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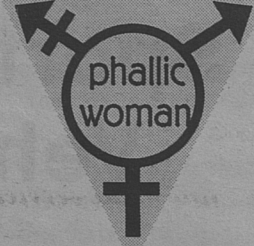
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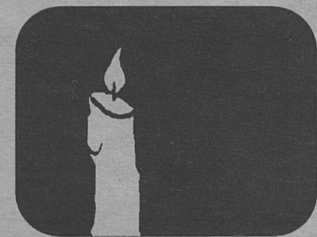
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FAITH MATTERS
by the reverend christine leslie

Faith Matters and Remembering Matters

BY REV. CHRISTINE LESLIE

As I write, yet another year is about to become the past. The year 2000, however, has not been a year like any other year in my life. The year 2000 has afforded me the privilege of experiencing many milestones that have not been paralleled.

On a personal note, in the spring Martha and I were able to buy the home we had rented for 3 years. We were then able to make improvements to it over the summer that have added greatly to the quality of our life. This is the first time either one of us have ever owned a home. That we were able to experience this "first" together has really been a very sweet and precious step in our lives.

We've also been able to participate in a number of civil union services, including our own. Thinking about this still leaves me breathless! I will forever cherish being present for the first public hearing in Montpelier last January when so many brave and articulate friends and members of the glibt community testified in favor of same-gender marriage. And I will never forget as long as I live the day the civil union bill was signed into law making it possible for same-gender couples in Vermont to legally unite.

This year has also been one of the most memorable in my life because of The Samadhi Singers, A Sacred and Spirited Music Chorale for Friends & Members of the GLBT Community, with whom I have been singing since the summer of 1997. Singing and working with this group of dedicated people has been an extraordinary source of pride and joy in my life. I wish for everyone I know the experience of community that singing with this group gives to those of us who

make it part of our spiritual homes. This group, more than any group I have ever been in, helps me remember who I am and what my life needs to be about.

Because I, too, suffer from spiritual and emotional amnesia from time to time, having such a group to help me remember who I am and what my life needs to be about is precious to me. Remembering who I am is to remember that I am a child of the loving, creative life force I call "God," and that I was made in this amazing entity's image to love and be loved, to laugh and cry, to dance and sing, to work and play, to grow and change, and to enjoy the goodness of creation, even its shortcomings like death, disease, disappointment, destruction, and disasters.

If I remember this and live out of this understanding of who I am, then I fret less when I don't measure up to a standard that another would prefer I live by, or by which I might need to live but don't remember that I should. This means I might step on another person's emotional toes from time to time. When this happens, what helps me navigate is to remind myself that rarely, if ever, do I set out to hurt another person on purpose when I say something or do something that they take issue with. When I do, I can only apologize for having inadvertently hurt or angered that person, ask for their forgiveness, and hope we might find a way to explore what's going on between us and why.

I recently heard a story that helps me remember just how much remembering matters. A little girl, whose parents had given birth to her new baby sister, asked her parents if she could talk to her new sister by herself when they brought her home from the hospital. Although a little puzzled by

this request the little girl's parents were willing to trust her and agreed to do this for her. Imagine their amazement and wonder when they over heard their first child saying to their new born infant, "I am so glad you are here because I have almost forgotten what God looks like and I hope you can help me remember before you forget, too."

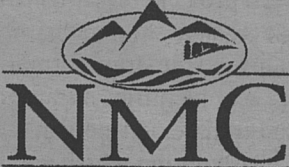
If we are all made in God's image, when we help each other remember what God looks like, then we can help each other remember what we really look like! And when we remember who we really look like then we can remember who we really are and what are lives really need to be about. I love the fact that the Buddha said, "It doesn't matter how long we have forgotten, only how soon we remember." In this newest of years, may we all remember sooner rather than later who we really are and what our lives need to be about! In so doing perhaps 2001 might even be more joyous and more amazing than 2000! Happy New Year!

Rev. Christine Leslie, a pastoral counselor in private practice near Burlington, Co-director of The Samadhi Singers, & the Protestant Campus Minister at UVM, can be reached at 802-860-7106 or revcs1@aol.com. ▼

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