

## 'Growth counseling' aids marital sex problems

By CHRISTOPHER BURBACH

Sex and marriage — the first is important to the success of the latter, according to a Lincoln minister. "Marriage has a lot to do with communication, intimacy, being together. Sexuality is one of the most important ways of expressing love and intimacy," said the Rev. Benjamin Roe, a United Methodist minister. Roe said couples often come to him for counseling about human sexuality.

Roe said sexual expression includes touching — like hugs and backrubs as well as any type of genital expression, which is just one of many possibilities.

"Intercourse is just one part of the picture," Roe said. "That's important for disabled people."

Talking about sex is important for couples, Roe said. "Sometimes I suggest they go on an exploring mission of each other," he said. The two then can increase their capability of "mutual pleasuring." Such an endeavor inspires creativity, which nurtures a couple's entire relationship, he said.

Roe said a good sex life "really emphasizes the flowing back and forth between the couple's beings as whole people, a sharing of real, honest, generous thoughts and feelings. It honors their integrity. The physical aspect, what each individual likes, is part of the picture."

"I work with people who want to affirm and grow in their sexuality," Roe said. Some of the problems he said he encounters arise in relationships disturbed by questions of sexual orientation, sexual dysfunctions or other physical disabilities.

"My basic approach is pastoral counseling — within that, growth counseling based on growth and hope. Often sexuality issues are connected to life concerns and life goals," Roe said.

"Success is when a person can either begin growing or grow more in their own appreciation of themselves and their relationship," he said. "Even if their problem isn't solved in the way they wanted originally, at least they'll have new ways to look at it."

Roe said his approach is based on spirituality. "From the Christian point of view, God is the source of creation. We are created for each other, for relationships," he said. "Jesus is the unique bearer of the understanding and power to become whole and reconciled with ourselves and our community."

A healthy sexual relationship between the partners in a marriage is important not only for the couple, but for their children as well.

"If a couple really does express love and intimacy, if they're comfortable, their children would be likely to be affirmed in their own right," Roe said.

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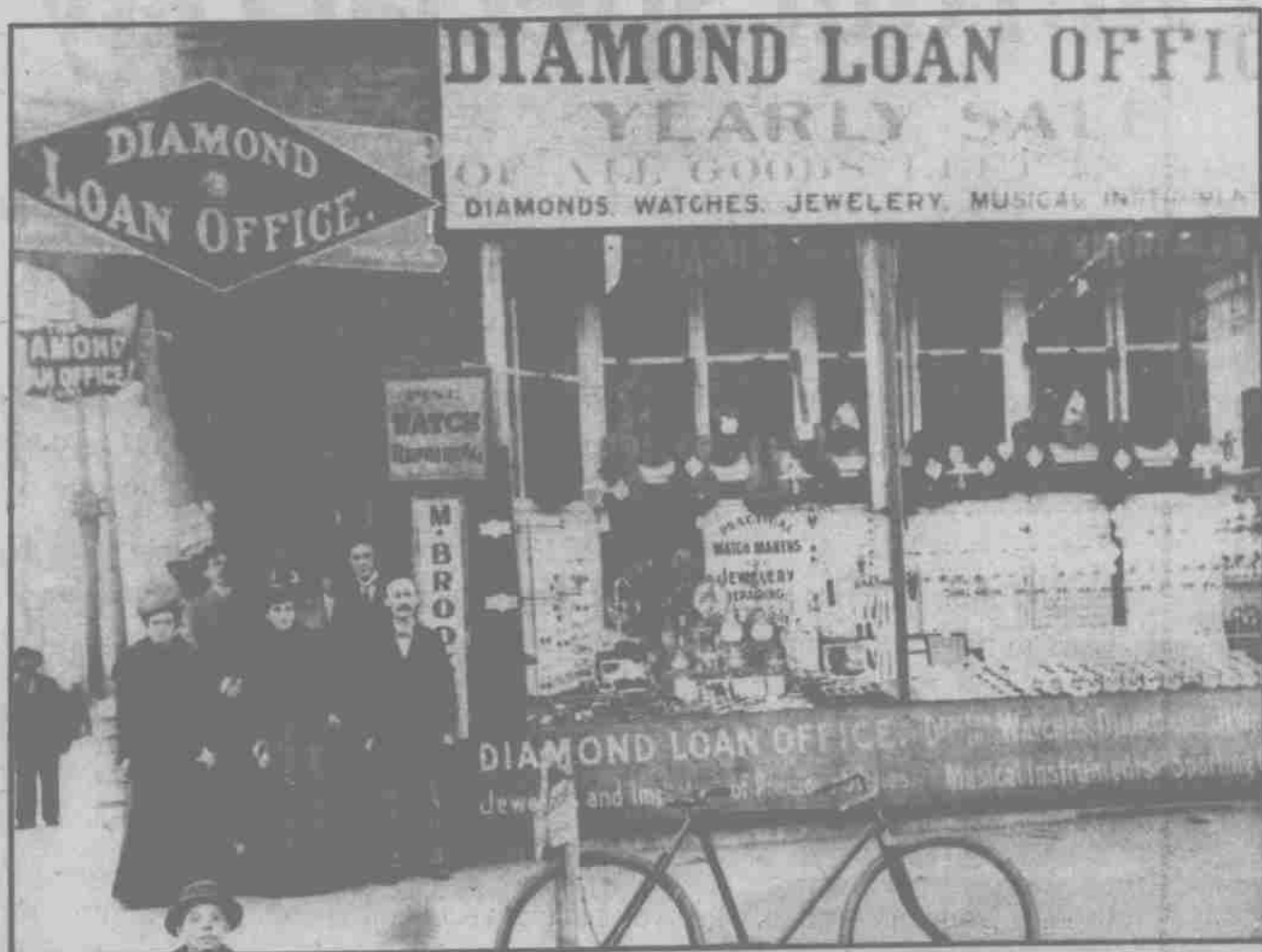
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