

FAITH



MATTERS

# Faith Matters & Intimacy Matters

BY THE REV.  
CHRISTINE S. LESLIE

**S**pirituality is a word we use to talk about how we are drawn to and interact with The Holy One. Sexuality is a word we use to talk about how we are drawn to and interact with another person.

health & wellbeings

Because spirituality and sexuality both involve relating to a "significant other," I have come to believe that they are opposite sides of the same coin. The coin in question is the coin of intimacy. I like the image of a coin because it immediately imparts that an exchange of something valuable is involved.

Being intimate is an exchange of life-enhancing energy and involves an ability to be vulnerable and a willingness to risk being honest about what we think, feel, and need. Intimacy can occur when we share stuff that's personal, private, and precious with someone who receives what we share with acceptance, love and support. This kind of exchange usually gives us a sense of safety, self-worth, comfort, contentment, and joy.

These are wonderful sensations to experience. We need to experience them in order to know first-hand that life is worth living. In fact, the very memories of these experiences are often what help us make it through the dark periods in our lives. Because our hunger for sexual and spiritual intimacy is as "hard-wired" into our makeup as breathing air and eating food, life simply cannot be all that it is meant to be without healthy inti-

mate relationships. This means that when we ignore, minimize, or trivialize our hunger for healthy intimate relationships, we do so at great risk to our health and well-being.

If relating in meaningful, intimate ways with The Sacred One

of us finally start to listen to our souls after we have experienced one too many failed relationships or can no longer stand the pain of living in isolation from ourselves, other people, and The Holy One.

Faith matters and intimacy

*We deserve to feast sexually and spiritually and thrive as spiritual and sexual beings.*

and other people is what we all need in order to know first-hand that life is worth living, then why is it that so many of us don't know how to have these kinds of relationships? Why do so many of us struggle with relating to The Holy Spirit? Why do so many of us struggle to find and keep a healthy intimate sexual relationship with another person?

There are many reasons why so many of us live, at best, on bread-and-water diets of spiritual and sexual intimacy. For those of us who are GLBT, understanding the reasons for this in our own lives often takes enormous courage. It may involve delving into the unhealed wounds of our past so they can be lanced, cleaned, and healed. It also involves a willingness to take a parallel look at what we believe about the nature of human sexuality and what we believe about the nature of The Holy One.

Because traditional religions of every stripe have perpetuated so much negativity about the nature of human sexuality and the nature of The Sacred One, it's a miracle that any of us ever even have a conscious desire to know The Holy One or another human being on intimate terms! That we have souls that tell us the truth, whether we listen or not, is a stroke of fortune. Many

matters intersect when we change our own negative beliefs and behaviors, and start to believe that we don't deserve to live on bread-and-water diets of intimacy. In fact, we deserve to feast sexually and spiritually and thrive as spiritual and sexual beings.

I highly recommend two books that have been helpful to me in my own journey: *The God We Never Knew* by Marcus Borg and *The Good Book* by Peter Gomes. Both do a wonderful job of refuting what traditional Christianity has done to portray the nature of human sexuality and of The Holy One in negative terms.

Last but not least, I recommend a book called *Psalms For Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness* by Nan C. Merrill. This is one of the most moving and intimate renditions of the Psalms I have ever come across. Merrill has done an amazing job of re-framing the Psalms of the Hebrew Scripture, which, in her own words, "often reflect a patriarchal society based on fear and guilt that projects evil and sin onto outer enemies." Merrill reflects in *Psalms for Praying* "the reciprocity of Divine Love that opens the heart to forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing."

I agree with her that "affirming the life-giving fruits of love and acknowledging the isolation and loneliness of those separated from Love, may serve to awaken the heart to move toward wholeness and holiness."

Healthy sexual and spiritual intimacy is a reality meant for all of us, not just some of us. It is my hope and prayer that we all find our way home to the truth about this and then do whatever it takes on a daily basis to let faith matters and intimacy matters feed our hungry souls. ▼

Rev. Christine Leslie is the director of Triangle Ministries - A Center for Lesbian & Gay Spiritual Development. She can be reached at (802) 860-7106 or email revcs1@aol.com.

RICK RECCHIO, M.D., F.A.A.P.

specializing in adolescent and pediatric medical care

PO Box 806, 184 Rt. 7 South  
Milton, VT 05468  
(888) 527-8189  
rrechio@together.net

MAGGIE FRAMPTON MSW ACSW  
LICENSED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER

PSYCHOTHERAPY • CONSULTATION  
ADULTS • ADOLESCENTS

MONTPELIER, VT  
(802) 229-5071

PROFESSIONAL  
CONFIDENTIAL

Montpelier  
229-5220

Burlington  
860-6360

JOSIE JUHASZ, M.A.  
Lic. Psychologist - Master

LYNN GOYETTE, M.S., M.A.  
Lic. Clinical Mental Health Counselor

sliding fee scale

insurance accepted

COUNSELING CENTER OF NORTHERN VERMONT

Practice limited  
to male clientele



THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE

William Coil, NCMT



802-658-2390  
800-830-5025

Michael Gigante, Ph.D.

Psychosynthesis  
Counseling, Psychotherapy, & Consultation

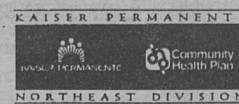
(802) 254-8032

15 Myrtle St., Brattleboro, VT 05301  
email mgigante@together.net

Psst! There's more to  
read in OITM besides  
Dykes To Watch  
Out For!

No kidding!

OITM



PHONE: 802/524-9595  
FAX: 802/524-2867

Carol Thayer, M.D.

PO Box 1160, RD2 • Fairfax, VT 05454