

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Regarding HTLC's Possible Affiliation with Reconciling in Christ

June 22, 2026

Question #1: Do we currently have enough support from the congregation to affiliate with RIC? That is, can we proceed with holding a formal vote on this issue?

Answer: Of those responding to the survey (n = 105), 73 % indicated that they were in favor of affiliating with RIC, whereas 10 % indicated "Maybe" and 17 % indicated "No." The Visioning Council determined at their meeting in May that this level of support (i. e., 73 %) was sufficient for holding a two part special congregational meeting on August 2nd and 9th to vote on affiliating with RIC. Confirmed members may cast their vote on **either date**. More information will be forthcoming.

Question #2: What voting margin will be required for the RIC vote?

Answer: The Visioning Council has decided to use the highest voting margin called out in our constitution which is a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of those that vote.

Question #3: How much will Holy Trinity contribute to RIC on a yearly basis?

Answer: If the congregation votes to affiliate with Reconciling in Christ (RIC) in August, the Visioning Council has approved a \$100 donation to RIC for the remainder of 2026. For 2027, the Visioning Council recommends designating one Sunday for a free-will offering to support Holy Trinity's annual contribution to RIC. In future years, the Visioning Council will review and determine the amount and method of any ongoing support based on the congregation's priorities and financial circumstances.

Question #4: Why are we considering RIC before we hire our next pastor?

Answer: There are several good reasons to decide on our affiliation with RIC before we hire a new pastor.

- Affiliation with RIC is a decision of the congregation and a new pastor would like to know this when considering a call.
- Both the ELCA Synod and RIC organization do not recommend having a new pastor guide the congregation through an RIC affiliation decision for at least a year after they start.
- The survey results support moving forward with a vote.

Question #5: Will an RIC affiliation (or the lack thereof) specifically impact our ability to attract candidates?

Answer: According to Reconciling Works, an RIC affiliation has been shown to attract forward-looking ministry and staff members. Such churches are in high demand for applicants. There is a big shortage of available pastors with respect to churches that need a pastor. According to Pastor Tim, far more pastors are in support of RIC than are against it. With these considerations, the RIC team believes that if we say “No” to RIC affiliation, it will likely limit the number of forward-looking candidates who will consider our church.

Question #6: How can the HTLC Call Committee do their work with this vote not occurring until August?

Answer: The Call Committee is charged with the explicit duty of creating a profile of Holy Trinity with the congregation’s input and then discerning which candidates fit with our needs as a congregation. A new pastor will not be selected by the Call Committee. Ultimately, the congregation will have the opportunity to vote to call a candidate which was recommended by the Call Committee.

The Call Committee is receiving guidance from the ELCA Southeast Iowa Synod office and is working with them to identify the best possible pastoral candidate for HTLC. They are currently gathering information on the pool of possible candidates. Having the vote in August does not affect the Call Committee for this stage because no matter what the RIC vote results are, our church culture does not change concerning our welcoming and

acceptance of all people. An RIC designation is an official “statement” that Holy Trinity is proud to be welcoming, inclusive, and affirming as one part of many pieces of our church mission. So, no matter what the RIC vote results are, the call committee’s selection should not be based on sexual orientation or identity of the candidate. If the RIC vote results in RIC affiliation, the call committee will likely experience a benefit because their chances of success will be higher in attracting a candidate to HTLC.

Question #7: How does RIC affiliation align with the HTLC mission?

Answer: The short-form of our mission statement is: “Love Christ, Live Christ, Share Christ”. The RIC affiliation aligns perfectly with this. Here are three aspects to consider:

- First, our core values in the “**Loving** Christ” part of our long-form mission statement describe our discipleship response to God's unconditional grace as “growing ever deeper in relationship - with God, with others, and ourselves”. It is clear that the RIC objectives serve all three aspects.
- Second, the long-form of the “**Living** Christ” part of our mission statement is “living as Christ would have us live... if we have anything to say to a broken and skeptical world.” We describe this as “embodying the faith in daily life; giving the Gospel integrity in a culture of mistrust.” You may have felt that the world has ever-growing reasons to be skeptical and mistrusting of the church. By being boldly upfront about our commitment to being welcoming, inclusive, and affirming to all, we are showing the kind of integrity that is both needed and respected.
- Lastly, our call in the long-form of our mission statement to “**Share** the hope of Christ with others by inviting ALL people to share a journey of faith among us” puts no boundaries on the LGBTQ+ community.

Question #8: Why do we need to change our welcome statement?

Answer: We have had an explicit welcome statement for over eight years. This statement has helped individuals looking for a new congregation feel comfortable in checking us out. The explicit welcome statement helps set HTLC apart from churches that explicitly exclude the LGBTQ+ community from worship and membership or limit their participation in the activities and potential responsibilities of a full member. The changes we would make to our existing statement to align with the RIC requirements are very minor. Specifically, we need to add “gender expression” (we already had “gender identity”) and state our commitment to the work of anti-racism efforts.

Question #9: What is our wedding policy with regard to same-sex marriages?

Answer: In 2009, the ELCA voted to allow congregations to host same-sex weddings in the sanctuary at the congregation and pastor’s discretion. As a congregation we have not considered this before and our wedding policy does not explicitly address it. If we decide to affiliate with RIC, our wedding policy will be revised accordingly. This change in policy would differentiate us from churches that explicitly deny those marriages or are silent/neutral about their support.

Question #10: How will an RIC affiliation affect our membership?

Answer: It is impossible to know with certainty what the overall impact on membership will be. During Holy Trinity's exploration of Reconciling in Christ (RIC), a few members have chosen to leave the congregation because of the possibility of affiliation. At the same time, we have welcomed new members who have shared that our exploration of becoming a more welcoming, inclusive, and affirming congregation was one factor in their decision to join. Ultimately, the long-term impact on membership is unknown.

Question #11: What are the main benefits of affiliating with the Reconciling in Christ organization?

Answer:

- The RIC organization has an on-line database that will help people find us. We can use the RIC logo on our webpage so those browsing for churches will know more about us. People look for faith organizations that align with their values. Even those who are not part of a marginalized community may be looking for churches that align with the values an RIC affiliation provides.
- An RIC affiliation would formalize our congregation's commitment to be a welcoming, inclusive, and affirming congregation.
- Historically, members of the LGBTQ+ community have been harmed by churches. An RIC affiliation is a commitment that HTLC would be a safe faith community.
- An RIC affiliation would show Holy Trinity is a visible, loving, and proud alternative to the increased marginalization of people in the LGBTQ+ and racial minority communities. RIC congregations celebrate diversity and are openly welcoming and inclusive of those who find themselves without meaningful and full access to a loving church community.

Question #12: What will affiliating with RIC look like in practice?

Answer: An RIC affiliation is a beginning, not an end. If we affiliate with RIC, the first thing we will do is incorporate the RIC logo into our website and develop a plan for promoting both our affiliation and our updated welcoming statement. Beyond those simple first steps, it will be up to the congregation to determine how we can grow into our commitment to be a welcoming, inclusive, and affirming congregation.