



*The Reconciling in Christ Team a group of members (primarily: Suzanne Terry, Celene Welch, Nathan Graham, Chris Clarkson, and Pastor John Bell). We have been meeting over the last year, asked by the Congregation Council to explore whether it is time for Christ The Servant Lutheran church 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 (LGBTQIA+ people).*

*As we continue on this journey, we will be hosting conversation with all members so we reach an answer to whether we, as a body of believers, wish to become an RIC congregation. This is a significant decision. A decision which will flow from the faith we have. This faith is grounded in the Biblical story*

## **One Moment of Grace**

*By Nathan Graham*

My journey to self-acceptance was not an easy one. Until I was twelve or thirteen, I'd never even heard the word "homosexuality"; for me "gay" simply meant "happy." I didn't grow up in an environment where queerness was used for insults or slurs, but where the subject was simply taboo. At the end of my freshman year, after I'd revealed my true self to a friend and he'd betrayed my confidence, my dad, the only other person I'd told, said that he would have taken my secret to the grave. He was signaling that *he* was a trustworthy confidante, but also made me feel more than ever that this completely natural part of me was something shameful, to be hidden away forever.

Of course, that just wasn't possible, not without drastic harm to my spirit. Several years ago, in a sermon on the apostle Thomas that I preached for Young Adult Sunday, I talked about a major turning

point in my life, a time when I prayed, as I had so many times, for God to take away my attraction to men, or if not, at least my attraction to one handsome and flirtatious coworker. It was too much for me to take anymore, a burden too heavy for me to bear. That afternoon, when I arrived for my shift and saw my crush, I still had all the symptoms of attraction—my heart raced, my palms grew sweaty, and I couldn't keep from smiling—but one thing had changed. Miraculously, my shame was gone. For me it was one of those moments of hurt, of questioning, of fear, when God breaks through our walls and reveals God's true self to us in unexpected ways. In spite of everything I'd read in the Bible, and all the sermons I'd heard, I never anticipated a God who loved me as I really was, not for who I had been told I should be.

One moment of grace cannot erase years of repression and self-hatred, but my path had taken a new direction.