

Reconciling in Christ

General Information Sheet

What is the Reconciling in Christ Program?

In 1984 Lutherans Concerned / North America started the Reconciling in Christ ("RIC") Program to recognize Lutheran congregations that welcome lesbian and gay believers. During the 2002 LC/NA Assembly, members took action to include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the RIC Program. The Reconciling in Christ Roster now exceeds 300 settings, including congregations, synods and organizations.

All people are welcome here. Why should we single out lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people?

The RIC Program doesn't seek special treatment for LGBT people. The reality is, however, that we live in a time where the voices of fear and ignorance dominate the public discussion of human sexuality issues in our society. Most often these judgmental voices of irrational fear are all that is heard. In fact, Lutherans Concerned continues to learn of Lutheran churches that shun LGBT people. Sometimes their parents and family are even vilified and attacked by church members.

As a result, it is assumed by most LGBT people that they are not welcome in any church unless told otherwise. Even a general statement of welcome is heard as really meaning "everybody but me," so it takes a special effort to communicate the same welcome. The RIC Program seeks to make clearer the policy of churches where all people are welcome as full members, regardless of their sexual orientation, their gender identity or that of their children, siblings or friends.

What is the Affirmation of Welcome?

The single element that is central to the program is the Affirmation of Welcome. It is simple, yet powerful in its witness. Any group that adopts it or a similar statement which includes the naming of LGBT people as welcome to full participation is eligible to be designated as Reconciling in Christ after review by Lutherans Concerned. Making the Affirmation promotes a publicly inclusive ministry and helps heal the pain of doubt.

How do we become designated as RIC?

Most groups start the process of consideration by engaging in a study program or series of educational meetings. Hearing the experiences of LGBT people and their families often creates greater understanding and insights.

A congregation, synod or other organization joins the program in one of several ways: by having its council (or equivalent body) approve the "Affirmation of Welcome" or by having a vote of the whole congregation. Once the Affirmation is adopted, the congregation, synod or organization sends a copy of the Affirmation with a signed letter to the RIC Executive. When the Affirmation is reviewed, the congregation, synod or organization will be added to the roster of RIC

participants. This roster is carried on our web site and is distributed appropriately as a witness to the community and the church at large.

What will happen if we participate?

What you do once the Affirmation is adopted is up to your own congregation, synod or organization. Many churches post their Affirmation or include it in their bulletin. Others make an inclusive reference in their advertising or include the RIC Program in their annual budget. Once you adopt an Affirmation of Welcome, take a look at "Your Church is RIC: Now What?" a guide full of voluntary action steps for inclusive ministry.

Experience shows that any changes in your church or group will happen slowly, opening up individuals to healing and deep spiritual reconciliation. Perhaps parents with a gay son may finally be able to feel they are not guilty of failure in raising their child. Maybe a closeted lesbian member will bring her partner to church for the first time. A bisexual or transgendered person, hearing of your congregation, might return to church after an absence of many years. It's amazing how the Holy Spirit works when we are willing to be an instrument of God's grace.

"All this is from God who reconciled us through Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:18