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical and global partners.

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



Please keep all of the materials, including the panels, and use them for other events in your area, such as synod workshops, RIC Sunday services, local Pride celebrations, PFLAG gatherings, etc. .. Don’t forget to collect sign-ups, memberships, and donations and mail them to us in the pre-addressed envelope included in the display kit.