



## NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Mark Bowman, [communications@lgbtqreligiousarchives.org](mailto:communications@lgbtqreligiousarchives.org)

### **LGBTQ-RAN Awards Its First Exhibit Grant To Spotlight New York's First Gay Church**

**Online Project to Explore How Church Pioneered the Use of  
Sacramental Rituals to Create a Spiritual Home for LGBTQ+ People**

The LGBTQ Religious Archives Network (LGBTQ-RAN) today announced that its inaugural exhibit grant will go to Roy A. Fisher, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University, for an online project on New York City's first openly queer sacramental church.

“Queer Sacramentality: The Church of the Beloved Disciple, ca. 1968–1986” will use original archival materials and research to mark the church as a significant yet underrecognized site of theological, political, and communal innovation within LGBTQ+ religious history. The church was launched by [the Rev. Robert M. Clement](#) when hundreds of participants in a 1968 gay pride march in Manhattan responded to his invitation to participate in a first-of-its-kind open and affirming church service.

Focusing on the church's lived experience—especially its practice of “holy unions” affirming same-sex couples—the exhibit will demonstrate how this marginalized community reimaged Christian sacramental traditions and used them as vessels for resistance, creativity, and community formation.

“The exhibition will situate the Church of the Beloved Disciple within a broader genealogy of queer sacramental movements, tracing connections to earlier figures such as [George Hyde](#), founder of the Eucharistic Catholic Church in 1946 in Atlanta,” said Fisher in his proposal to LGBTQ-RAN. “In doing so, it highlights overlooked contributions to LGBTQ+ religious life emerging from independent Catholic traditions.”

“We are excited to add this important chapter in LGBTQ+ religious history to our growing archives,” said Mark Bowman, executive director of LGBTQ-RAN. “We expect that scores upon scores of open and affirming churches will be able through this exhibit to understand the roots from which they grow and gain inspiration from what this church pioneered.”

This is the first year of an annual \$1,500 grant LGBTQ-RAN will give for the development of an online exhibit on a particular institution, leader or movement in LGBTQ+ faith history. Applicants are encouraged to propose exhibits on underrepresented areas of LGBTQ+ religious life, including movements outside Christian Protestant traditions, and those involving women and people of color. See our current exhibits, and a link to additional exhibit grant information, on [our online exhibitions page](#).

The [LGBTQ Religious Archives Network](#) is celebrating its 25th anniversary as a groundbreaking venture in preserving the history of LGBTQ religious movements around the world. The organization assists LGBTQ religious leaders and groups in determining how best to preserve their records and papers; provides an electronic information clearinghouse about LGBTQ religious history for the use of historians, researchers and other interested persons; and encourages scholarship in LGBTQ religious history. Learn more about LGBTQ-RAN at [lgbtqreligiousarchives.org](http://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org).

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