



# Reconciling in Christ Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **When was the RIC program started and why?**

In 1983, Lutherans Concerned/North America created the Reconciling in Christ program to recognize Lutheran congregations that welcome lesbian and gay members into full participation. Because gays and lesbians were frequently not welcomed in congregations, they greatly appreciated the RIC roster when looking for “safe” places to worship. Since its formation, the RIC program has been expanded beyond congregations to include other settings, such as organizations, synods, and colleges and seminaries. In 2002, the RIC program began to include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

### **What does a congregation (or other setting) have to do to be included on the Reconciling in Christ roster?**

The universal requirement is that the setting must have made a public, explicit indication of its welcome to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Congregations 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. And colleges and seminaries demonstrate their intent by explicitly including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in their non-discrimination policies.

### **Are congregations listed on the RIC roster required to contribute dues, assessments or apportionments to ReconcilingWorks or to include ReconcilingWorks in their congregational budgets?**

There is no requirement of an RIC congregation to contribute to ReconcilingWorks. There are no dues or assessments. Many RIC congregations choose through their mission outreach to contribute to ReconcilingWorks to enhance the work of welcome to all in the church. Congregations may also choose to purchase additional resource materials through ReconcilingWorks.

### **What is an Affirmation of Welcome or Welcome Statement?**

A resolution of welcome that explicitly specifies gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people or people of all sexual orientations and gender identities is the key requirement of the RIC program. The statement may be very short and specify only such people, or it may be rather long and include a sufficient listing of people where every member can find a connection.

### **All people are welcome in our congregation\*. Why should we single out lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people?**

Many LGBT people have learned by experience that they are not welcome in church, even in churches that state, “All are welcome here!” ReconcilingWorks continues to learn of Lutheran congregations\* that shun LGBT people; sometimes parents, families, and friends are also vilified, attacked, and expelled by members or leaders. 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 LGBT people. The RIC program seeks to make known settings where people

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\* or organization, synod, university, etc.

of all sexual orientations and gender identities are truly welcomed. Many RIC communities find that the process of extending a welcome to LGBT people opens them up to other people or groups that also need a particular invitation to know that “all” includes them as well.

### **Does an Affirmation of Welcome or Welcome Statement have to refer to “Reconciling in Christ”?**

No. While many congregations\* 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 and gender identities are explicitly included.

### **The Reconciling in Christ program is a ministry of ReconcilingWorks. If we become Reconciling in Christ, does that mean that we have to support a specific “agenda?”**

As stated earlier, the RIC Program simply lists settings that have an explicit welcome for LGBT people so that those (and other like-minded) people can find them. However, as partners in ministry, welcoming congregations often find that their goals and values frequently align with the goals and values of ReconcilingWorks as a whole.

### **What is/are the goal(s) of ReconcilingWorks?**

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. The ministries of ReconcilingWorks embody, inspire, and support the acceptance and full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, their families, friends and allies, within the Lutheran communion and its ecumenical and global partners.

Through our Reconciling in Christ program, ministries, resources, events and alliances, ReconcilingWorks: builds community for worship, education and support; fosters welcome and acceptance in all Lutheran settings; 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. (board-approved vision statement, 2003)

### **But ReconcilingWorks supports same-gender blessings and the ordination of gays and lesbians in committed relationships. If we become Reconciling in Christ, doesn't that mean that we also have to support these blessings and ordinations?**

ReconcilingWorks has many ministries and many members with differing opinions and beliefs. The RIC program simply focuses on welcome. Over the years, however, we have found that once congregations\* begin fully welcoming LGBT people, they often find that the ministry of welcome and reconciliation calls them to also support same-gender blessings and the ordination of gays and lesbians in committed same-gender relationships.

### **What is the position of the ELCA regarding ReconcilingWorks?**

ReconcilingWorks is an independently organized 501(c)3 organization. In 2002, the ELCA began recognizing ReconcilingWorks as an Independent Lutheran Organization and including ReconcilingWorks in the ELCA Yearbook. We have a presence at synod assemblies, at WELCA and the ELCA National Youth Gathering, plus many other ELCA events.

### **What is the position of ReconcilingWorks toward the ELCA?**

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 primarily from the ELCA and ELCiC. As ReconcilingWorks continues our mission of working for the full participation of LGBT people in church and society, we seek 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.