

# CONNECTION

Kampmeeting  
Edition



A PUBLICATION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST KINSHIP INTERNATIONAL, INC.







*This is the Kampmeeting edition of Connection Magazine. Kampmeeting is SDA Kinship's annual conference where we come together to renew friendships, make new friends, enjoy entertainment, renew our faith, and more. Our 2018 Kampmeeting was hosted in Baltimore, Maryland, United States.*



## SUMMER MEMORIES

***Do you remember those yearly reports you had to do in school? Write about what you did this summer. Well, here's mine: I got to spend time with my family this summer.***

*You may be thinking, All right. Good for you... so what?*

But I'm not talking about my biological or legal family. I'm talking about my chosen family: Kinship. I love both my families, but Kinship is where I'm able to be authentically me.

For the first time, I decided to go all in and sign up for the Women's Retreat before Kampmeeting. I'm so glad I did, because I met many wonderful people and created memories I will treasure. We did a lot of things you'd expect, such as eating chocolate and ice cream and swapping life stories. We also made time for more unexpected experiences, like visiting an art museum and watching fireworks explode over a farmer's field.

If you've been around Kinship before, you know we love to laugh. Women's Retreat is no exception. Laughter was a constant companion, joining us as we played card games, pieced together puzzles, and broke bread together.

Then it was time for Kampmeeting with its speakers and stories. This year, the speakers were exceptional and I appreciated everything I learned from the seminars. Our keynote speaker's willingness to share his personal story and struggles was powerful. Community is built from vulnerability, and his story brought a sense of sacredness to the room. Another highlight was speaker and author Kathy Baldock, who took us on a journey through the history of LGBTIQ issues in the United States. We also got a taste of what members of our community experience in other contexts, namely in African nations or as refugees or immigrants. It was a good reminder that our community is widespread. While each of us has a unique path, we can share the journey together as a family.

Interspersed among the seminars were long walks and talks with friends—many of whom I only see once a year. One of my best memories was the Sabbath afternoon barbecue. I went from group to group talking and reconnecting with old friends.

Looking back, I'm so glad I chose to attend Women's Retreat and Kampmeeting. It was a special time! Kinship is a crazy, diverse, beautiful family, and I'm proud to call them mine.

*PS If you haven't attended a Kinship Kampmeeting yet, I encourage you to come in 2019!*

Ellen  
Henderson





*Kampmeeting: No shortage of laughter.*



*Communion*



Kampmeeting is SDA Kinship's annual conference where we come together to renew friendships, make new friends, enjoy entertainment, renew our faith, and more.

This, our 40th Annual Kampmeeting takes place July 10-13, 2019, at the Red Lion Hotel On The River - Jantzen Beach, Portland, Oregon, United States; Men's Mingle, July 8-10; and our Women & Children First Retreat is July 6-10.

Portland, Oregon's largest city, sits on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, in the shadow of snow-capped Mount Hood. It's known for its parks, bridges, and bicycle paths, as well as for its eco-friendliness and its microbreweries and coffeehouses.

Iconic Washington Park encompasses sites from the formal Japanese Garden to Oregon Zoo and its railway. The city hosts thriving art, theater, and music scenes.

**EARLY BIRD RATES, DISCOUNTS, ACCOMMODATIONS  
AND OTHER INFO AT [SDAKINSHIP.ORG/KAMPMEETING](https://sdakinship.org/kampmeeting)**





**Cameron Whitten**



**Dr. Bryan Ness**



**David Brooks**



**Dr. Douglas Edwards**



**Dr. Sylvia Rhue**



**John McLarty**

GET MORE INFO ABOUT THE FEATURED SPEAKERS AT OUR  
40TH ANNUAL KAMPMEETING AT [SDAKINSHIP.ORG/KAMPMEETING](https://SDAKINSHIP.ORG/KAMPMEETING)



*Kampmeeting 2018 speakers Kumar Dixit, Marpheen Chan, and Elyse Ambrose*



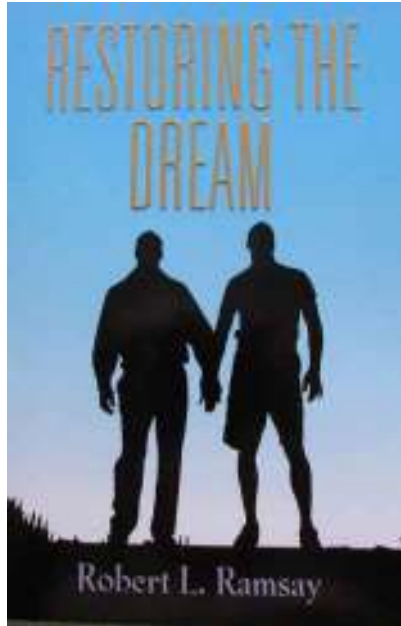


Give OUT Day is the ONLY national day of giving for the LGBTQ community – a 24-hour online fundraising event that unites the LGBTQ community from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and D.C. to raise critically needed funds. Throughout the day-long event, thousands of people make gifts to support a vast array of LGBTQ nonprofits across the country, ranging from the arts to social services agencies, advocacy groups to sports leagues, community centers to health care nonprofits.





# SDA Kinship's Robert L. Ramsay Publishes Book



Life is unfolding like a dream for graduate student, Marc LaChance. In his final year at university, student housing pairs him with Howard Hildebrandt. Howard is built like a linebacker, Marc's dream of what a real man should look like. He discovers that Howard shares his minority affectional orientation, and the two men become lovers.

Looking forward to graduation, they plan to escape Winnipeg's cold, prairie winters by moving to Vancouver, British Columbia. They imagine their life on the Pacific coast: a house with an ocean view, winter weekends skiing Grouse Mountain, and summers sailing the Salish Sea.

At spring reading break, they make an exploratory trip to Vancouver. Marc

obtains an interview with a suburban school district and is promised a teaching position in September. If Howard can land an engineering job on the coast, their dream will be realized.

Marc's happiness is shattered when Howard tramples their dream into the prairie dust by accepting an engineering position in Winnipeg. His conservative religious upbringing tells him that men who love men will burn in hellfire forever. The guilt over his relationship with Marc is making him sick. He has no choice but to break it off.

Twenty-five years later, disillusioned with his lonely life on the coast, Marc returns to the prairies. He reconnects with his former lover, but learns that Howard, after undergoing reparative therapy, plans to marry a woman.

Will Marc win Howard back before he makes the biggest mistake of his life.

Further to the above, one of the characters, Howard, attends a year-long reparative therapy clinic in Pomona, California. In doing research, I read the Ron Lawson reports on Colin Cook and also spoke with men at a GCN conference who had undergone reparative therapy.

Rather than hold the Adventist church up to ridicule, I "invented" the Tabernacle of Believers' Assembly (TBA). The good old TBA had a prophet, Brother Tingley (Ellen White) (who also makes an appearance in one of my short stories).

Robert lives in White Rock, British Columbia and has been a Kinship member since the 1980s, having heard of Kinship's existence via a local cable television program in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It was an interview style program called *Coming Out*, hosted by Chris Vogel, one of the first gay activists in Canada. The closing credits included a list of gay Christian organizations such as Dignity (gay Catholic). "I almost fell off the chair when I saw SDA Kinship on the list." He wrote to the TV station to get Kinship's address, then contacted Ben Pickell, one of Kinship's founders. "I was sent a newsletter and a list of members. The closest one was Gary Stebbes in Wisconsin. He and I became good friends. We chatted by telephone every Friday evening until he passed away a couple years ago."

I wanted to find Kinship members closer to where I lived so using my own name and contact information, I naively placed an ad for Kinship in my local newspaper. Within days of it appearing I was summoned to appear in the pastor's office. I was asked to recant my belief that gay relationships are right and accepted by God or resign my membership. I refused both requests. I had to hand in my church keys: no more piano playing for the children's divisions, no more leading discussion in an adult SS class, no more choir practice and organ playing. (But, please continue to attend church, even though we've disfellowshipped you.)

I quit attending within a few weeks and except for occasional attendance at Adventist churches where pastors are informed and friendly, I worship in churches of other denominations.

Currently I play organ for Christ Alive Community Church in Vancouver, British Columbia.



*Restoring the Dream* is available on Amazon.

*Kampmeeting Portraits*





TO OUR METHODIST  
FRIENDS: WE  
UNDERSTAND. WE  
SHARE YOUR  
FRUSTRATION

On Tuesday, February 26, 2019, the United Methodist Church (UMC) voted in a special session of the General Conference (their top legislative body) to adopt the “Traditional Plan” which sought to strengthen enforcement of the denomination’s homosexuality prohibitions. It was passed by a vote of 438-384.

This special session of the UMC, the second largest protestant denomination in the United States, was the result of a 2018 report of a commission established by the Council of Bishops (COB) to review their *Book of*

*Discipline*, a fundamental book that outlines the denomination's law, doctrine, and procedures. The result of that commission, endorsed by the COB, was called the “One Church Plan” which would have allowed accommodations for same-sex marriage and LGBTIQ clergy. Currently, only celibate LGBTIQ members are permitted to be ordained.

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, an advocacy community for LGBTIQ individuals with a Seventh-day Adventist connection, has been paying close attention to proceedings of the UMC session.



THIS IS ANOTHER STAND-UP-AND-  
CLAP, SIT-DOWN-AND-CRY MOMENT

Our denominations share many similarities, including the presence of influential conservative groups that strongly oppose affirmation, opportunities, and treatment. This was reflected in the UMC session that featured impassioned and emotionally charged speeches from both sides.

We want to highlight the words of Rev. Byron Thomas who compared the issue to the church's earlier handling of racial segregation within the denomination. Thomas, in his impassioned speech, quoted the late Bishop Thomas of North Carolina: “In 1939 the UMC was trying to figure out what to do with black people. At that GC...the white folk stood up and clapped and the black folk sat down and

cried.” This is another stand-up-and-clap, sit-down-and-cry moment, according to Rev. Thomas. We agree.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” On the 26th day of African-American History Month, we sat down and cried in solidarity with our LGBTIQ friends and allies in the United Methodist Church.

Tomorrow, we stand up and continue our work in solidarity and unison to move that arc towards justice for LGBTIQ Christians. Justice will come.

# Rehoboth

## MINI-KAMPMEETING

***Come, enjoy the fun,  
fellowship and  
adventures of what is  
Mini-Kampmeeting.***

This annual pre-kampmeeting meetup takes place in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware this May 2-5, 2019.

The cost for accommodations at our beach house (Thursday afternoon thru Sunday morning) is \$140 per person and includes breakfast on Saturday and Sunday only.

You are responsible for all other meals. The cost is \$80 if not staying at the beach house.

Space is limited.



**RSVP**

[sdakinship.org/rehoboth-minikm](http://sdakinship.org/rehoboth-minikm)



*Kampmeeting: No shortage of time for fellowship, to catch up with and make new friends.*



# JOIN SDA KINSHIP

***You can join Kinship's Online Community today!***

Membership is free and all your information is kept confidential.

Visit [sdakinship.org](http://sdakinship.org) for details on connecting with people just like you, or send an email to Member Services at [memberinfo@sdakinship.org](mailto:memberinfo@sdakinship.org) for details on being a member of SDA Kinship.







# A miracle called Colombia



***Colombia is a South American country with a diversity of regions and beautiful landscapes. This diversity is also observed in its people, both in the ethnic and sexual diversity.***

Three years ago Kinship Colombia was organized with a small group in the city of Bogotá. Today we have two additional groups in the cities of Medellín and Cartagena with close to 50 members.

In 2018 we managed to work on diverse fronts carrying out a number of activities in the three cities, serving current and former Adventists, their friends and families.

Last August, Kinship Colombia hosted an event for LGBTIQ children who come together every year to talk about their experience and build friendships. The theme was *Family the Best Place to Grow*.

In addition, we have healthy living programs that include ecological walks and vegetarian cooking courses to promote healthier lifestyles for our friends and members.

Under our the ecology programs, 100 trees were planted in the city of

Bogotá; and workshops on diversity, art, and economic entrepreneurship were given to our members in the different cities.

Kinship Colombia finished 2018 delivering a total of 300 gifts to children of limited resources in the city of Bogotá and provision of books for a school in the province of Santander.



In December we were recognized for our work with the *San Sebastian Award* for best organization that promotes spirituality in LGBTIQ people.



*Kampmeeting: Affirmation*



# FEELINGS & EMOTIONS



CARING WORDS  
FROM JOHN &  
CAROLYN WILT -  
FAMILY & FRIENDS  
COORDINATORS

***Feelings are the world's universal language. Do you have feelings? Do you know where they come from? Or what caused them? Do they impact your life? Are they important to you and your life?***

YES should have been your answer for every question. Our feelings are us. They reflect where we are emotionally at the time we felt them. And if you think a moment about feelings, have you noticed that everyone has them no matter who they are or where they are? People around the world laugh in the same way. They giggle or explode with laughter when something funny occurs in their sight or mind or hearing. We also cry and feel bad when something sad happens in our lives.

Each of us, as a person, is impacted daily by our feelings. Our feelings are also alive and well in our relationships with others and their relationship with us. Our partners, our families, our friends, and our enemies all generate feelings when we interact, some great, some just good, some sad, and some really create anger and hate. That's us. That's our feelings. And to live better lives, have better relationships and better family communication, we need to understand where feelings come from. We need to understand what they mean to each of us.

Our feelings are us. Just like my brain is me. I am my brain. My feelings are me. I am my feelings. Some folks don't agree when we share those

statements on a marriage encounter weekend. But over 40 years and several hundred weekends we have personally watched thousands of husbands and wives discover their feelings, learn to share and accept each other's feelings, and often see their acceptances of each other. Their understandings of each other become acceptable and even desired as they personally learned how to find feelings, share feelings safely, build safe communication bridges between each other, and bond together in loving support.

Marriage encounter basically focuses on husbands and wives, but we urge them to share their new communication tools with their children, and we've had many share how successful their family communications became. Carolyn and I believe very strongly and emotionally that these tools will be very useful for our Kinship members and their families. We want to teach and share about feelings, emotions, and personalities, creating safe bridges of communication within a family, with the goal of helping all family members understand and connect with all their willing family members. Our family communication workshop is almost ready for use.

Let's stop a few minutes and chat about feelings. What are feelings? Our Adventist theologian taught they were right and wrong, correctable good ones and devil-imposed bad ones. Our pastors had a difficult time accepting the real fact that "feelings are an instantaneous reaction to a person, place, or

situation." They are not right or wrong! They are how our brains react to various stimulus.

Feelings and their companion emotions are a new, vibrant topic being discovered in all relationships. Imagine a world without feelings! There would be no glue to bind humans together; life would be colorless and isolated. It was an honor to spend time with our Kenya Kinship members at Kampmeeting last summer. We laughed and cried over the same topics, over the same successes and challenges. Sharing feelings was a common communication tool that worked smoothly and successfully. We laughed and hugged throughout the Kampmeeting as they shared their journeys. Feelings are the same worldwide; languages are not.

Let's learn about our feelings. Some of us must search for them. Others have them handy and visible. Let's become comfortable finding them and sharing them. We can all grow stronger, visible, and successful in our desire and goal to enrich families, especially new families, as they find our Kinship path and join our journey.

Look forward to hearing from anyone with their feelings, thoughts, suggestions, and comments.

*John & Carolyn Wilt - Family & Friends Coordinators  
family-friends@sdkinship.org*





## *We have some great news for Kinship members who are 65+. Kinship Seniors!*

*We have a new Facebook group just for you to talk and discuss things that are relevant to you!*

*Taylor Ruhl has volunteered to be the coordinator for this new group and we are excited about this new supportive community.*

*If you have (or will soon) achieve the age of 65 or older, please let me know that you want me to add you to this Facebook group, please send an email to [info@sdakinship.org](mailto:info@sdakinship.org).*

## *SDA Kinship Welcomes Interim Director of Youth Interests*

*Last December, we welcomed Peter Reynold as our Interim Director of Youth Interests. Peter is a native of China, currently studying in Ohio, United States. "We are excited to have him and his enthusiasm join the leadership team and work to help promote Kinship's mission worldwide," said Floyd Poenitz, Kinship's Vice President.*

*Peter takes on the role previously held by Scott Bird who graciously served in the position for six months. Scott, in his departure, shared his appreciation for Kinship with these words: "I know Kinship will continue to be a light to others around the globe just as it was for me. Your work is invaluable. It is honorable. And it is so, so worth it." The board of directors wishes Scott well.*



## THE REST OF THE READING STORY



### A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

If you are reading my story for the first time and you feel you are missing some context, I suggest you start at the beginning with the May 2015 issue of *Connection* magazine. Why am I writing my story in such detail? In short, I am answering questions while hoping to educate. Over the years, I have been asked the same questions over and over by friends, family, and church members. The answers to those questions are found in different decades of my life. I'm grateful to *Connection Magazine* for giving me this space to share my story. Publishing as I write is a great motivator!

DISCLAIMER: The material in this chapter deals with sensitive issues with respect to the author's experience when he was in counseling with Mr. Cook. Some may find this section upsetting. At the same time, the author would like to stress that these events were in 1982 and that a lot of time has passed since then. The author has a long history with Mr. Cook. Over the last couple of years, he has been in contact with Mr. Cook about these incidents. This, however, is for a later chapter.

---

***When I previously described my first visit with Colin (Cook), I indicated I had had a very positive experience. In fact, there were multiple benefits. I arrived in Reading hoping to be known on a deeply personal level; I was not to be disappointed. I bared my soul in ways I had never done before. I began to purge twenty years of shame, self-condemnation, and emotional isolation.***

That I was able to speak freely about my attractions without being a depraved freak—an abomination punishable by death—was life-giving. However, not everything about the visit was healthy.

On several occasions, usually during our formal counseling sessions, Colin initiated lengthy and affectionate hugs. As a touch-deprived 26-year-old, I welcomed the affection, but I was startled when he became aroused. When that happened, I was uncomfortable.

Colin didn't pretend he wasn't excited. On the contrary, he casually acknowledged it. He very comfortably talked about things which most people would go red in the face over. I found his frankness helpful even disarming. It seemed logical to me that a counselor would be at ease discussing such things. As Colin talked about what had occurred, my discomfort subsided. Then he used the situation as a teaching moment—a moment to model how “I” might respond in similar situations. This “desensitization” training was somewhat unnecessary because only once in my life had I ever had an erection while hugging a male friend, and Colin knew this from our conversations. I had, however, often felt betrayed by emotional longings and fantasies when in very close proximity to male friends. I think, however, that Colin was projecting his own erotic experience onto me, and therefore hoped I could learn to relax when such “stirrings” occurred.

A second “therapeutic” exercise took me well beyond my comfort level. During our conversations, I confessed that I had always felt uncomfortable in my body. Although I knew many confident guys who were my size, at 5' 6" tall and all of 120 pounds, I felt very small, and I looked young for my age—not that that bothers me now that I'm in my sixties! During our conversations, Colin also learned that I felt “inadequate” in other ways.

In response to my disclosure of my body image issues, Colin suggested an exercise meant to help me affirm the body God had given me. He encouraged me to stand in front of a mirror in the privacy of my own room

—naked—and express gratitude for all my body—especially those parts I did not like or felt deficient in. It was difficult to dismiss the benefit of letting go of my obsessive bashfulness or resentment over aspects of my body when Colin had, because of childhood polio, body issues of his own.

I was deeply touched when he shared his discomfort and embarrassment over being teased because of a leg marred by polio. I wondered how I would have dealt with this when growing up. If he could learn to praise God for this very visible condition, surely I could learn to appreciate my body which was untouched by polio. As well, he told me that acceptance of my body was part of reclaiming my heterosexuality. If his counsel had stopped there, it might well have passed the scrutiny of peers. It went well beyond that, however. Perhaps because I expressed embarrassment about trying the exercise on my own, Colin persuaded me to do it with him in his home. By the time we had finished praising God for my body, we were both naked.

I felt extremely awkward during that “counseling” session. While I took comfort that another man was reassuring me that I need not worry about being inadequate—that things were fine just as they were—I felt a significant conflict between my longing for affirmation and a nagging sense that this seemed professionally inappropriate.

**READ THE REST  
OF THE STORY AT**  
<http://bit.ly/journeych18>



*Kampmeeting Portraits*





***Join us for an unforgettable spiritual experience September 5-9, 2019 at the stunningly beautiful seaside retreat Othona in West Dorset, set in beautiful countryside. Wake up to birdsong in the woods and fall asleep to the sound of the waves on the beach below.***

The historic market town of Dorchester (birthplace of world-famous author Thomas Hardy) and the seaside resort of Weymouth are nearby. The beach is part of the Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage Site that stretches from Exmouth in East Devon to Studland Bay in Dorset. The county boasts picture-perfect English villages with thatched cottages and breathtakingly beautiful scenery.

There are good public transport links to Weymouth, and Othona is only a few miles away. Both Southampton and Bristol airports are nearby, serving most European cities with budget flights. In addition, the two big international London airports (Heathrow and Gatwick) are only three hours away. The airports all have good bus and train connections.

Day trips to London, Winchester, Salisbury (the world famous Stonehenge is nearby) and Brighton (the UK's gay capital) are all possible. The local area is rich in natural beauty and offers plenty of opportunities for country walks and relaxation.



Prices start from only €309 (Euros) per person (with our Early Bird Discount). The price includes all meals, and Othona provides wholesome home cooking with vegetarian and vegan options. Accommodation is mainly in twin rooms (two single beds), but a number of single and family rooms are also available.

We will also be welcoming the Sabbath with a Messianic Jewish Service called "Kabbalat Shabbat," led by a Kinship member who is a gay Messianic Jew.

Further information about the venue can be found [othonawestdorset.org.uk](http://othonawestdorset.org.uk).

We are expecting demand to be heavy, so book NOW to avoid disappointment. Places are allocated strictly on a first come, first served basis.

Booking and more information: [sdakinship.org/ekm](http://sdakinship.org/ekm)





# Support the mission of **SDA Kinship**:

- Donate **Online**: [sdakinship.org/give](https://sdakinship.org/give)
- Donate by **Mail**: PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563 USA
- Donate by **Shopping**: [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)



©2019 SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST KINSHIP INTERNATIONAL, INC.

PO BOX 244  
ORINDA, CA 94563 USA  
[WWW.SDAKINSHIP.ORG](http://WWW.SDAKINSHIP.ORG)

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