



TOWN OF NATICK

Town Administration ♦ Select Board

Natick Public Schools ♦ School Committee

13 East Central St. Natick, MA 01760 ♦ www.natickma.gov



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 29, 2024

Natick Stands United with the Entire LGBTQIA+ Community

In the early hours of Sunday, July 28th, two Natick churches were each targeted by an act of hate, aimed squarely at their support of the LGBTQIA+ community. Both the First Congregational Church of Natick (FCC) & Christ Lutheran Church Natick (CLC) have long been allies of the LGBTQIA+ community and each church strives to foster a congregation anchored in inclusivity. Sunday night was a calculated act of hate and the Town of Natick stands firmly against all forms of bigotry and hate. Natick is firmly committed to celebrating inclusivity so ALL who call Natick home, and those who visit, feel welcomed and supported.

In coordination with the below community groups, the FCC and CLC churches are planning to show community-wide support by participating in this Thursday's regularly-scheduled "Natick Nights." The Town of Natick and community organizations will join the FCC and CLC congregations to stand in support of the entire LGBTQIA+ community. This is just one step in the process of healing from this painful event, and making sure it doesn't happen again. We will support each other and proclaim the message that Natick is a welcoming community for all.

Please join us Thursday 8/1/24 (5:00 - 8:00 PM) to gather and support each other. We will gather on the FCC front lawn (NE corner of Rte. 27 & Rte. 135).

Standing in support of the LGBTQIA+ community,

- Town of Natick, Natick Public Schools & NGO Community Organizations





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Church Statements:

(fully supported by all Town departments, Natick Public Schools, Select Board, & School Committee)

First Congregational Church of Natick (FCC)	Christ Lutheran Church Natick (CLC)
<p><i>“At First Congregational Church of Natick, we are celebrating twenty years as an Open and Affirming Congregation. That means we are fully open and affirming to people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. We declare loudly and with conviction that our LGBTQIA+ siblings and selves are fully beloved by God – and each other. On Sunday, July 28, we arrived to worship to discover that flags and banners around the outside of our building had been taken down. The rainbow-colored pride flag, the pastel transgender flag, and the green mental health flag were all crumpled and thrown under bushes. The banner in celebration of our 20 years as an Open and Affirming congregation was folded on the ground. They were replaced by what is known as the Christian flag and a banner declaring “Jesus is King.” Also left behind were copies of an anonymous letter focusing on a narrow interpretation of a few verses of scripture. Not included in the letter were the many bible verses calling us to care for the stranger or love our neighbor.</i></p> <p><i>Once cleared by Natick police, we were able to remove the unwelcome messaging and joyfully restore our flags and banner to this historical building in the center of town. Our congregation gathered for worship and proclaimed, as we always do, “No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” Especially those who have been told by other churches that they are broken, sinful or wrong for who they love – or who they are.</i></p> <p><i>Following worship, we gathered around our flags, blessing and rededicating them to the critical work they</i></p>	<p><i>“Beloved community of CLC and our devoted friends and followers-</i></p> <p><i>Christ Lutheran Church is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and part of the New England Synod of that church. We recently celebrated 14 glorious years of being visibly and vocally open and affirming to the LGBTQIA+ community. That designation is as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation. We believe that God’s radical message of love and grace is a message for everyone - period - inclusive of all aspects of identity and specifically to all within the LGBTQIA+ community.</i></p> <p><i>This morning - July 28, 2024 - before worship, I got the call that our two banners (one that welcomes folks to worship with the Reconciling in Christ logo and one that proclaims “Peace” over the colors of the rainbow flag) had been removed and replaced by other banners - one known as the Christian flag and a banner declaring “Jesus is King.” In addition to the banners a handful of letters that were decidedly anti-LGBTQIA+ were also left behind.</i></p> <p><i>What’s of the utmost concern for our community is that this anti-LGBTQIA+ act of vandalism and hate speech came from an anonymous group of other Christians, once again using the Bible to render their judgment. It’s painful to have our shared sacred texts levied against us. Our belief is that God’s mercy is there for all.</i></p> <p><i>We are saddened by what has happened and hope that - should the people who did this become known - the community of Natick will act in love and restorative</i></p>



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do for us – declaring to all who pass by the message of God’s love for all, including and especially our LGBTQIA siblings and selves. We have heard from many people in the community – not just in our congregation – that our flags at the center of downtown Natick give them a sense of belonging in town. Tearing down the symbols of a historically marginalized group can never be framed as God’s work – it is an action that inflicts heartache and pain on our entire community.

This church values discussion and reflection. We would be glad to have a conversation with anyone who has concerns or questions about our faith, our actions, our understanding of God and the world. We will not be anonymous in our declaration of our convictions, and we will not spread them around the community under the cover of night. We invite honest and thoughtful dialogue. And we will most certainly continue to proclaim the Good News of God’s love for all people.

- Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry, Pastor

justice to ensure that this does not happen again in our town.

I’m so grateful for the outpouring of support that has already surrounded us from others in our community - not just those within the four walls of our congregation. Clearly, Natick is a place that will not stand for this in our town. This is an indicator of that which we at CLC hold most dear - loving our neighbors as God has loved us.

After washing the feet of his disciples (an act of selfless hospitality) at the Last Supper, Jesus says “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

Our prayer is for the hardened hearts of those who perpetrated these acts to be softened by the message of welcome that is the message of Jesus. In the end, love must be the way.

In peace,

The Rev. Christophor Gilbert, Pastor