

A report put forward by the taskforce convened by the bishop and council of the Indiana Kentucky Synod for the purpose of pursuing the duties prescribed by resolution R-15-02 from the 2015 Indiana Kentucky Synod Assembly.

This taskforce has been tasked with evaluating the Reconciling In Christ (RIC) status on a synodical level. The taskforce has continued to meet over the last year to explore the meaning, implications, and purpose this designation. The team has focused on four points of work:

1. Seeing the overarching challenge of this resolution as a need to better understand and embody hospitality toward our neighbors on both a congregational and synodical level, the taskforce has continued its work on a bible study that focuses on exploring the nature and audience of hospitality in scripture.
2. Seeking to better understand the knowledge and needs of the synod body, so to better focus its efforts, the taskforce has continued its work on a survey to be used with the assembly body.
3. To best serve the actions of the Indiana Kentucky Synod, the taskforce has been in dialogue with other synods and organizations who have pursued a RIC status. These conversations focused on better understanding how to structure a strong process and the long-term value of a RIC designation.
4. These conversations have led the taskforce to better discern the difference between a congregational and synodical RIC designation through ongoing conversations with the Reconciling Works organization.

The discernment of the difference between a congregational and synodical RIC designation is ongoing, however, the initial exploration has proven to be very enlightening and worthy of sharing with the assembly in this report.

A foundational challenge of this process is the ongoing discernment of being church together. As we work to better understand our charge to extend hospitality to the marginalized and to share God's unconditional love with all, the taskforce recognizes that there is fear that the church will simply exchange one body for another to exclude. Here, as a taskforce, we are in agreement on the implications of the directions extended by the national church: Unity is not served by conformity, and inclusion does not require agreement.

The RIC designation of a synod is not a blanket designation for all congregations within the synod. The designation makes two things official and public for the synod office. First, it allows for the synod to designate resources and staff to address the needs of congregations engaging the LGBTQ community, and individual members of the synod, rostered leaders, and seminary candidates who are LGBTQ. Second, it provides a platform for synodical responses to social issues concerning, not only the LGBTQ community, but all marginalized groups within society.

The taskforce will continue to move forward with these tasks and to share resources and materials with the synod in their ongoing and evolving forms.

This report has been compiled by the taskforce and is respectfully submitted on its behalf by the Reverend William H. Smith