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lifestyle: RELIGION

A HIGHER Power

Islanders find strength in personal faith

Having faith in something means believing and trusting in something outside ourselves. For many of us, it is often a challenge to have faith in such difficult times. However, in the three years since the tragic events of 9/11, America has seen a resurgence in faith. More people are now attending church regularly than before 9/11, and more people are beginning to look to God to fill a void in their lives where previously they tried to fill that void with more worldly things.

However, not all religious news has been positive as of late. Recently, the issue of homosexuals in the church has become a hotly debated topic. In some instances, even among members of the same faith, a great chasm has opened because of the widely opposing views some worshippers have. On one hand, some believers feel that whatever a person does or believes in their personal life is fine and they should be accepted no matter what. Taking an opposing view are those who believe the Bible should be followed strictly to the letter, and that we, as God's people, should not take it upon ourselves to change God's word, and therefore because of the specific wording in the Bible, that homosexuality is against God's plan.

Whatever a person's view on homosexuality in the church, it is sure to "ruffle feathers" and cause great debate, often among family members, neighbors and friends. Some believers feel the Bible is open for interpretation, and they argue among each other about just how "open" the Bible is and should be. Additionally, they also disagree over how to interpret parts of the Bible. The opposite school of thought, those believers who take every word in the Bible as literal and unchanging, seem to have more cohesion, and less division among themselves, when it comes to practicing their faith.

Another source of argument on the religious front is the issue of religion in politics. President George W. Bush has been very open regarding his faith in God. Some have criticized him for this, others have applauded him. Disagreements regarding Bush's faith actually began on the campaign trail back in 1999. Someone asked him which "political philosopher or thinker" he identified with most, Bush replied, without hesitation, "Christ-because he changed my heart."

Some people were touched by Bush's answer. They believed Bush would make an excellent leader for our country because he would use his faith and morality to help him make good decisions. Others felt that Bush would make the White House a place where Christianity ruled with a weighty hand.

As we have struggled to recover from the tragedy of 9/11, President Bush has continued to be open about his faith, and has continued to receive praise from some and criticism from others. As the election draws near, new polls show that the issue of religion in politics is becoming a topic more and more people are contemplating as they make their decision on who is the best candidate to run our country.