

An Invitation from the RIC Team: We want to hear from you!



Our process of becoming a Reconciling in Christ Congregation was paused at the beginning of 2020. In early 2022, we realized that the major shifts in the world around us necessitated hitting the reset button and beginning the journey anew. After many months of our Core Team learning together and connecting with individuals in one-to-one conversations, we're inviting the whole congregation to chime in and share your thoughts with us.

If we, as a congregation, choose to adopt an RIC designation, it means we commit to continuing education, advocacy, and connection within our congregation, as well as to provide financial support to Reconciling Works. achieving RIC designation is not an ending point; that's why we intentionally use the word "journey" to describe this process. Just as our faith grows and develops over time, so too will our understanding of what it means to extend intentional hospitality to folks who may have experienced church as a place of harm or rejection.

As we move forward with the next steps of this journey, we want to hear from everyone, across a wide section of those who attend worship, either periodically or weekly, on-site or online, of all age groups and all levels of participation, to get a better idea of who and where we are as a congregation.

The information you share with us will inform our priorities in the short term and the long term, as we consider what God is calling us to in this time and place. We need your help to figure that out!

As we enter the season of Lent, we hope you will approach this survey as a spiritual practice and prayerfully consider your responses. We ask that you intentionally set aside time to complete it. Perhaps light a candle and say a prayer for discernment and guidance. Invite the presence of the Holy Spirit and pray for your fellow disciples on this journey of discernment.

We're keeping your information confidential. The only person who can see your identifying information is our Director of Communications, Sarah Smit. However, you'll be invited to talk more with the RIC team, if you'd like to continue the conversation with us. We hope you'll consider it!

Thank you for your time and your faithful consideration as we move forward together into the new thing God is calling us toward!

Please place your completed survey in a sealed envelope and return it to the church office by Friday, April 14, 2023. The survey can also be completed online, if you prefer, by visiting tinyurl.com/FirstRIC.



Welcoming *intentionally* Growing *authentically* Sharing *in community*



Reconciling in Christ Congregational Survey

First Lutheran Church, Ellicott City

Demographic Information

My primary role in the congregation is (select all that apply)

- Church Staff
- Church Council Member
- Ministry Leader
- Committee Member
- Church Member
- Prospective Member
- Visitor
- Other: _____

I attend worship

- Every week
- 2-3 times a month
- Once a month
- On holidays and/or special occasions

I primarily worship

- On Site
- Online
- Both equally

I interact with congregation life (participation in non-worship activities)

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- 2-3 times a month
- Once a month
- On special occasions

My age is

- 12-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+

Welcoming

What drew you to First?

I believe our congregation's top priority is to...

(please select up to 2)

- Support fairness and justice for all, both locally and globally
- Serve our neighborhood
- Care for our members
- Uphold our traditions and maintain our property

When it comes to finding leaders for ministry, I think that...

- We have an effective system for training and supporting people.
- We encourage new leadership
- We struggle to find new people
- We rely on our established leaders
- I don't know

When it comes to welcoming visitors, I think that...

- We have a strategy for meaningful hospitality throughout our ministries.
- We greet them warmly and try to meet their needs.
- We rely on ushers and greeters who see this as their role.
- We don't have a specific plan.
- I don't know

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements, on a scale of 1-10 where 1 indicates you strongly disagree and 10 means you strongly agree.

In response to changes in our world and growing awareness of diversity in race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, and more, I think that our congregation...

... values diversity and embraces both the strengths and the challenges that differing worldview bring.

Strongly Disagree

○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 ○6 ○7 ○8 ○9 ○10

Strongly Agree

... is learning to welcome diversity and is exploring relationships with people different from ourselves.

Strongly Disagree

○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 ○6 ○7 ○8 ○9 ○10

Strongly Agree

... is not sure how to deal with diversity and uncertain about engaging with people different from ourselves.

Strongly Disagree

01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 010

Strongly Agree

... is uncomfortable with diversity and would prefer to have a single worldview represented at church.

Strongly Disagree

01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 010

Strongly Agree

Growing

What keeps you coming to First?

When our congregation puts a team together, I think that...

- We build a team with people from a wide variety of backgrounds who challenge each other's perspectives.
- We invite the whole congregation to participate.
- We turn to the people we can trust and who we have worked with in the past.
- We create a committee to explore our options.
- We struggle to find enough people to participate.
- I don't know

My experience of God in this congregation...

(select all that apply)

- Invites me to explore my spirituality more deeply
- Gets me through the week
- Is a comfort to me
- Sometimes leaves me confused
- Is less than I would hope
- Encourages me to learn more and deepen my daily faith practices
- Frustrates me
- Makes me feel uplifted
- Gives me a sense of stability and familiarity
- Other _____

The culture of our congregation...

- Encourages me to ask hard questions about social and theological issues.
- Invites me to wonder about faith and life.
- Doesn't challenge my way of thinking.
- Doesn't align with my way of thinking.
- I'm not familiar with the culture of the congregation.
- Other _____

When it comes to conflict in our congregation, I believe that we...

- Manage disagreement in a healthy way; it's part of growth.
- Are learning to have hard conversations about difficult topics.
- Choose not to address the issue and try to avoid upsetting people.
- Have a tradition of internal arguing and taking sides.
- I don't know
- Other _____

Sharing

Where do you see this congregation heading in the next year?

The most meaningful way our congregation serves the community is...

- By actively listening to local needs to identify and solve problems.
- By gathering volunteers to do service projects.
- By opening our building for others in the neighborhood to use.
- By financially supporting established programs.
- Other _____

Welcoming, Growing, and Sharing in God's Grace calls us to see God in all people and to open our hearts to them. As a reflection of God's gracious love, First Evangelical Lutheran Church welcomes ALL of God's people. We commit ourselves to making justice, racial equity, and inclusivity foundations of our church. Our faith community invites and welcomes you—regardless of race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, or economic status—for worship, fellowship, and partnership in ministry.

This welcoming statement includes changes that meet the new requirements of Reconciling Works.

If we were to vote on this amended welcoming statement today, how would you respond?

- Yes, wholeheartedly
- Yes, but I have a few reservations
- Maybe
- Probably no
- No

Do you have any comments, questions, or concerns related to this amended Welcoming Statement?

For example, would you like to learn more about any specific topics like gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, racial equality, disability, accessibility, etc., or would you appreciate scriptural engagement and context about subjects such as, hospitality, loving one's neighbor, justice, diversity in God's Creation, inclusivity, etc.?

Wrapping Up

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Would you like a member of the RIC Core team to contact you?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes, please provide your name and the best way to contact you.

Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Thank you for your time and your faithful consideration as we move forward together into the new thing God is calling us toward!

We look forward to engaging with you as we continue on our Reconciling in Christ journey together. If you elected to have someone from the RIC Team contact you, we will be in touch in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, we invite you to visit the RIC section of the website (www.firstlutheranec.org/RIC) where you will find links to resources, past editions of our monthly newsletter, and more. This section will be updated along the way, as we continue to learn and evolve together as a congregation.