



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



R-2: Resolution for the Northern Illinois Synod to Consider Becoming Reconciling in Christ

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America affirms that all people are beloved by God; and

Whereas, the ELCA's Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust adopted in August 2009 calls on all congregations and rostered ministers "to reach out in welcome to all in accord with previous Churchwide Assembly actions as reaffirmed by the 2005 Churchwide Assembly [CA05.05.18], and to assist members to understand what it means to be hospitable to all in the name of Christ regardless of sexual orientation"; and

Whereas, in 1991 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly declared "gay and lesbian people, as individuals created by God, are welcome to participate fully in the life of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America"; and

Whereas, in 2023, at least 510 anti-LGBTQ bills were introduced in state legislatures across the United States last year, nearly three times the number of such bills introduced in 2022 ^[1]; and

Whereas, one in five (21%) LGBTQ youth reported that their religion or spirituality is important or very important to them.; and LGBTQ youth who reported that their religion or spirituality is important or very important to them reported significantly lower rates of symptoms of depression compared to their peers for whom religion and spirituality were not at all or only a little important; and LGB adults who report that they left their religion due to conflict with their sexual identity report higher odds of attempting suicide, compared to their peers who had no conflict between their faith and sexuality ^[2]; and

Whereas, beginning in 1983, the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) program recognizes Lutheran congregations, synods, organizations, colleges, and seminaries that welcome people of all sexual orientations and gender identities; and

Whereas, the synod cannot speak for the welcome offered by individual congregations, it can ensure the ministries offered by the synod are inclusive and serve as a witness to the wider Lutheran community; and

Whereas, as of March 2024, the Reconciling in Christ roster exceeds 1,055 settings, including congregations, synods, campus ministries, colleges, and other organizations in the ELCA, ELCIC, and independent Lutheran ^[3]; and

Whereas, the Northern Illinois Synod currently has 13 congregations and ministries that are Reconciling in Christ (RIC); and

Whereas, a Reconciling in Christ Synod approves a welcoming statement that includes a specific welcome to members of the LGBTQIA+ communities and People of Color;

Therefore, be it resolved, The Northern Illinois Synod Council will appoint a task force to begin a year-long process of exploring what it means to become a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Synod. This process may include participation among synod staff, council, conference deans, and congregations; and

Be it further resolved, the appointed task force, in consultation with the Synod Council, will generate a Synod Welcome Statement. The proposed Welcome Statement will be presented for adoption to the 2025 Synod Assembly for the purpose of applying for Reconciling in Christ recognition.

Resolution proposed by the Northeast Conference.
Approved by the Northeast Conference on April 3, 2024

The following RIC Congregations and conferences have also requested to sign on in support of the resolution:

Salem Lutheran Church, Sycamore
First Lutheran Church, DeKalb
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, DeKalb
St. John Lutheran Church, Rock Island
Living Waters Lutheran Church, Crystal Lake
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rockford
New Life Lutheran Church, Bolingbrook
First Lutheran Church, Galesburg
North Conference

[1] <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2024?impact=>

[2] Gibbs, J. J., & Goldbach, J. (2015). Religious conflict, sexual identity, and suicidal behaviors among LGBT young adults. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 19(4), 472–488.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2015.1004476>

[3] <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/findric/> Retrieved March 9, 2024

Submitted: 4/12/2024

Action of the NIS Resolution Committee: **Recommend adoption of the resolution.**