

Reconciling in Christ



A Synod's Guide to Being RIC

The RIC
Journey of
Discernment
and Living
into an RIC
Identity



RECONCILINGWORKS: LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION

Starting in 1974, ReconcilingWorks and its predecessor organizations focused on the acceptance, full participation, and liberation of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions within the Lutheran Church. In carrying out this ministry of reconciliation, inclusion, and affirmation, ReconcilingWorks is guided by these values:

- God values and embraces each person as a beloved child.
- The Spirit gives a diversity of gifts for the common good.
- Jesus Christ calls us to work for justice



Reconciling in Christ

Since its beginning in 1983, 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, gender identities, and gender expressions. The purpose of the RIC Program is to ensure the welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions; work for racial equity and commit to anti-racist work; and support the national program.

STAY CONNECTED

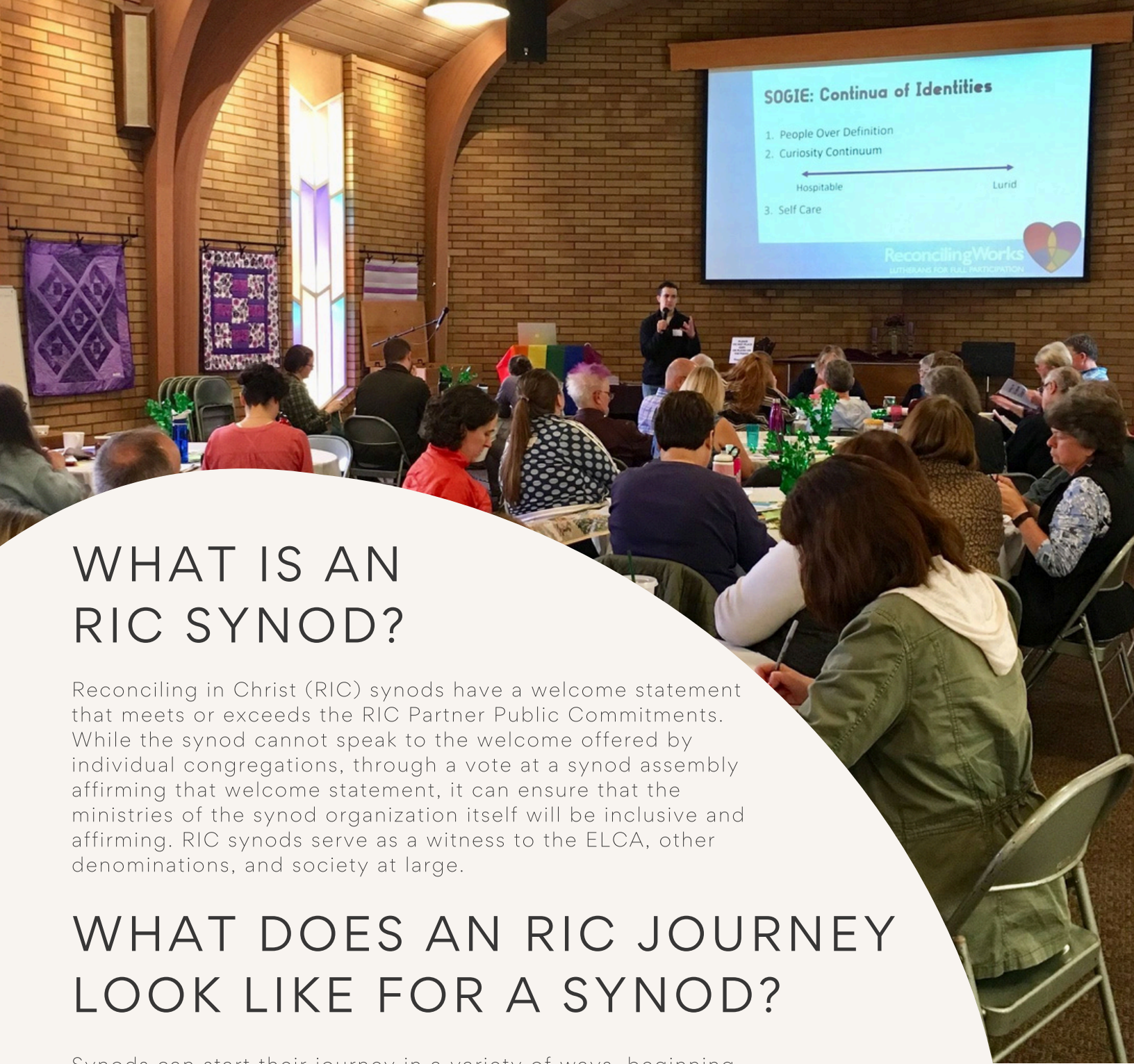
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WHAT IS AN RIC SYNOD?

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) synods have a welcome statement that meets or exceeds the RIC Partner Public Commitments. While the synod cannot speak to the welcome offered by individual congregations, through a vote at a synod assembly affirming that welcome statement, it can ensure that the ministries of the synod organization itself will be inclusive and affirming. RIC synods serve as a witness to the ELCA, other denominations, and society at large.

WHAT DOES AN RIC JOURNEY LOOK LIKE FOR A SYNOD?

Synods can start their journey in a variety of ways, beginning with either a charge or request from a Synod Council or a resolution at a synod assembly. Successful RIC synods have formed standing committees or convened task forces composed of lay and rostered leaders from across the synod with a primary focus on the work of public welcome. ReconcilingWorks staff are available to support and accompany each synod in their journey.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SYNOD LEADERSHIP

ROLE OF THE BISHOP & SYNOD STAFF

During the Journey of Discernment, as the RIC core team of lay and rostered leaders who are guiding the journey are engaged in research and outreach, bishops can and should provide support to the synod's core team and remain informed about what the RIC team leaders are doing. Bishops and other synod staff can provide advice and logistical support [e.g., arranging for meeting spaces, setting aside time at synod staff meetings for updates, etc.]. While the Bishop should not get involved in the direct work of the RIC team, it can sometimes be helpful to have one member of synod staff serving on the team in the dual role of active member and staff liaison.

ROLE OF SYNOD COUNCIL

The synod council is often where the initial decision to begin the RIC journey is made, with a vote to authorize a formal RIC Journey of Discernment and commission or appoint an RIC core team for the synod. Given the wide range of lay and rostered leaders on a synod council, it is an ideal opportunity to employ the Faith Community Assessment Survey tool. Once that tool helps discern a recommended timeline for the RIC journey, the synod council can make decisions about reporting and transparency on progress.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN AT SYNOD ASSEMBLY?

The synod assembly can be the place where the journey is formally started, but that is optional. ReconcilingWorks requires synods to vote in an assembly to affirm a welcome statement by at least a 75 percent margin in order to become an RIC partner, which is what we require for our congregational partners.

WHAT ROLE DO CONFERENCES AND CONGREGATIONS PLAY?

It's ideal if the RIC core team for the synod includes two active team members from each conference, one lay member and one rostered member. But it would work to have only one from each conference, depending on the overall size of the synod and the number of conferences.

Conference gatherings are also opportunities for educational events and large group outreach, including information sessions and surveying about the Welcome Statement. Likewise, larger congregations can serve as venues for gatherings of lay and rostered leaders in geographic regions or communities to gather for the same purposes, information sessions and surveying about the proposed Welcome Statement.

HOW DO RIC SYNODS LIVE OUT THEIR AFFIRMATION?



RIC PARTNER COMMITMENTS FOR SYNODS

The RIC Public Partner Commitments found on the ReconcilingWorks website and circulated in toolkits and handouts are primarily focused on ministry that happens in a congregation, which means that they might not fit exactly into the structure and public commitments of a synod. Below is one way to imagine how to apply those commitments to a synod.

RIC Public Commitments
Anything in bold and quotations below must be included in RIC Partner Welcome Statements, public identities, and policies of the synod. If the synod has a separate statement of racial equity, a commitment to anti-racism, or has submitted an anti-racism plan to the ELCA's Churchwide Office, this can also satisfy the first RIC Partner commitment. A copy of this additional statement will need to be shared with ReconcilingWorks.

COMMITMENT ONE

Clearly state a welcome to people of "***all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions***" or "***LGBTQIA+***" and name a commitment to "***racial equity***" or "***anti-racism***" in your welcome statement.

COMMITMENT TWO

Be open to calling an LGBTQIA+ and/or Black, Brown, Indigenous, Person of Color (BIPOC) as a Rostered Leader serving on synod staff AND commit to working with LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC rostered ministers as they search for first calls or are seeking new calls as part of the synod's mobility processes.

COMMITMENT THREE

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

COMMITMENT FOUR

Make a meaningful contribution annually to support the national RIC program. [Note: A meaningful contribution is determined by each faith community, its budget, and the understanding that generosity funds the RIC Program. Meaningful contributions vary for each RIC partner. For example: A synod can meet this commitment by designating a portion of each year's synod assembly offering as mission support for ReconcilingWorks.]



PUBLICIZING RESOURCES

Partner with ReconcilingWorks to engage congregations and other ministries, collaborating with the national organization of ReconcilingWorks, and respecting the RIC program's tools and processes.

A synod can curate and publicize information in support of people in the LGBTQIA+ community through its website and printed material distributed at synod assemblies and other synod-wide gatherings. This effort could include the maintenance of a directory of resource people and organizations within the synod's boundaries that could provide additional support to congregations and other ministries as they live out the journey of welcome, inclusion, and celebration together with the synod.

Serve as a congregational and synodical resource for all matters of welcome, inclusion, celebration, justice, outreach, and advocacy in the life of the church, including but not limited to the following:

- Candidacy Committee responsibilities.
- Mobility forms and processes [e.g., Site Ministry Profiles and Rostered Minister Profiles].
- Youth and Young Adult ministries.
- Advocacy training and support for congregations and individuals speaking to local, regional, and state governments.
- Host Building an Inclusive Church and other trainings created or curated by ReconcilingWorks.

EMPHASIZING WELCOME

Emphasize and model the synod's commitment to welcome at synodical events as agendas and schedules are created, and leadership for events is appointed. The list of events would depend on the synod, and could include things like an annual leadership conference, synod assemblies, workshops, panel discussions, synod-wide Bible studies, congregational vitality training, resource tables, and other means of educational and spiritual growth.

ADVOCACY

Advocating (through the office of the bishop and/or other elected synod leaders) for public policies that protect LGBTQIA+ people and their families, such as protections against discrimination in the marketplace and housing, protections against bullying in schools, anti-racism justice, and immigration justice

SAMPLE RIC SYNOD WELCOME STATEMENTS



SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD

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.

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.

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.