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Homosexuality & the SDA Church, Part II

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Who we are...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. (Kinship) is a non-profit support organization which ministers to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, 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 US. Kinship has a board of up to 15 officers and 13 regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes several thousand people in 43 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, which are often used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up as LGBT has its roots in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

Support Kinship

Kinship operates solely on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBT Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below. (You can also donate, using your Visa or Master Card, by contacting Karen Wetherell at treasurer@sdakinship.org. She will phone you so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

SDA Kinship, P.O. Box 49375, Sarasota, FL 34230-6375, or call toll-free in the U.S. 866-732-5677 or toll from outside the U.S. 01 (941) 371-7606, or visit SDA Kinship's Web Site at: www.sdakinship.org

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There is Still...

A Sweet Sweet Spirit in This Place

Welcome to Part II of our report from the workshop on Homosexuality and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. We begin this issue as we did the second day: with a personal story. We're including excerpts from the rest of Ron Lawson's sociological history of the Seventh Day Adventist Church's relationship with homosexuality, Fritz Guy's theological discussion of lesbian and gay relationships and John Elder's thoughts on Homophobia and the Sabbath. You will also find invitations to several International Kinship meetings that are happening this spring and summer, some thoughts of orientation and race over the last fifty years and our calendar. We love to have your thoughts and voice in these pages and want to hear your reactions to what you are reading about the January workshop. Send them to katgurian@aol.com ▼

Learning to Live in Love

Sherri Babcock

My story starts within the context provided by my Adventist ancestors. My great-great-grandfather, D.A. Robinson, co-founded Atlantic Union College in 1881 along with Adventist pioneer Stephen Haskell. He later became the first male Adventist missionary to India, following behind the nurse, Georgia Burrus. My great-grandparents and my grandparents were missionaries to Africa. My parents are both Adventist educators, my father being the current President of Atlantic Union College, and they were missionaries in Pakistan when my conscious childhood memories began. With this rich family heritage, my childhood was filled with stories of church history, miraculous mission stories, Bible stories, Pathfinder activities, and relationships with Student Missionaries. I experienced firsthand the thrill, adventure and responsibility related to serving God and God's remnant church. I assumed God's plan for my life included attending SDA schools through college, taking a year off from college to be a student missionary, getting married, working for the Adventist church, becoming a fully credentialed missionary and spreading the

"truth" throughout the world so Jesus could return.

In the midst of all this traditional Adventism, I was discovering that parts of me did not fit the traditional Adventist ideals. My father was constantly reminding me to "act like a lady." I preferred playing with my brother's cars, trucks and Lego's, rather than with my own dollhouse and Barbie's. I wanted to climb trees, excel in school, wrestle, and fly kites, rather than read Little Women and learn how to sew. By the age of eight, I had completely claimed the "Tomboy" label already given to me. I often wondered why God had made me a girl, when boys had so much more fun, freedom and adventure. I frequently asked God to make me into a boy.



As I entered my preteen years, and the boys I considered my best friends started showing an interest in dating me, I began to feel that I was someone else living inside a girl's body. That someone else was eventually given the name, Sandy Smith. Sandy represented someone totally androgynous (which perfectly described how I felt) and Smith was totally anonymous (not the college president's daughter). I would spend long hours pacing the parapets around our flat roofed house in the evenings, talking to God and pretending to be Sandy, someone who was strong, independent and didn't fit a traditional label. Although I couldn't name it, I knew something was wrong with me. The emotional isolation and loneliness were unbearable, and I felt I would never be able to be my true self. One night, while in the persona of Sandy Smith, I came perilously close to committing suicide by jumping off the parapet. Just as my center of gravity went over the edge of the roof, a college girl, who I considered to be my adopted big sister, appeared on the sidewalk below me. Not wanting to land on her or for her to witness my death, I twisted around, caught the parapet and scrambled back to safety. That suicide intervention was so providential that it stopped me from ever seriously considering suicide again.

My circle of friends expanded in the eighth grade when my parents returned to the United States. My unique accent and life perspective made me intriguing to the American boys. I suddenly realized that I could date any boy I wanted, and my girlfriends all thought I was crazy for not taking advantage of it. So, my first few years in the States were marked by dating the most sought after boys and enjoying the attention it brought me from the girlfriends that I had crushes on.

One day, while I was agonizing on the way to clarinet practice, I silently cried out, "God, what is WRONG with me?" I immediately got my only audible response, as I heard a voice booming through the hallway, "Sherri, you are a homosexual." I spun around to see who had spoken, and if anyone else had heard, but the hall was empty. I started crying and ran out of the building screaming "No, God, anything but that! I'd rather die!" During my sophomore year in college, I realized that in spite of my dedication to change, spontaneous attractions to women were still occurring. Dreaded and unbidden, those feelings would pop up at the most startling moments. I was trying everything to bury myself in studies, church activities and other distractions, but it wasn't enough. Thinking that I must need to more deeply dedicate my life to God, I continued the original life plan and took a year off to be a Student Missionary.

Although being a Student Missionary was definitely an enriching, life-changing experience, I realized during that year that even while I was living a life totally dedicated to God's service, my feelings were not changing. In desperation, I came out to my parents and asked for help. Although my parents assured me of their unconditional love and support, they obviously could not make my decisions. By the end of that year, I started to understand that for some unknown reason, this was not something



that God was going to change. In spite of that realization, I still could not accept being a homosexual.

I dated sporadically, but the struggle, isolation and loneliness nearly resulted in an emotional breakdown. At that point, I finally threw my salvation on God's mercy and started trying to find another woman to develop a relationship with. I had to find out if I really was a homosexual. If I was, I figured I could be of more use to God as a "less-than-perfect" woman than as an insane woman.

By mid-year, I had discovered my first love. The comfort level and lack of emotional angst that I felt when I was with her were liberating. I experienced for the first time what it was like to be totally myself. I felt whole and realized that several facets of my life had finally become integrated. Along with this wonderful new experience came the constant fear of being publicly exposed and getting kicked out of school.

At the end of the year, I transferred to Walla Walla College to finish my engineering degree. It soon became clear that the distance and social pressures to "get married and have children" were more than our relationship could bear. Heartbroken, I started dating men again, but I felt like I was lying to them at best and driving myself insane at worst. I worried that if I got married, I would ultimately end up breaking

a good man's heart and ruining both of our lives. I got severely depressed and decided to drop out of school, even though I only had one quarter left to go, and I had just been selected as "Outstanding Engineering Student of the Year." I needed to find out who I was and locate people I could be myself with. I decided to go to San Francisco and start a new life.

When I called my educator parents to tell them of my decision, they were adamantly against the idea of not finishing my degree. On discovering that I was serious about pursuing such a disastrous course, they promised to find me a contact number for SDA Kinship, if I would promise to stay in school and graduate. With promises exchanged, I contacted Kinship the week before spring break, and asked if I could meet some of the women in southern California during the break. They not only welcomed my impromptu visit, but let me stay in their homes, took me out to eat, spent long hours sharing their own life stories, and introduced me to the gay and lesbian community. One night after telling them my life story, I asked, "But, how can God love me if I am a homosexual?" Marge didn't miss a beat. She said, "Sherri, if someone had just told you their life story, and it was similar to the one you have just told us, would you be judgmental or offer them your love and understanding?" I replied, "I'd understand, of course, I know the struggle they've been going through." Then, Marge looked me right in the eye and said, "Sherri, do you honestly believe that you are more loving than God?" At that moment, I realized that God's grace was big enough to love me, even if I had turned out to be a lesbian.

As my healing progressed, I entered a handful of brief relationships. While some of those relationships lasted a couple of months, most of them never got past the initial dating stage. I

discovered that I didn't trust my own emotions and judgment. While I wanted someone to share my life with, I was not emotionally ready. So, I chose to be celibate for one year. I took that year to rediscover who I was as a person, broaden my base of friends and develop a basic comfort level with myself.

Half way through my year of celibacy, I met Jill through mutual friends at a gay-friendly ecumenical church. She respected my celibacy commitment, and we started a slow-moving friendship that eventually transitioned to dating. We solidified our relationship two years later at a Celebration of Covenant, held at a local metropolitan park. We decided to tap into an old Quaker tradition and selected six couples to serve as our sponsors. Our sponsors were people with experience who could mentor us in relationship-building. We were both incredibly blessed to have our parents serving as two of those six couples. The wedding weekend was perfect, and over eighty friends and family from across the country were in attendance. As we were whisked away from the reception by helicopter, I knew that I had never been happier in my life.

About three years after our wedding, Jill let me know that she really wanted to have a child. I, on the other hand, was quite content with our life and didn't even want to imagine the challenges presented to gay parents. Because of my reluctance, our discussions about parenting continued for another two years. When I finally realized how deeply ingrained her feelings were, I agreed to co-parent. We selected a donor that the child would be able to meet at the age of 18, and Jill got pregnant on the first try. Grace was born on her due date exactly nine months later. We chose the name Grace not only because it was the name of my great-grandmother, but also because we had recently finished reading *What's so Amazing About Grace* by Philip

Yancy. We felt that this little gift of a baby perfectly symbolized the undeserved and unexpected ways that God moved in our lives. Just as Jill's maternity leave came to an end, I landed a long term project management contract. The work was steady enough, that Jill was able to make the choice to stay home and parent Grace on a full time basis.

During the first eight years of our relationship, Jill and I attended an assortment of churches in the Columbus area: The Abundant Life Fellowship of Seventh-day Adventists where my membership was, Spirit of the Rivers Ecumenical Church where we had met, the Dublin Seventh-day Adventist church, and the First Baptist Church of Granville where we learned about social justice, built a Habitat for Humanity House and had our daughter, Grace, dedicated. Shortly after Grace's dedication, we decided to attend the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist church because of the wonderful children's program and because I deeply missed worshipping on Sabbath. Although we have never officially joined the local church, we have been attending there for five years now. ▼

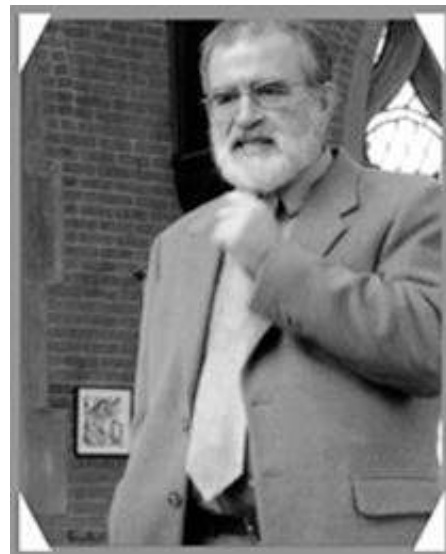
The Welcoming, Caring Church

Ron Lawson

...continued from February 2006 Connection

The church press had to this point been largely silent about homosexuality apart from the earlier articles by Colin Cook and those publicizing and then attempting to rehabilitate him, and the knee-jerk criticisms. However, in 1992 the youth magazine, *Insight*, published a major article, "Redeeming Our Sad Gay Situation: A Christian Response to the Question of Homosexuality," authored by its editor, Christopher Blake. Blake admitted that the church should have issued a public

apology following the collapse of the Quest Learning Center, and that it had not moved ahead with any other approach to help gay and lesbian church members. In many respects the article represented a real advance in understanding, especially in its sections entitled "Nobody chooses to be homosexual," "Gay bashing' is never acceptable, especially for Christians," "Many fears about homosexuality are irrational," "Homosexuals are not by nature necessarily promiscuous or child molesters," "Changing one's homosexual orientation is difficult and rare," and "Homosexuals can be genuine, model Christians." However, the article defined such model Christians as those who "battle against their orientation all their lives," for "homosexual sexual activity is sinful" and cannot be condoned [pp 10,11]. In insisting that gay and lesbian Adventists remain celibate, just as single heterosexuals must remain celibate, the article missed a fundamental difference between the two groups and what it would impose on them: single heterosexuals have the option and the continuing hope of finding love and sexual fulfillment in marriage. The demand that homosexuals struggle all their lives to remain celibate provides ironic counterpoint to the advice of St Paul, who advocated that, ideally, Christians should remain single; however he



recognized that since not all had that "gift", those without it should marry rather than "burn with passion" [I Corinthians 7: 7-9]. Is it either logical or fair to assume that Adventist homosexuals all have the "gift of celibacy" when the Adventist leaders who seek to impose this standard on them are, without exception, married males?

In 1996, an article opposing same-sex marriage that was published in the *Adventist Review* contained a side-bar containing the text of "An Affirmation of Marriage", which had been voted by the GC Administrative Committee in April of that year. The purpose of its publication in conjunction with that article seems to have been to remind homosexual Adventists that their only acceptable option was celibacy. In 1999, as gay issues came increasingly to the fore in public political debate and court cases, the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee voted a new "Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality": "The Seventh-day Adventist Church...believe(s) that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of the faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word. ...sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. ...The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of heterosexual marriage are forbidden... For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships..."

In February 2000, when the state of Hawaii seemed to be on the verge of recognizing same-sex marriage, Thomas Mostert, President of the Church's Pacific Union, and Alan Reinach, head of its Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty [PARL], published articles in the Union paper, the *Echo*, calling on Adventists in California to support



the "Knight Amendment", also known as Proposition 22, which aimed at adding the clause "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California" to the state constitution. Reinach explained that "The California Protection of Marriage Initiative, Proposition 22, is designed to insure that California need not recognize gay marriages, when and if they become legal in other states." In May 2000, as Vermont was in the process of adopting legislation recognizing civil unions between same-sex couples, officials of the Atlantic Union and the North New England Conference raised their voices in opposition to it. In contrast, the administration of the Netherlands Union remained aloof from the debate when that country embraced same-sex marriage in 2001.

When Canada expanded its hate crimes law to add the disparaging of "sexual orientation" to the list of "hate crimes" for which perpetrators could be charged with the equivalent of a felony in the US, the *ANN Bulletin* reported that pastors there were afraid that their preaching against homosexuality could result in their falling afoul of the law [May 4, 2004]. The attempts to involve Adventism in the political debates on the side of traditional heterosexual values have

moved the Adventist Church away from its traditional position opposing the enactment of morality-based law.

As the issue of same-sex marriage became politically prominent in the US, the tone of some articles in Church publications suddenly became much more strident. In October 2003, Roy Adams, Associate Editor of the *Adventist Review*, published "Marriage under Siege", which featured a photo of Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop elected by the Episcopal Church. Adams' language was harsh and hysterical, reflecting intolerance and fear. He wrote negatively of "the concerted push for full acceptance by a well-heeled, well-financed homosexual lobby, the media falling all over itself to push the agenda." He listed the overturning of the Texas anti-sodomy law by the Supreme Court, the acceptance of same-sex marriage by the Netherlands and Belgium, and its advance through the courts in Canada and Massachusetts, and posed the question "What is to be our stance as a Church?" Declaring that "the spiritual crisis of the last days" is here, that we are seeing "a brazen, deliberate, concerted attack on the three foundational pillars of the book of Genesis: Creation, Sabbath, and...marriage", he declared that in

spite of the historic embrace of the separation of church and state by Adventists, "Silence is not an option. The stakes are too high. And normal considerations of tolerance and political correctness cannot apply—in fact, would be irresponsible. This is the time for faith communities to speak out."

In contrast, the publications of the liberal independent press concerning homosexuality are often very different from the official publications, reflecting the increased polarization that has emerged over this issue. These have given increasing coverage to these issues over the past decade, using a tone that contrasts sharply with the often hysterical and judgmental articles that have appeared in the officially sponsored church press. At the end of 1995, *Adventist Today* published "Kampmeeting Supports Gay Adventists", which described the program, participants and interaction at Kinship's annual week-long retreat the previous Summer and told of the history and goals of Kinship [Bouchard and Elder, Nov.-Dec.1995, 16]. *Spectrum's* Summer 2002 issue contained a cluster of five articles on sexuality, one of which reported research on the lives of gay and lesbian Adventists, another was autobiographical, while a third reviewed a book that surveyed a diversity of Christian views of homosexuality.

School and college administrators have also become more comfortable with the presence of the gay students. They have also become less aggressive in their handling of teachers who are discovered to be homosexual. This is evidenced by changes over time in the stories of former teachers told at Kinship Kampmeetings. In 1997 La Sierra University, in southern California, asked a lesbian couple, who had been kissing and caressing one another around the campus, to be more discreet. This was a dramatic change from the automatic removal of yesteryear. The

following year LSU accepted a former Adventist and self-identified lesbian who planned to seek ordination in the gay-oriented Metropolitan Community Church into its MA in Religion program. Some colleges have gay support groups among students. These depend on the presence of support among the faculty and a secure administration, but especially on the presence of students with the courage to act; their visibility rises and falls according as active students graduate and newcomers become involved. The first such group was formed by two Hispanic students at Pacific Union College in the late 1980s. It faded after the two founding leaders graduated. By 1996 there were more substantial active groups at Walla Walla College in Washington State and at Columbia Union College in suburban D.C. Others were formed at LSU in 1998 and at Southern University in 2005. Although public surveys suggest that younger people are much more likely to be accepting of gays and lesbians than the older generations, students on Adventist campuses are more conservative than average, so that gay students there face mixed reactions from their peers if they "come out" there. (Loma Linda University Medical School and Ben Kemena's stressful experience with them is in the larger paper and will be included with the book.)

This paper has tested both the fit of the slogan, "the Caring Church," to Adventism, and the extent to which the hope of Adventist President Paulsen that it be a "welcoming church" has been realized by assessing how it treats its homosexual members. As measured here, the Adventist Church fails the test, for it has proven to be concerned more with rules and image than the needs of its people. Despite the failure of the "change" program they had backed and the grossly unethical sexual exploitation of young and fragile counselees by its director, Colin Cook, Church leaders helped

to restore Cook to a place where he could resume his counseling and sexual abuse, and continue to insist that the only acceptable homosexual is one living without love and struggling to change his/her orientation. The prejudice of the church leaders led them to sue SDA Kinship as a means of distancing themselves from gay Adventists, and it prevented them from seeing the AIDS epidemic as relevant to Adventism, at least where it was initially a "gay disease." Their tenacity in clinging to traditional biblical proof-texts and in manipulating the writings of their prophet to support their anti-gay prejudices are reminiscent of the manner in which the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa until recently clung to biblical interpretations that justified Apartheid. There is a growing awareness in the Church of both homosexuality and gay and lesbian Adventists, but also a profound distaste and even fear, which have fed a growing polarization over this issue.

However, there have been some positive shifts at the local level, where individual cases are most often addressed. These shifts seem isolated and incremental because of the diversity of situations. Nevertheless, in the years since the first Kinship Kampmeeting, there has been a remarkable change in the tone of the stories told by newcomers of growing up gay in the Adventist Church. For the first few years these were known as the "horror stories." Such a designation is rarely apt today in North America or much of the rest of the Developed World, even though the stories often continue to reflect pain, confusion, isolation, and rejection. The very existence of Kinship, the fact that gay Adventists now find it more easily and at a younger age, the ready availability of information on the web, changing attitudes in church and society, which are now reflected more frequently among Adventist parents—all have made a remarkable impact. ▼

Is Gay Really Okay? Thinking Theologically About Same-Sex Relationships

Fritz Guy

The theological reflections offered here will take the form of a series of affirmations intended to represent a progression of theological reasoning: (1) Humanness entails physical, bodily existence. (2) Physical pleasure is part of God's intention for humanness. (3) Sexuality is a created good. (4) Sexual intimacy symbolizes the most profound volitional human relationship. (5) Optimal sexual intimacy is defined by rigorous moral criteria. (6) The moral quality of erotic relationships is not affected by the sex of one's partner. (7) Scripture does not necessarily condemn all same-sex eros. (8) Some same-sex relationships described in Scripture may have involved erotic elements. (9) Neither the possibility of procreation nor male-female complementarity is an essential ingredient of "natural" human sexuality. (10) Antagonism to same-sex eros has deep psychosocial roots. (11) Christians should nurture and support persons in mutually caring, committed same-sex erotic relationships.

The essential goodness of the human body is established by three principal theological considerations.

- The first is the primordial creation of humanness.
- The second consideration is the incarnation of God in and as Jesus the Messiah. In the person of Jesus God "became flesh"—that is, became a body—"and lived for a while among us." Elsewhere the New Testament insists on this truth: it was "in the body" that Jesus suffered and died, and anyone who says otherwise should be regarded as a deceiver.
- The third consideration is the Christian hope of an

eschatological resurrection of the body. The New Testament envisions the ultimate future of humanness as a thoroughly physical, bodily existence.

The possibility of physical pleasure is part of the created goodness of humanness, one of the blessings of physical existence. Hence the colors of a sunrise, the fragrance of a carnation, the sound of a symphony, the taste of an ice cream cone, the relaxation of a massage or a bath. With all this attention to the physicality of humanness should come a recognition that physical pleasure is a proper function of human bodies and in itself an entirely appropriate reason to be as healthy as possible. It is right to take good care of bodies, one's own and others', and it is right also to enjoy them.

Sexuality, the desire to share physical intimacy and bodily pleasure with a partner, usually involves all of the senses to one extent or another; and a defining characteristic of physical intimacy is the exquisite physical pleasure of orgasm. Sexuality is part of the humanness created in God's image. Human sexual intimacy is a symbol that both points to a reality beyond itself and participates in that reality, thus opening up levels of reality that human beings would not otherwise be able to experience. The reality to which sexual intimacy points and in which it participates is a relationship of permanent, preeminent concern for and commitment to the total well being of one's sexual partner. Sexual intimacy both expresses this reality and enriches and deepens it.

In the light of the relevant Biblical materials such as the Seventh Commandment and the Golden Rule, four moral criteria for optimal sexual intimacy are immediately apparent.

- Optimal sexual intimacy does not compete with any other

relationship or violate any prior personal commitment.

- Optimal sexual intimacy is not coercive, exploitive, or manipulative. It is not instrumental or strategic, an exchange for some other desired good such as money, professional advancement (as in "sleeping one's way to the top"), or other favorable treatment.
- Optimal sexual intimacy is authentically mutual and egalitarian. The desire to receive pleasure does not in the long run (the duration of the relationship) exceed the desire to give pleasure, or in the short run (the immediate occasion) overwhelm it.
- Optimal sexual intimacy respects the vulnerabilities it engenders. It includes concern for each other's safety, security, and comfort in the broadest and deepest sense. It presupposes and expresses trust, and it evokes and sustains trust.

Taken seriously, these moral criteria carry important practical implications. They evoke, for example, both a revolutionary self-discipline and an "ethic of tenderness". These criteria, furthermore, carry potential theological significance insofar as optimal sexual intimacy reflects the desire of ultimate, divine reality to give pleasure to, and (in some sense beyond human comprehension) to receive pleasure from, human reality.

While the theologically based moral criteria of optimal sexual intimacy specify the quality of the personal relationship of the partners, these criteria do not specify, or even refer to, the sex of the partners.

Two important objections to this view call for consideration and assessment—namely, the claim that Scripture condemns all same-sex romantic and sexual relationships; and the claim that such relationships are "contrary to

nature” not only because they cannot result in procreation but also because they disregard the natural complementarity of male and female. A third possible objection, that an affirmation of same-sex eros is a radical departure from traditional Christian and Adventist thinking, does not require a detailed refutation here. For one thing, Adventism has from its beginning distinguished itself by its criticism of traditional Christian thinking (in regard to such issues as an imminent Advent, the continuing relevance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the ontology of the human soul, and the theological and spiritual apostasy of much of Christianity). For another thing, a fundamental conviction of authentic Adventist theology (but not necessarily popular Adventism) is that it is called to be self-critical: *There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.* —Ellen White

The widespread belief that the Bible condemns all physical intimacy between persons of the same sex is apparently the result of selectively applied principles of Scriptural interpretation. Underlying this selectivity may be a psychological need to rationalize, absolutize, and universalize one’s own sexual attractions and aversions. (Fritz followed with a discussion of the texts often used to condemn same sex eros. Another discussion of them can be found in the August and September 2005 issues of the Connection. The entire text of this paper will be in the book it was designed to help build).

It is true that Scripture often links sexual intimacy with procreation,

beginning early in the human story: “Adam lay with his woman Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.” But there are significant instances in which Scripture does not make this connection.

- The initial explanation of the duality of male and female does not mention procreation. Instead, the whole point of the story is the goodness of social companionship, and the preeminence of this relationship over attachment to one’s birth family. “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She will be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of a man. For this reason a man leaves his father and mother and unites with his woman, and they become one flesh.”
- Equally important is the fact that the Biblical poetry devoted to the celebration of eros in the Song of Songs does not mention procreation either. It is wholly devoted to the desire for sexual intimacy and ecstasy.

Given the generality and ambiguity of the texts commonly cited in condemnation of same-sex eros, plus the subjectivity of arguments about its alleged “unnaturalness,” one wonders if these citations and arguments are not largely rationalizations of a widespread and intense aversion to this form of sexuality. It is significant that Christians no longer justify committing genocide, owning slaves, or regarding women as household property, by referring to the Bible’s explicit endorsements of these practices.

To the extent that the reasoning offered here is sound, it is theologically and morally imperative for serious Christians, Adventist and otherwise, to welcome, affirm, celebrate, nurture, and support individual choices for caring, committed same-sex relationships. Serious Christians,

individually and collectively, should address their moral attention and practical efforts to the monumental task of improving the moral and spiritual quality of the sexual intimacy of all Christians. Serious Christians, individually and collectively, should immediately discontinue their moral condemnation of same-sex eros in caring, committed relationships. Jesus emphatically opposed misguided moral judgments: “Take the plank out of your own eye,” he said, “before you try to get the speck out of someone else’s eye.” “You strain out gnats and swallow camels.” “The person who is without sin should throw the first stone.” In his parable of the Last Judgment, he identified the ultimate moral issue, namely, people’s responsiveness vs. unresponsiveness to the needs of the vulnerable.

Serious Christians, individually and collectively, should encourage their spiritual brothers and sisters living in caring same-sex erotic relationships to communicate not only their experiences of rejection and oppression especially within the community of faith, but also their hearing and understanding of Scripture, especially when that hearing and understanding differs from that of the larger community.

Serious Christians, individually and collectively, should encourage their congregations to welcome, affirm, and support persons who are engaged in morally appropriate same-sex relationships. Like their Master, these Christians should speak clearly and act courageously in behalf of those who are oppressed and marginalized by the larger society—even if, again like their Master, they evoke social hostility from persons inside and outside their communities of faith. In these and other ways Christians individually and collectively, Adventist and otherwise, can contribute to the realization of God’s program for all humanity and the actualization of God’s will “on earth as it is in heaven.” ▼



Homophobia and the Sabbath: Culture of Babylon vs. Grace of the Kingdom

John Elder, MA, MFT

The Sabbath is an institution of grace. It is sacred time that God gives every one of us each week. The word “sacred,” is the English translation of the Greek “aphorizein.” This was a combination of the preposition “apo,” meaning “beyond” or “away from,” and “horizein,” meaning “to limit.” “Horizein” is the root of our English word “horizon.” So “sacred” means “beyond the limits” or “beyond the horizon.”

Once each week, God invites us to step beyond our horizons, to transcend our limits, with the gift of the Sabbath, made for us. I cannot begin to imagine that first Sabbath day in Eden, that day when God “rested,” that day God first set apart. If the Sabbath was made for us (not we for the Sabbath), then perhaps it was made for God, too. After all, God set aside His seventh day, but it was only the first full day for Adam and Eve. They had nothing to rest from. I fantasize that this first Sabbath was when God stopped doing “God work” and played with His creation. Thus, Adam and Eve got to spend their first full day playing with their Creator. God stepped beyond the boundaries of doing divine work into the sacred time that he had created for humanity.

While imagining that first Edenic Sabbath may be an act of

fantasy, I do not have to imagine what contemporary Sabbath is like, living here in Babylon. Sabbath keeping is accepting the grace to step beyond our horizon—that is to step out of Babylon and into the kingdom of God for a day. God offers us the grace and fellowship of His kingdom. Babylon coerces us with its oppressive culture. God's kingdom values each and every person equally and infinitely. The sacred fact is that we are each infinitely precious, regardless of our achievements. In America, Babylon manifests as godless capitalism that values people as commodities, as resources to be exploited and strip mined. We gain our value from our ability to produce, consume, or provide spectacle to entertain. God values individuals in the multitude of their diversities. In Babylon, there is no respect for the individual, as an individual, only for the power to exploit. In Babylon, nothing is sacred, values change as quickly as a runway model's clothes. Babylon is angry, punitive, and judgmental; but the kingdom of God is based on love and acceptance through divine grace. No performance is required to achieve God's regard. God wants to play with us. Babylon urges us to work so that we can attain value.

Before proceeding to discuss “true Sabbath keeping,” I want to digress into a brief examination of power. First, let us briefly examine the power of Babylon, power-over. “Power-over enables one individual or group to make the decisions that affect others, and to enforce control.” This is not God's power—this is the power that God fights the great controversy to avoid wielding. Had God chosen to use power-over, there would have been no need for Jesus to die on the cross. God would have simply enforced His control and prevented sin from ever happening. True power is not enforcing control; it is the ability to function. It takes two forms: power-within and power-with. Power-within is closest to the Latin

“pot re”. Often we speak of “empowerment” in order to avoid confusion with the power-over of Babylon. In Babylonian new-speak, “power” has been stolen from the people and recast as tyranny, coercion, shame, and manipulation. “Although power-over rules the systems we live in [Babylon], power-from-within sustains our lives.” Phillipians 2:13 tells us “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” In Greek, “works in you” is *ho energon*, the root of our English word “energy.” God is the driving force within us, the Inworker, the Energy, and playing loose with physics terminology, the Power-within. And this connects directly to Sabbath keeping—our weekly playdate with God! When we exit Babylon's gate to encounter the Divine in sacred time, we recharge our Energizer, we increase our power-within. Sabbath keeping is empowerment. Power-with is the social power of the Church, the power of fellowship. “Koinonia is not primarily something that you do but rather signifies a state of affairs understood by the word ‘partnership’. It means sharing, belonging together, togetherness. Those who have become God's people by faith are joined at the deepest level. They have koinonia with Christ and with God.”

M. Scott Peck captures it well: If we are going to use the word [community] meaningfully, we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to “rejoice together, mourn together,” and to “delight in each other.” The existence of power-with, of koinonia, of community comes ultimately by the grace of God. It is the antithesis of the culture of Babylon. It finds its foundation in the Sabbath, in venturing beyond

the horizons of “networking” and hierarchical association. It comes when God's children gather together in His sacred time to honestly and eagerly play with Him.

When God finished creating the world, He saw that it was good. He celebrated the completion of creation by hallowing the Sabbath day. He shares that celebration with His children each Sabbath. Sabbath keepsers wake up the next day refreshed, their hopes renewed, their eyes locked on their Creator/Playmate. The Sabbath is a day of liberation. The creative and celebratory play that Sabbath keepsers engage in with God demands that they become co-creators. God has created a time of liberation for them; they must empower the liberation of others. In Isaiah 58 God calls us to join Him in this revolution! “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?”

True Sabbath keeping is setting the oppressed free, breaking the yokes with which Babylon enslaves our kindred. It is caring for the marginalized. Jesus amplifies this in Matthew 25, where He says, “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.’” Those who have kept the Sabbath by helping the marginalized go on to eternal life, but those who failed to act in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized will go away to eternal punishment. If we celebrate God's creative power, by His grace we will be filled with compassion for our oppressed comrades—an injury to one is an injury to all.

Babylon thrives on judgment and condemnation, for this reinforces its oppressive power while intimidating the oppressed into submission, shame, and inadequacy. The culture of Babylon is the anti-Sabbath. Babylon operates to marginalize and oppress God's children, by

using instruments of domination and power-over. Homophobia is a specific instrument of marginalization and oppression. Not only does it harm homosexuals within and without the church, but it also damages the soul of those suffering from homophobia.

At this point I need to say that I find it quite easy to get caught up in judgment myself. That judgment leads to anger and fear focused on those I believe to be bigoted or intolerant. I puff my chest out with pride that I am not so ignorant and hypocritical! Judgment, when practiced by humans, is an “I-it” relationship. The judge becomes estranged from the judged. Separation ensues, a rift in the community of the Kingdom. When I attempt to judge my fellow man, not only do I enact the culture of Babylon, but I abrogate Jesus' authority to judge.

Instead of judgment, let us practice discernment. Discernment is the process of exhibiting keen insight without loading condemnation into the equation. Keen insight includes empathy, which keeps discernment from becoming destructive. When we practice discernment, we respect and empathize with others. I discern that homophobia does not come from God. It destroys the practitioner, harms the target, and rends the church. Homophobia has the characteristics of Babylon. It is an attempt to dominate, to exert power-over, and to devalue God's precious children.

As the person suffering from homophobia enters the Sabbath, he or she begins to play with God. One characteristic of play is unselfconsciousness; if one enters into play with their Creator, they cannot continue to focus on the Babylonian values of insecurity and disgust. Playing means giving up the right to referee—and so judgment is abandoned. Celebration of creation requires an acceptance of what has been created. Thus, acceptance drives

out homophobia.

God calls for straight people to meet gay people where they are, and to love and accept them as they are. He calls for gay people to meet homophobic people as they are, and to love and accept them as they are. Homophobia is fear and insecurity, but “perfect love drives out all fear.” (1 Jn 4:18) God has given us the Sabbath day as a day to Play with Him by Celebrating with Him, by Liberating the captives of Babylon, by Congregating with our family members in Christ. The result of this can only be transformation by the renewing of our minds, all our minds. ▼

john@jelder.com

Sex and Race in the Last Sixty Years

Billy Glover

Anyone living in 1948 and living in 2006 will know that the views of people on race and orientation can change. Without ignoring all the work that earlier pioneers did on the issue, 1948 was a year that increased the speed on our journey down the road toward racial desegregation and laws forbidding homosexual acts.

In 1948 Dr. Alfred Kinsey's book on male sexuality shocked the nation about what we “really” do as opposed to what we “say” we do. In 1948 President Truman ordered the military to be racially integrated. These two events changed our nation. Others have contributed to the change; religiously, academically, legally, and medically. Our nation knows the names of Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Harry Hay, Dale Jennings, the NAACP, The Mattachine Society, Brown v Board of Education, Lawrence v Texas.

There can be no doubt that the people who ran our nation in 1948 would be shocked if they came back today. Even those who dreamed of the end of legal racial segregation and the end of the sodomy laws, would be surprised

to know that black men and women and homosexual men and women are now leaders in our universities, in our churches, in entertainment and occupy positions of power in all levels of government.

There are still those who try to impose their hate and fear of people who differ from them. I remember when those people organized boycotts of TV shows featuring black entertainers, such as Nat King Cole. Today they try to organize boycotts against Ford Motor Co for advertising for customers who are homosexual. Bigots try to prevent theaters from showing a film about two men trying to understand their sexuality; Brokeback Mountain.

But history has been written. Such attempts will fail. The car makers and movie producers are not in the vanguard trying to change our views; they are acknowledging what has already happened. ▼

Some Thoughts On Building Families

Elias Rowlandson

What is the accurate definition of a successful family? Is it having a million brothers and sisters? Is it being the favorite person either of your parents or your siblings? Is it finding happiness during childhood and when you become an adult? Most of us want to be liked and to be happy. The idea of having a million brothers and sisters is a personal subject; some people would love having a big family when others would not. Personally I would be overwhelmed by a large familial mob.

Our childhoods give us the lessons that affect how we build relationships for the rest of our lives. We can choose spouses who will spoil us rotten. We can pick partners who are medication or substance dependent. We can pick life long companions who are

healthy for us. We can pick ones who makes us miserable. Those of us with difficult pasts or parents often make it our goal to avoid being like them at all cost. It's a fine goal until we look in the mirror and face the truth that we're not so different at all.

As we raise our children we again promise ourselves that we will not repeat the mistakes we lived through. The arrival of our babies can elevate our worries about the success of our effort. Some people don't even try to have children because they are so concerned they will repeat family patterns. The Bible says that "family is a gift from God while we live in the world." Many cultures and individuals want to preserve their name on this planet. But, the Bible saying that family is a gift, does not mean that having one is a necessary practice. Ellen G. White makes the comment that it is an error to bring a child into the world if it impossible to offer them a secure upbringing.

Despite all of our experiences, choosing to have children is a statement of great hope and optimism. As you do so, nurture the energy it will take to raise your little ones. Build the time to spend with them. Make sure you have the resources to support them. Decide young if you want to build a family. Make your plans early to create a good and safe relationship with your partner or spouse and to use that relationship to nurture your family. ▼



A Letter to Mom

Carl Williams

I hope all is well with you. I have been thinking a lot about my childhood. I want to let you know that I feel badly about the pain you and Dad shared. I couldn't really pay attention at the time because I had enough on my own plate. I knew I was gay when I was fourteen years old. I accepted the fact when I was seventeen. Dad chose to hide it from you. Dad did not influence me to be gay. I do remember him being gone from home a lot when I was younger. I know it must have been a hurtful experience for you, knowing that your husband was gay. I hope you don't hold that against me, Mom. Even though I am gay that is only part of who I am. I am still the same loveable child you gave birth to and who will do anything for anyone who needs my help. Mom, there are worse things than being gay. I could be a murderer or a rapist.

There was a time when I was mad at Dad because he gave me a hard time about being gay. I was angry at him because I knew he was in the same boat I was. Then he tried to commit suicide because he couldn't handle all the turmoil in his life. I know this was just before you and he divorced. That hit me like a ton of bricks. When Dad came home from the hospital, he and I went out to breakfast and had a long talk. I told him I forgave him for giving me a hard time about being gay. I told him I knew how it was to have no one to talk to. I told Dad it is better to have a gay dad than no dad at all. You and he did the best that you could in raising us. We had nice clothes to wear, good food to eat, and a roof over our heads. We were taught to hold our heads high. Those are great gifts and I am glad that Dad and I found our way back to each other. We are both father and son and the best of friends.

Today, I have a wonderful partner named Victor. He is nice to

me. Like me, he is a great cook. Victor is from Puerto Rico and I enjoy eating his Spanish food. I have met his family. They are very nice and are very happy for Victor and me. I hope you will come over to meet him. I told him what a good cook you are. It is you, Grandmom, Aunt Mary and Aunt Carrieto that I need to thank for this love of cooking and food. Every time I go into the kitchen, Grandmom's memory lives on in the food I prepare. I am glad I had the chance to learn from her.

Even though things went wrong between you and dad, there were still many things about my childhood that made me happy. Most of my friends did not have a mom and dad in the same household. I am thankful for what both of you did for all of us. If I had a thousand tongues they would not be enough to tell you how grateful I am for you and Dad. I hope to see you soon. Please give me a call.

Love always.
Your son Carlton

Postnote: My mother responded. She told me that she loved me for who I am. She came to visit for the first time. She met my partner Victor and that went well. She brought my sister Kim, my baby sister Norma, my nieces Jessica and Lauren, my nephew Christopher and my great nephew William. ▼

To Your Health

Ren Reynolds

One thing that might assist many of us to more healthy living is eating more brown rice and fresh vegetables. We often do not get whole grains that are essential. We can sprinkle a little of the liquid amino acids on the rice instead of salt. That addition to our diet may be one thing all of us can easily do as a first step toward a healthier lifestyle; substitute the rice for potatoes three times a week or eat rice for breakfast or for your supper.

With this small change you might possibly see a bit of a weight loss too. Many of us would probably like that benefit. Oh, and remember an apple a day....

A note to many of you who have mentioned the number of people each recipe is supposed to serve; your suggestion that was mentioned to several editors of cookbooks. Perhaps one may be available before too long. Wouldn't that be nice; recipes for 2 to 4 people? Call editors and ask for this. You might also mention the need for larger print and my hope is that they take that option under consideration as well.

Pickle Publishing
www.pickle-publishing.com also has a vegetarian cookbook in which all ingredients are readily available about anywhere one lives. There are approximately 100 -150 recipes in this book for \$7.95 plus postage. ▼

Kinship News

Australia: Noel Thorpe

We would like to offer all of you a special invitation to attend our Kampmeeting Down Under the weekend of September 29-October 1. You will be able to meet more of our Kinship family, enjoy the incomparable Australian hospitality, gain a spiritual blessing, and be part of welcoming spring to our part of the world. We already have two wonderful speakers lined up. For more information and to register, contact Noel.

Brasil: Itamar Matoso

We would like to thank Ed Viera for translating Ben Kemena's paper: The Biological Determinants of Homosexual Behavior – Biology or Sin to Portuguese. We are printing it and distributing it here.

US Region 1 – Catherine Taylor

March 4 -We would like to invite you to join us at Sean Water's home in Boston for an 11

AM worship service led by Travis and Jeremy, potluck lunch, discussion of the Workshop on Adventism and Homosexuality, building the book that has been requested of us and then some adventures in Boston. For more information you can contact Catherine: katgurian@aol.com or for directions you can contact Sean: seanies@yahoo.com

US Region 8- Obed Vazquez-Ortiz

Our February 5th outing to the new de Young museum was smashing. A great group of us went to see a wonderful exhibit: "Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh". Our next meeting will be on March 11 in Martinez at Obed and Marcos' place. Lunch at 3pm and meeting 4-6. Our discussion will be centered on the video "In My Shoes: Stories of youth with LGBT parents".

Older Adults: Virginia Reynolds

I want to share with you some upcoming Live Web Seminars & Seminars

Registration fees include complementary continuing education credits, unless otherwise noted. Promoting Safety and Independence through Older Driver Wellness - (Note: This on-demand seminar is offered free of charge. Continuing education credits require additional payment.)

Psychosocial Issues, Assessment and Treating Interventions with Cluttering Behavior Reducing the Risk of Falling Among Community-Living Older Adults (Note: This seminar is free with a promotional coupon). For more information you can write to me at: Renone24@aol.com ▼

Need Extra Copies??

If you would like to have some "personal ministries" materials in the form of additional copies of the issues from the workshop on Homosexuality and the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Fred says you are welcome to contact the office at office@sdakinship.org and he will dispatch them to you. ▼

IS THE SDA CHURCH YOU ATTEND GAY FRIENDLY?

The Kinship office is frequently asked for referrals to gay friendly SDA churches. Unfortunately the list is VERY short and positive referrals too infrequent. If you are attending an SDA Church you would consider to be gay friendly, accepting, or at least tolerant, please email or write to the Kinship office with the name and address of the church (see page 15 for addresses). Additionally, if you know of an SDA Pastor who is open to LGBTIs for positive, affirming counseling, please write the name and email address of this pastor to the Kinship office. Kinship's list of gay friendly SDA churches and pastors is not published (denominational "don't ask, don't tell") but kept in the Kinship office for referral purposes. Thank you. ▼

Resources

Book: My Son Beloved Stranger by Carrol Grady

The book includes an additional final chapter highlighting her journey and understanding of the subject of homosexuality since the release of her original book written under the pseudonym of Kate McLaughlin

Video: Open Heart Open Hands

Both items have a synopsis of content as well as the pricing on the web page:
www.someone-to-talk-to.net/order.htm. They are also both available for order via the KOL web page. The easiest way to purchase is with PayPal. They can also be purchased by sending a check or money order to the Kinship office.

Ren would like to recommend another book for those who are struggling with the Biblical issues connected with being lesbian or gay. Trafford Publishing: A Biblical Defense Guide for Gays, Lesbians and Those Who Love

connection ▼

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

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Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

Them has been recommended by PFLAG and can be found at <http://www.trafford.com/4dcgi/view-item?item=10043>.

Carrol Grady has suggested Fifth Generation: Spiritual Treasures of Mature Adventism by John McLarty (who was at the Menucha Kampmeeting several years ago). ▼

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! And Write Ye!!!! Please.

This is a call for your stories. A representative from Pacific Press Publishing Association has asked us to submit a book that talks about our lives. The four focus topics are based on developmental stages: 1) Sensitization -- I'm different

2) Identity Confusion -- Could I be gay?

3) Identity Assumption -- I know I'm gay

4) Commitment -- I'm okay being gay and telling others

Inside of that I think readers would like to hear your ideas or experiences on: your history as a Seventh Day Adventist, your school experiences, wrestling with the scriptures or any efforts to change your orientation, building relationships, building community, your relationship with the church now, your relationship with God now, mentors that you have had along the way. We would like to make sure to hear from some of you in long term relationships as well as the rest of us. And and and....we want to make sure that this is a book that shares the stories of our international members. We want to hear experiences from Africa, Asia Australia, Europe, North America, and South America. Catherine is helping to edit this adventure and is looking forward to hearing from you: Katgurian@aol.com ▼



Kinship Kampmeeting in Kampala, Uganda April 1-2

Spirituality, Fellowship, News from Africa, Planning our Work.
For more information and to register:
Contact kkindu2001@yahoo.com

Mini-Kampmeeting in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware USA April 21-23

Friday evening Crafts, Supper, Vespers and Fellowship
Sabbath Speaker: Zack Platnk
For more information and to register: Contact ysellott@aol.com



European Kinship Meeting in Gudhem, Sweden July 14 - 17 with holiday options afterwards!



Bed and breakfast or Hotel Olaf. Walks, roses, spiritual growth, building our community, prayers and laughter. Enjoy the midnight sun.
For more information or to register you can find us at Kinship on Line or contact: reino.kullko@telia.com

MY SON, BELOVED STRANGER

A book by Carrol Grady

New edition, April 2005

How can this type of thing happen to an Adventist family???

Carrol choked down a few bites of salad, then got up and wandered aimlessly through the house.... At last, with great difficulty, she forced herself to face the terrible question. Is it possible that her son could be a homosexual? The question, with all its implications, reverberated in her mind.... Is he eternally lost? Will he die of AIDS? Could we have done something to prevent it? Why? Why? WHY?

An occasional shuddering breath was all that remained of her tears as one last question filled her mind.

What has this been like for her son?





NO ONE LIKE YOU CELEBRATING UNIQUENESS

27th Seventh-Day Adventist Kinship Kampmeeting Registration
Orlando, Florida - 2-9 July 2006 - San Pedro Center

No One Like You Celebrating Uniqueness Kampmeeting is going to guide you in the process of recognition and affirmation that you yourself are a great piece of art made by God. Being unique and extremely valuable is not about your sexual orientation, the color of your skin, your degree, your job, your bank account (or not having one), your age, your gender, your family name, the good things you have done, or even the bad ones. It is about the love that God feels for you, about the love you feel for yourself and the love that we feel for each other. It is the celebration of the richness that you are - unmistakable, irreplaceable, unequalled. Most of all, this Kampmeeting is going to be about the love you deserve and have the right to demand.



This is going to be a time to strengthen your bonds and create new ones. We are going to have people from everywhere in America and around the world. And one of the great things at Kampmeeting is to notice the many times we can understand exactly what someone else is trying to say and, that others can also perfectly relate to our experiences.

What's more is that many professionals are been invited to speak and will be available to talk to you if you need, such as psychologists, physicians, therapists, pastors, teachers and so on.



Keep in mind we are going to be in Orlando, where innumerable attractions can satisfy all tastes and expectations, such as Magic Kingdom Park, Sea World Adventure Park, Universal Studios, Disney MGM Studios, Arabian Nights, Cirque du Soleil, Disney's Blizzard Beach, Disney's Typhoon Lagoon Water Park, Epcot Theme Park, Holy Land Experience, and a great number of rainbow friendly places spread throughout the city, just a few minutes from San Pedro Center, where the best of all experiences is going to happen.

This celebration is not going to be the same without you because we know that You Are Unique. Let's go to Orlando.

Search for the registration that is available at www.sdakinship.org. That is no reason to be left out, scholarships are available, make your request if you need, we are going to consider everyone carefully.