



The Reconciling in Christ Team is a group of members (Suzanne Terry, Celene Welch, Nathan Graham, Chris Clarkson, and Pastor John Bell) tasked by the Congregation Council to explore whether it is time for Christ The Servant to be formally recognized as a 'Reconciling in Christ' (RIC) church. An RIC church is one that proclaims itself to be welcoming and inclusive to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities (LGBTQIA+ people).

Let's Get Uncomfortable

by Nathan Graham

Christmas, the media tells us, is all about *comfort*: comfort food, the comfort of family, of the glow of firelight, of security inside our homes as weather may worsen outside. Ads will play lip service to ideas of hospitality and generosity, but in practice what they celebrate is bounty, wealth, purchasing power.

It's a reminder that the semi-secular holiday that's grown up around December 25 has little to do with God's breaking into our world in the form of Jesus. The birth narratives found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke are far from comfortable for the people that inhabit them; they are full of long and treacherous journeys, scary responsibilities, great risks, and the oppressive spectre of Empire. And they challenge the reader who enjoys the *status quo*. To quote the Magnificat, Mary's song of praise in Luke 1:

⁵² [God] has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

This is a radical passage, coming from one of the story's major characters, Jesus's own mother. The hungry, the poor and lowly remain an indictment to the social order that claims a Christmas with a Christ who is merely symbolic, and not alive and at work in our world, calling us to the same work.

There are many ways to be poor, to be hungry, and to be lowly. I have been thinking lately of our LGBTQ+ siblings in Christ who are spiritually left out in the cold, who so often come into God's house to be filled with truth and love, only to be told, "No, this food is not for you." Each year the church does not commit to the full inclusion and celebration of LGBTQ+ people in whom God's image resides is another Christmas when many are left believing there is no place for them in our inn.

The celebration of Jesus's birth is not a time to get comfortable, to avoid challenges. As we continue to celebrate the season of Christmas on the church calendar, heading into Epiphany and then ordinary time, let us allow ourselves to be made uncomfortable by God's dream for this world, and what it may require of us. I can't think of a better way to follow in the footsteps of Mary and Joseph and many other saints who came before us.

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