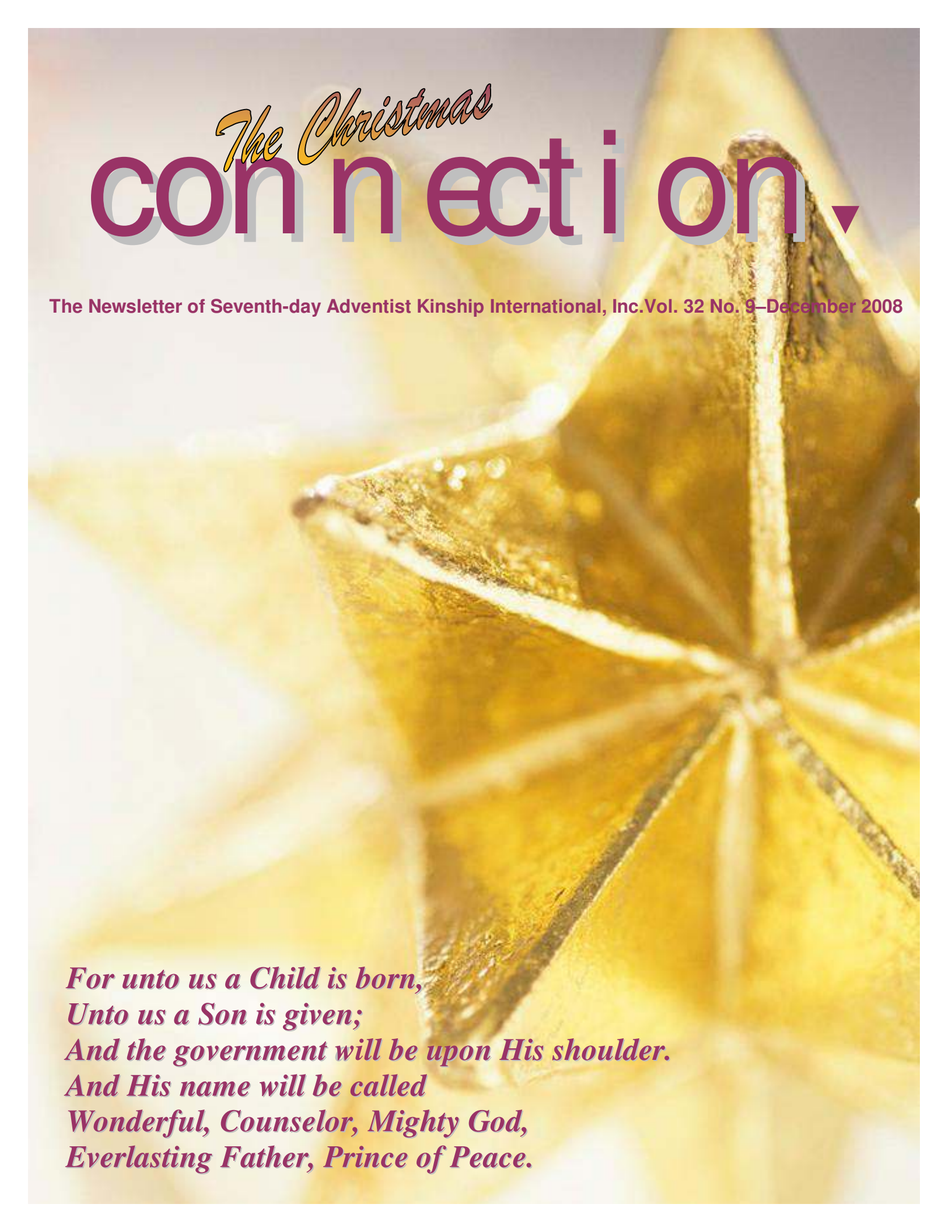




The Christmas connection ▼

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 32 No. 9—December 2008

*For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

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WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a nonprofit 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 an organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people.

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 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

SDA 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.

SUPPORT KINSHIP

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 SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

SDA Kinship, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA
 or visit SDA Kinship's website at:
www.sdakinship.org.





From the Editor

Seven months after my grandmother died, I was living with my grandfather over college Christmas break. The weather was traditionally cool and rainy, like many of the Yule holidays I spent on the Cambria beaches of California. Sparrows and blackbirds lined up on drizzling telephone wires, singing carols I have never heard in church or concert hall. Christmas Eve I walked down the hill to visit Hearst's equine fortune. These brood mares ran in ten-acre enclosures, so close to the waves you could hear water crash against sandy cliffs. Sea otters cracked open shellfish on the platters of their bellies - small tympanis in the orchestra. At twilight, deer followed mist down hillsides to join the grazing horses, and others quiet enough to honor the peace of that place. Blue heron sentries watched pasture entries. Without camera or paint-filled brush, that scene became etched in my mind, a living reminder of a poignant holiday.

I missed my mom. She was six hours away in Los Angeles with responsibilities of her own. There is never a moment of my life that I regret whatever time I spent on that coast, but I wanted to see my mother on Christmas morning. My grandfather had enough sadness without carrying mine, so I laughed with him and told him we'd fix a great holiday breakfast and play dominoes. I slapped Canadian bacon into the pan, mixed up blackberry pancakes, and set the table. He poured orange juice and opened up cantaloupe so sweet and full of juice, it really did almost melt as we ate it. As I finished cooking pancakes, I heard the sound of tires on gravel and peered out the window. At 8 AM, my mother's Chevrolet was pulling into the driveway. She, who hates driving long distances and hates driving in the dark even more, had gotten up at 1:30 AM and left by 2 so she could join us for breakfast. You will never be able to tell me there are no Christmas miracles.

Sometimes miracles are unfathomable - the annunciation of a Birth by an angel. Sometimes they are breathtaking - scarlet sunrise for a hungry heart. Sometimes they are startling - frail mortals making soul-stretching efforts to show us their love. Look around you this holiday for the miracles. They are there, waiting for you to see.

This holiday issue we've gathered more Christmas thoughts. We're sharing a few recipes. We decided to feature an article by Arlene Taylor designed to help us survive the stresses of this time of year and several of the other celebratory seasons. For those of you who are single, we include Michele O'Mara's article about dating. For some odd reason, we pitched you a paragraph describing heart attack symptoms in an issue dedicated to the most fat-filled eating of the year. Mike Lewis' thought-provoking European Kinship Meeting worship talk is designed to give us perspective. But all of these are only our simple efforts to remind you to "Take Good Care of Yourself for You are Infinitely Valuable."

Catherine

What do We Eat for Christmas?

Christmas Food in Australia

Noel Thorpe -

Christmas here falls at the very beginning of summer. We eat watermelon with cold meals like salads. My favorite Christmas memory is eating watermelon on the beach with my family. Prawns and crab are traditional Aussie dishes for this holiday, but some people turn on their air conditioners and cook more European food.

I do like jellied plum pudding for Christmas. It is served cold with whatever you might like on top. Here's the recipe.

- 1 pkt of port wine jelly crystals
- 2 teaspoons of gelatin
- 3 cups of hot water
- 12 oz can fruit mince
- 2 tablespoons brandy or brandy essence

Dissolve jelly crystals and gelatin in boiling water and allow to cool.

Put the mixture into the refrigerator until partially set.

Fold the fruit mince and brandy through the partially set gelatin.

Pour into a couple of small moulds or one large one.

Serve next day with whatever takes your fancy.

Christmas Salad from California

Catherine Taylor -

- 2 ripe avocados
- One can or a couple of mandarin oranges
- One pomegranate
- Sliced almonds

Mix together the avocados and oranges. Open the pomegranate and sprinkle its seeds over the other fruit. Top with the almonds.

Chill for thirty minutes and serve!



Rom Wilder

A String too Short to Save



connection

It was bone-chilling cold that Christmas morning in New Jersey, but there was no snow. It was early and I was looking for food. At least that's what I thought I was looking for. I didn't mind being alone - my family was far, far away; and the bah-humbug part of me, while not yet fully grown, was enough to make me enjoy the solitude. The other part of me, the part who had always gotten up before the sun on Christmas mornings to see what magic was under the tree, felt a little bit lost and sad.

There weren't many cars on the road, and of course everything was closed. I drove around for what seemed like forever and was about to go across the bridge into Philadelphia when I spotted it. OPEN. My empty stomach said, "Yes, yes. Pleeaaaaaase stop here."

Inside were a few men, rather scraggly looking, if truth be told. They were cheerful, but not in your face about Christmas. I sat at the counter where the men were each sitting on one of those wonderful spinning stools. It brought a smile in my head, remembering how I had loved to spin and spin on them as a kid - if I didn't get caught!

The smell of coffee was delicious but I didn't like the taste of it unless there were at least five sugars and enough milk to make it quite beige. That morning I wanted that smell close to my nose, so I ordered some. Now everyone at the counter had coffee, even the Seventh-day Adventist school teacher.

When I finished eating I was loathe to leave. I actually felt at home with this handful of men who had also come there that Christmas morning. So I stayed, slowly sipping my beige coffee, letting the waitress fill it up again, adding more sugar and milk. I felt accepted with no expectations at that counter.

I cannot recall all of my 64 Christmases. The one at White Castle, where I found unexpected comfort and joy, I cannot forget. s



For those who like to drink cold water, this article is applicable to you.

It is nice to have a cup of cold drink after a meal. However, the cold water will solidify the oily stuff that you have just consumed.

It will slow down the digestion. Once this "sludge" reacts with the acid, it will break down and be absorbed by the intestine faster than the solid food. It will line the intestine. Very soon, this will turn into fats and lead to cancer. It is best to drink hot soup or warm water after a meal.

Health Tip for December



Common Symptoms of Heart Attack

A serious note about heart attacks - You should know that not every heart attack symptom is going to be the left arm hurting. Be aware of intense pain in the jaw line. You may never have the first chest pain during the course of a heart attack. Nausea and intense sweating are also common symptoms. 60% of people who have a heart attack while they are asleep do not wake up. Pain in the jaw can wake you from a sound sleep. Let's be careful and be aware. The more we know the better chance we could survive. s

Five Gifts and a Lagniappe:

Manage Holiday Stress Effectively



©Arlene Taylor PhD

Hear the word *holidays* and the word *stress* often follows quickly in its wake. Examples abound. I observed these three quite recently:

- “I absolutely hate holidays—everything goes into fast forward. It’s SO stressful!” The young woman shouted, grimaced, gestured dramatically, and disappeared into the break room.
- Further down the hallway, a colleague burst through his office doorway, forehead furrowed, body radiating coiled tension. He paused in midstride long enough to mutter, “Holidays! Talk about stressors! It’s the pits!”
- In the quiet room the Chaplain shook her head ruefully. “I just spoke with your patient,” she told the physician confidentially. “The woman’s parents separated nearly fifty years ago on July 4th. She still dreads that holiday and considers it the most stressful time of year for her . . .”

Stress is Here to Stay

Stress is simply the word for what happens when you ask your brain and body to adjust to a change. Asking your body to move from one chair to another is stressful—a request for change. Having said that, stress is part of life and lets you know that you are alive. The absence of stress is death.

Any change in routine can be a stressor. Since holidays usually involve changes in routine, they can contribute to one or more of the following types of



stress:

- Eustress - positive stress that you choose to embrace, like getting married or going back to school or changing jobs
- Distress - negative stressors that you would be wise to avoid when possible, such as going through bankruptcy or failing to take good care of yourself
- Mistress - stressors that you fail to recognize, such as too much time spent in front of a computer monitor or long commutes to and from work.

According to Webster's Dictionary the word *holiday* denotes a time when one is exempt from work, or an opportunity to commemorate an event or a period of relaxation, even a vacation.

The word *stress*, on the other hand, refers to a state of bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter existing equilibrium (balance). That makes the term holiday stress something of an oxymoron—a combination of incongruous words. It also helps to explain the reason that something designed to be relaxing can end up being a major stressor. It is difficult to commemorate an event with relaxation and pleasure when you are in a state of bodily or mental tension!

Identify your history

Think about your most stressful holiday. What is your history related to this holiday? Is it good, neutral, or awful? Rate it on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 indicating abject dread and 10 indicating joyful anticipation. You may find it helpful to use the Holiday Stress Grid that follows.

Someone asked me the other day if my holiday memories were positive, negative, or neutral. Pondering that question, it quickly became clear that mine were a mixed bag. During part of my childhood we lived on the Canadian prairies. My brother and I joked that we could expect about three days of hot weather each year. Memorial Day weekend was a signal that summer might be just around the corner. If the weather cooperated we could wear short sleeves and pedal pushers to the annual spring picnic, and start on a tan. Memorial Day weekend was definitely a favorite!

December holidays were a different story! They arrived with snow and more snow, often piled higher than a horse's head. And with the snow came wind. Sometimes it coated bare tree limbs with shimmering hoarfrost or drove ice crystals through the tiniest cracks in doorjamb and storm-window frames. And the cold. Relentless, bone-jarring, unforgiving, biting, 30- or 40-degrees-below-zero cold! Curled up with a favorite book in front of the fireplace (if there had been a fireplace in our home) would have been one thing. Bundled in layers of protective gear and going from house to house singing carols and requesting donations for food baskets was another. No, December holidays were not a favorite of mine!

Which *holiday or celebration event* is most stressful for you? Think beyond national celebrations—Christmas/Hanukkah, New Year's, Cinco de Mayo, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, July 4th, or Labor Day. Any event that commemorates something important or momentous in your life may actually have a greater impact on your brain (e.g., the anniversary of a birth,

Arlene Taylor



adoption, marriage, divorce, miscarriage, layoff, bankruptcy, or death).

Your Brain is Unique

Every brain on the planet is believed to be different in structure, function, and perception. This means that your perception of what constitutes holiday stress and the magnitude of its impact will be unique to your brain, as well. Your perception will be influenced by a whole host of factors, including your own innate giftedness (e.g., individuals with introverted brains may find holidays to be over stimulating and energy-exhausting), past experiences, expectations, beliefs and attitudes, perceptions, and personal preferences, to name just a few.

Strategies for handling stressors need to work for your brain. Some have estimated that half of most people's problems result from the way they think. Hmm-m-m. Imagine changing the way you think about holiday stress and dropping half the problems off the back of your metaphorical turnip truck.

You may have approached your most-stressful holiday or celebration event from a grin and bear it stance—if you couldn't avoid it altogether you just tried to survive the inevitable. Unmanaged holiday stress can contribute to everything from depression to death. There can be a better way. Managed effectively, these celebration events can add spice, enjoyment, and meaning to life. Give yourself five gifts and a lagniappe...

#1 – Manage Your Expectations Carefully and Realistically

Everyone has expectations. Period. They can perhaps be most harmful when you don't realize you even have them, have not identified them consciously, or have no plan for dealing with them efficaciously. Your learned responses related to expectations may be causing you needless stress.

Holidays and other anniversary events typically involve traditions and rituals. Many expectations revolve around traditions and rituals. Whether or not they're functional and desirable or have completely outlived their usefulness, traditions and rituals are powerful—so powerful that in some cultures they can result in death.

Jot down your expectations. Are they mature, realistic, and doable? If not, revise your expectations and post them where you can see them easily. Make a clear decision to be true to them. You may need to do some pre-holiday negotiations and implement more appropriate personal boundaries.

An ounce of prevention before the holiday arrives is worth ten pounds of cure afterward.

For example, if you expect Great Aunt Lily to affirm everyone in general and you in particular, even though she hasn't thrown a kind word anyone's way in 50 years, your unrealistic expectations can set you up for major stress. If you expect your erstwhile nephew to show up stone sober, even though he's been spiflicated at every family gathering his entire adult life, get ready for stress!

If, on the other hand, you expect the usual and set personal limits that work for you, any improvement in the situation or behaviors can be viewed as a bonus. The words of Kahlil Gibran speak eloquently to expectations: *We choose our joys and sorrows—long before we experience them.*

Create and implement realistic expectations. Avoid getting caught up in the agendas of others or sucked into hype and commercialism. Above all, expect to be successful!



#2 – Learn to Upshift Quickly

According to my mechanic, an automatic transmission is designed to use the most efficient gear for the specific environmental conditions. Compare the three functional layers of your brain to an automatic transmission with three gears. Under situations of trauma, threat, or crisis—when the going gets tough—the brain tends to downshift looking for functions to promote safety.

Whether it is your vehicle's automatic transmission or your brain's ability to refocus energy and attention, downshifting is helpful when used appropriately. Under the doctrine of "you usually give up something to get something," when your brain downshifts unnecessarily or stays downshifted for too long, you may:

- Fail to recall what you heard
- React automatically (reflexively, instinctually) or overreact
- Follow old learned beliefs and behaviors regardless of available information
- Be prevented from learning and/or generating solutions for new problems
- Experience altered immune system function and brain chemistry
- Accelerate the aging process

It is important to recognize when your brain has downshifted so you can upshift as quickly as possible. To do this, increase conscious awareness of your own key stressors, patterns, and symptoms:

- Stressors: what are your top ten stressors? Are they individuals, substances, thoughts, noises, locations, tasks, foods?
- Patterns: what is your most common habit pattern? Do you exhibit symptoms at specific times of the day, week, month, or year?
- Symptoms: what are your top three symptoms? Do you experience changes in heart rate, breathing, body temperature, energy levels, or attitude? Do you start sighing heavily or become internally reactive?

Getting a handle on your stressors, patterns, and symptoms is a form of insurance. You are ready for whatever happens. This knowledge can serve as an early warning system to alert you when your brain downshifts. Then you can implement your pre-planned strategy to upshift. Over time, conscious awareness can kick in about the same time as the first stress symptoms make their appearance.

Dig to uncover core issues. Be honest. Create a collage of what happens to your brain and body when you are confronted with holiday stressors. Picture in your mind's eye what your body looks like and how you behave. Create a new picture of what you want your body to look like and how you want to behave. This gives your brain a map to follow. With a bit of forethought you may be able to avoid a specific stressor altogether, limit your exposure, or minimize the stress reaction.

Develop a pre-planned strategy to get your brain upshifted. The fastest way for me to upshift is to think of something humorous—and then choose to laugh about it. Both those functions reside in the conscious thought part of the brain: third gear, if you will.

If I can recognize something is funny and can choose to laugh about it, I'm upshifted.

#3 –Reboot Your Brain with Brain Breathing

Using the metaphor of a computer, learn to reboot your brain. At the first sign of a stress symptom, break the cycle, within the first 6-7 seconds if possible. The sooner you do this, the fewer stress symptoms you'll likely experience. You may be able to avoid downshifting altogether or at least return quickly to an upshifted state.

Brain breathing is a simple technique that can be used almost any time, anywhere, and can be accomplished in a matter of seconds. It is designed to ensure that a sufficient amount of oxygen gets into your blood stream. As you may know, oxygen comes into your lungs through the air you breathe and is then transferred to red blood cells that transport the oxygen to cells in your brain.

Growing up, you may have been taught that the best way to breathe was to stand up straight, stick out your chest, and hold in your abdomen. It turns out this is not an optimal position for deep breathing. Abdominal breathing is the ticket!

The formula for brain breathing is:

- Breathe in through your nose to a count of four
- Hold your breath while counting to twelve
- Exhale through pursed lips to a count of eight

At the first sign of a stress symptom reboot your brain by brain breathing. As a preventive tonic, I usually take a dozen brain breaths every day, preferably in pure fresh air. If someone asks me what I am doing I respond, "Brain breathing. Please join me."

#4 – Hone Your Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

Emotional intelligence—the ability to bring intelligence to your emotions—is important to your overall success in life. It may even be more important than I.Q. Emotions are internal signals that alert you to what is going on around and inside you. They connect your subconscious with your conscious mind and give you information and energy with which to manage a variety of situations safely and appropriately.

You are much more likely to store information in long-term memory when the encounter contains an emotional component. That's likely why holiday memories can be so impactful—euphoric or abysmal! Ignoring your emotions or pretending they don't exist is generally unhelpful. So is permitting them to take over your life. Emotions are just signals.

When you react out of proportion to any given situation, the overreaction usually relates to the past and may have little, if anything, to do with the current moment. In other words, *the reason is never the*

reason. Something about the present situation reminded your brain of something in the past, and brought the emotional force of that memory to bear on the present moment.

If you catch yourself beginning to overreact, stop, breathe, observe, and evaluate. Ask yourself what there is about this situation that may have reminded your brain of something from your past? Identify that "something," bring it to conscious awareness, and deal with it appropriately. Consciously working this process can help increase your level of EQ.

Marcus Aurelius taught that when you are upset by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself but to your own estimate of it. You have the power to alter your estimate (thoughts about it) at any moment. When confronted with a stressful situation, I have found it helpful to imagine the worst thing that can happen, decide if I can live with it, and then take appropriate action to minimize negative outcomes. Actually, the worst-case scenario rarely materializes.



#5 –Keep Your Life in Balance

A balanced, high-level wellness lifestyle is important all the time but especially necessary during holidays. Determine to take good care of your brain and body, and then actually do it! Make generous deposits into your stress-prevention bank in terms of sufficient sleep and relaxation, adequate water intake, daily exercise, nutritious food, positive mindset, humor, play, and nurturing relationships (e.g., friends, co-workers, family/family-of-choice, partner, Higher Power) just to name a few.

Be judicious about your intake of caffeine, sugar, and alcohol. Avoid placing yourself in situations that you know from past experience either push you to get out of balance or are likely to trigger a stress response.

Illness, minor injuries, accidents, and depression often increase during or following holiday periods. This

is often due, at least in part, to allowing some aspect of life to get out of balance. It's much easier for stressors to trigger illness or overreaction when you are living an unbalanced life. Even a good thing taken to the extreme can be detrimental. Treat yourself to a consistent high-level wellness lifestyle. It's great insurance and can pay huge dividends over time.

Lagniappe – Live the 20:80 Rule

The word lagniappe (pronounced lan-yap) first crossed my conscious awareness some years ago in New Orleans. During a tour of antebellum homes, pre-Katrina, my guide explained that she was giving us a lagniappe. She went on to say that this Creole term meant something special, a little bit extra, or an unexpected surprise. On that occasion, our lagniappe was a delicious Louisiana pecan praline.

Think of the 20:80 Rule as your lagniappe. It represents wisdom that Epictetus shared with the world more than seven centuries ago. This philosopher believed that only about 20% of the impact to your mind and body was related to the event (i.e., what happens to you), while 80% was due to your perception of it (i.e., the importance you assign to it).

The 20:80 Rule is an elegant way of saying that holidays will likely be a stressor in some way or another. That represents the 20%. You may not choose to—or even be able to—eliminate the 20%.

The 80% represents what you think about the stressor, the weight you place upon it, and the importance you assign to it. You can do almost everything about the 80%.

Actually, one of the few things you can control is your thoughts. Therefore, you can exercise a surprising amount of control over stressors by managing your thoughts and, if necessary, changing the way you think. That's the difference between efficiency (doing things

correctly) and effectiveness (doing the correct things).

You can reframe the importance. When you clearly understand that anything that comes out of another person's brain is only that brain's opinion, you will likely avoid arguing, stop taking things personally, and actually get a chuckle out of many situations. Another brain's opinion has nothing to do with yours unless you choose to make that so.

The 20:80 Rule was the ticket recently when I brought my “infamous” cherry-apple pie to a community potluck. Over the dessert table a casual acquaintance asked, “Did you put sugar in your pie?”

“Yes,” I responded.

Without even a pause to take a breath, the woman continued with, “Well! If you had *brains* you should have known that I was recently diagnosed with diabetes and can't eat sugar. And if you had *any* milk of human kindness flowing through your veins you would have made the pie sugarless for my sake!”

I blinked, chuckled, and applied the 20:80 Rule. “Thank you for sharing that information with me,” I said. “Another time let me know in advance that you will be present and if I'm able to attend I'll bring a sugarless dessert.”

Now it was her turn to blink. She did, twice, and then said, “Well, that doesn't help me today.”

“You're right,” I agreed. “It doesn't help you today, at least not for this pie.” End of discussion.

Did I enjoy her confrontation? Not particularly. Did it knock me off center and ruin the event as it might have for me half a century ago? No.

Give yourself these five gifts and a lagniappe. When practically applied, they can make all the difference in your response to holiday stressors. Come to think of it, they can make all the difference in the rest of your life!

S

Holiday Stress Grid

Holiday: Write down the name: _____

History: Good / Neutral / Awful
Stress Scale: 1 Minimal / 2 Some / 3 Moderate / 4 High / 5 Off chart

Your Present Expectations:

Are your present expectations mature, realistic, and doable?

If not, how you could reframe your expectations?

Write down one strategy you can implement now:

How can the 20:80 Rule help you with this strategy?

Michele O'Mara

Eight Suggestions for Dating

1. **Speak confidently, honestly, and well of yourself.**

Repugnant and worthless won't get you dates... well, at least dates that you want. Dating is like marketing, it is critical to highlight the benefits and features of dating or being in a relationship with you.

2. **Focus on living, enjoying, and experiencing life.**

Dating is a part of life... it isn't life. The more you zero in on dating, the more desperate you begin to sound, and less interesting you will become to others. Enjoy your singledom, pursue your interests, develop hobbies, join groups, have fun with your friends. Become interesting, and be active. In order to meet women you must be visible, accessible, and of interest. Note: If suggestion #1 is to market oneself well, #2 is to have a good product (you) to market!

3. **Live as openly as possible about your sexual orientation and dating status.**

Ironically, one of the best places to meet other women is in your everyday life. At the gym, at work, at church, in your apartment complex, through friends, etc. In order for this to work, though, when you are in these environments it is helpful for others to know that a) you are lesbian, and b) you are single. Make it known.



4. **Utilize existing networks and venues designed to help lesbians meet.**

Thanks to the internet it is increasingly easier to make connections with other lesbians seeking to connect.

Search Facebook for lesbians near you - befriend them, join a dating service like tangowire.com, match.com, etc., visit a local gay/lesbian bookstore for local events/happenings.

Options exist in many communities, so wherever you live, do your research and find out what currently exists, or create something yourself. Anyone can start a free Yahoo! online group, or gather a small group of single women to meet monthly at a local restaurant. Take charge of creating your own venues!

5. **Join an affirming congregation if you are interested in spiritual worship.**

There are many affirming congregations such as MCC churches, UU churches, and others throughout the US that offer ways to connect their gay and lesbian members.

6. **Expand your friendship network.**

Decrease your focus on dating, and increase your focus on friendship. Your friends are excellent dating referral sources! Friends like to see friends happy - and when you have two really great, single friends, it is natural to want them to meet. The more friends you have - whether they are partnered or not, the better. Be a genuine friend too - otherwise this strategy won't work.

7. **Surround yourself well.**

I read somewhere, and I agree, that we either rise or fall to the same level of those around whom we surround ourselves. Are you hanging out with people that help you be a better person... or are you hanging out with people who do not represent the likes of those you'd like to attract into your life?

8. **Lastly I encourage you to take risks and be creative.**

Do the unexpected. For example, say something witty, announce your availability. Approach that hottie at the gym and strike up a conversation. To the cute gal that flirted with you at the bank, leave your phone number and name on a deposit slip (that's a true story someone told me... and it worked!). You never know what will work until you try. s



Movie Review

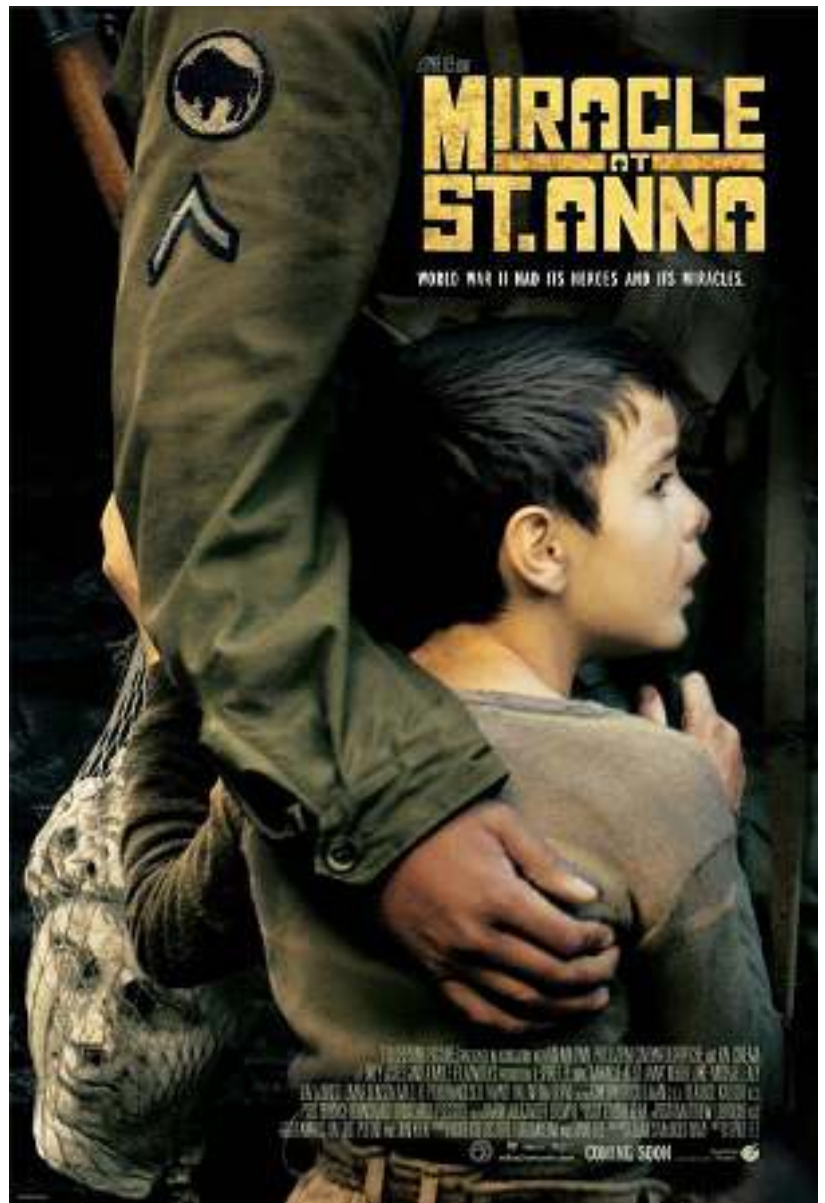
Miracle at St. Anna

John Edwards

When I lived in San Francisco I had an unusually spacious apartment which I still miss. I decided to purchase some posters to use as art on the large walls. However, the poster sales event that I attended at Fort Mason was well above my price range. Many of the posters were originals from commercials and movie premieres from the 1950s and 1960s. Prices averaged a couple thousand dollars, so I window shopped. As I left the poster show, I saw a small art gallery/shop with some artwork made by a Nigerian artist. As I wandered throughout the store, I came across a photo display about World War II. This display was different; it told the story of black soldiers rescuing Jews during WWII. It was a story that, frankly, I didn't know existed. Having lived in Brooklyn, NY, where tensions between Blacks and Jews often run high, I was surprised to know that this history existed. In the summer of 2004, shortly after I moved to British Columbia, Canada, I enrolled in a screenwriting class at the University of British Columbia. One of the stories I thought I would tell would be that of black soldiers liberating Jews during WWII. It's a story I would still like to tell or see told. The movie *Miracle at St. Anna* tells another story of black soldiers during that war. The movie is directed by Spike Lee; and on a recent episode of Oprah he indicated that the movie almost was not made because he was unable to get financing for it. He had to obtain European financing before American money kicked in.

Prior to the election of Barack Obama, I would have said there is institutional racism in the movie industry: the powers-that-be believe Americans, aka white Americans, would not go see a movie about black soldiers during WWII. Since the election of Barack Obama, I will say that institutional racism still exists in the film industry - in that the powers-that-be still think that white Americans will not see a movie where the black characters are not gang/violence/ghetto related. I do hope that his election shows that Americans of all colors have dealt a fatal blow to institutional racism.

Miracle at St. Anna shows the horrors of war and the blight of racism in the 1940s across



society, including the military. One of the movie character's racist views prevents him from seeing the successes of the black soldiers. This blindness contributes to horrors that were inflicted on the soldiers and innocent civilians. As far as I am aware, *Miracle at St. Anna* is the first movie that features the stories of black soldiers as a primary story line. The actors are wonderful, especially the untrained ten-year-old Italian boy who plays one of the movie's central characters. *Miracle at St. Anna* has been the focus of controversy regarding its depiction of some "facts." However, the movie is fiction; and, like previous movies about WWII, there are always plot twists, embellishments and, in some cases, liberties taken by the director. Based on the wonderful acting, powerful story lines, and the breathtaking scenery, I rate this movie a 7 out of 10. *Miracle at St. Anna* will be available on DVD soon. **s**



Building our Community

This has been a remarkable year for Kinship. The book, *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*, was published. With Dave Ferguson in the lead, we have been distributing and selling copies all over the world, including libraries. It has been the focus of events like the Human Rights Campaign press conference, Open Day for the Dutch Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Kampmeeting, European Kinship Meeting, and several mini-Kampmeetings. Many international Seventh-day Adventist church leaders have received complementary copies and follow-up conversations with Kinship members about their reactions. Mailings have gone out to other conference and union administrators inviting them to read this groundbreaking work. Adventists are being given the opportunity to research and think about homosexuality in new ways. We are appreciative of all the "doors" that have been opened because of the hard work of the team who put this project together.

We continue to develop ways to support and connect our Kinship family. Jacquie Hegarty, in her role as Director of Communications, has helped us create electronic newsletters that can be utilized by regional coordinators to stay in contact with their local members. We have continued our monthly Kinship *eNews* as a way to electronically share recent updates and upcoming events with the entire Kinship community. Linda Wright, our webmaster, updates our website regularly and has been working on renovating that site to make it even more user-friendly. We have offered Kampmeetings or mini-Kampmeetings in the US and Australia. We have hosted European Kinship Meeting in Germany. At those meetings part of our focus is to bring Seventh-day Adventist pastors to share spiritual messages and also to have a chance to get to know Kinship members and their stories. These pastoral discussions have done much to expand the

way the Adventist church views homosexuality. The *Connection* is offered both electronically and in hard copy. Carrol Grady and her Kinship team organized an exhibit at *Ignition*, an Adventist-sponsored youth leaders' training convention in Dallas.

In March, the Board ratified a new set of by-laws designed to help us work more efficiently. Among many additions, Floyd Pönitz has become chair of our International Growth and Development Committee and is working on expanding Kinship's outreach to LGBTI people on at least six of the seven continents. (As far as we know, there are no Kinship members in Antarctica.) Obed Vazquez-Ortiz chairs a committee developing ways all the diverse cultures represented in Kinship can better understand and support each other. Isis Montalvo chairs the Member Services Committee designed to make our interactions with you more efficient and helpful. Fred Casey, our office manager and volunteer Membership Services Coordinator, works untold hours organizing mailings, responding to e-mails and letters, and making sure new members receive "welcome packets."

Kinship leaders have been working with the Advisory Council of supportive church leaders that meets once a year in Los Angeles, California. This autumn a group of church administrators from the Trans-European and Euro-African Divisions of the Adventist church agreed to form an advisory group that will meet in Europe. Their first gathering will be May 2009.

With all of these opportunities, the Board of SDA Kinship International works diligently to provide support and services in the most cost-effective ways possible. For instance, in the last eighteen months we have cut the cost of producing the *Connection* by fifty percent.

We are well aware that many have been affected by the global financial situation. We know that many of you are working with tighter personal budgets. Given the situation, we want to say we are very appreciative of any donations you can make to Kinship. For our members living in the US, any monies donated this month are tax-deductible on your 2008 tax returns. For all our members around the world, any monies donated will be used carefully and thoughtfully and in the most efficient way we can design. Don't think that any amount is too small. And don't think we won't appreciate large donations also. You can donate by credit card on our website, or by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org to ask someone to phone you (never put your credit card information in an email). You can mail a check or money order to SDA Kinship, PO Box 69, Tillamook, Oregon 97141, USA.

Thank you for your support of Kinship. We wish you many blessings in the upcoming year. **s**

s Kinship s News s

Kampmeeting 2009

– Naveen Jonathan

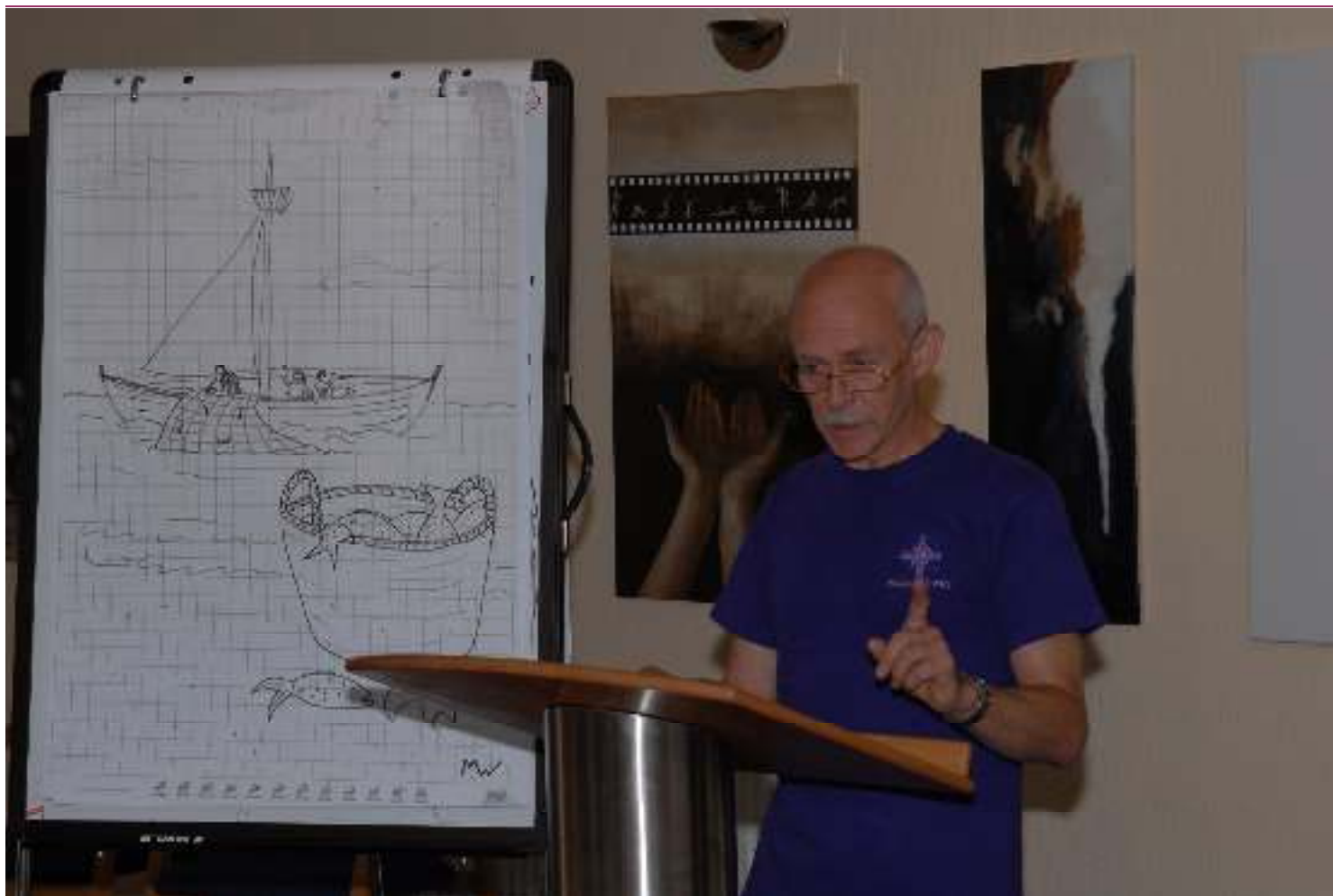
On behalf of the SDA Kinship International Board of Directors, I would like to inform you that the 2009 U.S. Kampmeeting has been changed to a four-day event. Kampmeeting next year will begin on Wednesday, July 15, at 5 PM and continue through Saturday night (with departure Sunday morning). The Board of Directors has taken this action in an effort to be financially prudent, given the economic situation in the United States and around the world. The *Women & Children First* event will take place July 13-14, 2009. Please watch the SDA Kinship website for up-to-date Kampmeeting information. For questions or comments, please email me at kampmeeting@sdakinship.org. I am looking forward to seeing you in Seattle!

Website – Remember to check the Kinship website (sdakinship.org) daily for the **News Notes**. We are changing them almost daily and adding the old ones to the archives. s



Some more impressions from Kampmeeting 2008





Getting Out Of or Into the Boat?

Mike Lewis

Some time ago I read John Ortberg's book, *If You Want to Walk on Water You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*. It's an excellent read and I thoroughly recommend it. Ortberg deals with the perennial questions of Challenge, Faith, Taking Risks, Courage, Reaching Out To Jesus, etc. People who are LGBTI (lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/transgender/intersex) by physical and mental makeup and who are also Seventh-day Adventist Christians by conviction/persuasion are very likely to have "gotten out of the boat" in a number of ways as they have tried (and often succeeded) in reconciling their sexual orientation with their beliefs and understanding of Scripture. Even in the enlightened 21st century it still takes courage to be Out and Proud - whether that refers to being LGBTI or to being Christian. (I have heard more than one LGBTI

Christian claim it's easier for them to come out as LGBTI than to come out as Christian....).

When we have taken this huge leap of faith—have seen Jesus and have gotten out of the boat to run to Him, where does that leave us?

Getting very wet and very cold.

Yes, it's wonderful to feel the metaphorical strong arms of the Saviour, and hear words like "acceptance," "forgiven," "assured," "affirmed," and even "loved." But our feet are still on the water (getting colder and wetter) and we are in constant danger of sinking as we avert our gaze from the One who saves us as we glance sideways at some Cute Little Number (in the briefest of swimwear) who happens to be strutting her/his stuff along the shoreline. Down into the deep we go again, getting colder and wetter. Fortunately, Jesus still has a firm grip on us and He pulls us up yet again.

Check out the story for yourself: it's in Matthew 14.

Do you know it well? Are you shocked by what happens next? You should be! Jesus gets into the boat, taking Peter with Him. Now wouldn't you have expected Jesus to stride off with Peter accross the lake and beat the boat to the shore? But that is not what happens. Jesus puts a very soggy spluttering Peter firmly back into the boat. Peter is saved. Saved by being put back in the boat. That's where he belongs. That's the safest place for him. The boat is his place of safety. Floating. Steerable. Dry. Warm. With other people in it. And most importantly, Jesus is there. That's what makes it the safest place on earth (or rather, on the lake).

Isn't that what Church is all about? Warmth. Companionship. Safety. Dry. It's going to reach the shore. And Jesus is inside. Surely that's where we should be, too.

Now a fishing boat on Galilee may not have been the most salubrious of places. In the boat there were probably piles of dead fish. Rather smelly dead fish. Bilge water slopping around. A rather Old Trout that had seen better days. Ropes and nets lying tangled together to catch one's feet and trip one up. Perhaps there were off-cut lobster claws and bits of yesterday's lunch. Not a very comfortable place. But, despite the overall unpleasantness of the inside of a Galilean fishing boat, that is where Jesus decided to go and that is where He took Peter. And I think Peter was secretly rather pleased to be there. Perhaps we can imagine the hard time the other disciples gave Peter - *hey mate, try learning to swim... get your wet stuff away from me... why didn't Jesus just leave him to drown...?* But Peter had broad enough shoulders - and he was still alive. And maybe someone was heard to say *that was SO brave of you... come sit down where it's warm... here, have my dry cloak.*

And what of the Church that Jesus drags us screaming into? I'll leave you to decide how you are going to cope with the dead fish and the Old Trouts and the ropes and the bilge water and the claws and the rotten lunch that you might find slopping around in the bottom of the Church (sorry), Boat. But we need to remember that the Church is where His friends are. It's where He has taken us. And it's going to end up at the shore some day. It's where He is. It's much drier and safer inside than it would be trying to wade your own way and you're getting out of your depth. And, you never know, someone may even offer you their dry cloak and a place where it's warm.

In the words of the song by Sullivan Pugh: "Stop by a Church Sometime." s (mike@scotmagic.co.uk)



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Pictures taken at European Kinship Meeting 2008, Bremen, Germany