

## **Pastor believes 'gay is a mark of God's diversity'**

Sexual orientations celebrated

KATIE ANDREW

Issue date: 8/20/08

Holy documents such as the Bible, the Torah and the Qu'ran have listed homosexuality as an "abomination"; an "unnatural temptation"; or a "perversion."

Rev. Renee DuBose is an active pastor and lifelong Christian with a master's degree in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. She is also a lesbian.

"I believe I was born gay," DuBose said. "I believe with all my heart that God creates diversity; my being gay is a mark of God's diversity." DuBose is a pastor at Our Hope Metropolitan Community Church in Athens, which specializes in the spiritual needs of the gay community.

"So many mainline Christian churches refuse membership to gays, lesbians and transgendered," said DuBose.

Dubose experienced this firsthand when the Campus Ministry organization initially did not want Dubose to be a part of the ministry because she is openly gay. She is currently vice president of the organization.

"MCC started a place of refuge, of safety for people that are gay." DuBose, who was raised in a fundamental Southern Baptist household, admits she doesn't always agree with the way she was brought up.

"In the late '60s, homosexuality was considered a mental disorder. If you were a homosexual, you were demon possessed," said DuBose. "(Mainstream churches) used a literal translation of Christian and Jewish scriptures to say that homosexuality was a sin and you had to be delivered from it."

DuBose recalls the founding of Metropolitan Community Church by Troy Perry in 1968 in response to great tragedies and injustices he'd watched gays suffer.

"He started this group because he'd had so many friends that were gay attempting or committing suicide," DuBose said. "They were just being abandoned in some ways." DuBose encourages everyone, no matter your orientation, to join her at Our Hope for Communion service every Sunday at 11 a.m. Partners are welcome.

The Jewish community, especially more Orthodox Jews, also have a history of homosexual intolerance within their synagogues. While UGA's Hillel community is not quite as liberal as Our Hope, Rabbi Justin Kerber insists that gays and lesbians are always accepted in his services.

"Some of our most committed and most active students are openly gay," he said. Kerber made reference to a 161-page document specifically concerning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer students within Hillel. Upon opening the document to the table of contents, it reads "For Queer Jews everywhere: this guide is for you. Here's to a future of

reconciliation, celebration and peace."

The Hillel LGBTQ Resource Guide is written and edited mostly by homosexuals, professionals and students.

"It's important to be open and inclusive," DuBose said. "Based on what I've studied, it seems like He was inclusive."

## HOMOSEXUALITY AND RELIGION

- The 2000 U.S.Census indicates that there are about 600,000 gay and lesbian couples, or about 1% of the population. Keep in mind those are just the gays that are willing to release information to the government about their sexual orientation.

- In 1973, homosexuality was officially declassified as a mental illness after 21 years in the APA's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

- The Human Rights Campaign is currently working with 23 different Progressive State Clergy Coalitions to encourage certain Christian organizations to open their doors to thr LGBT community.

**- In 2007, The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force established The National Religious Leadership Roundtable (NRLR), - "an interfaith network of leaders from pro-lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) faith, spiritual and religious organizations." The NRLR is also dedicated to monitoring and campaigning for the progression of marriage rights in the United States.**