

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Reflection by Matt Coppens

(from 3/18/2020 Bethelite)



– *Matthew Coppens*

In May of 2016, I made the decision to relocate from Denver to Madison. My decision to move was rooted in the fact that I could be closer to family, to reconnect with extended family, and to be an active uncle to my nephew. My decision to move was, in part, that I no longer saw myself growing. And while relocating does place a large shock on the body, my decision to move ultimately was the healthiest choice for myself.

This move allowed me to rediscover myself and what makes me happy, giving myself permission to explore and do more without guilt. This move pushed me out of my comfort zone, and in doing so allowed me to rediscover my faith. Moving forward is what also drew me to Bethel in the spring of 2019.

Faith for me was always something of a sensitive issue as I am a gay male from southern Florida. While I grew up in the church, the church that I knew never grew with me. Over the past decade, I fell in and out of pursuing faith because the leadership within each congregation that I would attend would never address, recognize, or affirm those who identify on the LGBTQ spectrum. Until now.

Bethel is not only an institution in Madison, but a reflection of the community that she serves. The work that the Reconciling In Christ (RIC) committee does, the willingness to adapt and grow, the openness of being accepted for who I am, and the desire to reach out and serve others; that is what drew me to this church. My feelings are only amplified as the church pursues the RIC designation to be a welcoming community for those who are seeking something more. I am happy that I have found a home here in Madison, and a chosen family with whom I can worship."