



DEVELOPING A WELCOME STATEMENT FOR YOUR CONGREGATION

WHO SHOULD HAVE A WELCOME STATEMENT?

At the Synod Assembly in 2024, the Central States Synod adopted a [resolution to become a Reconciling in Christ \(RIC\) Synod](#). This is most often thought of as welcoming members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and it is, but being an RIC Synod is far more than that.

At its heart, this resolution is about committing ourselves as a Synod to a deep Gospel value—to embrace all people as beloved of God as we live out our mission: United with Christ in Baptism. Traveling the way of Jesus. Joining God’s reign of justice and radical love in the world.

So, does your congregation have to become RIC, or plan to become RIC, to have a welcome statement? ***Every congregation is invited and encouraged to develop their own statement of welcome, whether you plan to become RIC or not.*** Many resources and examples from our Synod’s congregations, some RIC and some not, may inspire your congregation as you reflect on what it means to welcome and embrace all people as beloved of God.

PREPARING TO WRITE YOUR WELCOME STATEMENT

If your congregation has not had conversations about welcome, hospitality, and inclusion, and you are looking for resources to help you begin, check out “[New to the Conversation.](#)”

Other possible steps to take may include the following.

- Gather congregants for conversation about what you want to say in a welcome statement.
- Discuss your values as a congregation and what words define who you are as a church.
- Determine what questions your congregation has about welcoming people different from yourselves.
- Additional conversations or workshops might include:
 - Defining terms that might feel common and shared, but may have different meanings to different people—for example
 - Grace
 - Welcome
 - Gospel
 - Discussing what scripture says about welcome and hospitality. What are your favorite Bible stories about welcome and hospitality, and what do you learn from them?
 - Exploring *Traveling the Way of Jesus* Bible study together as a congregation, or in small groups. [Leader Guide](#) / [Participant Handout](#)
 - Read the Book of Acts together and discuss where you see radical welcome and hospitality lived out in the early church

DIVING MORE DEEPLY

Check out [Reconciling Works resources on welcome statements](#) including samples of Welcome Statements and the resource called [“We’re Already Welcoming, Why Do We Need to Say So?”](#)

Additional conversations or workshops might include the following.

- Determine what questions your congregation has about welcoming people from marginalized communities, and LGBTQIA+ people in particular.
- Familiarize your congregation with the alphabet soup of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Explore how racism is still present today; how it might impact people of color in our communities and congregations.
- Define terms that might feel common and shared, but may have different meanings to different people—for example
 - Anti-racist
 - Queer
- Discuss what scripture says about the LGBTQIA+ community and about people of different races or ethnic backgrounds or cultures. Again, check out the Bible study *Traveling the Way of Jesus*, especially module 4! [Leader Guide](#) / [Participant Handout](#)

If your congregation would like to explore officially becoming a Reconciling in Christ Congregation, ReconcilingWorks has resources to guide the process. The requirements are listed on the [ReconcilingWorks website](#).

According to ReconcilingWorks, being Reconciling in Christ is “a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. The RIC Program is made up of congregations, synods, colleges, seminaries, outdoor ministries, and other Lutheran organizations.” To be RIC, your welcome statement must clearly state a welcome to people of **“all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions”** or **“LGBTQIA+”** and name its commitment to **“racial equity”** or **“anti-racism”** in its welcome statement.

WELCOME STATEMENT EXAMPLES FROM CENTRAL STATES SYNOD CONGREGATIONS

The following pages contain examples of Welcome Statements from a variety of congregations within the Central States Synod. Some are Reconciling in Christ, and some are not. Take a look at how our neighboring congregations define their commitment to welcome!

- **ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN, BLUE SPRINGS, MO (Border Conference)**
Welcome Statement *(11/19/2023 RIC Affirmation Date):*
 Welcome! You are absolutely invited into this sacred space
 We welcome all who are seeking God’s love and grace. All Saints recognizes that we are all unique and beloved children of God.
 We celebrate and give thanks for the many diverse gifts that God has given us.
 We affirm the sacredness of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.
 We affirm the sacredness of all those who have experienced exclusion because of race, ability, age, or culture.
 We are committed to working towards antiracism in ourselves and our community. We affirm the sacredness of all those who wrestle with addiction, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances, or anything that too often divides us.
 We believe that through our openness we all grow in our faith through Christ’s teaching to love one another as God loves us.
 We need each other and our sincere hope is by being in community together, we will experience God’s presence in new and real ways.
- **GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN, LAWRENCE, KS (Border Conference)**
Welcome Statement *(1/19/2020 RIC Affirmation Date):*
 Wherever you find yourself on the journey of faith, you are welcome at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (ELCA). We joyously affirm people of all walks of life and invite full participation in the life of the church. No matter where you are from or how you identify, we invite you as you are to walk with us as we humbly strive to follow Christ’s example to glorify God in all we do, and to love and serve all. We uphold the belief that all individuals are children of God in the body of Christ. As an open and affirming faith community, we welcome people of every race, ethnicity, nation of origin, class, age, marital status, physical or intellectual ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression to join us on our faith journey.
- **ST. MARK HOPE AND PEACE LUTHERAN, KANSAS CITY, MO (Border Conference)**
Welcome Statement*(1/24/1993 RIC Affirmation Date):*
 St. Mark Hope and Peace Lutheran Church is proud to be a Reconciling in Christ Congregation (RIC). Persons of all gender identities, races, sexual orientations, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds are encouraged to participate fully in every aspect of this community’s life.

- **IMMANUEL LUTHERAN, KANSAS CITY, MO (Border Conference)**
Welcome Statement *(8/18/2023 RIC Affirmation Date):*

WE BELIEVE YOU ARE WELCOME HERE
 We believe that God welcomes and loves us all.
 In turn we welcome every sinner and seeker of faith -- the faithful and
 not-so-faithful, new Christians and lifelong believers,
 Lutherans and those from other traditions.
 We welcome people of every family structure and marital status;
 every race, culture and ethnicity: every age and level of physical and mental ability;
 every sexual orientation and gender identity;
 every economic status and educational background.
Join us as we grow, share, and learn together as God's people.

- **LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION, PRAIRIE VILLAGE, KS (Border Conference)**
WELCOME! WE'RE A SMALL CHURCH DOING BIG THINGS WITH THE HELP OF GOD!
Welcome Statement *(6/22/2023 RIC Affirmation Date):*
 We believe that God loves, values and embraces each person as a beloved child.
 Therefore, we welcome people of every age, size, color, culture, sexual orientation,
 gender identity and expression, marital status, ability and challenge. We welcome
 people from all faith traditions, those with doubts, and those with no sense of faith at
 all. We also commit ourselves to the pursuit of environmental, economic, social and
 racial justice.

- **SALEM LUTHERAN, OVERLAND PARK, KS (Border Conference)**
Welcome Statement:
 We, the members of Salem Lutheran Church, affirm the belief that we are all created in
 God's image and are called to love one another as God loves us. We are a community
 that welcomes people of all ages, cultures, economic statuses, ethnic backgrounds,
 family blends, gender identities, physical and mental abilities, races, and sexual
 orientations. We seek to provide a safe and caring community where all people can
 grow in their faith. We encourage you to join us as we develop relationships with each
 other and discover the depth of God's love for us all.

- **ST. JAMES LUTHERAN, KANSAS CITY, MO (Border Conference)**
Welcome Statement *(12/14/1997 RIC Affirmation Date):*
 St. James welcomes all God's siblings with open arms; we embrace people of all colors,
 race, disability or economic background. St. James welcomes persons of all sexual
 orientations and gender identities to share in the worship of God and the work of God's
 dominion. With God as our source, the Son as our example, and the Spirit to guide our
 way. We Serve!

- **MESSIAH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN, LINDBORG, KS (Central Kansas Conference)**
Welcome Statement:
 God loves everyone.
 Whatever your race, culture, ethnicity, age, gender expression or identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, socioeconomic position, or family status, we invite you to join us in this lifelong journey of faith and discovery.
 We are committed to anti-racism, social and economic justice, and caring for our beautiful and fragile world.
 Here at Messiah the door is open, the table is set.
 Welcome.

- **ST. PAUL LUTHERAN, WICHITA, KS (Central Kansas Conference)**
Welcome Statement (10/10/2021 RIC Affirmation Date):
 We are called by Jesus to love God and one another, to practice radical hospitality, and to serve all without stipulations. We welcome you to join us, no matter your race, culture, ethnicity, age, gender expression or identity, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, socioeconomic position, family status, background, or where you are in your faith journey. You are a unique and beloved child of God. You are accepted and affirmed just as you are – with all of your differences and all of your gifts. We commit ourselves to embrace the continuing work of anti-racism, social and economic justice, and environmental care. We invite you to join with us, as through Christ, we joyfully and inclusively love and serve our community.

- **CHRIST LUTHERAN, WEBSTER GROVES, MO (Eastern Missouri Conference)**
Welcome Statement (8/6/2023 RIC Affirmation Date):
 Christ Lutheran is a congregation of the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(ELCA\)](#). We are a [Reconciling in Christ \(RIC\)](#) community in which people of all ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, ethnic and racial backgrounds, economic conditions, people living with mental health challenges, people who are disabled, and all who feel excluded, are embraced and celebrated.

- **ST. THOMAS/HOLY SPIRIT LUTHERAN, ST. LOUIS, MO (Eastern Missouri Conference)**
Welcome Statement (5/5/2019 RIC Affirmation Date):
 “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Romans 15:7)
 As our Lord has committed his love for all of his creation so we too are directed to love all of Gods’ creation with no limits or boundaries. We therefore welcome to worship and membership all, whatever your age, sex, race, ethnicity, political perspective, religious background, economic situation, citizenship, mental or physical ability, marital status, sexual orientation or gender identity. Not only do we welcome you, but we encourage you to join in full mission partnership and have the expectation that together we can be Christ’s church in the world.

- **GETHSEMANE LUTHERAN, ST. LOUIS, MO (Eastern Missouri Conference)**

Welcome Statement (6/12/2011 RIC Affirmation Date):

Christ's welcome knows no boundaries! Therefore, our welcome knows no boundaries and we invite all people to full participation in the life of the congregation.

We at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Saint Louis embrace...

People of any race or ethnicity...

People who are male, female, transgender, or any other gender identity...

People of any age...

People wherever they are, or wherever they have been, on their faith journeys...

People who are single, married, widowed, divorced, separated or partnered...

People who are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or any other sexual orientation...

People with a variety of political perspectives...

People who have, or had, addictions, phobias, abortions, or a criminal record...

People who are homeowners, renters, living with parents, or homeless...

People who are fully-abled, disabled, or of differing abilities...

People of differing educational backgrounds...

People of any socio-economic condition...

People not mentioned above, all of whom are created and loved by God!

As we celebrate and seek to preserve the beautiful, amazing diversity of God's creation, we pledge to ourselves and to all others that we will strive to live as a reconciling people in our life together and in our outreach to the world. We are committed to being a radically loving and welcoming community of faith.

- **GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN, MANCHESTER, MO (Eastern Missouri Conference)**

Welcome Statement:

As we at Good Shepherd seek to live out our mission to Follow Christ, Grow in Faith, and Share God's Love, we affirm that every person has worth, is unique and made in the image of God.

Since it is together that we best reflect God's abundant grace and love, we affirm that all are welcome here: people of all races, ethnicities and cultures; all gender identities and sexual orientations; every marital status and family configuration; all levels of physical and mental ability; and every economic status and age.

Please join us in our mission and share fully in the communal life of this congregation through worship, fellowship, leadership, and through all the rites and sacraments we celebrate together. We are glad you're here! You belong.

- **PEACE LUTHERAN, WASHINGTON, MO (Eastern Missouri Conference)**

At Peace Lutheran, we practice radical hospitality. Rather than saying, “We love you no matter what,” our welcome statement (below) is based on, “We love you because of who you are.”

Welcome Statement (1/26/2020 RIC Affirmation Date):

Peace Lutheran Church is a community of people committed to following and learning from Jesus Christ, a congregation “Bound by Christ to Break Boundaries”. It is our hope that you will feel safe and celebrated here. We strive to offer an authentic community, grounded in love and service, in which you can connect or reconnect with God. We invite you to bring all that you are: age, ability, religious belief and doubt, ethnicity, place of origin, legal status, gender identity, sexual orientation and life experience. Gather with us as we live out our values to Cultivate Community, Seek Understanding and Welcome Diversity, for the sake of the whole world.

JESUS CHRIST IS OUR HOST

ALL ARE WELCOME HERE IN HIS NAME

- **ST. MARK’S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, CLAYTON, MO (Eastern Missouri Conference)**

Welcome Statement (1/28/2018 RIC Affirmation Date):

“The arms of Jesus are always spread wide in welcome. In keeping with Jesus’ call to welcome the stranger, St. Mark’s Evangelical Lutheran Church wants the community to know:

We welcome those of diverse economic backgrounds. Those of means and those who are in need are welcome to worship here as full partners in the life of this Church.

We welcome those of diverse family backgrounds. Single parent families, “traditional” families, blended families and those to whom family is one person are welcome to worship here as full partners in the life of this Church.

We welcome those of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. There exists here no color or culture barrier to full partnership in the life of this Church.

We welcome those of diverse gender identities. We are engendered in varying ways including but not limited to straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered. These various ways of being are no barrier to full partnership in the life of this Church.

We welcome those with disabilities, physical, mental and emotional. Our church building is wheelchair accessible, we have a hearing loop and we strive to implement other accommodations as needed. These conditions are no barrier to full partnership in the life of this Church.

We welcome those who seek spiritual growth and enrichment regardless of where they are on their faith journey. We welcome lifelong Lutherans, those from other traditions and those just beginning to explore. All who are drawn to the communion table are welcome.

We recognize that not everyone will want to stay ... but we offer this welcome as a way of introducing ourselves as a part of the body of Christ here in Clayton.”

- **PEACE LUTHERAN, JOPLIN, MO (Osage Conference)**

Welcome Statement *(5/5/2024 RIC Affirmation Date):*

There is a place for you—the full you—at Peace Lutheran Church!

You are welcome exactly as you are. As Lutherans, we believe that each and every person is a beloved child of God for whom God’s grace, love, and mercy are freely given. We welcome differences in age, ethnicity, ability, status, cultural heritage, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. We believe God embraces everyone as worthy regardless of any barriers, walls, or separations the world seeks to establish. We are committed to the work of racial equity, justice, and advocating for marginalized groups.

We are not here to change or “fix” who you are as a distinctive person. We welcome your joy, your passion, your perspective, your experience, your interests, your questions, and your struggles. We invite you to be yourself and join us in a journey of faith toward love, relationship, worship, and service within God’s creation.

As a church and community with a place for you, we know that together we’ll be better for having you and your unique presence and voice among us!

- **ST. ANDREW’S LUTHERAN, COLUMBIA, MO (Osage Conference)**

Welcome Statement *(1/29/2023 RIC Affirmation Date):*

At St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church (ELCA), we hold space for you—the full you—including your race, age, ethnic background, personality, experiences, gender identity, sexual orientations, gender expressions, and mental, spiritual, and physical needs. Here, you are invited to worship, pray, play, be baptized, get married, and celebrate Holy Communion.

Together, we strive to eliminate human-caused barriers to a holy relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another. We hear the call to love our neighbor as a commitment to antiracism and welcome for our LGBTQIA+ siblings. We pledge to work intentionally to further justice and inclusion. We strive to glorify God in the ways we care for each other, our communities, and our planet. Recognizing that we are all siblings in Christ, we celebrate, affirm, and welcome individuals and families in all their beautiful and varied compositions. As a church that holds space just for you, we are better for having you and your unique voice here! Come just as you are!

{Welcome statements from Central States Synod congregations were updated as of 1/31/25}