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'Gay in the Eyes of God' - A new series

Maureen Fiedler | Jul. 6, 2012 NCR Today

Beginning this week, "Interfaith Voices," the public radio show I host, is launching a timely new series, "Gay in the Eyes of God: How Twelve Traditions View Gay and Lesbian People."

Over nine weeks, we will deal with the varied ways in which major faith traditions in the United States deal with issues of homosexuality. This week, we feature an opening panel of experts, providing an overview of the issue in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The most interesting question is this: Why the changes in some religious traditions and not others? Throughout this series, we search for answers in cultural influences (TV shows like "Modern Family" and "Glee," for example); the public debate on issues like same-sex marriage and "don't ask, don't tell"; flexibility -- or not -- in theological and scriptural interpretations; rapidly changing attitudes among youth; democratic decision-making structures -- or lack thereof -- in religious bodies; and simply the influence of who you know: having friends or relatives who now identify publicly as gay or lesbian but would have been fully closeted 20-25 years ago.

Fear of change is also a factor. As Kevin Eckstrom, the editor-in-chief of Religion News Service, says on this week's show: Some people fear life "on the other side." They think: If my understanding of God on homosexuality is wrong, where else is my understanding of God wrong? If what I thought the Bible said for my entire life has now shifted, isn't everything else up in the air? In other words, some see such a change as a threat to faith.

Next week, we explore the first religious bodies to change, with Rev. Troy Perry, founder of the Metropolitan Community Church (sometimes called the "gay church"), and Rev. Rob Hardies, a Unitarian minister. Later, we will deal with other Christian groupings: mainline Protestants, Southern Baptists and Evangelicals, the predominantly African-American churches, and of course, Roman Catholicism.

Also included in the series are Judaism, Islam (where there is more movement for change than meets the eye), Mormonism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Beginning midday Friday, it's possible to listen to the first of this series at our website [1]. And we podcast. This series was made possible by a grant from the ARCUS Foundation.

As they say, stay tuned!

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Links:
[1] http://www.interfaithradio.org