

# connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 39, No. 2, March/April 2015



P6-11

Question of the Month  
What would you  
recommend to  
Kinship members  
who are just  
coming out?



*Hawaiian  
Wedding*

#### KINSHIP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Yolanda Elliott  
Vice President: Naveen Jonathan  
Treasurer: Karen Lee  
Secretary: Rosemarie Buck  
Director of Church Relations: Dave Ferguson  
Directors of Women's Interests:  
Debbie Hawthorn-Toop and Betty O'Leary  
Director of Communications: Jonathan Cook  
Director of Youth Interests: Rebecca Kern  
Director of Development: Keisha McKenzie  
Directors-at-Large: Ruud Kieboom (Europe)  
Marygrace Coneff (Parents, Family, and Friends)  
Floyd Pönitz (Intl. Growth and Development)

---

#### WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a non-profit support organization. We minister to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-day Adventists who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is a global organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people worldwide.

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 2,500 people in more than forty-three countries.

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn or even mention homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts that are used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up as LGBTI has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.



PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA  
or visit Kinship's website [www.sdakinship.org/resources](http://www.sdakinship.org/resources)  
for information about

- Find a Gay Friendly Church
- *Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?*
- *Living Eden's Gifts*
- Previous *Connection* issues
- ... and more.

---

#### CHAIRS

Executive Committee: Yolanda Elliott  
Finance Committee: Bob Bouchard  
Kampmeeting Committee: Linda Wright & Kristina Burgos  
Communications Committee: Jonathan Cook  
Governance Committee: Rosemarie Buck  
Member Services: Naveen Jonathan  
Int'l Growth and Development Committee: Floyd Pönitz

---

#### LEADERSHIP TEAM

Office Manager: Member Services Team  
Web Administrator: Linda Wright  
Connection Editor: Catherine Taylor

---

#### REGIONS AND GROUPS WORLDWIDE

[www.sdakinship.org/regions-groups](http://www.sdakinship.org/regions-groups)

---

#### CHAPLAIN

Marcos Apolonio, [chaplain@sdakinship.org](mailto:chaplain@sdakinship.org)

---

#### CONTACT/INFORMATION

[info@sdakinship.org](mailto:info@sdakinship.org)

---

#### SUPPORT KINSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to SDA Kinship Int'l, PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563 or donate securely online at [sdakinship.org](http://sdakinship.org). (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting [treasurer@sdakinship.org](mailto:treasurer@sdakinship.org). You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

---

#### RESOURCES

[www.someone-to-talk-to.net](http://www.someone-to-talk-to.net)  
[www.buildingsafeplaces.org](http://www.buildingsafeplaces.org)  
[www.itgetsbetterforadventists.org](http://www.itgetsbetterforadventists.org)  
[www.sgamovie.com](http://www.sgamovie.com)  
[www.facebook.com/sdakinship](http://www.facebook.com/sdakinship)  
... and more



## From the Editor

This issue is mostly about us: our thoughts, our transitions, our stories. We always knew you had wonderful things to say; we just hadn't found the correct questions. When Linda sent out a Kinship broadcast email with our request for suggestions to GBTI people with Adventist backgrounds who are just coming out, we heard from people and places we never expected. Many thanks to those of you who took the time to write: one sentence, a poem, half a page—all of what you said is important. Floyd and Jeff, we appreciate you sharing your *private* wedding with your around-the-world community. Ronaldo and Pam, thank you for taking the time to be interviewed and the thoughts about what you would like your Kinship family to know about you. We'll be sending out another question in the next week or so. Thanks in advance. In the meantime, take good care of yourself—for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine

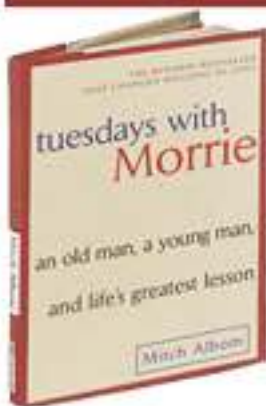
## Letters to the Editor

*It is another great issue. I always look forward to receiving the Connection. This morning, as I often do, I interrupted my plans to read—not cover-to-cover—but a rather thorough read. Thanks. Although I am not an Adventist, there is an application for almost everything in the magazine. Thanks for including my brief comment about Paul.*

Marvin Baker

*I love getting to know each of the writers, just a little better. Reading these makes my heart smile! Wonderful stories!*

## Book Review



## tuesdays with Morrie

by Mitch Albom

During Mitch's college years he grew quite close to one to one particular teacher. Sixteen years post-graduation, Mitch heard on the TV that his former professor had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease, and decided to visit him.

His visit became a series of regular Tuesday meetings. Mitch brought a tape recorder each week to record the extremely open and honest conversations. Mitch shares their dialog and Morrie's wisdom about life. At one point, while he was still able to talk and enjoy social contact, Morrie celebrates a living funeral, inviting all his friends.

*tuesdays with Morrie* touched me partly because of the picture it draws of ALS, but mostly because of Morrie's reflections on the living of life. I thought about my own life: For what do I want people to remember me? Am I loving? Am I attentive? Am I forgiving? For me this book is invaluable.

Ingrid Schmid ▼

## VIRGINIA WINTER

Iced waves catapult the James to Chesapeake rendezvous  
Thermostats report 15 F.  
Wind meters read higher.  
Trees bow to forces weaving their limbs  
Improbably, ospreys return this day  
.... for nest building season  
Silks, wool, down jacket, Vermont Red Hat, Tibetan mittens  
I revel in the dancing shadows  
of skeleton trees

Catherine Taylor



# Hawaiian Wedding



By Floyd Pönitz

Pictures Scott Hughes

December 18, 2014

Each year Jeff and I take turns planning our annual December anniversary celebration trip. Usually the location and details are a surprise to the other one until a month or two before the trip. This past year it was Jeff's turn to plan our 11th anniversary trip. He chose the island of Maui.

In the past, we have thrown around the possibility of getting legally married, but I wasn't in a hurry and wanted to wait until it is legal in the state of Texas. Besides, 2015 sounded like a better number to me than 2014 and it would be our 12th anniversary celebration. All of this aside, the lure of getting hitched in Hawaii won out. As soon as I found out where we were going for the celebration, we started putting together plans for a ceremony. Jeff did his research via Google and found a service that makes all the arrangements for you at an affordable price—by Hawaiian standards.

We arrived at our hotel in La Haina, unpacked, and relaxed. The following day we went to the marriage license office, signed the paperwork, paid the fee, and picked up our marriage license. The atmosphere and

process was very casual. Our friendly clerk talked to us about gay marriage on the island and asked how the move towards marriage equality in Texas was progressing. Afterwards we went shopping. Since it was to be a Hawaiian wedding, we decided to wear Hawaiian shirts and shorts. We looked through every tourist trap in the city before settling on our outfits.



The next day we drove down to McKenna Surf Beach, where our ceremony was scheduled to take place, an hour before sunset. In the parking lot we met Scott Hughes (our photographer), his assistant, and Kahu Alalani Astra Hill, the Hawaiian minister who would be officiating. Although it is a public beach we were the only ones present. It was perfect!

McKenna is a small, somewhat secluded beach, almost private. Kahu Alalani had a perfect ceremony that mixed elements of traditional American weddings with a traditional Hawaiian wedding. We had the traditional blessings including leis, rings, conch blowing, wrapping our hands and wrists together, and of course the kiss. The conch is blown into the four directions of the Earth: east towards Haleakala, the world's largest dormant volcano and



house of the rising sun; north towards the Maui Mountains and jungles where spirits gather; west towards the eternal ocean, where life starts and ends; and south towards us, the wedding couple. The ritual of the conch is designed to bring all the good thoughts, mana (power and energy) and aloha (love) to us.



It was a magical event filled with meaning, positive energy, and love. It was nice to have our ceremony without the pressures of the usual American wedding—tons of guests, family issues, and timing to coordinate. This was a celebration of love in a truly relaxed atmosphere. If anyone is considering marriage, I highly recommend this to you. ▼



Register now on  
[www.sdakinship.org](http://www.sdakinship.org)

Staying Onsite \$ 115  
Staying Offsite \$ 80

## Book and the Beach Mini- Kampmeeting

**October 1-4, 2015**  
Nags Head  
North Carolina



Info & registration on  
[www.sdakinship.org](http://www.sdakinship.org)

\$235 per person  
(or 2 x \$ 117.50)

## Question of the Month

✖ What would I recommend to Kinship members who are just coming out?

Jacque: This meme by author Judy Blume said it better than I ever could:

*"My only advice is to stay aware, listen carefully, and yell for help if you need it."  
- Judy Blume*

Flickr/Carl Lender

*What would you recommend  
to Kinship members  
who are just coming out?*



## What would you recommend to Kinship Members who are just coming out?

*I felt inspired by a Facebook photo which said the following*

**God  
Adores  
You**

*Elias*

Be brave, optimistic, and patient. Be aware that religion and spirituality are very different. Even though some people/organizations claim to have a monopoly on the truth, the reality is that there has to be room for mystery, diverse opinions, and a wide range of cultural "norms." Those that try to control people and/or religious institutions have a hard time with that. Such manipulators may see our freedom to explore, relate, ask questions, and/or live differently as a threat to their power and/or the security of the status quo.

People that truly care about you want you to be happy; they also want to protect you from being hurt. Talk to them, love them, and be patient with them. Even if it is initially hard for them to hear or face the truth, they will eventually come around.

Sex can be physically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally charged. Some people are overly curious, frustrated, desperate, and/or eager. Their reason can become distorted. Heartache, disease, and social problems can result if one leaps without caring enough about one's health or one's future. In other words, some of your loved ones may have legitimate concerns if you go overboard with sex, drugs, alcohol, lack of sleep, pornography, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, etc. Freedom comes with responsibility!

Be wise about how, why, who, what, when, and where you get involved. Also be careful about how, why, and who you tell what, when, and where.

Most importantly be true to yourself and to others.

Best wishes and hugs,  
*Daniel Mark*

*God loves you, and He will be with you as you stay close to Him. It does get better and is getting better. There is a growing community of LGBTIQ people, with Seventh-day Adventist backgrounds, on which to lean for support. We are here to help, to encourage, and to carry you in whatever way we can to help you become a stronger person, complete in Christ, as you stay close to Him!*

*A.K.*

*Gut, dass du zu dir und deinem Sein stehst. Lass dich nicht von den Gottesbildern der anderen beirren. Gott hat dich so wie du bist geschaffen und als sein Geschöpf liebt er dich über alles Maßen. Solltest du Bedarf nach Austausch, Gespräch oder Zuspruch haben und niemand in deiner Nähe finden, hast du bei SDA Kinship die Möglichkeit, die entsprechende Gesprächspartner nennen zu lassen.*

*PS: Selbstverständlich stehe ich gerne telefonisch, per Mail und auch persönlich für derartige Gespräche zur Verfügung*

*Mit freundlichen Grüßen*

It is a good thing to think about yourself and your being. Do not let anyone deter you from the image of God. God has created you as you are and as the creature He loves more than anything else. If you have any need for a call or encouragement and can find no one in your area, you have the possibility of calling the appropriate representative in SDA Kinship.

P.S. Of course I am available by phone, by mail, and in person for such discussions.  
*Detlef Mueller, Germany*



*If you're thinking about coming out, if you're on the verge of coming out, if you've just come out, if you know someone who needs to come out, you can't find a better ear than someone at Kinship.*

*Gerard Frenk*

Taking this step into living the life you were meant for is tremendously brave. I think you need to know that there are lots of people out there who love you exactly how and where you are. We want to be a stepping stone, not a stumbling block, in your spiritual journey. What lies ahead may be unclear; but being true to yourself will light the way, one step at a time. God bless you and those around you as you move into this next phase of your life.

*Ashley*



To a Seventh-day Adventist just coming out: There are many positive aspects to coming out. One of the key tenets of true Christianity is the ability to forgive. As a gay Adventist you have an advantage; you will have more opportunities to practice forgiveness than most members. Use that. Also this may give you a unique opportunity to find out who are your true friends. Don't you want to know that? But don't expect others to accept your gayness if you don't completely accept yourself. And if one church does not accept you, don't use that as an excuse to change your beliefs. I am a seventh-day adventist. I had my name taken off the books and was about to give up on going to church after being treated very badly by one church, when another member from a smaller church said I would be welcome there. I have been going there for about 10 years; and even though my name is not on the books I am treated like a member and we are a close-knit congregation. They all know I am gay and I don't make it an issue unless asked. If you are a true follower of Jesus, there is no room in your heart for bitterness. If you feel bitterness, remember that Jesus is the answer to everything.

*Miles Thomas*



*I was asked to write either a paragraph or a page about what I would like to say to LGBTIQ people, with Seventh-day Adventist backgrounds, who are just coming out. To be honest, I'm not sure what I would say. I know what it's like to come out to some of those close to me, but I never did come out to anyone in my church while I was still a member of said church. I left the church back in my late teens, and I have not been back since. My orientation wasn't my only reason for leaving the church, but it was one of the main ones. Maybe I was being a coward, walking away from a church that meant a lot to me back then; but at the time I felt that it was the best thing for me to do. It was very difficult for me, for the church was a big part of my life. Still, I truly don't regret leaving. I did what I thought was best.*

*If I could go back and do things over again, I don't know if I would have made a different decision. It was hard, leaving as I did, feeling forsaken by both God and my church, even though I left on my own accord. I've noticed that there's more acceptance of the LGBTIQ community nowadays, and I hope that that acceptance will extend to the Seventh-day Adventist Church one day. Since I have no current contact with anyone from my old church, I don't know if that acceptance is already there or not. I really hope so. But what's most important, I think, is to accept yourself, no matter what your orientation is. Maybe I'm a bit biased, but I do believe that God will accept those of the LGBTIQ community as well. It took me many years away from my old church before I finally realized that, myself. God is supposed to be love, right? And I think that part of that love is acceptance. None of us are perfect; but I think that if we are able to love and accept both ourselves and others, then I think that will be as close to perfection as we will ever get, at least while we are on this earth.*

*I hope and pray that those who come out now will find the road much better than when I travelled it. Actually, I am still travelling it, for I have yet to come out to most of the people in my life. I don't know if I ever will, for I am a very private person for the most part. I would like, though, to find a place where I belong and can be*



As a mother, I would like to remind you that it has probably taken you many years to come to terms yourself with being LGBT, so please don't expect your parents to immediately understand and accept this. Some people find it easier to write a letter and send or give it to them first. Most parents will eventually come around if you have had a loving relationship with them in the past. But you will need to give them some time—months to years—to process all this information. It's good to be prepared for this, and even to tell your parents you know this is a shock and you know it will take them time, just as it has you. Connecting them with other resources when they are ready for them is good. Our son sent us a book about two girls who were lesbian, which I guess he thought would be easier for us to read than about two guys who were gay. And he suggested we watch the movie *Yentl* because it was about a Jewish girl who tried to appear as something she was not—a boy. Back then there was not much in the media about this, but today you can find all sorts of resources. It would be a good idea to have friends to turn to for a while as your parents go through a grieving process and begin to educate themselves. And don't forget to pray for your parents!  
*Carrol Grady*



Always let your personal health and safety be your top priority. Don't be a martyr because that would not be helpful. Be aware that coming out is a courageous act especially in a homophobic environment like the Seventh-day Adventist subculture. If you can come out and share who you are safely, it will be the best thing you can do for your own mental health and the most powerful thing you can do to make the future better for all of us, especially LGBTIQxyzs. Negative stereotypes evaporate when people learn firsthand that LGBTIQxyzs are as normal as anyone. When people see for themselves that sexual minorities are not promiscuous child molesters, civil rights will progress.  
*Heidi Johnson*



**I am one of those LGBT people with an Adventist background who just came out. I would say, Be prepared for the unexpected. Be prepared for family rejection and accept the care, acceptance, and kindness of strangers! These people can sometimes demonstrate more Christianity than one's own family.**  
*Karmen*



*accepted for who I am, regardless of whatever my orientation may be. I think that I'm starting to find that place, but the self-acceptance part is very difficult. With God's help and loving grace, I hope to be able to embrace it one day.*

*Thank you.*

Elle



To my LGBTQ Christian friends who are just coming out from the rules and regulations of the Seventh-day Adventist or any other church, welcome to the freedom that honesty provides. Rejoice that you no longer will struggle to maintain an outward appearance that did not match your inner self. Live in the confidence that God loves you like He created you.

Coming out is an act of faith. You are stating you are ready to trust God to lead you. You are moving away from the rules and regulations the church established for membership and/or participation. You are not moving away from God. Your family and friends may not understand, but hasn't that been true of other choices you have made? Remember, the family of Jesus was not always too happy with Him.

Trusting the Holy Spirit for guidance and power will enable you to live victoriously over the opinions of others. Whenever we try to follow Jesus without being filled daily with the Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves frustrated by failures and exhausted by our efforts.

One of the liberating experiences is removing the mask and facing everyone with honesty and openness. Several weeks ago I was commenting to family members that I had never been happier than I have been since my husband and I were married. My daughter who years ago questioned why I had to tell anyone that I was gay asked,

"You know why, don't you?" Before I could reply, she said, "It's because you are being fully honest with everyone now."

There may be times when you may question the value of being open and honest about your sexuality. You may be shunned by friends and isolated or exiled by church people you have known for years. You may be a "believer in exile" from the church. A friend explained this experience so well. "I had to leave the comfort of the church, but I have never left the security of my faith."

Now that you are coming out to be the person God created you to be, you have the privilege and responsibility to live out what you say you believe. God is sufficient. May you find strength from other believers in exile or like-minded LGBTQ friends and allies.

Marvin Baker



First of all, remember that God loves you and to Him you are infinitely valuable, regardless of what the church says or believes. Remember that the church has not always been right. It has seriously misinterpreted scripture in the past. Remember slavery? For close to 2,000 years most Christians, including church leaders, used the Bible to justify slavery. In the 19th century (1800s), however, that all changed. The Bible didn't change but how Christians interpreted it changed greatly. I think much of Christianity, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is similarly misinterpreting the few comments in scripture about same-sex relationships. So don't give up hope; keep the faith, the church notwithstanding. In God's eyes you are special and you are loved.

Roy



Newbies.

This is what we called ourselves the first months in this organization. Newbies. In reality we were all new to this group. It was not long after Kinship started here in Sacramento that the editor moved to San Francisco.

Me...I was eager to meet folks who had not been to church for a very long time, but were quite hesitant to go. I would not move my membership from my home church. I would have lost membership had

a board member not spoken for me on this topic at board meetings.

Ren Reynolds



*Come on out! It's worth it. You get to snuggle up to someone whose body feels good; experience the tingles and excitement when you kiss them tenderly; deal with and solve the relationship problems that come up; and become a more mature, giving, and generous person. You can have a boyfriend or girlfriend for a weekend, a month, or for much longer than that. All these relationships can be fun and life-affirming. Maybe you can get married. Now you can do that even in Alabama. You can have kids. Dr. Samuel Pang (longtime Kinship member and renowned fertility doctor) can advise you how. And you can know the joys and responsibilities of raising these kids.*

*Where you may have problems is your affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. SDA Kinship through its annual Kampmeetings and other outreach has successfully dialoged with and even changed the thinking of many key church leaders. These doctors, professors, pastors, denominational leaders, and social and health care workers have advocated on the behalf of LGBTIQ young people within the Adventist Church, young people who have been repressing normal human desires for fear of divine, peer, or parental disapproval and possible rejection. When I first sought out Kinship in the early 1980s these church-leader friends of Kinship gave me the courage to take those first fearful steps out of my self-imposed closet of celibacy for life.*

*But what happens after that is a slow realization that, despite the accepting words and gestures of many Adventist leaders, the church as an entity, formed in the mid-1800s, guided by a prophetess who wrote many inspired guides to life, ever in the search of present truth, some-*

how got this gay thing terribly wrong. I was raised by fervent Adventist parents and knew no other life until I was well into my 30s. I truly believed the Seventh-day Adventist message and was prepared to do whatever I could to spread it to others. I said the realization was slow. Mine came several years after my joyful coming out. I was sitting in church waiting for the main service to start. An overwhelming feeling of I-don't-want-to-be-here-any-more took over and I stood up, walked down the middle aisle and out into the parking lot, got into my car and drove home. I was home at 11:15 on a Sabbath morning. I knew life would never be the same after that.

If the church got the gay thing so wrong, if fervent Adventist parents broke down in tears and prayed that God would remove this manifestation of the devil, the gayness in me their son— No, I'm sorry; I felt betrayed. And, like they say in Brazil, once the crystal glass has shattered, you can't really put it back together again. From there it was a slippery slope. If the church got the gay thing so wrong, what other beliefs that I so fervently stood for might flimsily crumble before me? There are other Kinship members who have taken this same path. One guy, a really involved Kinship supporter, told me at one of the last Kampmeetings I visited, "I'm now an atheist." I was taken aback, but I knew that I myself was already moving away from the church.

So, come out of the closet. Embrace your sexuality and experience the wonderful life-events it affords. Perhaps the Seventh-day Adventist Church is changing. No doubt, Kinship has many more friends within the church. Perhaps there are now Adventist parents who wholeheartedly affirm the sexual orientation of their children and give them the guidance and support they need. But coming out fully will change your relationship with the church. You may feel scared and very vulnerable. But you now have the opportunity to re-examine and rebuild the all-important spiritual dimension of your life. Good luck!  
Doug Ota



**RUN** — Get out, stop wasting your emotions on an abuser (the Seventh-day Adventist Church and organized religion). There is life and there are welcoming communities outside and beyond the Adventist Church which are filled with love, justice, and lack of fear-based guilt and self-doubt. Vote with your membership—get out! Why keep sacrificing yourself for something that doesn't want you? If the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines have the "love everybody, God loves everybody" so wrong in the case of LGBTIQ then there is no trust for their interpretation of any other Bible passages. The Seventh-day Adventist Church institution is all about control by fear and guilt by insecure people.

Kathy Coffin



So. You are an Adventist and you have realized that you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. If you are reading this, you already realize that the first person who had to understand this was you. Coming to terms with it yourself may be your biggest challenge. You may not have any challenges that are quite as big as this first one. This could take a long time, so be gentle with yourself and give yourself all the time you need. Once you started to understand your orientation or gender identity, you may have quickly come to realize that this may not be something you are prepared to share in Sabbath School or in AY. Yet, we fully understand that you

don't want to go to another church. You want to come to terms with this as a Seventh-day Adventist. Good for you! That's why we're here.

Yet, you may be bursting to share this with someone. That is a very natural response because that is how we are wired. It is in our very nature that we want to be loved and understood by others.

We seem to thrive best in relationship with others. There is no single way to navigate this. Only you can know what is best for you, but I would urge you to listen carefully to the experience of others because we are at heart not all that different from each other. Once you have understood and accepted this rather important fact about yourself, you must realize that it is only a part of who you are; there is so much more to who you are as a person. However, as you already know, this *is* a biggie. Don't let this get you down. You are the person who gets to say how you move forward. If you are reading this, you are already aware of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship. Become a member and take advantage of the many resources on this website: <https://www.sdakinship.org>. For nearly 40 years, Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International has worked worldwide with current and former LGBTIQ Seventh-day Adventists. It's free to join and completely safe and confidential.

If you haven't already seen it, I would urge you go to [www.sgamovie.com](http://www.sgamovie.com) and buy the DVD, Blu-Ray, or digital download of the documentary film *Seventh-Gay Adventists*. If you are not familiar with it, you have no idea how important this will be for you. It is a film made by a straight Adventist couple about three lesbian or gay Seventh-day Adventists and their families. They are just like you and they share very openly and courageously their experience as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) Seventh-day Adventists. Actually, only lesbians and gays are represented, but their experiences will speak eloquently for bisexuals and transgender folks, too. One day when you are comfortable about it, watch it with someone else so you will have someone to talk to when it's over. One day you may choose to show it to others to help them understand you. You should know that several very prominent Adventists point to this film as the reason



# From the President's Desk

—March 2015



## ► continued from page 10

they became completely affirming allies.

Next, I would watch this online video, *It Gets Better (For Adventists)*.

<https://vimeo.com/26613330>. Listen to these stories that also include trans people. You will soon realize that you are not alone. There are other people who are just like you. The stories shared by these Adventists are so worth hearing. You are not alone and you don't have to do this alone. You have many resources that will be invaluable. You don't want to become overwhelmed with too much information, but you should know that they are there.

While the Adventist Church may not always look safe to you (and you are the best judge of that) you should know that there has been a profound shift in understanding and attitudes in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many people (including the editor of the *Connection*) have dedicated themselves to helping others understand. Time is in our favor. As an Adventist coming to terms with your orientation or gender identity, you are part of a growing awareness and understanding that is happening within our church.

Blessings to you, and may you move forward, becoming less fearful as you grow in understanding and find encouragements in others who are just like you.

Andrew Dykstra ▼



Whenever the term "equal rights" is thrown around, many think of LGBTI rights first, but it means so much more. Equality includes respecting women's rights, civil rights, trans rights, elders' rights, and immigrant rights, as well as the human rights that apply to all of us. There are so many voices that need to be heard to help wake us up, not just within our LGBTI Adventist movement, but in many other movements as well. I'm looking forward to the dialogue film that builds on *Seventh-Gay Adventists*, because it will be just one more opportunity to hear from more of the people we don't hear enough from. Every story matters!

A few weeks ago, I saw a movie that helped me hear new stories when I went to see the film *Selma* with my partner. I was deeply moved by the film and by "Glory," the song that plays during the credits. I get choked up when I speak about this; my heart aches at the racial discrimination that has torn this world apart for thousands of years and that still festers in my country. Hate is such an ugly thing.

I look at our church and see the same issues being fought over in society also being fought over in Adventism. Our church did little to fight for racial justice last century, and still discourages people from getting involved in this one. Some also feel that the church's stance on women's ordination makes women second-class church members. To withhold the name of a new, duly elected conference president because she is a woman is a pretty second-class move!

We're also affected as LGBTI Adventists. There are Adventist leaders who don't believe we should be allowed to participate in our churches at all, and others use their voices and votes

to describe us as "less than." I wonder if any denomination makes even one soul feel less equal than another, what kind of faith is it really practicing? There's a huge disconnect in preaching "love thy neighbor" and then proclaiming that LGBTI individuals shouldn't belong as members.

I also wonder if a literal approach to Scripture makes it difficult for some Adventists to take in new discoveries and experiences and accept Scripture in a way that allows the church to treat us with the love and respect that every child of God should receive. Ellen White told us that the church would receive new understandings of God. But is the church *willing* to receive those new understandings?

Just this week, one of my dear friends and I were discussing how easy it is to get angry when one marginalized group doesn't seem to be as concerned about what's happening to another group. My friend, a transgender man, is also Black, and asked me what prevents some White people from marching against racial injustice alongside our Black neighbors? Why isn't the gay community rising up against trans attacks? Why have Adventist men been so slow to step up for women's ordination?

While we should always stand strong for ourselves, we can and should also stand strong for each other. As a member of Kinship and a member of this LGBTI community, I have the ability and opportunity to stand strong for myself—and I will also stand strong for you. In Kinship, we care about each other; and together we can continue the fight for equality in the Adventist church and in our societies. Equality and justice is worth fighting for, not just for people like me, but for *all*.

**Yolanda Elliott, President**  
SDA Kinship International

[president@sdakinship.org](mailto:president@sdakinship.org)

## I would like you to know about me

By Ronaldo Appleton



I am single. Supper club and Kinship provide for me a very spiritual space. There are few physical places that provide me this sense of a safe, spiritual place around me. I occasionally attend church. At this point, this is almost purely out of ritual. My real spirituality comes from my private and personal relationship with God. I appreciate people who can understand and/or share in this experience or have it meld together.

I was born into Adventism in the district church of St. James, Jamaica. My mum was my Sabbath school teacher in primary class. My grandmother and I would tell the children's stories during the divine service. She was very creative: action-filled skits, character modeling, questions and answers. She would rehearse her children's story in front of me on Friday evenings. I was at her hip almost all the time—at deaconesses' gatherings, getting flowers for Sabbath, cooking for church work day. Church work days are when we members would come in and deep clean, do needed construction, cut down trees, and begin building projects for the church during expansions. The deaconesses would cook the food for everybody. I would be there with

Music means a lot to me. While I all appreciate all forms, classical music is very close to me because of its expressiveness. The first movement of the *Shostakovich* Fifth Symphony has brought me through a lot of emotional transitions and has helped me through difficult times. I was so inspired by the effect that music has on me that I decided to study it in college and would like to make it a part of my professional life. I used to live in New York where I went to the opera house five nights a week. It felt like home. I had the opportunity to perform in a couple of small companies. This allowed me to share the gift of music with others.

my grandmother till the very end. She taught me to cook and to bake. The last time I saw her was in 2005. She is a large part of who I am. She is one of the few people I cherish immensely. She will live in me. I spent my entire childhood and teenage life being very active in Sabbath school as a teacher, in Pathfinders (Adventurers to deputy director), and I was involved in the AY society. Church was my community. I was a Sabbath keeper and did not fit into the regular social circles of school. I went to public schools my entire life.

I left Jamaica in 2003 to begin at the College of Wooster in Ohio. When I went to college I stripped myself of Adventism for a while so I could explore who I am. I took on all sorts of different labels: Agnostic, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian... none of them in which I was confirmed. I found some kind of spiritual space from my church job as a choral scholar. My being away from home allowed me the room to accept myself as a gay person and to begin to live my life authentically. I had known I was gay forever. I cannot think of a time when I didn't know, even when I didn't have a title to it. I had internal resistance because it was not acceptable in my culture and religious beliefs. School let me be authentic.

I was learning how much the belief in which I was raised affected my ability to live an authentic life. I believed that I could not be both. I chose to ignore the religious aspect of my life; I tried to evade the belief system in which I grew up. I didn't go to Adventist services the whole time I was in college. Whenever I was among Adventists I felt like I did not belong and I did not want to be there.

I still feel this way much of the time. There are some Adventists circles now

where I can feel welcomed and appreciated, where difference is respected and I can be myself. I know other LGBTI people who have found community in these places and have given me warmth. One of the Adventist communities was a place where we could explore various topics and ideas and challenge concepts. The NYC Forum was a loving home for me. They still want people to know they are welcome at the Forum. I appreciate places where we all know we are on a spiritual journey but that we may be making that journey in different ways. We are still trying to grow as individuals and progress towards becoming the likeness of Christ.

I began to integrate my spiritual background and my authentic life at Kinship Kampmeeting 2009 in Seattle. I found other people who had been able to be both Adventist and gay or lesbian. They could embrace their spiritual life and fold it into who they are without having to strip away their beliefs. I do feel a theological schism from Adventism so I am more likely at this point as represent myself as *growing up* Adventist. I do think of myself as having a place in the Adventist fellowship. I want the Adventist Church itself to be able to be a safe place for people who need it to be their spiritual home. I don't know if I can say at this moment what Adventist beliefs I still hold. It is difficult to pinpoint specific Adventist beliefs to which I can subscribe. I care but I don't care about the official entity, the corporation, and the administration. I care about the community that I find most Adventist; the community that I have embraced is mostly Adventists.

To the church: There are people who are yearning for a spiritual home who could enrich the church community. The doors of the church are being shut to them. I want



you to keep them open. They should be welcomed into the fellowship of the church and allowed to grow spiritually like all other straight and narrow Seventh-day Adventists. The church leadership tends to see the body as a uniform unequivocally identical body regardless of who you are and where you go, and the Adventist Church is diverse in ways the leadership does not always accept. It will be nice when we are able to appreciate those differences.

**I** am a patient service coordinator at Johns Hopkins. I have worked in pedi-

atrics. Now I work alongside plastic surgeons. Long term, I am working toward a professional life in clinical nursing. I am doing prerequisites for nursing school right now. I would like to be enrolled in nursing school by next year.

Outside of work it is still and always music. My friendships and my family are important. I like *Chicago Fire* and *Chicago PD*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, and *RedBand Society*.

I like food. I like good food. I love crab cakes. Baltimore has really good food and restaurants with street food fests in the summer and food truck gatherings. I look

forward to my once-a-month supper club potlucks at our various homes. I love traveling. Kampmeeting has given me a chance to travel to various cities I would not have seen otherwise. I went on my first cruise with my supper club family last February. I talk to my mom almost every day. Even when I think there is nothing to talk about I have to wonder, *Where did the time go?* I look forward to the day when I can share my life with someone special. ▼



## I would like you to know about me

By Pam Neal

**I** would like people to see the image of Jesus Christ reflected in my behavior and my words. That means I would like to show patience, kindness, slowness to anger, willingness to be helpful, and be a pleasant person to be around. This is what Christ modeled for us.

I read a lot of books about the west. I wanted to be a Native American. I thought the notion of war paint was wonderful. I got walnut hulls and rubbed them on my hands. I got mulberries and made face paint. Those walnut hulls don't wash off; they have to wear off.

**I**n my friends I look for loyalty. I got married when I was 21. I followed all the rules. My husband was an Adventist from an Adventist family. I was a trusting, loyal, and naïve person. He had many affairs. The pain that I felt as a result of his infidelity was so strong I made a decision to never violate someone else's trust. I can still hear my mother say, "Your word is your bond. You keep your word, even if it hurts."

I am fun to be around. I like to laugh. I like to be around people who laugh. I like people who find silver linings at the edges of black clouds.

I appreciate the people who look for the good in life. We were a poor family with an alcoholic father. We had few resources, including food. My mom taught us how to have fun. We would go out in the winter and sniff the air to see "if spring

was coming around the corner." We had simple things with which to play. I want to surround myself with people who have my same values as well.

**M**y relationship with my partner Teresa is one of the better things I have experienced. I believe God designed for our paths to cross. Teresa lived way out in the hills of West Virginia. She knew nothing about computers, much less social media. I lived in Illinois. There was no way I could have possibly heard of her, much less gotten to know her.

Here is the journey of how we met. I was on a list serve for women horse riders. I happened to mention that I was going to the Paso Fino grand nationals in Georgia. Another woman on the list said, "I am going too! Why don't we meet there?" We enjoyed talking to each other and she invited me to her place on the Eastern shore of Virginia for the following Thanksgiving. During the holiday, she suggested we go visit a friend of hers who lived in West Virginia. That visit was how I met Teresa.

At the time, I was in the process of a divorce based on my husband's infidelity. I



**I** love cowboys/cowgirls and horses and my cowboy boots. I really like my cowboys boots. As a little girl I had the strongest desire for a horse. I built a treehouse in the crook of the tree and I would go up there every day and pray to God for a horse. Then I would go to the barn and see if the horse had arrived. It was never there but I saved my money to feed it upon arrival. Eventually, I got that horse when I was grown and married.

The love of my life was an American saddle-bred by the name of Bourbon Indiana. She and I spent a lot of time riding. She carried me uphill and downhill and across rivers. I could put her into a full gallop and I knew that as soon as I touched the reins she would slow down. My fondest memories are the many rides and escapades I had with this horse.

was having financial issues with both my husband and my business partner. I needed a job and a place to live. I had been a counselor for victims of domestic violence. Teresa helped me get a local job working with oppositional boys ages 9-18. Most of her work was out of town and she told me I could stay at her cabin because it would give me lots of peace and quiet.

Teresa provided a place of refuge for me when I was going through some of the worst trials in my life. I didn't have a spare cent and Teresa carried me during that time. My ex-husband died two years later. Surprisingly, I was still the beneficiary of his life insurance policy. My former business partner was forced to pay me for my part of our company. I was able to sell my farm in Ohio. All this unexpected income helped me to pay off the mortgage on Teresa's

cabin and become a co-owner. God looked out for me.

Teresa and I had planned to remain platonic friends. Some how, through all the stresses and opportunities to learn to trust each other, we became romantically involved.

As a result of our relationship, Teresa went from being church avoidant to being baptized as a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We share our religious convictions and study the Bible together. We support each other in our work to live up to our beliefs. I know there are many in the Adventist church who would reject us and our relationship. I know that God does not.

My forty-year marriage to my husband was filled with turmoil. My relationship with Teresa is filled with peace and contentment.

**I** believe the message of the Adventist church about the soon coming of the Lord, the judgment, the Sabbath, and the state of the dead. With all my heart I believe in the third angel's message. That said, I wish the church would make women equal. I wish that the church would at least hear the stories and the agony experienced by young gay men and women. I wish church leaders would listen before they condemn. I wish women could be ministers on equal standing, not superior and not less. It is hard on those who are not accepted.

I look back and see the leading of God in my life. I have a good life now. I love the Lord and I am really looking forward to seeing Him face-to-face. ▼

July 10 – 14, 2015

Register now for the  
annual pre-Kampmeeting Event  
on [www.sdakinship.org](http://www.sdakinship.org)



# Women and Children First

**A special retreat in sunny southern California for the women of Kinship!  
Bring yourself (and your children, if you wish) and enjoy this time to rest  
your body and soul while cultivating the friendships that are so important to us!**



# Kinship Germany Meeting on Saturday May 2

in the Frankfurt area

Info at [kinshipgermany@sdakinship.org](mailto:kinshipgermany@sdakinship.org)

By Ingrid Schmid and Tanja Svinska

In Germany we are trying to schedule meetings in homes of Kinship members more often. Since several members/friends live in the greater Frankfurt area, we decided to meet there to get started.

The next regular get together will be on Saturday afternoon, May 2, at the home of David and Werner in Spielberg. If you would like to join us, please contact Tanja at the above email address!

If you live in Germany and would like to be a host, please let us know. It would be great if the group could grow again.



## Seventh-day Adventist Kinship Kampmeeting July 14-19, 2015

**Kellogg West Conference Center & Lodge,  
Pomona, CA USA**

Information and registration at [www.sdakinship.org](http://www.sdakinship.org)



The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist  
Kinship International, Inc.

Editor : Catherine Taylor  
Circulation : Floyd Pönitz  
European Editor : Ruud Kieboom  
Photography : Karen Wetherell, Pearl Pangkey, Ivan van Putten  
Production : Ruud Kieboom  
Proofing : Jacquie Hegarty, Floyd Pönitz, Carrol Grady, Yolanda Elliott  
Printing : Doolittle's PrintServe

The *Connection* is published by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141 USA. Submissions are welcome and may be directed to the editor at [connectioneditor@sdakinship.org](mailto:connectioneditor@sdakinship.org) or mailed to the principal office address above. Include your name as you want it published along with your address and telephone number(s).

If an item is to be acknowledged or returned, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Some *Connection* contributors have chosen to remain anonymous or use pseudonyms.

The *Connection* reserves the right to edit manuscripts for length, syntax, grammar, and clarity. The mention or appearance of any names, organizations, or photographs in this publication is not meant to imply a fact or statement about sexual orientation or activity.

Subscription requests or address changes may be sent to Subscriptions, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141 USA or emailed to [subscriptions@sdakinship.org](mailto:subscriptions@sdakinship.org).

Members may also update their contact information online. The Kinship mailing list is confidential and used only by Kinship officers. The mailing list is not sold, rented, or exchanged for any purpose.

© 2015 Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc.

All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship Int'l, Inc.

Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

# European KINSHIP Meeting

27—31 August 2015

Florence, Italy



*Relais Firenze Stibbert*



For information and registration: [kinshipeurope@sdakinship.org](mailto:kinshipeurope@sdakinship.org)

## Kinship Europe Holiday

August 31—September 7

Priello luxury farmhouse

With gorgeous swimming pool



connection