

Reconciling Spirituality + SEXUALITY

Patrick SORAN

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO FIND OUR WAY HOME.

For some, finding Science of Mind at all might be thought a miracle, but for many in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities there may be the additional challenge of breaking through the barrier of an upbringing controlled by a homophobic theology.

The following stories each reveal a difficult passage from dark to light, from judgment to acceptance, from rejection to grace. The principle of Oneness guides us to know that we are all one thing, and that thing is God.

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GOD HAD OTHER PLANS

REV. NORMAN BOUCHARD
& SCOTT GEER



NORM



SCOTT +
HESTER

No institution is your friend that demands your silence or denies your right to grow and be who you are. That was a lesson that both Scott and I had to learn on our spiritual paths. As a former Catholic priest, I worked for an institution that told me I was a sinner. Who I was as a gay man was not acceptable. Scott grew up in a small town and went to a fundamentalist, fear-based church and heard the same message. Both Scott and I were quite done with churches.

But Spirit had other plans.

I attended my first Religious Science service thinking I was going to brunch with a friend. She forgot to tell me it involved church, knowing quite well that my answer would have been no. We sat in the back row and I was prepared to reject everything. To my surprise I felt nothing but love and heard nothing I disagreed with. This started my wonderful path in Religious Science. Scott came to church with me, and these powerful teachings have transformed both our lives.

We both moved from our painful pasts with church into a place of acceptance, love and empowerment. The doctrine of our past, based

on a God of conditional love, shifted toward a Spirit that called us to be comfortable in our own skins. These powerful teachings taught us that it's about knowing and accepting who you are. We are powerful expressions of God, and the Science of Mind philosophy has shifted everything in our lives. When you begin to understand that you are a Divine expression and that who and what you are is perfect, life shifts in amazing ways.

Ernest Holmes says, "God gives some more than others because some accept more than others." Scott and I have said yes to being fully who we are, both individually and as a couple. The Science of Mind teachings support who we are. They call us forth to greatness.



MELISSA + Z

POWER OF COMMUNITY

REVS. Z EGLOFF
& MELISSA PHILLIPPE

When I was a kid, I was an atheist and an outsider. I didn't believe in God and I didn't believe in myself. In my early 20s, I realized that my sense of alienation was due to being gay. This realization, while comforting in some ways, was disconcerting in others. I felt different and alone.

Luckily, only a few years after coming out as gay I discovered the Science of Mind teachings. For the first time in my life, I felt a profound sense of connection to myself and to the world. I wasn't defective. I wasn't an outcast. I was a unique, wonderful expression of the Divine.

As the years went by, my life was greatly enriched by all I learned through Science of Mind. One area in particular was that of gender identity.

Through the support of my community, the Center for Spiritual Living (CSL) in Santa Rosa, California, I changed my name and my gender expression to more fully reflect my androgynous nature. This was a huge liberation, and my CSL community was a powerful ally in that process.

Another area that underwent major transformation was that of intimate relationships. Thanks to a talk I heard by Melissa Phillippe, a New Thought singer and songwriter, I began using the phrase "better

than I could ever imagine" in my prayers for a fulfilling intimate relationship. A year later, I met Melissa again at a women's retreat. We started talking and became friends. A few months later we became more than friends. Melissa realized that she'd been gay all her life and hadn't known it. She credits the teachings of Science of Mind with giving her the self-love and empowerment to come out at the age of 50.

Melissa and I have now been together for over six years, and our relationship is truly better than anything I could have imagined.

We recently became Science of Mind ministers and have started a focus ministry called OhMyGod! Productions. We love spreading the teachings that have brought so much joy to our lives. Life can be better than you ever imagined — we're living proof!

LEARNING TO LOVE OURSELVES

REV. DR. DAVID AULT
& TY ANDREWS



TY + DAVID

For branding consultant, entrepreneur and musician Ty Andrews and his husband, Rev. Dr. David Ault, an ordained Center for Spiritual Living minister in Atlanta, Georgia, their identical Pentecostal upbringings and struggles with sexual orientation seem like a distant memory. "There is an undeniably strong emphasis on honoring and loving the self in Science of Mind," says Andrews. "And since our everyday lives are so immersed in the practice of this philosophy, we're thankfully conscious to focus on the immeasurable acceptance we feel today rather than what we never received from any relative or other people in those awkward phases of identity discovery."

Ault agrees. "The focus on who we love as a nonissue makes it, for the many around us, a nonissue. Our interracial union isn't something we think about." They fell in love, and their center has championed them from day one. "Some might look at my mother's inability to not accept me as gay before her death as a tragedy," Ault shares. "I don't see it that way. She had her faith and I had mine. And I learned to respect another's choices without expectation. She is responsible for that gift,

and it stands as one of the greatest lessons I have ever authentically embodied. And besides, meeting Ty and getting married brought me another mom who kind of thinks I'm swell."



CARLA

I AM ENOUGH

CARLA L. THOMPSON, RScP

Religious Science Practitioner

For so long I thought of myself as an abomination — a word a young lesbian girl should never hear. My initial religious teachings began in our local Baptist church, where our preacher made his message clear.

I remember him pacing in the pulpit, his arms waving above his head and his voice emphatic with conviction as he spoke, "Leviticus 20:13 says

that if a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them."

While my young vocabulary did not know exactly what "abomination" meant, I was not left with any sense of my own wholeness or perfection. Those early teachings lingered with me as I grew older. I did not have the traits of confidence and self assurance that are often noted in those who are spiritually grounded. While I realized that I was different, I was also left feeling that I was not welcomed by the people who were the core of my spiritual community at that time.

As I grew older, I grew away from those teachings, yet I felt a yearning to reconnect with my spirituality as well as find a community where I would be welcomed and accepted for who I am. By the grace of God, I was guided to Mile Hi Church in Lakewood, Colorado, where I was greeted with open arms. I remember hearing these words for the first time: "We welcome all faiths, all lifestyles and all orientations." I was elated to be connected to like-minded, welcoming, open and accepting people.

I remember early classes where I began to learn that I am whole, perfect and complete, that I am enough and that I am one with Spirit! It was through this teaching that I felt my self-acceptance grow. I am a beloved child of God with whom he is well pleased! I find myself moving with ease and grace through life. I am grateful to know that our spiritual community is a container for greatness — for both myself and my future Beloved.

A REBEL'S REVELATION

SCOTT MCGLOTHLEN



SCOTT

By my early 20s, I had become a full-fledged, furious atheist whose mission was to wage war on organized religion. It didn't matter if someone belonged to a faith background that supported the gay community. My hatred extended far beyond that. I, like many atheists, blamed religion for all things wrong in this world. Thus, the moment I found out any person followed a faith, my blood boiled. I had no qualms with tearing into them, trying to deflate their beliefs.

But then I met Luke Simmington. On our first date, when getting on the topic of faith and religion, Luke talked about how he was fully tied to his faith and even went to church every Sunday. Luke explained that his home church primarily served the LGBT community. By the end of our evening, I had dubbed him completely undateable purely based on the fact that he was a man of faith, even though everything else seemed perfect. And vice versa, I came off as a bit too rebellious for his tastes.

Toward the end of that summer, I opted to take advantage of some local, free STD testing. Even though I was adamant about safety, I knew that regular testing played an important role for any sexually active individual. So, because I behaved so safely, I knew that I absolutely had nothing to worry about. "Hmm," the tester murmured as he revealed the rapid HIV test. "I don't want you to freak out, we get a lot of false positives, but there is a faint line."

Freak out, indeed. The next day, I zipped off to my primary care doctor, knowing that she could get definitive results in four days. When I returned to her office to hear the answer, I knew something was wrong when the nurse handed back my co-pay. The doctor walked in and, before the door even shut, she said the test had come back positive. It was official. I had HIV.

A few friends gathered at my apartment that night to comfort me. Stunned, they hardly knew what to say. Once they left, I was all alone and my reality began to crumble. I picked up the phone, and for reasons I'll never understand, I called Luke. The man dropped everything and came right over. Though he knew very little about HIV, Luke somehow comforted me better than anyone else. Toward the end of my night in crisis, he made an odd request. "Would you mind if I prayed for you?"

Luke's prayer unfolded unlike any prayer I had been accustomed to. He didn't ask for anything ridiculous, like God removing the disease from my body. Instead he asked God to give me strength in handling this difficult time. Something about it helped me relax. I felt a little peace.

Before I knew it I was attending the MCC of the Rockies, and admiring its slightly unkempt minister, Pastor Jim Burns. He didn't merely preach that God is the answer. He used theologies to explain how to find the answer within ourselves — with God's support.

Proudly, I let my guard down and upgraded from atheist to agnostic. To some, this may not sound like a big leap. For me, it was huge. I suddenly found relief in not knowing everything the universe had to offer. And I found happiness in not badgering people about my own point of view.

THE GOD OF LOVE

ELISHA CHRISTOPHER HAYDEN, RScP

Religious Science Practitioner

I have known since I was a very small child that my calling in life was ministry. As a teen, I served on youth leadership and was in choir, worked church events, served my church in every way I could.

I grew up in a Baptist family and my whole life revolved around church. I also knew from a very young age that I was gay, and that this would

bring conflict on my path toward ministry. For so many of my formative years, the disparity between my sexual orientation and my faith grew in me a dark depression. I remember coming out to my youth pastor when I was 15. I was seeking support but was kicked off youth leadership and cast out of my church for being gay.

Not being able to serve was heartbreaking, and so I spent many years after that exploring every spiritual path I could: Islam, Hare Krishna, Baha'i and many others. I tried many different faith systems, but all in some way or another condemned me because of who I loved and definitely would not open up a path to ministry for me.

I knew that the God of my soul was a God of love, of compassion and above all that there was one God that loved all people. When I found Centers for Spiritual Living, it was the first time that I had been to a spiritual community where I immediately felt the celebration of all people, including me. All of me. This teaching has changed my life for



ELISHA

the better in more ways than I have words for. I love that this teaching not only celebrates me for who I am, it supports me fully on my path toward ministry.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

JULIET VORSTER, RScP

Religious Science Practitioner

& REV. MARY LAQUET



JULIET + MARY

Mark 12:31 says, "Love thy neighbor as thy self." This biblical invitation is my reference in reconciling faith with sexuality. For me, the key to embodying this quote is found in the oft-missed second part, "... as thy self."

I started to uncover my true sexuality in my late 30s, by which time I was already a woman of deep faith. Yet my childhood conditioning left me judgmental and afraid of people living differently to how my family lived. All of a sudden, here was I stepping into such a "different" life, falling in love in a new way.

Despite my faith, I initially struggled to be okay with myself as a lesbian. This new identity forced me to look within on a deeper level than I had previously been willing to delve. Knowing the oneness of all life helped me to circle around my learned beliefs and recognize them for what they were — someone else's ideas based on fear and lack of understanding.

Jesus didn't say, "Love thy neighbor if they are like you", or "Love thy neighbor, but not the different ones." The invitation is clear in my mind: I must first love and accept myself exactly as I am, on the good days and the other days. Divine love is my nature, I am love, yet in everyday life that's easy to forget. My daily practice is to remember I am Divine Love and treat myself accordingly. God in me, as me, through me — even gay me. ☸

FIND YOUR SPIRITUAL HOME



Centers for Spiritual Living are open and diverse communities that love, welcome and support everyone who walks through the doors. Many of our ministers, practitioners and laity identify as LGBTQ.

Go to CSL.org and click on **Centers and Services** on the left.