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Short Film 'Places of Worship' Pins Religion and Sexuality at the Forefront of Chicago's Ever-Changing Stage

By: Jillian Marquardt

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It's often said that the only constant in life is change, and short film *Places of Worship* stands as a testament to this in more ways than one. Brought to life by Director [Bridget Frances Harris](#), the film follows a young altar server, Steph, as she navigates swelling feelings of queerness within her traditional Catholic faith. Through these experiences, Harris highlights the ambiguous middle ground that exists between religion and sexuality.

"I really wanted the character of Steph to not know how she was feeling about the intersection of her religion and her newly explored sexuality, and that she didn't have to make a finite decision at the end of the day," Harris said.

Here is your first look at *Places of Worship*...



These major life anchors are often forced to shed their traditional skins in the face of change, a core message that *Places of Worship* extends to the very walls it was filmed within. The Music Box Theatre, one of Chicago's most historically rich spaces for entertainment, as well as what Harris fittingly describes as her own "personal place of worship," served as an easy choice.

"The Music Box is dripping with history, sensuality, and memories. Any other theater would have come off as clinical and would have taken away from the magic of the scene," Harris said. "Not only is the Music Box aesthetically such an incredible space, I think tonally it really lends itself to the overall aura of the film."

Since opening its doors in 1929, the Music Box Theatre has served as a cornerstone space for Chicagoans to connect through film and art. Although announcements of an upcoming expansion mirror themes *Places of Worship* explores regarding the inevitability of change within even the most enduring spaces.

"It is both brave and necessary that the Music Box ebbs and flows with what we want as a community. Sure, we need an eight-hour Béla Tar screening, but you know what? We also need to play 'Shrek' at midnight on a Wednesday to a packed house of rowdy queers," Harris said. "It's expanding tradition, rather than settling for a rigid view of tradition."

Ultimately, whether it's the tedious balance between religion and sexuality that *Places of Worship* reflects, or the physical theatre where this intersection takes place, these evolutions can feel uncomfortable — that's the point.

"The film isn't meant to be comfortable. It should make you squirm, giggle, and unpack," Harris said.

Places of Worship will continue to leave audiences unpacking as it finishes its final circuit at the [NewFilmmakers Los Angeles Pride Screening on June 14](#), and just as the only constant in life is change, Harris sets fresh sights on Las Vegas as her latest short film stage. Though she holds tight to the lessons that this project, as well as the Chicago film community, have taught.

"You can't be a visionary without a village," [Harris](#) said. "Indie film takes miracles, and I think it's our willingness to give, not take, that makes us more successful."

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