

# Reconciling in Christ Synods

*a Synod's guide to RIC*



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, gender identities and expressions, their families, friends and allies, within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical and global partners.

**ReconcilingWorks**

LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



# Reconciling in Christ (RIC)

Since its beginning in 1984, the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program of ReconcilingWorks has identified congregations, synods, and other Lutheran organizations as safe, welcoming communities of faith for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.



Currently, ReconcilingWorks has recognized over 690 communities as publicly and intentionally welcoming, including, and celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and their families.



As of 5/3/17

# What is an RIC synod?

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) synods have extended a public welcome to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. RIC synods serve as witnesses not only to LGBTQ people in the area, but also to congregations within the synod and to the wider church. The Gospel is indeed for *all*. Yet, unfortunately, LGBTQ people continue to experience exclusion and harm from people supposedly acting in the name of Christianity. It is important LGBTQ persons are specifically named as part of that “all.”

Within the interdependent nature of the ELCA's polity, it's important that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities feel welcome in all aspects of the church's life. While the synod cannot speak for the welcome offered by individual congregations, it can ensure that the ministries of the synod organization will be inclusive.



In this way, RIC synods partner with the churchwide organization, sharing in the ELCA's 1995 affirmation of welcome to gay and lesbian people “to participate fully in the life of the congregations” (CA95.06.50) as well as the social statement on sexuality, which “call[s] upon congregations and members of this church to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families” (*Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, p. 19). RIC synods therefore serve as a witness to the wider Lutheran community and to society at large.

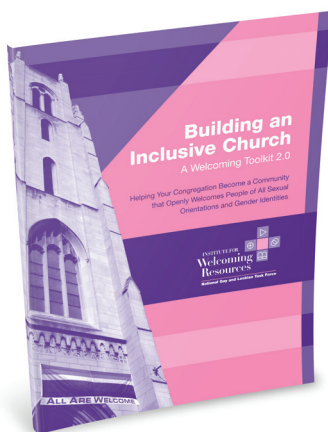
RIC synods also share in the churchwide ministries by extending the ELCA's formal recognition of ReconcilingWorks as an “Independent Lutheran Organization.” The ELCA recognizes Independent Lutheran Organizations as those that work compatibly with the programs of the ELCA and that fulfill or enhance particular work for the overall life of the church. ReconcilingWorks relates to the ELCA through the Congregational and Synodical Mission unit.

# How do RIC Synods live out their affirmation?

RIC synods have formed standing committees or task forces focusing on publicizing and expanding the synod's journey of welcome, inclusion, and celebration to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in many ways, including:

**Partnering with ReconcilingWorks** to engage congregations and other ministries in the Reconciling in Christ journey of welcome, inclusion, and celebration, supporting and utilizing the national organization and local chapters of ReconcilingWorks and the RIC program.

**Serving as a congregational and synodical resource** for matters of welcome, inclusion, celebration, justice issues, outreach, and advocacy for all LGBTQ people in the life of the church.



**Hosting “Building an Inclusive Church” trainings** throughout their synod. Building an Inclusive Church equips you with ways to create dialogue, deepening relationships throughout the congregation rather than sparking debate and division.

**Maintaining a directory of resource persons** to assist congregations and other ministries as they live out the journey of welcome, inclusion, and celebration together faithfully in dialogue.

**Providing resources** relevant to welcoming LGBTQ people and their families on the synod’s website.

**Emphasizing the synod’s commitment to welcome** with synodical events, such as at an annual leadership conference, synod assemblies, workshops, panel discussions, Bible studies, resource tables, and other means of educational and spiritual growth.

**Promoting annual “RIC Sunday”** worship services and celebrations in the synod newsletter and other outlets.

**Advocating** (together with the bishop and/or other synod leaders) for public policies that protect LGBTQ people and their families, such as protections against discrimination in the workplace, marketplace and housing; protections against bullying in schools; and immigration equality.



# Becoming an RIC Synod

## BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Synods can start their journey of welcome, inclusion, and celebration by hosting and facilitating Building an Inclusive Church training events throughout the synod. The trainings utilize a wonderful resource called “Building an Inclusive Church: A Welcoming Toolkit.” Drawing upon over thirty years of experience within a variety of Christian denominations, this toolkit is a step-by-step guide to help facilitate a welcoming process in your local context. Biblically and theologically based, it uses tools of relational organizing, assessment, conflict management, and change theory. Visit ReconcilingWorks’ resources page for other free educational resources to accompany your community’s journey.

## MAKING IF OFFICIAL

**1. Have a vote.** After completing a program of education, discussion, and mutual discernment, a synod joins the RIC roster by adopting an “Affirmation of Welcome” that publicly welcomes people of all gender identities and sexual orientations. The affirmation may be approved by a vote of either the synod council or the synod assembly.

**2. Send us your affirmation.** After the affirmation is adopted, mail, fax, or email ReconcilingWorks a letter with the approved Affirmation on synod letterhead asking to be added to the RIC roster.

### 3. RIC Profile Survey

Once we receive your synod’s affirmation of welcome, ReconcilingWorks staff will call the synod office to ask several demographic survey questions. Once we have concluded the survey, and have answered any additional questions you may have, we will add your synod to the roster of RIC participants. The RIC roster is displayed on our website and is distributed appropriately as a witness to the community and to the church at large.



# Sample Affirmations

## FLORIDA-BAHAMAS SYNOD

*The Florida-Bahamas Synod welcomes all people without regard to racial or ethnic distinction, family status, age, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, or differing abilities and invites and encourages all people to participate fully in the life and work of the church and its expressions. Christ's message, the Gospel, is for everyone equally; and our response to God's Radical Hospitality includes welcoming and including all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender believers in all aspects of the life of the Church and its congregations.*



**God's work. Our hands.**

## SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD

*Baptized into the waters of Christ and raised to new life by the strong word of God, fed and nourished by the body and blood of Christ, the people of God in the Southeastern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America decided in the 2009 assembly to be a Reconciling in Christ Synod. This synod, called by the Holy Spirit, is kept in unity with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. We are freely forgiven in Christ and we are in full service to one another. Whenever we meet in worship, prayer, deliberation and decision, as a large and diverse body of Christians, we recognize various ministries to ensure all people are welcomed into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ. As baptized believers created in the image of God – including, but not limited to, people of every race, nationality, age, political affiliation, marital status, gender identity, economic or social status, sexual orientation, mental and physical abilities – our synod welcomes all people of all backgrounds to become Christ's devoted disciples.*



**SOUTHEASTERN  
MINNESOTA SYNOD**

## THE NORTHWEST WASHINGTON SYNOD

*The Northwest Washington Synod affirms that gay and lesbian people and their families share with all others the worth that comes from being unique individuals created by God. People of all sexual orientations are welcome with the membership of the synod. As members of this synod, gay and lesbian people and their families are expected and encouraged to share in the sacramental and general life of this synod. The Northwest Washington Synod encourages member congregations to study, discuss, and consider becoming "Reconciling in Christ" congregations.*



Northwest Washington  
Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

## Current RIC Synods

The following 29 synods are recognized as  
Reconciling in Christ:

### **Eastern North Dakota**

**Eastern Washington-Idaho**

**Florida-Bahamas**

**Grand Canyon**

**Greater Milwaukee**

**Lower Susquehanna**

**Metropolitan Chicago**

**Metropolitan New York**

**Metropolitan Washington DC**

**Minneapolis Area**

**New England**

**New Jersey**

**Northeastern Pennsylvania**

**Northwest Washington**

**Oregon**

### **Pacifica**

**Rocky Mountain**

**Saint Paul Area**

**Sierra Pacific**

**South-Central Synod of**

**Wisconsin**

**Southeast Michigan**

**Southeastern Minnesota**

**Southeastern Pennsylvania**

**Southeastern**

**Southwest California**

**Southwestern Texas**

**Upstate New York**

**British Columbia (ELCIC)**

**Eastern (ELCIC)**

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