



Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
LGBTQIA Coalition

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING RIC

Why should a synod become RIC?

There are three primary reasons synods choose to become RIC: **Witness, Resources, and Accountability**. When a synod chooses to become RIC, it commits to witnessing publicly to God's radical welcome for all people, as well as its advocacy for racial equality. Second, an RIC synod commits to providing ongoing resources and support for congregations and organizations in becoming more diverse. And third, a synod becoming RIC provides ongoing accountability to the synod for its commitments it made in its Welcome Statement.

Being RIC means our synod would make a “meaningful contribution” each year to ReconcilingWorks. What does that mean, and how much will the synod contribute?

“Meaningful contribution” is defined as an intentional financial contribution that helps support the work and resources of ReconcilingWorks. The Synod Assembly will decide what this annual contribution will be when it passes the synod's annual budget. According to ReconcilingWorks, in 2022 the 27 RIC synods gave a minimum of \$100 and a maximum amount of \$2,500, with an average annual contribution of \$880.

If the synod votes to become RIC, what will be the impact on our congregation?

If the synod votes to become RIC, the LGBTQIA Coalition hopes it may encourage some congregations that have been considering the possibility to begin its own RIC discernment process. For other congregations, if they so desire, it will not impact their day-to-day ministries and operations in any way.

Will we be “forced” to call a gay pastor or deacon?

First, it is important to remember that congregations call their own pastors and deacons. Second, the synod staff would never recommend a pastor or deacon for a call where they would not be safe and free to be themselves or thrive in their ministry.

What is “bound conscience”?

“Bound conscience” is the idea that some people believe so strongly in something that they cannot, in good conscience, act against it. It is rooted in the story of Martin Luther himself, who at the Diet of Worms in 1521 was demanded to recant his teachings or be declared a heretic. Luther purportedly exclaimed, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God… Here I stand, I can do no other.”

In 2009, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly approved the social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*. The social statement attempted to use the concept of “bound conscience” to acknowledge that there was not universal acceptance of LGBTQIA people and relationships. The concept was meant to allow those who were opposed to not have to accept such people or relationships.

Many theologians and biblical scholars have acknowledged that this is not a scriptural, or even Lutheran, application of “bound conscience,” and it has ended up inflicting even more harm on LGBTQIA people and families. Because of this misapplication, bishops could claim “bound conscience” and not consider pastors and deacons for calls in their synods. Congregations could explicitly state that LGBTQIA people and families were not welcome because of their “bound conscience.” Pastors could refuse to provide pastoral care to LGBTQIA persons and families because of “bound conscience.”

This is not what it means to be the church, nor is it what Luther meant when he spoke of his conscience being held captive to the Word of God.

The ELCA continues to seek to be a church for all people of various theological and political orientations. However, there is a growing understanding that this should not be at the expense of the worth and dignity of LGBTQIA people and their families.

For more information and other resources, please visit the Gulf Coast Synod’s [RIC webpage](#), or email the LGBTQIA Coalition at lgbtq@gulfcoastsynod.org.