

connection

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Who we are...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. (Kinship) is a nonprofit support organization which ministers to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbian, gay men, bisexual, and transgendered individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBT 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 501a(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 20 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.

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Kinship Netherlands: one member!

Ruud Kieboom, European Editor

It must be somewhere in the end of the eighties that I found out about Kinship through a leaflet that was sent to me by a girlfriend who moved from the Netherlands to the United States. She belonged to a group of close friends with whom I had my first coming-out experience.

As the US seemed so far from where I was living I didn't write to Kinship, but kept the leaflet for future use. It was not until I discovered Kinship on the Internet, and understood its international character that I considered becoming a member.

Thought it doesn't have to be tough to live as a gay/lesbian adventist in The Netherlands, it still takes some courage (for most) to out for the first time. There is always a certain wall one has to climb over, not always built up by fellow church members, but often built up in one's own mind!

This was the case in my situation: I was afraid that some of my best friends in church wouldn't accept my orientation. But to my surprise most did! (And some "knew" already that I must be gay!) And those who didn't think I took the right decision (not to change) accepted me anyway and nobody turned his back to me or tried to change me.

The only members that didn't accept me as a gay, never told me so to my face. By chance I discovered they had sent a letter to the local church board in which they complained that an openly gay man was an active member in the congregation. When they didn't succeed they appealed to the national church board. I also happened to see the national church board answer to their complaint. I treasure this letter to this very day!

No condemnation whatsoever. They never argued about my orientation, on the contrary they only wrote about my positive contribution to the welfare of the congregation. They returned the 'case' to the

local congregation, because that was the authority to decide on my functioning in the church as a person.

Since then, my well being in the church has greatly improved. I don't work for the church to prove my dedication anymore (as a gay guy), but because I feel loved as the person I was/am.

My decision to stay in the church as a gay man despite the negative attitude of the world SDA church organization is, that I want to help those who dare not yet be out openly. I want as many as possible to know that I am gay and adventist. Not for my self, but for other hidden lesbians and gays, that they know that there is somebody they can talk to if they feel a need, if they are ready for it. Only two persons (women) have, and I encouraged them to be who they are.

The Dutch church magazine Advent, has published two articles I have written. One was a reaction to a negative opinion-article that brought up all prejudices about homosexuality; the second, a report on the European Kinship Meeting in Sweden last year. The first article received several positive and negative

reactions; but the second non at all!

In the last article I also wrote about my efforts to start a Kinship chapter in The Netherlands and the address of the website of Kinship was mentioned. But... up till now I haven't had any sign of anybody who wants to become a member!

During a meeting of HAD (Kinship Germany) a pastor asked me why there is no chapter in The Netherlands, as it is such a liberal country in this aspect?

The answer is in the question I think: because The Netherlands, and maybe because of that also our church here, is liberal and open (at least not anti!) about a gay/lesbian orientation. So that there is no reason for most people to fight against prejudices, to start a support group, because they simply feel no oppression from the church in general and the local congregation in special.

So, maybe it is not such a bad sign that there is still only one member after one and a half years of talking and publishing. After all, I became member of Kinship more than fifteen years after I first heard of the organisation. So I think I have to wait more patiently...

European Kampmeeting

Ruud Kieboom, Europe

What would you think of meeting some Romans? At Kijkduinpark Holiday Centre near The Hague in the Netherlands you'll be at just the right place to do that.

The Romans settled in Kijkduinpark eighteen-hundred years ago. From October 10 to 13, 2003 we will have our second European Kinship Meeting (EKM2) right on that spot, in a four-star bungalow park, in one or more dune villas.

Both Europeans and non-Europeans are welcome to join the meeting. It will start on Friday evening (arrival from late afternoon onwards) and end on Sunday evening (departure Monday morning).

Kinshippers from Germany, England, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands are already planning to participate. I am confident that other European members will want to attend, and we hope that some from the US will join as well.

Notes from readers

Pindoc, KinNet

I have placed a couple ads in Just Out, a regional GLBTI newspaper. Today I got a call from someone at the paper. They have never written about Kinship in JO and would like to do an article! Wow, what do I do next?

Wow. Did I already say that?

Lynn,
Thanks for the wonderful news! Robb Crouch is the public relations coordinator for Kinship. Robb also does public relations for a living, and is very comfortable in dealing with the press. He will need the details of how to contact Just Out. His e-mail is: region6@sdakinship.org

Karen, Region 7

In receiving the March issue of "Connection", I was particularly drawn to the "Gay and Lesbian Seventh-day Adventists: Strategies and outcomes of resisting homosexuality".

Words cannot express the positive impact that article had for me. I grew up in a loving SDA home and went all the way from 1st grade through 4 years of college at SDA schools. To read the pain and misery other SDA's went through with their struggle of being gay! I can really relate to all of these struggles. I just thought I wasn't strong enough or a good enough Christian.

My parents and my brother's family are very committed to the SDA way of life and my lifestyle has been a huge burden to them. While they love me as a daughter, there is no relationship with them because anything to do with my lifestyle is not tolerated.

Thank you for your article! The load of guilt I've been carrying has been lifted. I know Jesus loves me just the way I am

Lila the Great

Thank-you for sending Edna and I the information package. I was very thrilled to receive it, since I am a former S.D.A. Edna is Catholic, and I'm very happy that she has a wonderful relationship with God. We received the package the day before our 3-year anniversary. Three years and we still like each

Kinship unveils new logo

Robb Crouch, Public Relations

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship announces its new logo, designed to help communicate its 24-year-old mission and outreach to gay Seventh-day Adventists.

"If there's one thing we hope the new logo does, that is to let others know that Kinship exists to provide a safe and inclusive place for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people—along with their friends and family—who may feel they aren't welcomed other places," President Bob Bouchard said.

Robb Crouch, public relations director, said Kinship is excited that its new logo "communicates some important messages about us, because we're not always given the opportunity to do that face-to-face."

According to Crouch, the logo was created to share the following about its mission:

- Kinship is a place for Seventh-day Adventists of all backgrounds to join together, especially including those who may have been hurt

or rejected by the Seventh-day Adventist Church because of their Creator-given sexuality.

- Kinship is a loving, inclusive organization that embraces people and their Creator-given differences. Like the embraces and support many members provide their Kinship family, the image reflects this hospitable nature and characteristic.
- Kinship believes all people have access to the cross upon which our Savior died and that no one is denied the salvation it represents. Kinship believes Christ died for all people regardless of their sexual orientation and that no one is denied God's love and grace.
- The inverted triangle is a common image used by the gay community to represent solidarity, and here represents Kinship's important work within the gay community.

The new logo represents Kinship's

ongoing efforts to improve its visibility. It published a new Web site last year, promoted a toll free number and began once again to advertise in targeted gay media.

Its efforts are helping reach more people, Bouchard said. "We're reaching many more people, which is exciting. On average, 12 people inquire about Kinship through our new communication channels each week, and many decide to become members. We sent out 36 new member welcome packets in the last month alone."

Kinship members Kevin Gepford of New York City and Robb Crouch of Lincoln, Neb., assisted with the logo project along with graphic designer Sarah Webber of Lincoln. A suite of printed office materials were also created for Kinship.



other!!!!(smile) Often, it seems, people are in relationships and can say they love each other but they do not like each other.

The love that Edna and I have for each other is a continual growing love. It amazes me that some people think that God is not with us due to our orientation. Our friends can see by our actions towards one another that we have a strong loving relationship. Truly, actions do speak louder than words.

I haven't read the entire package that you sent because I was too excited! I wanted to get on-line and request that you send a similar package to my cousin Cindy. She was recently baptized in the S.D.A. church and she is very interested in SDA kinship. However, she doesn't have a computer to receive e-mails.

Thank-you again for the packet of information. I want to show it to all my SDA friends, what few I have left. I was disillusioned at a young age

and thought that the church loved me unconditionally like God did...boy was I wrong, but that is a whole other e-mail.

Steve Pline, Editor

It appears I am still human as there was another mistake in the last Connection. SDA-FFLAG (Seventh-day Adventist Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) was mistakenly referenced as FFLAG. My apologies.

On a more positive note, thanks for a great year. 5 issues and 60 pages later, we've accomplished what we set out to do this year with the Connection. Thanks for all of your support and please send the next editors loads of pictures and poems, artwork and articles.

SDA Kinship is a blessing. My birth family and church family may still exclude me, but the Kinship family continues to be here for you and for me. Thanks for being here.

Supreme thanks

Max Hess & Celeste McCollough

Dear Lawrence amici,

Today, the U.S. Supreme Court protected the private lives of gay Americans. This is a smashing victory!

This ruling, and your role in bringing it about, are cause for celebration for multitudes of people. Finally, we have the promise of fair and equal treatment for all Americans for generations to come.

This victory would not have been possible but for the countless hours your group and others like it have devoted every day over years of time in helping the American people understand the humanity of the persons involved. We know that many will be grateful for all you have done. Please accept our prayer of thanks and blessing.

The woman of my dreams

Pearl Pangkey, Region 7

I thank the Maker of the stars for His amazing grace.
It seems that I've looked high and low, but could not see her face.
The face of one who'd cherish me in happy times or sad,
One who accepts my many faults and often says, "Be glad..."
"Be glad for all that life has brought to make your life complete:
Family, friends, good health and food, and for this chance to meet."
I'd never thought I'd meet someone who'd love me just for me.
Someone who'd look into my eyes and see what I can't see.
I've found the woman of my dreams, the one I've waited for.
She's everything my heart desires, all that and even more.
She loves, accepts and honors me. She's someone I adore.
We made an oath that we'll be together forever more.
This woman whom I've learned to love is staring back at me
From the mirror in my bedroom wall, she's letting me be free.
I'm free to think, to choose and feel as only I can do.
For I'm the woman of my dreams, and that I swear is true!

To have a happy and fulfilling relationship with another person, one must have a healthy relationship with one's self. We need to love us for ourselves, accept our feelings, respect our wants and be our own person. Looking inward is not always easy. Nevertheless, it's a journey we must take—a journey into one's soul to search, to find, to learn and finally, to love and accept. We enter into relationships NOT *in order* to be complete, but *because* we are complete. Join me in this journey, it's a trip of a lifetime!

Scholarships

Taylor Ruhl, Vice-President

The winners of the 2003 SDA Kinship college scholarships will be announced during Kampmeeting, the week of July 20.

Kinship offers up to three \$500 college scholarships each year. If you know of a student (gay or straight) who supports the mission of Kinship and needs assistance in 2004, please have them contact the Kinship office at office@sdakinship.org and request a scholarship application form.

The 2004 scholarships are available to anyone who will have graduated from high school by July 1, 2004 and or has passed the G.E.D. The scholarship is available for students in higher education through graduate or doctoral level studies.

Gay and Lesbian Seventh-day Adventists: *Strategies and outcomes of resisting homosexuality*

Part 2 of 2; Reprinted with permission from *Social Work & Christianity*; Fall 2001: Volume 28, Number 2

Rene D. Drumm

This article presents findings from a qualitative study of 37 gay and lesbian Seventh-day Adventists. Using in-depth interviewing, the research explored participants' accounts of the home environments and examined participants' journeys in trying to reconcile a lesbian or gay sexual orientation with an identity as Christian. Findings offer contextual information regarding the participants' experience growing up in Adventist families and Adventist churches whose religious beliefs prohibited homosexual behavior. Findings highlight various strategies participants used to resist homosexuality, including several change strategies that appear unique to Christian gay and lesbian persons that have not been previously examined in the literature, and the outcomes of those efforts. These findings suggest implications for social work practitioners, social work educators, and faith-based communities.

Conditions Leading to Integration

There were three conditions that appeared to facilitate the integration of lesbian/gay identity and church affiliation. These conditions were:

1. Having an accepting church congregation.
2. Having a job that would not be in jeopardy if sexual orientation became known.
3. Having an accepting family.

Having an Accepting Church congregation

The condition that appeared mandatory for a fully integrated identity was having an accepting local church congregation. Without

an accepting church congregation, the participants' church membership was withdrawn. A female participant reflected: My involvement with the church has been less than average in the last six years. It's not because I don't believe—I do—but I was limited because of how I thought the

Too often, it is easy for religious adherents who see homosexual behavior as sinful to pass judgment on lesbian and gay persons as simply choosing to live an immoral lifestyle. Given the magnitude and range of strategies lesbian and gay Adventists use to avoid homosexuality, it appears unlikely that this is the case.

church may perceive me. But lately I've found a refuge in the church. When I go to prayer meeting, my partner comes with me. The pastor said that if the gay fellowship in his church increases, he would be more than happy. People in this church are warm and accepting, or at least not mean. So, I've started to go back to church more and try to teach my partner who is not an Adventist more (Carol).

Having a job that would not be in jeopardy if sexual orientation were known

Another important condition for integrating a lesbian or gay orientation with Adventist affiliation was for the participant to hold a job in which sexual orientation was not an issue. None of these participants were in a position where their employment would be jeopardized by coming out publicly. Most participants in this category were self-employed or worked for non-church related organizations. One participant reported, "I came out to my boss [an Adventist] and she said, 'I don't see it [your sexuality] as an issue.' Then she told the president of the company, and the president said the same thing" (Brandon).

Having an accepting family

Having an accepting family was another condition facilitating the integration of gay/lesbian identity and church affiliation. While the majority of families in this sample initially had difficulty accepting a gay or lesbian family member, over time they did accept the gay or lesbian member. Nathan shared, "Now I feel loved by my family. I understand that they had to have a 'coming out' period of about three years. Since my father is an Adventist pastor, it was important for me to be accepted by him before I could go back to church."

Conclusions

Lesbian and gay Seventh-day Adventists in this study shared a number of common pathways on their journeys in understanding their sexual orientation and their relationship to the Adventist religion. Most participants grew up in highly religious homes with loving,

involved parents. This contrasts with other research on gay and lesbian families. Pattison and Pattison found that their “subjects reported that the primary cause of their homosexuality was unsatisfactory relations with their parents. Eight subjects stated that their fathers were distant, aloof, and uninvolved with them” (1980, p. 1558). Since this study only included 11 gay men, this difference could be because of small sample size, researcher assumptions, or biases. Gay and lesbian Adventist used a variety of strategies to resist homosexuality. While the literature addressed denial (Troiden, 1988) and suicide (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 1997) as resisting strategies, it does not address the other strategies discussed by these participants. My sense from the data is that gay and lesbian Adventist may engage in strategies to resist homosexuality to a greater degree than other studies indicate. These data demonstrate an extensive use of resisting strategies by the participants. It was also interesting that many of the resisting strategies connected to religion: prayer, immersion in religion, use of religious rituals, claiming Bible promises. Participants relied on tools gleaned from their religious upbringing to try to overcome what they believed was sin. Once participants came to believe that their sexual orientations would not change, they made choices about church membership in accordance with their beliefs about homosexuality and the church doctrines. Study of choices about church membership in relation to sexual orientation is lacking in the literature; however, a number of studies point to religion as important in the lives of some lesbian and gay persons (Davidson, 1970; Shallenberger, 1996; Thumma, 1991). While participants in this study clearly saw no “choice” in their sexual orientations, they were able to choose what to do about church membership under their given circumstances and did so with varying outcomes.

Implications for Social Work Practice
Social work has a long history of

faith-based involvement, research, and advocacy. It appears that addressing religiously affiliated gay and lesbian persons sometimes presents social workers with unique challenges. How do conservative social work practitioners and educators integrate their religious beliefs and convictions with their social work mandates of inclusion and advocacy? How do liberal social workers work respectfully with religiously conservative gay and lesbian clients who may be choosing to try to resist homosexuality or to integrate their sexual orientation with the beliefs and practices of their religious groups? First, social workers should become educated about sexual orientation in general, its development, fluidity, and its multifaceted features. In checking

Popular media presents a picture of the lesbian and gay community at large that is not necessarily in keeping with gay and lesbians who have strong religious convictions.

the research on sexual orientation, particularly “change” in orientation, it is crucial to pay particular attention to research rigor, methodology, and how the conclusions flow from the data. Some research abstracts examined for this article that appeared to support orientation change, upon careful examination of the full article, supported instead, little to no change. Secondly, social work practitioners who have religious convictions against engaging in same-sex relationships may hesitate to advocate for gay rights such as extending marriage rights to gay and lesbian couples. Social workers may want to consider the impact on lesbian and gay persons who have done what they could to be true to their religious convictions and come to believe they can never be

heterosexual. While some of these individuals may choose celibacy as a way to resolve the conflict, others believe that finding a life partner more feasible. These people believe they are simply doing the best they can with what they feel they were given.

Third, social workers may not realize the importance of religion in the lives of their gay and lesbian clients because of the lack of information and dialog about religiously affiliated gay and lesbian persons. Social workers should not assume that gay and lesbian clients are void of spirituality because their religious convictions do not include heterosexual sex-within-marriage as the only appropriate sexual expression. Similarly, social workers should not assume they know what the goals of their religiously conservative gay and lesbian clients are or should be. Respect for client self-determination is complex, especially when workers and clients may have differences of values and goals, regardless of what direction that difference may run.

Finally, social worker clinicians must carefully consider the ethics of engaging in therapies designed to change sexual orientation, even with clients who request such therapy. Research indicates the lack of these therapies’ efficacy while documenting some inadvertent harm that clients have suffered because of such therapies. The integrity of both the client’s and social worker’s values must be protected, not always an easy thing to accomplish. In terms of social work education, educators should provide students with specific information about religiously affiliated gay and lesbian persons. Popular media presents a picture of the lesbian and gay community at large that is not necessarily in keeping with gay and lesbians who have strong religious convictions. Silence insinuates non-existence, which presents a biased view of homosexual persons.

Faith-based Communities

Too often, it is easy for religious adherents who see homosexual behavior as sinful to pass judgment

on lesbian and gay persons as simply choosing to live an immoral lifestyle. Given the magnitude and range of strategies lesbian and gay Adventists use to avoid homosexuality, it appears unlikely that this is the case. It is important to recognize the reality of gay and lesbian Christians and to listen to their voices, often full of pain and confusion, as they seek to honor their religious beliefs. How should the non-gay/lesbian church community respond to their gay and lesbian members? It may be important for church members of all religions to re-examine their attitudes towards gay and lesbian adherents. The issues, complex and deeply-woven into the fabric of Christianity, are unlikely to change quickly or dramatically. In spite of this probability, we must begin meaningful dialogue that incorporates new knowledge and a deeper understanding of sexual orientation into our perceptions and subsequent actions.



Rene' Drumm, pictured above at Kampmeeting 2002, is an Associate Professor of social work and coordinates the Advanced Interpersonal Practice track of the MSW program at Andrews University. Dr. Drumm holds a master's degree in Social Work from Michigan State University and a Ph.D. in Sociology/Family Studies from Texas Women's University.

Parting shots



Make a difference

Volunteer in Kinship

Most of us have been excluded from communities we value in some way. We can let exclusion win or we can overcome bigotry by reaching out. The choice is ours.

Throughout this Kinship year, the Connection has attempted to highlight some of ways people like you make this world and the Seventh-day Adventist church a better place for all orientations: Noel and Ruud grow country organizations, Jacob starts a local chapter, Pindoc places an ad, Carrol reaches out to families, Rene' understands, and Fritz anchors us in the truth that God loves us.

A new Kinship board is about to steer our Kinship family through another year. Work with them, but don't wait for them to ask. None of the people listed above are board members. They know their calling and are acting on it. Only you know yours, act today!

Want to make a difference?

The last of a three-part how-to get involved in Kinship series.

Get acquainted

If you haven't been to Kampmeeting, there isn't a better way to get acquainted with the family. KinNet is a great way to stay in touch throughout the year and the Connection will attempt to live up to it's name. When you are ready for more here are some ideas:

in the January issue:

How to: Advertise Kinship in local GLBT press

in the March issue:

How to: Establish a local chapter

in this issue

How to: Volunteer in Kinship



Above & cover: Photos from the East-coast Mini Kampmeeting, May 1-3, 2003, at Rehoboth Beach.