

RECONCILING IN CHRIST

Frequently Asked Questions



All people are welcome in our faith community. Why should we single out lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) people?

Many LGBTQIA+ 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 LGBTQIA+ people. Many RIC communities find that the process of extending a welcome to LGBTQIA+ 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, gender identities and gender expressions.

- 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, gender identities and gender expressions in their non-discrimination policies.

When was the RIC program started and why?

Beginning in 1983, the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program recognizes Lutheran congregations, synods, organizations, colleges, and seminaries that welcome people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and gender expressions. Because lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic people of faith are frequently made to feel unwelcome in many Lutheran settings, the RIC roster provides a list of Lutheran communities where LGBTQIA+ people can find safe, nurturing, and affirming settings in which to worship and learn.

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



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, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/ aromatic” (LGBTQIA+) people or “people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions” 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, abilities, and ethnicity.



RIC Ceremony at Saint Mark Lutheran Church in Salem, OR

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

To ensure this holy work continues, it is our hope that all RIC partners would choose to make a gift meaningful to them on a regular basis. Some RIC partners make annual or monthly contributions. Contributing to ReconcilingWorks enhances the work of welcome to all in the church. Partners may also choose to purchase additional resource materials through ReconcilingWorks online store.

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, gender identities and gender expressions so they are more easily found by those looking for such a welcome. 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, gender identities and gender expressions are specifically included. The Reconciling in Christ program is a ministry of ReconcilingWorks.

What are the goals of ReconcilingWorks?

The ministries of ReconcilingWorks embody, inspire, and support the acceptance and full participation of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, their families, friends and allies, within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical partners. 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. ReconcilingWorks 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, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromatic 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 LGBTQIA+ 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.