



Affirming diversity in the Adventist community since 1976.

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February 13, 2014

Dear Elders Ted Wilson and Pardon Mwansa:

We have learned that you will convene a conference on “alternative sexualities” in Cape Town, South Africa, March 17-20, 2014 (<http://ingodsimage.adventist.org/>). According to the conference site, you intend to *“have a conversation with key people in the global leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to gain a greater understanding of the issues surrounding alternative sexualities, and to counsel together regarding the challenges the church is facing in this area, in order to find a way to be redemptive as well as obedient to the teachings of Scripture in a more consistent manner around the world.”*

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International has worked with and for Seventh-day Adventist lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people around the world for nearly 40 years, yet no representatives of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International were informed of or invited to this meeting. We strongly and respectfully object.

It is not appropriate that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination continues to hold official conferences *about* Seventh-day Adventist lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people without allowing a range of us to be present, participate, or speak. It’s incomprehensible that our church would discuss us as an issue, “counselling together” on what church policy should say about us and how our pastors and teachers should minister to us, without ever consulting *with* us. When we are not invited to our denomination’s table, we all-too-easily become its meal. This is not acceptable.

We note that the denomination is sponsoring the vocal participation of individuals from Coming Out Ministries (Know His Love, The Narrow Way, By Beholding His Love). These “ex-gay” individuals (“ex-gay” is the term some use for themselves) do *not* speak for the thousands of SDA Kinship members in more than 80 countries around the world or our supportive relatives and friends. **Their stories are not our stories; they do not speak for us, and they cannot provide the full or current perspective your committee seeks.** We strongly suggest that you include SDA Kinship representatives in the upcoming conversation.

Many SDA Kinship members continue to attend Adventist congregations and are tied to the church by their deeply held faith. Others, demonized by Adventist-sponsored ministries such as the Quest Learning Center and one-sided conferences such as *Gays In the Family*, have left the denomination, and the loss of their energy and gifts is a denominational loss. **If, as you say, you wish to gain a greater understanding of our sexualities and gender identities, families, employment concerns, pastoral needs, and spiritual lives, please allow us to participate in this conference.** What we have to say is important, and no one knows our stories better than we do.

Therefore, I respectfully request the following:

1. That Ms. Sherri Babcock or Mrs. Daneen Akers be given speaking time during the “Issues Overview Panel” on the morning of Tuesday, March 18.
2. That SDA Kinship’s chaplain, former pastor of the largest SDA church in the Americas, Mr. Marcos Apolonio, be given speaking time during the “Life Experiences Panel” on the evening of Tuesday, March 18.

3. That a screening of *Seventh-Gay Adventists* be conducted immediately following the “Life Experiences Panel” on the evening of Tuesday, March 18.

We are part of the Seventh-day Adventist community and wish to represent a crucial church membership segment that is not represented at this conference and will not be heard or spoken for without us. For the sake of the church and our members, we would like to respectfully join this important dialogue. We will encourage Kinship members worldwide to join Janet Page’s prayer team in inviting the Holy Spirit to guide you during the conference and as Elder Mwansa’s committee deliberates.

It is very interesting that the denomination chose to host this conference on a continent where violently anti-LGBTI legislation was promoted by loud “Christian” North American voices and where LGBTI individuals are currently being tortured, jailed, and even executed for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex. We hope that this backdrop will not overshadow the conference, that conference attendees will note South Africa’s constitutional protections for LGBTI people, and that the conversation will include more perspectives of being in God’s image than it does today.

I look forward to hearing from you and receiving invitations for our representatives to participate. We would, of course, like to confirm our travel plans without further delay.

May God continue to bless you.

Sincerely,



Yolanda Elliott, President

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International