

We're Welcoming Now What?



ReconcilingWorks believes that welcome is a journey, not a destination. Whether your Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Ministry Setting has been doing this work for 30 years, or just passed the vote last week, there are always ways to deepen and expand our welcome to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) people and families by making welcome a lived experience.

The holy work of welcome is a lifelong journey for everyone. There are countless milestones to be reached in a faith community to welcome, include, and advocate for LGBTQIA+ people, their families, and other marginalized communities. Incorporating welcome into the life of your faith community will take time. These milestones will be reached through ongoing education, relationship building, and staying up to date on LGBTQIA+ needs. Below is an example of a checklist which can help ensure that your faith community continues to reach new milestones in its Welcoming Journey.

Leadership

- Does your faith community have, or has it had, an openly LGBTQIA+ clergy person?
- Does your faith community have, or has it had, an openly LGBTQIA+ paid staff?
- Does your faith community have, or has it had, openly LGBTQIA+ moderators, treasurers, council members or other elected lay positions?
- Is there training spent on how your faith community lives out its Welcome Statement?
- Has your faith community considered making a meaningful contribution to ReconcilingWorks?

Adult Education

- How often does your faith community offer adult forums on issues relating to LGBTQIA+ topics, needs, and advocacy? Are they well attended?
- Has your faith community offered intersectional educational opportunities suggested in Step Six of the Building an Inclusive Church (BIC) Toolkit?
- Are your adult educational opportunities facilitated by openly LGBTQIA+ people in your faith community or neighborhood?

Children's Education

- Does your faith community offer curriculum for elementary aged children, junior high aged children, or high school aged people on LGBTQIA+ inclusion?
- Do you include LGBTQIA+ inclusion as part of your Confirmation curriculum in your faith community?

Mission Outreach

- Does your faith community offer mission trips for its youth group (and adults) that address specific LGBTQIA+ issues?
- Does your faith community offer letter writing, legislative visits and other forms of public witnessing on behalf of LGBTQIA+ persons and families?
- Does your faith community work with your denominational LGBTQIA+ advocacy group to engage within your denomination on behalf of LGBTQIA+ persons?
- Does your faith community work with state and local organizations on LGBTQIA+ issues?

Worship

- Does your faith community have LGBTQIA+ persons serving as liturgists, communion servers, acolytes or other worship leaders?
- Does your faith community offer prayers that explicitly name LGBTQIA+ persons and inclusion?
- Does your faith community sing hymns/songs of welcome and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons?
- Does your faith community offer wedding ceremonies for its same-sex couples?
- Does your faith community offer religious rituals for its LGBTQIA+ members around coming out, gender transition, and other life-cycle events?

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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)

Facilities

- Does your faith community clearly display its welcome statement and/or rainbow color logos which indicate a specific welcome to LGBTQIA+ people?
- Does your faith community offer gender inclusive bathrooms?
- Does your faith community have a sign on its building that declares it is specifically welcoming of LGBTQIA+ people?
- Have you made your faith community visible on various social media sites, to help others know about your community and its commitment to welcome and inclusion for LGBTQIA+ people?



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 pronoun name tags" in your favorite Online search engine.

How will you continue your Welcoming Journey?

One reminder as you continue this work: LGBTQIA+ people come in all bodies! Issues related to LGBTQIA+ persons and the work of welcoming are deeply related to other issues of inclusion and justice. LGBTQIA+ people embody every race, class, ability, and age group. It is strongly recommended to continue to do educational work about the ways in which LGBTQIA+ inclusion and justice are woven into and connected to other issues of justice and inclusion. Consider the ways in which you can connect the work you are currently doing with LGBTQIA+ folks and justice work that is already happening in your faith community.

If your faith community is looking for resources to help engage in justice work, here are a few organizations to take a look at:

- **RaceForward**, Race Forward brings systemic analysis and an innovative approach to complex race issues to help people take effective action toward racial equity: <https://www.raceforward.org/>
- **Services & Advocacy for LGBT Elders (SAGE)** is the country's largest and oldest organizations dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older adults: <https://www.sageusa.org>
- **Gender Justice** is a legal and policy advocacy organization devoted to addressing the causes and consequences of gender inequality: <http://www.genderjustice.us/>
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness**, the United State's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness: <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/LGBTQ>
- **Equality Federation** will be able to connect you with your state's LGBTQIA+ organizations: <http://www.equalityfederation.org>

For more organizations and resources, visit our website at ReconcilingWorks.org/Resources/Injustice

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Learn more: ReconcilingWorks.org/Resources/RIC