



Greetings on behalf of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod's Welcome and Reconciling Team!

Since the formation of our team some six years ago, we have been engaged in helping congregations discern their welcome of LGBTQIA+ members and neighbors. We have walked alongside congregations as they explored their openness to calling rostered leaders from the LGBTQIA+ community. Now, we are excited to be embarking on a new endeavor to help our synod discern whether we should become a Reconciling in Christ Synod!

Becoming a Reconciling in Christ Synod entails extending a public welcome to and affirmation of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, as well as a commitment to anti-racism in the policies, practices, and advocacy of our synod. In order to discover if the Northeastern Minnesota Synod is ready to make these commitments, our team will hold a quarterly gatherings in each of the five conferences of our synod. These gatherings will include discussion, education, and resourcing around a topic. Our first forums will explore what welcome means. The second forums will address how we read scripture as Lutherans and what that means for our welcome of LGBTQIA+ people. The third session will help those gathered to understand the various terms used by those in the LGBTQIA+ community to describe their orientation, identity, and expression. The fourth will center the experiences of those in the LGBTQIA+ community as we listen to their stories of faith. The fifth gathering will hone in on the importance of intersectionality and how working for justice for LGBTQIA+ people is intertwined with that for all marginalized people. The sixth and final quarterly session will help us explore how we as synod, congregation, and individuals can be advocates and allies.

At the conclusion of these gatherings, the Welcome and Reconciling Team will prayerfully consider whether our Synod is ready and willing to make these public commitments. If so, a memorial voicing these commitments will come before the Synod Assembly in 2025. If the memorial passes, we will be an RIC Synod and will be accountable for following through on the commitments we made!

It is our hope that members of our synod will make it a priority to participate in these gatherings to better aid our discernment process. As of now, the dates and places of most of our first quarter sessions have been settled!

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| <b>Sunday, September 10,</b>  | 2:30 PM at Messiah - Mountain Iron                    |
| <b>Thursday, September 28</b> | 6:30 PM at Grace - Sandstone                          |
| <b>Saturday, October 14</b>   | Zion, Grand Rapids as part of the Together Here event |
| <b>Saturday, November 11</b>  | 10 AM at Salem - Hermantown                           |

We will seek a new location within each conference for each quarterly gathering in order to widen the scope of participation. Please pay attention to Northeastern Minnesota Synod communications to learn of the schedule for these forums.

We are excited to guide this journey toward becoming an RIC Synod with you all!

Pastor Jeffery Davis and the members of the Welcome and Reconciling Team

