

1 **[DRAFT] RESOLUTION: Affirming Metropolitan Chicago Synod’s**
2 **“Reconciling in Christ” Commitments**

3 WHEREAS, ReconcilingWorks states that “since 1983, the Reconciling in Christ (“RIC”) program has been a
4 public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations,
5 gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church;”¹ and

6 WHEREAS, ReconcilingWorks credentials ministries as RIC based on their statement of welcome; and

7 WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Chicago Synod (“the synod”) has proclaimed itself a RIC Synod since 1993; and

8 WHEREAS, neither the synod nor ReconcilingWorks have a resolution or welcome statement on file that
9 affirms the synod’s commitment; and

10 WHEREAS, in 2021, ReconcilingWorks expanded the RIC program to require four specific commitments be
11 included in a faith communities’ welcome statement by 2025 to retain the RIC status. These commitments
12 include: (1) a clearly stated welcome to LGBTQIA2S+ peoples and a commitment to racial equity in a welcome
13 statement; (2) the openness to calling an LGBTQIA2S+ and Black, Brown, Indigenous, Person of Color
14 (BIPOC) roster leader; (3) the use of its space for LGBTQIA2S+ weddings and blessings; and (4) a meaningful
15 annual contribution to the national RIC program;² and

16 WHEREAS, the synod has committed itself to racial equity through its Allyship team, African Descent
17 Ministry, Asian Ministry Network, Latinx Strategy Ministry, as well as ongoing programs, workshops, and
18 organizations; and

19 WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the*
20 *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* (“synod’s governing documents”) state in S6.04.03. that “this synod
21 has been designated a "Reconciling in Christ" (RIC) synod with a commitment to welcome, include, and
22 celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people. As such, it is the
23 goal of this synod to ensure that the membership within all synod assemblies, councils, committees, boards
24 and/or other organizational units include individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+”; and

25 WHEREAS, the synod’s governing documents in S6.04.A22 note that “to best live out its Reconciling In Christ
26 designation, this synod encourages the following: a. That all buildings utilized for synod events, meetings,
27 assemblies, offices, and the like have the availability of a non-gendered bathroom. b. That events, meetings, and
28 the like include the ability for people to self-designate their gender pronouns during registration, introductions,
29 on name tags, and the like, except when made impossible by required designations by the ELCA churchwide
30 unit or required constitutional provisions. c. That language at all functions be carefully used to acknowledge the
31 diversity of sexual orientations;” and

32 WHEREAS, the synod’s governing documents in S6.04.B88 name that “it shall be the goal of this Synod that at
33 least 20% of the membership of the Synod Council, committees, and boards be persons of color and/or persons
34 whose primary language is other than English to include but not be limited to American Sign Language;” and

36 ¹ <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/becomeric/>

35 ² <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/becomeric/>

37 WHEREAS, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in*
38 *America* proclaim that “this church, in faithfulness to the Gospel, is committed to be an inclusive church in the
39 midst of division in society,” and that “the congregations, synods, and churchwide units of this church shall seek
40 to exhibit the inclusive unity that is God’s will for the Church” (5.01b); and

41 WHEREAS, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and in the name of Jesus, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in
42 America (“the ELCA”) and the synod share an ongoing commitment to justice work in the world and
43 communities in which we live; and that ongoing commitment to justice work necessarily includes justice and
44 advocacy work alongside people from historically marginalized communities; and

45 WHEREAS, in baptism without stipulations or conditions we have been made new; and the sacrament of
46 communion proclaims that same unconditional grace to the world, so that we find ourselves united as many
47 different members of the one body of Christ; and

48 WHEREAS, the communities of the synod have experienced the magnificent welcome of God and have tasted
49 the free gifts of God's unconditional grace; and God’s unconditional welcome has transformed us;

50 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the synod shall, in faithfulness to the continued and pressing need for
51 the church, in all of its varied and faithful expressions, to extend a specific welcome to historically marginalized
52 people and communities, adopt the following as their official statement of welcome as a Reconciling in Christ
53 (RIC) synod:

54 **“We, the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, welcome**
55 **you into the fullness of God’s love. You are a beloved child of God, made in God’s image.**

56 **We welcome you and celebrate all that makes you who you are, including: your gender identity,**
57 **gender expression, sexual orientation, marital status, race, culture, ethnicity, country of birth,**
58 **socioeconomic or employment status, physical abilities, political party, immigration status, home**
59 **address, medical or psychological history, family status, age, and religious/spiritual background.**
60 **You are accepted and affirmed just as you are—with all your differences and gifts.**

61 **In our synod’s continued effort to live out this welcome, we are committed to the work of**
62 **anti-racism, social and economic justice, and environmental care. We seek to dismantle oppression**
63 **in all its forms—internally, interpersonally, and structurally. We are committed to celebrating and**
64 **uplifting this diversity in our leadership, policies, practices, and culture. Rather than using our**
65 **differences to divide us, we pledge to use our differences as gifts for our work together;” and**

66 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the synod candidacy committee provide those going through the candidacy
67 process with accompaniment resources to support LGBTQIA2S+³ and Black, Brown, Indigenous, Person of
68 Color (BIPOC) candidates for ministry;⁴ and

71 ³ LGBTQIA2S+ is an acronym that generally stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Trans, Queer or
72 Questioning, Intersex, Asexual or Agender, and Two-Spirit. The plus-sign signifies the full inclusion of additional identity
73 terms while recognizing the consistent need to update terms to best represent God’s magnificent diversity. “Two-Spirit” is
74 a contemporary pan-Indian umbrella term used by some Indigenous North Americans to describe Native people who
75 fulfill a traditional third-gender social role in their communities.

69 ⁴ Resources available in 2024 include (but are not limited to) Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries’ *The Mysteries of the*
70 *Ages: a handy guide for LGBTQIA+ people exploring or preparing for rostered ministry in the ELCA.*

76 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the synod provide workshop-style inclusivity and anti-racism trainings for
77 all synod staff, candidacy committee members, Synod Council members, conference deans, and other rostered
78 and non-rostered leaders who desire to participate in such training. Newly hired and/or newly called synod staff
79 persons would be expected to participate in such training events when they are next offered. Such trainings shall
80 occur at least every three years, or upon the election of a new bishop;⁵ and

81 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the synod will celebrate with congregations and other ministry sites of this
82 synod which affirm a Reconciling in Christ welcome statement and will encourage those who are not yet
83 Reconciling in Christ to explore expanding their welcome; and

84 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the synod as well as congregations and other ministry sites of this synod
85 shall be encouraged by the bishop, synod staff, candidacy committee members, Synod Council members,
86 conference deans, and other rostered and non-rostered leaders to be open to calling LGBTQIA2S+ and BIPOC
87 rostered leaders; and

88 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the synod is explicitly open to calling rostered leaders and hiring lay
89 leaders at all levels within the synod who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ and BIPOC; and

90 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all appropriate synod-owned properties⁶ may be used for LGBTQIA2S+
91 weddings and blessings; and

92 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Synod Assembly direct the Treasurer and Synod Council to include a
93 meaningful annual financial contribution to the national RIC program beginning no later than FY 2026 to fulfill
94 the RIC requirements; and

95 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council and other appropriate bodies to
96 review the practices of the synod to best align our welcome statement to live out our expressed values in all
97 other ways necessary to make this synod more inclusive of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender
98 expressions and to deepen our commitment to racial equity; and

99 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution shall be forwarded by the Synod Secretary to
100 ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation as an affirmation of our RIC commitments.

101 *Submitted by the Synod Council of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in*
102 *America, pending final vote on May 31.*

107 ⁵ Such trainings available in 2024 could include or be similar to (but would not be limited to) the *Building an Inclusive*
108 *Church* training as offered by ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation, *Beyond Diversity: How to Build a Truly*
109 *Antiracist Organization* offered by Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training, or consulting with Rev. Sunitha
110 Mortha, associate to the bishop focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Belonging.

103 ⁶ “Appropriate synod-owned properties” include locations that are: (a) deemed by the synod bishop to be safe for
104 occupancy; (b) reasonable locations for a wedding or a blessing [including halls, sanctuaries, and the like; but excluding
105 private offices and the like]; and (c) if applicable, agreed to by the worshipping community occupying the synod-owned
106 property, for example a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community [SAWC].