

2024/2025 Annual Report

Metro DC Synod RIC Team

This is the second year of operation for the Reconciling in Christ [RIC] Team. In conjunction with the renewed RIC Statement of the Synod, the team was created by the Synod Council to support Reconciling in Christ objectives within the synod. The objectives include support for the LGBTQIA+ community, assuring that all are welcome, and the provision of support for congregations interested in embarking on the RIC process.

Philip Moeller is the chair of the RIC Team [2023161169, pwmoller@aol.com]. Fred Howell is the Co-Chair for PRIDE. Katharyn Wheeler is the liaison with the bishop's office. Pastor Lydia Posselt is the secretary. The team is in the process of expanding its membership. Interest has been received by Christine Heidebracht, Pastor Amanda Nesvold, and Arthur Kinzel. Any other interested parties should contact the chair of the team.

Currently there are 34 congregations or organizations that are designated as RIC. Receiving the designation of being RIC requires following a discernment process specified by ReconcilingWorks. This is an extended process, intended to assure the ownership of the congregation with declared welcoming of LGBTQIA+ members and support of the RIC programs. The RIC team has worked with several congregations considering starting the process or already into the process.

Last June provided a landmark for the synod. It was the result of widespread collaboration. For the first time the synod sponsored the float used as a focal point for congregations marching in the PRIDE parade. Additionally, the synod also provided a booth in the PRIDE festival. The model for the booth was provided by seminarians in a class in which Katharyn wheeler participated. It was exciting to see the contribution of future pastors to the execution of a PRIDE booth.

We are facing the celebration of World PRIDE in Washington DC this June 6-7, with an overlap of the Synod Assembly. Fred Howell will be leading our response to having a Lutheran presence in this event, which will be challenging as a result of modification in the usual formatting of events in addition to the overlap. It will be important to have a clearly visible presence for the synod. Note that the city has granted Capital Pride Alliance, the nonprofit DC group organizing WorldPride

2025, a grant of \$900,000 with funds already disbursed to the city and not affected by pending budget cuts for the district. The opportunity for messaging must be seized.

During the year the team has sought visibility by such actions as participation with a booth at the Synod block party. The synod web-site has also been upgraded to highlight its RIC Ministry. We will have a booth at the Synod Assembly this coming June.

With the expansion of the RIC Team, it is hoped to have the resources necessary for more program development. Two Zoom sessions are being planned and having in-person activities may also be possible. Meanwhile, support will be given to congregations interested in the RIC process. Congregations will be encouraged to mark RIC Sunday in January with liturgical elements suggested by ReconcilingWorks.

We are facing difficult times with Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion [DEI] Programs being targeted for elimination. We have seen the erosion of programs designed to support the trans community. What may be targeted next is uncertain. How the synod, and the RIC Team, is to/may need to respond will be an important future discussion.

A positive development, something that is well needed in these times, is to be found in the grand opening on April 26th of a new DC LGBTQ Center at 1828 Wiltberger Street, NW. Office space will be provided for nine local LGBTQIA+ service organizations. RIC congregations may wish to familiarize themselves with the service options available through this center in case they encounter at risk LGBTQIA+ individuals.

In conclusion, the RIC Team would ask prayers for the continuing mission of the RIC program within the ELCA.

In Christ we are one,

Philip W. Moeller, PhD., Chair of the Metro DC Synod RIC Team