

Expanding Our Welcome

January 2026 Edition

A Newsletter from the
Reconciling in Christ Work
Team of the Southwestern
Washington Synod

The Synod's RIC Work Team seeks to cultivate a culture of hospitality toward LGBTQIA2+ people and remove barriers to full participation in the life and ministry of the Southwestern Washington Synod.



RIC Sunday

This year, January 25th is Reconciling in Christ Sunday. Even if you are not an RIC congregation, expanding your welcome further shares the love freely given by God. To be considered a Reconciling congregation means to publicly proclaim acceptance, full participation, and liberation of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions within the Lutheran Church. Many churches proclaim "All are welcome" and wonder why more may be needed. We all long for love, acceptance and celebration of the gifts each of us brings into this world. Sadly, church has not always been a supportive space and needs to make it clear to people historically marginalized, that they are welcome in this church.

Today we find communities more divided than ever and the gaps are only growing wider. We must find ways to reclaim and reconcile with each other. We can work to reach across the divide through active conversations. Conversations that are meant to learn about each other and not trying to score points or change opinions. This is the foundational beginning of reconciling conversations. We cannot embrace each other if we are holding onto weapons of anger, mistrust and domination theology. First, we must disarm. We do this together when we share with each other. When we lead with curiosity and non-judgement. When we start with ourselves.

Sharing with the stranger that comes to church. Inviting them to sit down and learn more about them, that is the way we start a relationship. We welcome the stranger. This may even be the stranger in the pew we see every Sunday but have never said more than Hello. We all want to be seen and heard. What can you do on RIC Sunday to reach out?

Want to learn more about RIC or RIC conversations – contact us at the Southwestern Washington Synod at stefanie.dezarn@swwasynod.org or by phone at 253-999-1190.

–submitted by Deanna Eichler, Synod RIC Work Team member



To request access to the 2026 RIC Sunday resource package, made available by Reconciling Works, click below. You will be directed to a Google Form to submit your faith community's information.

Access RIC Sunday Resources [HERE](#)

We invite you to visit our friends at [Reconciling Works](#) "Lutherans for Full Participation" for helpful resources or reach out to the [Synod Administrator](#) - we're happy to assist!

Our Team *(in alphabetical order)*

Pastor Jonette Blakney *team chair*
Pastor Anna Czarnik-Neimeyer
Stefanie DeZarn *synod liaison*
Deanna Eichler
Mary Ann Nelson
Pastor Nate Sutton

The RIC Work Team serves as a resource for congregations and ministries throughout the synod as we all seek to expand our welcome in creative and life-giving ways. In this publication we hope to provide practical ideas for your congregation to consider. Each month will have a different focus and some resources you may find valuable.

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