Sexual Feelings in Spiritual Care
Participant Handout
Rev. Jennifer Block

Resources
- *Coming Out spiritually* by Christian de la Huerta (New York: Putnam/Archer, 1999)
- *Sex in the parish* by Karen Lebacqz and Ronald G. Barton (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991)
- *Sex in the Forbidden Zone* by Peter Rutter, MD (New York, Ballantine, 1989)
- *Sexuality and spirituality: friends, not foes* by Chavez-Garcia, Sylvia; Helminiak, Daniel
- *Theological perspectives on sexuality* by Jennings, Theodore W. Source: Journal of Pastoral Care 33 (Mr 1979), p. 3-16 Doc. Type: article
- *Ministry Among God's Queer Folk: LGBT Pastoral Care* by David Kunts and Bernard Schlager. (Pilgrim Press, 2007)

The Reality of Love,
from *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Stephen Mitchell

For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation. Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering, and uniting with another person – it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world in himself for the sake of another person; it is a great, demanding claim on him, something that chooses him and calls him to vast distances.

And this more human love ... consists in this: that two solitudes protect and border and greet each other.

Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest people infinite distances exist, a marvelous living side-by-side can grow up for them, if they succeed in loving the expanse between them, which gives them the possibility of always seeing each other as a whole and before an immense sky.

And from *Requiem for a Friend* also by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Stephen Mitchell

We need in love, to practice only this: letting each other go. For holding on comes easily; we do not need to learn it.
Self-Assessment Tool
Sexual feelings are a natural part of our humanity. They are our birthright. Many of us are affected by sexual feelings in pastoral care relationships. The following questions are designed to help you decide whether you are affected by sexual feelings in your ministry and if you need consultation.

In some pastoral relationships, do you …

- Regularly ask about the marital status, dating life, and sexual orientation?
- Experience a sense of ‘specialness’ in the relationship?
- Attend to what you wear around the ‘special’ individual?
- Keenly notice the color of his eyes? The shape of her mouth?
- Wonder if she/he is interested in you?
- Share deeply private material about yourself with him or her?
- Wonder what it would be like to touch him/her?
- Move from verbal intimacy to the freedom of touching one another?
- Fantasize about him/her when you are away from him/her?
- Ask about his/her sex life?
- Begin to close the physical space between you and him/her to see how he/she will react?
- Think to yourself: Can I get away with it? Can something that feels so right be so wrong? If only we had met under different circumstances ...
- Enjoy the pedestal you are placed upon when a particular patient is overly affectionate, attentive, admiring, etc.
- Enjoy give advice on sensitive subjects, especially regarding sexual activity?
- Become easily aroused or affected by physical touch?

If you answered yes to a few of these questions, congratulations: you are a sexual being! If you answered yes to most of these questions, consider getting consultation from a trusted colleague and/or contracting with a therapist to explore the prevalence of sexual feelings in your ministry.