

Reconciling in Christ Public Commitments

ReconcilingWorks-Lutherans for Full Participation recently published the public commitments required to achieve RIC status along with “Next Steps”. This is a summary of where Bethesda Lutheran stands in our commitments to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Commitment 1: Clearly state a welcome to people of “all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions” and a commitment to “anti-racism” in a Welcome Statement.

Next Steps 1: Make sure the fullest extent of the congregation is aware of this commitment, review your bylaws and constitution and promote the welcome statement.

Bethesda actions 1: The congregation voted to include our welcome statement in the bylaws (C4.03.01) and our welcome statement is part of our website and weekly newsletter.

Commitment 2: Be open to calling LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC (Black, Brown, Indigenous, Person of Color) Rostered Leaders

Next Steps 2: Ongoing education and ensure the entire congregation is aware of this commitment.

Bethesda actions 2: The following statement is included in our bylaws (C9.02.01)- “Bethesda Lutheran Church is committed to being inclusive and to racial equity and anti-racism. All positions of rostered leadership are to open to both LGBTQIA+ individuals as well as Black, Brown and Indigenous Persons of Color (BIPOC)”.

Commitment 3: Allow sanctuary/community space to be used for LGBTQIA+ weddings and blessings.

Next Steps 3: In 2020, ReconcilingWorks found that only 56% of RIC partners were open to holding LGBTQIA+ marriages/blessings in their community space or sanctuary. Review bylaws to ensure proper documentation of this commitment, update information on weddings to ensure clarity and care for queer couples looking to celebrate their union in your faith community's space.

Bethesda Actions 3: At the congregational level, we have agreed to allow sanctuary/community space to be used for LGBTQIA+ wedding and blessings with the approval of the rostered staff. In addition, we have added to our website under "What We Believe" the following paragraph-

Bethesda Lutheran Church joins with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in prioritizing inclusion. Bethesda Lutheran embraces the ordination and leadership of women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ persons, celebrates same-sex marriages, and recognizes the gifts of gender, race and sexual diversity in our congregation and community.

Commitment 4: Make a meaningful contribution annually to support the national RIC program.

Next Steps 4: Add an annual contribution to your budget or use special offerings throughout the year along with ongoing education.

Bethesda Actions 4: A one-thousand-dollar contribution to ReconcilingWorks has been an established part of our benevolence

budget. In addition, Bethesda is a significant sponsor of the local Pride Worship Event held each October in coordination with Ames PrideFest.