

As a Reconciling Lutheran, I call on the Lutheran church to extend God's extravagant welcome and a genuine invitation for acceptance and full inclusion to

People of every age, class, color, and ethnic origin....
People of all sexual orientations and gender identities....
People who are single, married, divorced, separated, blessed or partnered....
People who are temporarily-able, disabled, or of differing abilities....

And I ask God, the giver of life and all creation, to guide my ways in living out the ministry of reconciliation always seeking to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ.

You can also sign the covenant online at: www.lcna.org/RL

(please keep this top portion for your reference)

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I want to be a Reconciling Lutheran!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State & Zip: _____

e-mail: _____

Phone: _____ Date: _____

Signature(s): _____

Congregation: _____

Please return this slip to:

Lutherans Concerned/North America; PO Box 4707; St. Paul, MN 55104



RIC Sunday January 31, 2010

The ecumenical community which welcomes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities celebrates the last Sunday of January each year as "welcoming" Sunday. In the Lutheran tradition, we call this day RIC Sunday. This year, RIC Sunday will be more important than ever for our churches in the ELCA. The decisions and actions of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly have invited welcoming congregations to continue their ministry of reconciliation. This year's worship focuses on the theme of reconciliation.

Begun in 1983, Reconciling in Christ (RIC) is a program for Lutheran communities of faith to answer the inclusive call of the Gospel by welcoming people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Currently, there are over 445 Lutheran settings on the RIC roster, including congregations, campus ministries, synods of the ELCA and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, camps, colleges, and other independent organizations. Additional information about the RIC program, including a complete listing of RIC settings and resources for personal and congregational use, are available on-line at the website www.lcna.org.

"Building an Inclusive Church" Trainings are held several times each year to help folks from RIC or prospective RIC congregations learn how to work with church members to discern if a congregation wishes to "come out of the closet" about welcoming people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. If you are interested in attending such an event, check out the events listed on the website.

In addition to our Reconciling in Christ program for congregations and organizations, LC/NA offers the ability for individuals to become Reconciling Lutherans. *Whether you are a member of an RIC congregation or not*, it is important for your voice to be heard as a Reconciling Lutheran. Joining is easy and does not cost you a penny. You do not need to become a member of LC/NA to be added to the roster of Reconciling Lutherans. All you need to do is sign the Covenant of Welcome, affirming your commitment to encourage the Lutheran church to extend a genuine invitation for full acceptance and inclusion to all people. Please sign the attached covenant and return it to the church to send to LC/NA.

The following story was written by Ron Rendleman on behalf of himself and his partner, Dwight Alberhasky. The couple lives in St. Charles, MO.

Dwight and I first met in January 1994. Dwight graduated from Concordia Seminary in May of 1992 with a Master of Divinity degree, but was denied ordination when questions arose about his sexual orientation. He pursued a career in business and played organ at a local Missouri Synod church on Sundays. We met at his church and began to attend church together each week. Unfortunately, this caused questions of sexuality to arise within the congregation. The pastor asked me not to take Communion in order to avoid embarrassment and Dwight was eventually asked to resign as organist. We were both very upset and angry that this had happened. Still, we wanted to be involved in the Church and did not believe that keeping people out was the true message of the Gospel. That is when we first decided to visit Bethel.

Bethel Lutheran Church is a Reconciling in Christ congregation of the ELCA in St. Louis, MO. On our first visit we saw same-gender couples sitting together in church and it did not seem to be an issue for anyone. Both of us were welcome at Communion and there was an atmosphere of warmth and inclusivity. We have been attending on a regular basis for over 15 years now and have served as ushers as well as singing in the choir. A number of openly GLBT persons have served in leadership positions, assisted in morning worship services, and are an integral part in the life of the church. Speaking at a recent RIC event in St Louis Bethel's pastor, William L. Yancey, described how Bethel first became RIC more than 18 years ago. "The process took about 9 months for us," he said. "We brought in speakers and held discussions. Everyone was allowed to express their thoughts." When the congregation finally voted in favor of becoming RIC, "A few people left the church, but not many," Yancey expressed his belief that the effects of the decision had been overwhelmingly positive for Bethel. Unfortunately, Bethel remains the only RIC congregation in the St. Louis area but the local LC/NA chapter has been active in reaching out to other congregations in the area that have expressed an interest in beginning the process.

Reconciling Lutherans

Covenant

A program of Lutherans Concerned/North America inviting all Lutherans to publicly witness to their call for a church and world that welcome and include



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

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As members of the body of Christ, we are called to be ministers of reconciliation both in the church and in the world. Through our baptism we are reconciled to God through the saving grace of Christ Jesus. As children of God, Christ calls us to lives of reconciliation, wholeness, integrity and authenticity. We are challenged by the Gospel to be agents of healing and love within our church and society.

We affirm with the apostle Paul that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28). Christ has made us one body with many members, equal at the foot of the cross and at Christ's table of blessing and promise. God's extravagant welcome is sure.