

*The Maybe God Podcast team aims to challenge assumptions and inspire more meaningful conversations among friends, family, and community groups. To that end, we'll provide a Study Guide for each episode we produce that listeners can use individually or in group settings for deeper learning and exploration.*

# MAYBE GOD PODCAST

## **Season 3, Episode 1 (Part 1)** ***Do Queer People Belong in the Church?***

Before this episode, what, if anything, did you know about the United Methodist Church? Were you surprised to learn about the UMC's struggle over sexuality? Why or why not?

The United Methodist Church didn't really begin to openly debate homosexuality until 1972. What circumstances caused the Church to finally formalize a position on the issue?

Which of our three major guests (Oliveto, Hamilton, and Renfro) most resonated with you? Why?

### **Bishop Karen Oliveto**

As you might imagine, most of the guests on this episode are highly controversial figures in the United Methodist Church, but none is more polarizing than Oliveto. Most people either love her or despise her. Our effort with this episode was meant to *humanize* her for our audience. In that spirit, what stood out to you about Oliveto's story?

Name one issue or idea you and Oliveto agree on, and one issue or idea you don't agree on.

Consider this quote from Oliveto: "Our sexual orientation is the lens through which we encounter the world...though which we touch God. It's the lens through which we love other people. And I can no more not practice my sexual orientation than I can willfully stop breathing. I'd die if I stopped practicing whom God made me to be." Do you agree that expressing your sexual orientation is the same as breathing? Why or why not?

### **Rev. Rob Renfroe**

What stood out to you about Renfroe's story?

Reflect for a moment on Renfroe's words about grace and truth. What might be the problem with a church that's heavy on grace, but light on truth? What about a church that's heavy on truth, but light on grace?

Renfroe said, "Whenever I do talk about this [in my local church], I begin by saying, 'Look - if you're straight and you're a follower of Jesus, the primary thing you need to hear me say, no matter what I say after this, is you were called to love every person on Earth. Those who do right, those who do what you think is wrong. Those who are straight, those who are gay. Those who know Jesus, those who hate Jesus. You are called to love them, and if you cannot do that, you have a bigger problem than somebody who has same-sex attraction.'" But Renfroe also believes homosexual expression is sinful. Is it possible to truly love someone while also believing that what they're doing is wrong? What does that even look like?

### **Rev. Adam Hamilton**

Hamilton said that what convinced him to pursue Methodism was Wesley's emphasis on the heart *and* the head. How have you experienced God in your heart (or emotions) and in your head (intellect)?

Hamilton said he changed his position on homosexuality because the Bible contains maybe rules and regulations that we no longer recognize as authoritative - such as verses about slavery and misogyny. What did you think about his evolution on the topic?

### **Final Thoughts**

Dr. Stephen Rankin said the big question here is whether or not sexuality should be treated the same as race. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Read [Romans 12](#). What do you think is the most loving, Christ-like, grace+truth way for Christians to handle this sensitive topic and our LGBT+ neighbors who bear the image of God?