

We're Already Welcoming, Why Do We Need to Say So?

The purpose of the Reconciling in Christ (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. Since 1983, the RIC program has been a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. Over time, those commitments have expanded as we continue to live into our values. Every ministry setting begins this journey from their own unique context and ReconcilingWorks is here to help you create an authentic welcome journey that is customized to your community.

Why would a faith community want to be on the RIC list? Perhaps you feel your congregation is already welcoming to all people; what difference could having an explicit welcome statement make? Below are reasons current RIC partners have given about why creating a welcome statement and becoming RIC make a difference.

To communicate who you are:

All RIC partners are listed published on the ReconcilingWorks website in a searchable national map, which provides LGBTQIA+ people and allies to search for a faith community in their area. The RIC program is one way to extend specific invitations to people to your community names in its public welcome statement. When people see you have gone through a time of discernment to specifically welcome LGBTQIA+ people and are committed to the work of racial equity, they know you are a community that is skilled at welcoming. This is the kind of good news the world is wanting to hear!

To leave nothing unsaid:

Sadly, our LGBTQIA+, and Black, Brown, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) siblings continue to experience exclusion and harm from people supposedly acting in the name of Christianity. Even churches who declare "All are welcome" often demonstrate to LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC individuals and families that "All" does not include them. For this reason, the welcoming invitation RIC partners create is explicit, recognize the injustices have occurred in the name of faith. As an RIC partner your commitment to work towards the full welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy of all names in your welcome statement is a lifelong commitment of your community.

For the health of your community:

Engaging in a journey of discernment to become RIC deepens and expands the faith life of the community and builds long-lasting relationships. As members participate in dialogue with one another, they practice putting their faith into speech and action, creating a more vibrant spiritual community. Dually, having a welcoming statement printed in your bulletin, read during worship or posted on your social media pages, serves to remind members who they are and how they have pledged to engage with one another. Many RIC partners report the demographic most often drawn in by the RIC status is young couples with children. These folks are seeking communities prepared to help them raise their children in ways consistent with their values. They want their children to grow up surrounded by diversity and to know their families will never have to question if their children will be welcome as they grow and learn more about who they are. Your welcome shows others the type of community they have entered. It proclaims to the wider church you are a space who has been intentional in the welcome you provide.

