

Expanding Our Welcome

March 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.

Careful how you come to Scripture – is it for love, or for love of power?

March finds some of us under feet of snow and others welcoming blankets of wildflowers. Spring also brings Women's History Month and the complicated past and reality surrounding 50% of the world's population. For the most part, women continue to be placed in subservient roles, in obvious and not-so-obvious ways. This is not pre-ordained, this is culture. Of course, many people value women and push against cultural practices that stifle women, even if this leads to a violent death. Jesus did just this, not only for women, but for us all.

You have likely have heard the adage: Might makes right. It's not true. Might is a manifestation of power, but it doesn't make things right. Might is how to force one person's will over another and it comes in many forms: physical, financial, emotional or spiritual. It is wielded by individuals, but more insidiously comes through community. When a community exerts influence on individuals, normally it is to create order. Order is not bad but, rarely has it been used to create justice or enhance the common good. That would be the exception throughout history, an exception Jesus would teach all who would listen.

Jesus, Paul and all the people we meet throughout the New Testament lived under the Mighty Roman Empire. Slavery, servitude, race and class distinctions were a way of life. And, if you did not conform, then suffering and death was your certain fate.

Jesus taught another way. Jesus taught about love and service to the vulnerable instead of brandishing power. Power was the final and most tempting of temptations the devil offered to Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:10, NRSV) It is where we learn the admonishment "Away with you, Satan!" when Jesus sends evil away and angels come to his side.

While we find nature's power as a neutral force, for humans, power's character depends upon the free will of the person wielding it. We all have power over someone during our lives. We have all seen people act in ways that excite or scare us. If we are honest, we have seen this in ourselves. And this is where some turn to Scripture as a guide. Conversely, some use Scripture as a powerful weapon to keep others 'in line.'

You will find whatever you are looking for when you come to the Bible with an agenda. For instance, if you come looking to find passages that glorify violence,

slavery or servitude of women, you will find some. The challenge to a narrow reading is to look at what is written before and after those verses. Who was the audience and what was going on when that book was written? You may find that out of context, the message of love and 'turn the other cheek' became dominion and violence justified.

Another example is Jesus and Paul. They are likely the most well-known feminists in the world. Yet, Paul's letters and the Gospels continue to be twisted and recited as reasons to devalue women. Jesus and Paul worked with women to spread the Good News and spoke with and about them as equal inheritors of God's Heaven. They taught and learned from them. Women funded the first churches. Women were and continue to be crucial to churches everywhere. Everyone is needed to do the hard work of relationship, to love your neighbor as yourself. And neighbor is everyone, just ask Jesus.

It is easy to be in the sandals of Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night wanting to learn but remaining confused. Jesus challenged him "If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?" John 3:12 NRSV

It is difficult to understand deep spiritual truths if one rejects the foundational teachings of leading with love. When you lead with power, you miss the point. Jesus did not control us, though he could have. Instead, he said "Blessed are the meek." Instead, he served and died equally for us all.

~submitted by Deanna Eichler, Synod RIC Work Team member



Celebrating March RIC Anniversaries

Resurrection Lutheran Church, Tacoma (2001)

THANKS BE TO GOD!



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*

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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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