

Central States Synod of the ELCA Passes Historic Resolution to Become a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Synod

June 11, 2024 – Kansas City, MO – The Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is pleased to announce the passage of a significant resolution during its recent assembly gathering, adopting a new welcome statement and officially becoming a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Synod. This resolution builds upon the ELCA’s commitment to inclusivity and support for LGBTQIA+ individuals, affirming the church’s dedication to justice and radical love for all.

The resolution includes the adoption of a new statement of welcome:

“Traveling the way of Jesus, who commanded his followers to love one another as Christ has loved, and believing that all persons are created in the image of God, this synod welcomes people of every race, background, age, political affiliation, economic and social status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and mental and physical ability. As a synod, we strive to enable all people to participate fully in the life and work of the church in the ministry of Jesus Christ.”

Background on ELCA's Commitment to LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

In 2009, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly approved *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, addressing the understanding of human sexuality within the context of Jesus’ invitation to love God and our neighbor. Despite holding various convictions regarding same-gender relationships, the statement united the church on welcoming, caring for, and supporting same-gender couples and their families, along with advocating for their legal protection.

Progress Since 2009

Since then, the ELCA has made significant strides in welcoming LGBTQIA+ persons and affirming equality in the church. LGBTQIA+ pastors and deacons have been called and ordained for ministry, and many members have had their marriage vows affirmed in their local churches. LGBTQIA+ rostered ministers have been called to serve as bishops, and more than half of the ELCA’s 65 Synods have become Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Synods.

Central States Synod’s Commitment

The Central States Synod, guided by its mission statement to be “united with Christ in baptism, traveling the way of Jesus, joining God’s reign of justice and radical love for the world,” is becoming a more diverse community of faith. With 18 congregations and three campus ministries designated or in the process of becoming RIC communities, and both seminary partners, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Wartburg Seminary, joining as RIC communities, the Synod is dedicated to growing more diverse and inclusive.

Resolution Details

Despite these advancements, LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face exclusion and harm from some who believe they act in the name of Christianity. The RIC program, established

in 1983, has been pivotal in advocating for the inclusion and celebration of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions, along with working for racial equity and anti-racism.

The resolution passed by the Central States Synod includes the following commitments:

- Providing relevant resources for welcoming LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families on the Synod's website.
- Emphasizing the commitment to welcome all at Synod and conference events.
- Promoting annual "RIC Sunday" worship services and celebrations through various media.
- Advocating for public policies that protect LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families.
- Making a meaningful financial contribution to support the national RIC program.
- Continuing to work for racial justice in partnership with the Synod's Racial Justice Team.
- Encouraging individual congregations to develop their own welcome statements.

Moving Forward

By becoming a Reconciling in Christ Synod, the Central States Synod reaffirms its commitment to inclusion and justice for all, extending Christ's welcome to everyone, regardless of race, background, or identity.

For more information, please visit the Central States Synod website or contact:

About the Central States Synod

The Central States Synod of the ELCA is one of 65 synods (geographic areas) in the U.S. that connect its congregations with one another and with the larger denomination. The synod includes 150 congregations across the states of Kansas and Missouri. There is great diversity throughout the churches ranging from small rural churches to inner-city churches, with a good number of mid-sized suburban congregations as well.

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