

RIC Process Report



RECONCILING IN CHRIST

On March 16, 2021, Nativity Council approved the formation of a small group (Core Team) to begin leading Nativity Lutheran Church through the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Program; a program of ReconcilingWorks. The RIC Program is a way for faith communities to ensure the welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church.

Nativity's RIC Core Team had its first meeting on April 27, 2021, and includes Alex Bailey, Rachel Becker-Warner, Riya Chattopadhyay, Bryan Helminiak, Barb Peterson, Pastor Ben Schori, and Sherri Truchinski. Since then, the Core Team has been leading Nativity through its RIC journey: an intentional and extensive process of transparency, education, dialogue, learning, and growing.

TIMELINE | PROCESS SUMMATION

What follows is a timeline and summation of the Core Team's work and Nativity's RIC process over the past year:

April – July 2021

- We got to know one another and built our identity as the Nativity Core Team
- Began working through the steps of the RIC Building an Inclusive Church (BIC) Toolkit
- Communicated our presence to the Nativity community and how to connect (On June 12-13, Pastor Ben lifted up the Nativity RIC process and Core Team in his Pride inspired sermon)
- Planned out how we would engage with the Nativity community

August 2021

- RIC Table started having a presence in the Commons during weekend worship
The table has been...
 1. Adorned with the Pride Flag and similar LGBTQ+ affirming symbols
 2. Frequently attended by an RIC Core Team member to engage individuals in one-on-one conversation and answer questions
 3. Stocked with ReconcilingWorks educational materials and books for those who would like them
 4. A donation/payment basket on the table to support the effort to restock materials and pay for books

(Core Team intends for the table to have a presence in the Commons until after an RIC vote occurs)

September – November 2021

Congregation wide book study

- Encouraged the formation of book study groups/ book clubs
 1. The focus of this book study was around three books:
 2. Queerfully and Wonderfully Made: A Guide for LGBTQ+ Christian Teens
 3. Welcoming and Affirming: A Guide to Supporting and Working with LGBTQ+ Christian Youth
 4. Outside the Lines: How Embracing Queerness Will Transform Your Faith
- Several book study groups were formed, and dozens of participants read and discussed these books together

December 2021

"Get to know your RIC Core Team" Video Series

- Videos of Core Team members answering:
 1. Who they are
 2. Why they joined the Core Team
 3. A question around inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community they wanted to answer

January – March 2022

RIC Survey

- Core Team decided to survey the congregation to gauge whether Nativity was ready to become an RIC congregation

- The survey was developed in the first half of January and open to the congregation January 30 – February 13 (On January 30-31, Pastor Ben lifted up the survey in his sermon)
- The Survey Results and Report Letter was shared with the community on March 5
- The data from the survey results communicated to the Core Team that the congregation is ready to move into the final stages of our RIC process

RIC Forums

- A small number of survey comments conveyed some level of questioning and from these comments, the Core Team construed two prevailing themes:
 1. The interpretation of scripture regarding sexuality and gender identity
 2. How Nativity will be different/the same after becoming an RIC congregation
- Forums were held on these two themes the weekends of March 19-20 and March 26-27 and were widely publicized leading up to these dates

Core Team began developing this Nativity RIC Process Report & Recommendation, including a proposed Welcome Statement

April 2022

Core Team finalized content to present to Council at meeting on April 19

CORE TEAM'S RECOMMENDATION

To be recognized as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Partner, Nativity will need to comply with the following expectations of ReconcilingWorks:

1. Explicitly state a welcome to people of “all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions” or “LGBTQIA+” and name its commitment to “racial equity” or “anti-racism” in its welcome statement.
2. Be open to calling an LGBTQIA+ and Black, Brown, Indigenous, Person of Color (BIPOC) Rostered Leader.
3. Allow community space/sanctuary to be used for LGBTQIA+ weddings and blessings.
4. Make a meaningful contribution annually to support the national RIC program.

IN RESPONSE TO THESE EXPECTATIONS, THE NATIVITY RIC CORE TEAM OFFERS THE FOLLOWING:

- This newly updated and expanded Welcome Statement: Nativity aspires to be an inclusive community of faith that loves and accepts people of every race & culture, age & ability, family structure & economic status, and every sexual orientation, gender identity, & gender expression. We love and accept you as you are, wherever you are in your spiritual journey.

Freed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and called to love God and one another, we commit to serving and advocating for those who are marginalized and oppressed, striving for racial equity and wealth equality, and caring for this planet we all share. We will not do this work perfectly. We will fall short and fail at times. And so, we humbly commit, as well, to the holy work of listening, learning, repentance, and growing together. In this way, we live into our identity as followers of Jesus, constantly rising to new life by the grace of God. *(NOTE: the Core Team suggests that the first section be spoken at the beginning of worship services, and both sections are found in printed materials and on the website.)*

- Advisement to future Nativity Call Committees that sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and race are never legitimate deterrents for considering an individual as a candidate of choice.
- To state in wedding and baptism information (printed and online) that Nativity welcomes the weddings of couples and baptisms in families of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.
- Suggestion that Nativity Council set a regular financial contribution to ReconcilingWorks in the Annual Budget, either as a percentage of the budget or return to the amount annually to discern adjustment.

If Nativity becomes an RIC Congregation, this Core Team also encourages the formation of a successive RIC Team to continue the work of welcoming, including, celebrating, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people in this congregation and the greater church.

WITH THESE OFFERINGS, the Nativity Lutheran Church Reconciling in Christ Core Team proposes the following motion for Council's consideration at its next monthly meeting on May 17, 2022:

Therefore, be it resolved that Nativity Lutheran Church, in commitment to racial equity and welcoming, including, celebrating, and advocating for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions, become a Reconciling in Christ Congregation.

Before considering this motion and, hopefully, voting on it as a resolution, the Core Team suggests the Council do the following:

- Share this Report & Recommendation with the congregation starting the weekend of April 23-24 in the EConnected, website, News to Note, and in verbal announcements during worship services.

Also, include:

-That Nativity Council will be considering this motion to become an RIC Congregation at its next meeting on May 17

-A way for members, if they choose, to communicate with their Council as they prepare to consider the motion.

- Repeat these communications until the May 17 meeting and include any pertinent communications in the consideration of the motion.

After participating in the April 19 Council Meeting, this will conclude the work of this Core Team in leading Nativity Lutheran Church through this RIC process, barring any further needs the Council might have of us.

If you have any questions or comments for your RIC Core Team, please reach out to Pastor Ben at ben@nativitychurch.org.

With Gratitude,

The Nativity RIC Core Team



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