

RESOLUTION: Affirming Metropolitan Chicago Synod’s “Reconciling in Christ” Commitments

WHEREAS, ReconcilingWorks states that “since 1983, the Reconciling in Christ (“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;”¹ and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³ LGBTQIA2S+ is an acronym that generally stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Trans, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual or Agender, and Two-Spirit. The plus-sign signifies the full inclusion of additional identity terms while recognizing the consistent need to update terms to best represent God’s magnificent diversity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Submitted by the Synod Council of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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