

## Reconciling in Christ FAQ

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1. What is Reconciling Works?	A Lutheran organization since 1974, Reconciling Works has advocated for the full welcome, inclusion, and equity of LGBTQIA+ Lutherans in all aspects of their church, congregation, and community ( <a href="http://reconcilingworks.org">reconcilingworks.org</a> ). Reconciling Works has a training program for congregational leadership to achieve full inclusion. The St. John RIC team has participated in this training and has received ongoing guidance and support.
2. What is the RIC team's origin?	Pastor Brian organized the RIC Team and initiated connection with Reconciling Works in late 2021 after receiving authorization to move forward with this work from the St. John Church Council. This multi-year exploration was aided following contact with two recently arrived St. John families that expressed an interest in being part of a Reconciling in Christ congregation and conversations with other St. John members about clarifying a perceived reality of broad welcome at St. John. No pressure was applied from outside sources or church organizations to begin this process. It was initiated by Pastor Brian and a collection of other members to gauge whether or not something such as the proposed welcome statement is a true and accurate reflection of who St. John is, and is called to be.
3. What is a meaningful contribution to Reconciling Works?	A financial contribution that is consistent with what the congregation discerns they can make. The amount is entirely decided by each partnering congregation or organization.
4. How much is a meaningful contribution?	In recognition of the uniqueness of each congregation and their circumstances, Reconciling Works asks that each RIC partner come together annually and determine for themselves what is a meaningful amount to contribute to the mission

	<p>of ReconcilingWorks. For some partners this amount is \$50 for some it is \$1500 or more, and it can vary annually. It really depends on each congregation's discernment process. The contributions are then utilized to support the mission of ReconcilingWorks in the areas of congregation accompaniment, resource/material development, staffing and fundraising.</p> <p>The average gift from RIC partners in 2023 was \$700.</p> <p>Threehouse Collaborative Campus Ministries, our local ministry partner, contributes \$365 per year.</p>
5. Would we be required to have a pastor who is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?	<p>No. Since the ELCA was established, St. John has had the ability to call a pastor from the LGBTQIA+ community. If we adopt the proposed welcome statement we would commit to being open to calling a pastor without discrimination, but with the focus remaining on a spiritual discernment process that seeks to find the best fit for our ministry needs and the gifts and skills offered by possible candidates.</p> <p>St. John is currently, and has been, served by members and staff who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community in numerous leadership positions.</p>
6. Why can't we just say "ALL are Welcome"?	<p>Members of the LGBTQIA+ community have been specifically excluded in many church settings, so the RIC Team recommends providing a specific statement of inclusion to members of this community. Therefore they know they are not just welcomed here, but wanted as well, for full participation at any capacity in our congregation.</p>
7. What will happen to our financial giving?	<p>The RIC Team believes it is important to discern whether or not this direction is where God is calling us, regardless of legitimate financial budgetary concerns. If it is indeed the way we are called to follow, we must trust God will provide for the</p>

	ministries we lead.
8. What will happen to our membership?	The RIC Team believes that the adoption of the proposed welcome statement, and the active living out of its contents could lead to some members discerning the need to participate elsewhere. At the same time, the RIC Team believes that others could be led to participate with St. John on account of this welcome statement being adopted. It has also become evident that a number of recently participating folks have done so on account of the direction this discernment process has opened.
9. Why aren't we doing more to welcome other marginalized groups?	The RIC Team encourages all members of St. John to engage our "congregation led, staff empowered model" to respond to God's call in advocating for the care and welcome of people that are not being served or welcomed as well as we can. We all have opportunities and work to do but one small group cannot adequately address the many calls to action we share. The RIC Team believes that no other marginalized group has been so systematically shut out and condemned by the church for hundreds of years as has the LGBTQIA+ community. Other groups may experience marginalization, but have not been denied participation and condemned as the church has done to the LGBTQIA+ community.
10. Will adopting this Welcome Statement mean that every sermon will be about LGBTQIA+ issues?	No. Lutheran theological training of pastors is that sermons are based on one or more of the appointed Biblical readings of the day. St. John adheres to that teaching as an ELCA congregation. The proclamation of Christ crucified and risen for sinners saved by grace through faith is the central focus of preaching here at St. John.
11. Is being part of the LGBTQIA+ community a sin?	No. This question needs more expansive exploration and the RIC Team has offered several resources addressing this question. Relying on the words and actions of

	<p>Christ, God's earthly representative, there is no condemnation. Christ is the earthly representation of the Triune God who consistently welcomed "the marginalized." The RIC Team has offered several resources to address this important question and will be doing so again in early 2024. Contact a Team member or the office for these resources.</p>
<p>12. Can St. John adopt this welcome statement and remain consistent with the vital Lutheran commitment to understanding the Holy Scriptures as the only reliable source and norm of the church's teaching and life?</p>	<p>Yes. See answer to question 11.</p>
<p>13. Could we simply adopt the proposed welcome statement and not take on the four commitments that come with being a Reconciling in Christ congregation?</p>	<p>While that is an option for St. John, committing to all four action steps are necessary if we want to be identified as a Reconciling in Christ congregation – a designation that has proven meaningful for folks in the LGBTQIA+ community and their allies. When looking for a new congregation, upon moving to Cedar Falls, some Lutheran Christians and Lutheran Christian-curious folks will see such a designation as one factor in their discernment of a church home in which they feel welcome.</p>
<p>14. In what ways can the RIC Team commit to welcoming and respecting the views of St. John members that don't align with the proposed welcome statement?</p>	<p>God's tent is broad and it is natural that any church will have members whose views differ whether they are RIC affiliates or not. Through active listening, asking questions, finding common ground, and collaborating together on common goals we can, as the body of Christ, continue to help joyfully take God's love into the world at St. John Lutheran Church.</p>

