



The Reconciling in Christ Team is a group of members (Celene Welch, Nathan Graham, Chris Clarkson, Nancy Johnson, Suzanne Terry, and Pastor John Bell) tasked to explore with the congregation whether it is time for Christ The Servant to commit to becoming a 'Reconciling in Christ' (RIC) community. An RIC church is one that proclaims itself to be welcoming and inclusive to people of

Thoughts on Reconciliation

Yvonne Lacy

The meanings that come to mind: bringing opposing parties to the table... hearing each other out... recognizing the flaws in ourselves and others... seeking guidance to make it right, or, looking at balances in a ledger, seeking where the inequalities are and recalculating so the amounts come out right.

In any case, making it right.

We bring this mindset to handling differences among individuals and even among groups and nations - which has had some good outcomes in everything from labor agreements to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa in the 1990s and treaties between nuclear powers.

In the case of our American society's – and the Christian church's – relationships with LGBTQ people, approaching reconciliation has been complicated. I can't begin to try and pick apart the issues, but it's enough to say that there have been hostilities, indifference, and good intentions, all represented in public discussion. Much misunderstanding and negativity still exist. Yet attitudes have evolved in our society, bringing us to 2022 with more clarity and with much still to be learned.

Bottom line: the only reconciliation any of us has any control over is the one inside each person. That means a deliberate reconciliation not only informed by social attitudes but more deeply by the action of God in our consciences and our hearts.

That's where my attitudes have been challenged, although the journey for me began with outward, societal issues. I grew up absorbing a neutral if not favorable message about people with non-traditional gender roles: in my family, hearing negative remarks and occasional slurs but also admiration and respect towards gay folks in the arts and music. Through my young adult years, I became increasingly convinced of the unfairness of anti-gay bias; I disagreed with it and wished people could just be left alone to be who they were. Having a number of gay acquaintances, both "closeted" and open, reinforced this thinking.

From about the 1980s, I remember hearing popular media speakers stressing Bible passages condemning same-sex attraction, and while not taking from those passages the message that God hated gay people, I felt sorry for them – until I realized deep down that this wasn't something people could just decide to be or not be. Stronger, over the long run, were those Scripture passages exhorting us to love our neighbor, to be kind and welcoming, to treat folks as we wish to be treated. There wasn't an "aha!" moment for me, or a defining moment, where my beliefs were reset; there was a realization that being receptive to God's call to love, and seeking to embrace Jesus's way, means seeing LGBTQ folks as I see any other folks — not as strangers or "them," but as sisters and brothers.

The Christian church — the church I love and am committed to — is the hands and feet and eyes and heart of God. Serving, walking alongside, loving ALL neighbors, and receiving their service and love as well, are our duty and our delight.