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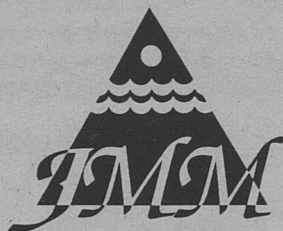
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Faith Matters and Singing Matters

by the Reverend Christine Leslie

Having marched in my first Pride Parade in San Francisco in June of 1977, I am joyous about marking the 20th anniversary of that momentous occasion in my life here in Vermont on Saturday, June 21st when I will participate in my first Vermont Pride Day. Given I have spent these 20 years since that first Pride Parade in the ministry, you can imagine my delight when I learned that this year's festivities will include an Interfaith Worship Service hosted by the 1st Unitarian Universalist Society in Burlington. I made some phone calls and was warmly invited to serve on the Pride '97 Interfaith Worship Service Planning Committee by Lisa Rubin, who is on staff at the UU church and who was key in getting the service on the roster of last year's, and this year's, Pride events.

Since singing sacred music has always been a love of mine and an integral part of my spiritual journey, I was even more delighted to learn that a choir of about 30 members and friends of the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender ("g/l/b/t") community had been part of last year's Pride Interfaith Worship Service. The Freedom Choir, as it was duly named in 1996, sang beautifully having only met and rehearsed one hour before the service began. The Planning Committee for this year's Pride Interfaith Worship Service wants a Freedom Choir to emerge again from our community for the service on 6/21.

Given that the service begins at 9:30 AM this year, we have arranged to hold two rehearsals for those who wish to be in this year's Freedom Choir. We will meet and rehearse at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Burlington from 7 - 9 PM on Sunday, June 15th and Wednesday, June 18th. We will also meet to warm up on June 21st at 8:30 AM just prior to the Pride Interfaith Worship Service at the 1st Unitarian Universalist Church.

Anyone who likes to sing and who wants to participate can do so by simply coming to the rehearsals. Being able to read music is helpful but not necessary. The music we are planning to sing is lovely, easy to learn and perform, and will add a great deal to our Pride '97 Interfaith Worship Service. Since gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people have few opportunities to sing music of faith together in supportive settings, having the Freedom Choir be part of the Pride '97 Interfaith Worship Service is important.

It's also why I am hoping those who join this choir for the day might be interested in forming a sacred music chorale for members and friends of

the g/l/b/t community that would actually rehearse and perform on a regular basis here in Burlington, and perhaps throughout Vermont. I would like to call this choir The New Jerusalem Singers and welcome inquires from anyone interested, especially those who might not be able to be in the Freedom Choir.

I helped to organize such a choir on Long Island in 1995 that's grown by leaps and bounds. It now pays its music director and conductor, Elaine Kirkland, and is rehearsing and performing regularly throughout the Long Island area. Many people here, with whom I have already discussed this dream have responded very positively and supportively, and hope that The New Jerusalem Singers come into being.

I learned long time ago how much music, especially sacred choral music, from hymns to the great works of Handel and Brahms, helps me connect with my soul and nurtures my experience of The Holy One. This is especially true when I sing music of faith with other g/l/b/t people. Something very holy happens when we sing sacred music together that can speak to our experiences of oppression, exile, and need for acceptance as full members of The Holy One's kin-dom. Something very liberating and healing also happens when those who have not found their voices among us hear us sing music of faith together.

This choir, even though not birthed yet, has been invited to sing at the regular morning worship service of the First Unitarian Universalist Society in Burlington on October 12th as part of its recognition of National Coming Out Week. It's my dream that we might even give our first concert the evening of October 11th, and also be a part of Burlington's First Night activities on December 31st. If there other dreamers out there who would like to help make these dreams a reality, I hope you will let me know. In the meantime, I look forward to singing in this year's Freedom Choir, and to my first Vermont Pride festivities. t

Rev. Christine Leslie is founder and director of Triangle Ministries, A Center for Lesbian & Gay Spiritual Development. Rev. Leslie can be reached by email at revcsl@aol.com or by calling her at 802-860-7106. Visit the Triangle Ministries web site at <http://members.aol.com/revcsl>.

Deadline For Murder by Val McDermid

Reviewed by Donna Freeman

It seems these days that lesbian literature consists of scarcely more than soft-porn murder mysteries. At least that's what the American writers seem to be concentrating on. In this regard, the lesbian mystery novel is in its infancy—with few exceptions, little is well written. An even smaller percentage hovers above the amateurish. So much for the American lesbian mystery writer.

Enter Scottish novelist McDermid. No stranger to the mystery novel, she brings her experienced journalist/sleuth, Lindsay Gordon, to Glasgow, Scotland to help spring a fellow journalist from prison. The imprisoned Jackie Mitchell was convicted of murdering a third journalist. This third journalist (and suspected lesbian,) just happened to be having an affair with—you guessed it—the inmate.

Here is where most predictability ends, insofar as the murder mystery goes. Much of the book is filled with the inevitable lesbian be-civil-to-your-ex balancing act. This balancing act becomes part of the mystery, and uncovering clues from the emotional turmoil is no easy feat for our sleuth. Imagine how it feels, when, in returning from a trip, you discover your lover is now your ex. To escape from this pain, Lindsay begins to dig into the past of the dead reporter, Alison, another one of her exes.

Not only is Lindsay one of the departed Alison's exes, so apparently is almost every other major and minor character in the book. It is a murder mystery, therefore the victim has to be one of the most colorful personalities. Colorful is not how McDermid describes her victim: "sexually omnivorous" is just one aspect of this vicious, back-stabbing professional, who, it turns out, had a rating system for every one of her female and male lovers. She used them and never allowed them to leave her until she had no more use for them. But did she deserve to die?

Since Lindsay knew this barracuda firsthand, she needs to uncover the identities of the other sexual partners, then determine the one most likely to commit the crime, as each had motive. Lindsay must then uncover the evidence proving Jackie's innocence.

Deadline For Murder kept my interest until the last word. McDermid is more than competent in weaving the mystery. She is also skillful in creating a lesbian novel that does not force sexual encounters into the spotlight, where they don't always belong. A word of warning: we amateurs need to break through a barrier of Scottish colloquialism to get to know the players in this novel. All in all, it's bloody good. ▼