

connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. April 2008 Vol. 32 No. 3



**One of the most valuable things
we can do to heal one another
is listen to each other's stories.**

- Rebecca Falls

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Who we are...

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

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of fifteen officers and thirteen regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

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

Support Kinship

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

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

This month's issue describes just a few of the ways we've been telling our story to the people in our spiritual community. When we asked Ron to share his response to being part of the book that is about to be published he wrote us a letter. Carrol and Floyd gave us a snapshot of their work at the North American Division Youth Leaders' Convention. Larry was kind enough to research some of Ellen White's thoughts on corporate spiritual growth. John tells the story of his rather rollicking adventures on the way to a conversation with Oakwood University students. Mike caps off our newsletter with some spiritual perspectives.

Dear Catherine,

You asked about my reactions to participating in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*. There are many, of course. The magnificent conference of participants at the Ontario workshop was one of those events that will stay in my memory. As I write this letter there are two other parts of the journey on which I would like to focus.



I was the Church Liaison for the first eighteen years of

Kinship. Any relationship with the General Conference seemed impossible. You remember their decision to sue us in a vain attempt to force us to change our name. I realized they were just not going to listen to gay people at all and that we needed ambassadors to speak for us. My chief responsibility became choosing speakers for Kampmeeting. I set out to find people to fill that role. Most speakers were professors at Adventist colleges and universities. Five or six visited us each year. I tried to insist that they stay for the whole of the Kampmeeting so we could build relationships with them. This worked very well. Most of them knew next to nothing about homosexuality when I asked them to speak. In the process of planning their discussion and in the time they took to hear our stories, these speakers began to know us, love us and become fast friends with Kinship. At the same time Kinship members were fed spiritually.

I had seen how the articles written by these men and women helped change the attitudes in the American church towards the participation of women in local churches and in ministry. I longed for them to write about the gay issue, to publish the wonderful stuff

they were presenting to us. My ambitions were frustrated for years. Our speakers were rightfully concerned about the consequences they and their careers would face if they published materials their administrators and opponents considered "pro-gay." In more than two decades the only article published was in the *Connection* and under a pseudonym. It had no influence in the church. This new book is the result of the seeds I planted in the 1980s and 1990s and of the watering done to those seeds by many others. Our authors are no longer scared. They are going out on this limb together. I want us to continue to plant seeds, to build relationships and to invite key Adventist thinkers to Kampmeeting. This will improve everything we do.

The other thing that has been important for me about the book is that as I wrote my chapter I got to use research on the sociology of international Adventism that I have been collecting for years. Part of this work has been to be a participant/observer of the way the Adventist church treats its homosexual members. I had the material available and it was exciting to use it in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*.

– Ron Lawson

Someone to Talk to Presence at Dallas Youth Leaders' Convention

– Carrol Grady

Floyd Poenitz, Mike Richhart and I hosted an exhibit for "Someone to Talk to" at IGNITION! the NAD youth/young adult leaders' summit in Dallas, Texas, February 14-17. This was our third time working together as a team. Believe me, those guys have setting up the display down to a science! Our curved unit with the same painting by Darrel Tank found on my website was the backdrop that sat on the table at the rear of the booth. On the table at the front were two computer

monitors: one showing the “Open Heart, Open Hand” DVD, and the other running a PowerPoint presentation Floyd has done of brief facts about homosexuality and



our ministry. We had a rack with five handouts, the newly printed “Homosexuality – Can We Talk About It?” leaflets, the DVD and my book for sale. Our bowl of Hershey chocolate kisses proved very popular!

The three of us became friends with our neighboring exhibitors. On one side were three elderly ladies representing Adventist Heritage Ministries. A young man sharing a health ministry was on our other side. Across the aisle the ever-popular Texas ABC helped draw more visitors to see our exhibit. At the other end of the exhibit area was Ron Woolsey, aka Victor Adamson, author of *That Kind Can Never Change, Can They?* For those of you who do not know him, Ron is the most recent Adventist “poster person” who says it is possible to change your orientation. We visited his exhibit several times and talked with him.

Since it involved only people in leadership roles this convention was not as large as last year’s youth prayer conference. We were told there should be about twenty-two hundred delegates. The smaller number of people visiting exhibits allowed us to have longer conversations with those who were interested.

I believe people were more open and interested at this convention than any conference where I have exhibited in eight years. Mike and Floyd could see changes from just the past two years. We only had two negative contacts. Although some of those who said they felt strongly that the church needs to address this issue may not have been quite on the same page as we were, we talked to a fair number who were more in line with our understanding. Several people told us they had seen our exhibit at other events.

An assistant conference treasurer said she had several gay friends in college and still keeps in touch with them. She told us her daughter has a gay friend and wants him to be one of her bridesmaids when she gets married. A conference family ministries director from Canada was very interested in our material and

wants to get some of the leaflets when they can be translated into French.

A pastor from Maryland told us his wife’s best friend in college has recently come out, lives with a partner and they just had a baby. He asked us what he could say to encourage his wife to visit her friend. He mentioned they’re both unsure about whether to take their three-year-old daughter, who might ask questions about the baby having two mommies.

A Brazilian pastor took five of the Spanish leaflets for friends. Two women from Allegheny Conference who are local youth leaders told us they are starting a “Get Real” series for the youth in their church; the first topic is homosexuality. They took all our handouts and also bought a DVD. A pastor from the Lake Region Conference who had taken our materials last year came back to get some more for some of his family members. A young woman from California took a leaflet and some handouts. Later she brought her friend back to get some, mentioning which ones had really helped her.

A youth leader from an Illinois church told us that when their church school was looking for a new school teacher, a male-to-female transsexual teacher applied. The church didn’t know how to handle the situation, so they ended up closing down the school.

A female conference youth director who is on the NAD family ministries council and who attended the meeting when Sherri, Mitch Henson and I gave our presentations, came by. She told me it was at that meeting that she realized what a bigot she had been and asked for our forgiveness.

We talked to another young pastor recently out of Seminary. I asked him if he had gotten any training on this issue. He said “No” but encouraged me to write to one of his professors and urge him to do something in this area. A young female theology student, who will graduate from Seminary in May, stopped and talked to us for quite a while Saturday night. She said she wanted to learn more about this issue. She asked Mike if he is gay and if she could ask him some personal questions. He answered them well and she seemed to appreciate their conversation.

On Sunday morning, between the time the conference closed and my flight left, Floyd took me by the MCC Cathedral of Hope where Mel West was once

the pastor. It was inspiring to see it packed and to listen to the beautiful music with organ, orchestra and choir.

As I look back on that weekend, I continue to be very thankful to Kinship for funding this outreach to youth leaders.

Note from Floyd: I'm happy with the positive responses we are getting. Carrol is getting known and respected with the other exhibitors. That's a good thing. The winds of change are gently blowing in positive directions. Folks are seeing the need at least to start dialoging about the subject of homosexuality.

Clobber Text Antidotes: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives

Larry from Tennessee shared the following Ellen White texts. You might enjoy having them in your repertoire as you encounter discussions based on Seventh-day Adventist practices and beliefs. Many of them are found on Carrol Grady's website.

We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed. {Counsels to Writers and Editors 37.1}

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. {CW 35.2}

The rebuke of the Lord will be upon those who would be guardians of the doctrine, who would bar the way that greater light shall not come to the people. A great work is to be done, and God sees that our leading men have need of greater light, that they may unite harmoniously, with the messengers whom He shall send to accomplish the work that He designs they should. The Lord has raised up messengers and endued them with His Spirit, and has said, "Cry aloud, spare

not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." {CW 38.1}

Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion. {CW 38.3}

The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what. {CW 39.1}

Seeds

– John Edwards



The sower sowed seeds. Some seeds fell on hard ground. There was not enough soil; when they sprung up, they died. Other seeds fell among thorns. They sprung up but were choked. Other seeds fell on

fertile ground. They grew and flourished. This is the story of seeds that were planted fourteen years ago on a surface that appeared to be barren ground or full of thorns.

The seed planted.

In 1994 I coordinated the Pawling, New York Kampmeeting. It was René Drumm's first Kampmeeting. Over the years she became a great supporter and friend of Kinship. It was also the first

Kampmeeting for Edith Fraser and her husband Trevor Fraser. They spent one day with us. I was not able to attend their presentation but I remember hearing the background sounds of a traditional style Black sermon. The Frasers and Kinship slipped out of touch.

The seed sown in fertile ground.

Fourteen years later, in mid-March 2008, Edith Fraser, Ph.D., professor at Oakwood University (a historically Black Seventh-day Adventist educational institution) sent an email to the Kinship office. She requested that someone from Kinship be a guest speaker to her class on diversity. Our coordinator of member services, Fred Casey, sent this email to Kinship's Board asking if anyone knew of a Kinship member in the vicinity of Oakwood. An animated barrage of e-mails followed. The Board agreed that this was a wonderful and rare opportunity for our organization to reach out to Seventh-day Adventists of African descent. Using phone and e-mails I had a couple of exciting conversations with Dr. Fraser and started to make plans to travel to Huntsville, Alabama to speak with the class in person.

Sometimes a weed whacker is needed.

I made arrangements with my boss to obtain time off from work. This entailed explaining why it was important that I as a gay, Black Adventist needed to seize this opportunity to speak with this class at Oakwood University. In all the excitement I forgot to confirm the exact date I was expected to speak. From the original e-mail I believed the requested date was April 3. However, after Edith had not received a response from Kinship she arranged to have someone from the local Metropolitan Community Church speak with the class on March 28. Edith Fraser indicated that my phone call was an answer to her prayer as the person from MCC cancelled just days before my phone call to her.

Imagine my shock when I arrived home on Wednesday night from choir practice to a voicemail from Edith in which she stated that she was concerned that she had not heard from me and that she didn't know what time to pick me up from the airport the next day. It's moments like these when my clinical social work and psychotherapy training kick in for personal use. I called Edith at her home the following morning

and we arranged to have a telephone conference in lieu of the planned visit.

Edith planned to call and leave a message on my cell phone with the number to call for the phone conference. I received the message and called the number about ten minutes after the 2:30 PM class began. I have since learned that Huntsville is on Central time and not Eastern. I had made my call an hour early. I tried to track down the class when no one answered the number I called. No success. Finally, I gave up and remembered my mother's saying "the devil is a busy man."

I joined my coworkers for lunch. Thirty minutes later my cell phone rang. It was Edith Fraser and her class. I excused myself from my coworkers and tried to find a spot in the food court where I could get both phone reception and enough quiet to hold a conference call. My previous efforts had used up my battery; five minutes into the conversation my phone died. I made a mad dash to the pay phones. I didn't have enough change to call long distance and the credit card reader would not read my credit card. Thinking quickly I asked my coworker to borrow her mobile phone. She doesn't have one. I found another coworker who let me use his phone to call the class. There I stood in the study area, surrounded by students finishing last-minute assignments, talking loudly into a cell phone about being Seventh-day Adventist, Black and gay.

The fruits of my labor.

The telephone conference went well. There were ten male and female students. The whole group asked questions but none of them were what I would ever call obnoxious. I provided a brief description and history of Kinship that included our nonprofit status, Kampmeeting and the lawsuit. I told them about my personal experience of coming out: fasting, praying, getting re-baptized, contemplating suicide and my one horrific experience at AUC. We talked about differences between behavior and orientation. We discussed the ex-gay movement and its validity. We talked about the difficulties incurred when gay people enter "heterosexual" marriages in their efforts to become straight. I indicated that for me the issue is less whether someone can change from gay to straight but what would drive a person to want to change. I talked

about the socio-cultural-political-religious pressures. I gave the example of Black women in the 1950s to 1970s using hot combs to straighten their hair so that it could look and be styled like the hair of Caucasian women. I asked them to imagine the pressure from their family and friends if they decided not to attend a Seventh-day Adventist school. I asked them to imagine what the pressure might be like if you're LGBTI. I helped them understand that effeminate behavior is not necessarily an indicator that someone is gay.

I told them I am not a theologian but a gay, Black social worker who is also a Seventh-day Adventist. I talked about the ways the Bible has been used to condone slavery and to oppress women. I said that, in general, we do not condone slavery any more and we're working on not oppressing women. We have come to a different understanding of those Bible texts. I suggested that the process is the same for people who are LGBTI.

I was asked how the males in my family accepted me when I came out. I told them my siblings all say that they still love me. However, no one asks me if I am dating anyone like they did when they thought I was straight. I told them my mother had difficulty accepting my orientation but that she started to become more accepting before she died. I told them I have not been involved with anyone for a very long time when I was asked if I was in a relationship. The question that touched me the most was from one young woman who asked if I find it difficult to meet someone that shares my Christian values. I indicated that it's hard for non-LGBTI folks to find Christian partners; I think on some level it's much harder for LGBTI folk.

I told the class that Christianity, not just Seventh-day Adventism, needs to become more loving and understanding. I told them that many LGBTI people have left the church and no longer have a relationship with God because of how the "good" Christians have treated them. I asked them to imagine what it would be like to be fifteen or sixteen years old, come out to your parents and have them throw you out into the streets. I said that because teens do not have the skills to survive on their own they often begin to use drug or alcohol to cope or have to earn their living as prostitutes. I talked about how society often blames them for their behaviors when it is our attitudes and behaviors that have driven them to personally dangerous actions.

When class members asked about sex outside of marriage I told them this was a difficult question because Massachusetts is the only state where we can be officially "married." I said Kinship supports committed relationships and that very few people have the gift of celibacy. They laughed with me at that comment.

More seed sown on fertile ground.

Edith Fraser and her class said they were pleased to talk with me and that it was helpful to have someone who was gay, Seventh-day Adventist and Black. Dr. Fraser also said that the 1994 Kampmeeting was a turning point for her and her husband. From that time they began to research the topic and to become more open-minded and accepting. She said she would like to keep in touch and wants to arrange something for next year.

Note: Dr. Fraser holds an MSW from Boston University and a PhD in clinical social work from Smith College.



Kinship News

Australia – Noel Thorpe

Kinship Australia's newsletter is out on the web. Check it out for our latest information.

[http://](http://www.sdakinshipaustralia.org/pdf/KinshipNewsletter2008Issue1.pdf)

www.sdakinshipaustralia.org/pdf/KinshipNewsletter2008Issue1.pdf.

I wanted to let everyone know that we have moved the location for our yearly Kampmeeting to Invercauld House Conference Centre in Lismore. This venue is built to be both comfortable and a great place to hold meetings. I think you will enjoy the level of service you find there.

European Planning Meeting –

Ruud Kieboom

We are in the process of finalizing our schedule. After people arrive on Friday, we're planning a walk on the beach. Sabbath we will attend the

services at our local open and accepting Seventh-day Adventist congregation. Later we will have Saturday Night at the Movies showing a Biblical/homosexual-related film. Sunday we will focus on our discussions and planning sessions. Monday is Liberation Day in Holland and will be a great day for sightseeing. Tuesday we would be delighted to take you to see the tulip exhibition.

United Kingdom and Eire

On February 25 Mike Lewis was permitted to give a two-hour presentation to his local church board that included such topics as: "Defining Homosexuality," The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Homosexuality," and "The Practicing Homosexual," Mike's personal story and information about SDA Kinship international. Previously some church members had expressed their concerns

about Mike's agenda as a gay Christian. In the presentation Mike described his agenda as: bringing healing between the church and its LGBTI members, bringing reconciliation between church members who hold varying views on this topic, bringing awareness of the needs of LGBTI Christians to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, bringing enlightenment to other Christians, ministering to the spiritual needs of gay friends, "bringing the gospel when and where I can," following the principles of Christian discipleship, "being true to God, my conscience and my church." Mike called friends that evening to share some of the joy he felt at the board's willingness to listen and continue dialog. He is hoping to write an article about this and upcoming plans in a future issue of the Connection.



Note from Floyd: To get into KOL, each new user must create a new login for Kinship OnLine. This is separate from the one used by KinNet. Once you've logged on to KinNetTalk, at the top of the page (under the heading Kinship Online website, it reads: The link above will take you to the Kinship OnLine website. It contains a CHAT ROOM, OPINION POLL, MEMBER LISTING, Posting Tips for the KinNet Discussion Board, Kinship updates, Kampmeeting news, lots of pictures and resources for the online SDA Kinship community. Check it out! Updates to all these are coming soon! Click [here](#) to get your login for KOL. When you click on the underlined word [here](#), you will go to the page where you can create your login.



SDA Kinship International Kampmeeting in Virginia

July 13-20, 2008

"Why should I attend Kampmeeting and especially Kampmeeting 2008?" was a question posed to me recently. I thought, "What a great question! If one person had this question there are probably others that are thinking the same thing." So why should you attend Kampmeeting? Kampmeeting is a time when we as LGBTI individuals with current and former Seventh-day Adventist connections can come together and celebrate our faith, uniqueness and diversity. It's a time when we can build fellowship and communion with our Creator through song, message, discussion and community. It is also a time when we can make new friends, while renewing friendships with those individuals we have not seen in a year.

Our theme this year is "Building Our Community." We're going to learn a variety of ways to do this in workshops, discussions, walks, evening meetings and play. On our recreation Wednesday we will be visiting the sights and sounds of our nation's capital. Our

Saturday night talent show will feature songs of the 1970s. On Sabbath, July 19, we ask you to invite those who are important to you for our second annual "Family and Friends Day." Last year's event was so popular that we've decided to make it a two-year-old tradition. If you have family and friends that live close to the Washington, DC area, or who are willing to travel, you can let them know now how much you would like to see them on that particular Sabbath. Invitations and more information are now available on the Kampmeeting page on our website. My hope as Kampmeeting Coordinator is that you join us for this wonderful event and learn how you can help to make Kinship a continued awesome and dynamic place. For more questions and information please feel free to email me at kampmeeting@sdakinship.org. To register as well as to receive the most up-to-date information about Kampmeeting 2008 please visit: <http://www.sdakinship.org/km2008.htm>.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in the Washington, DC area, July 13-20 at Kinship Kampmeeting 2008!



Hear Ye! Hear Ye!!
Calling all Kinship Women!!

You are invited to spend the wonderful weekend of July 11-13
at the Reston Sheraton
For our annual *Women and Children First* gathering

Plans for the weekend include Friday evening dinner, vespers and time for socializing. On Sabbath morning we will have breakfast, a short worship, an Air and Space Scavenger Hunt and visions of *The Forces of Nature* at the IMAX movie theater. After Sabbath lunch we'll spend the afternoon near the water at Lake Fairfax Park. Saturday evening we'll have dinner, vespers and some surprises for you!

We've found that no matter what we do, women remember our laughter, our great conversations and the appreciation we feel spending time with other women who understand our experience. We're looking forward to seeing you in just a few weeks.

You can register by filling out the Kampmeeting form you got in your *Connection* or by accessing our website at <http://SDAKinship.org/KM08registration.htm>

SDA Kinship International Board Meeting

March 29-30, 2008

Our primary focus for this weekend was to review, amend and adopt a new set of bylaws for the organization. We realized that the bylaws created many years ago were not meeting the changing needs of the Kinship community. Bruce Harlow, Secretary to the Kinship Board, was the chair of the Bylaws Committee that included Isis Montalvo, Scott Tetley, Naveen Jonathan and Taylor Ruhl (*ex officio*). They began their work by researching both the California code, under which we are incorporated, and the bylaws of similar organizations and corporations. The committee wanted to create a structure that would allow our organization to develop new programs, improve the ones we already have, adapt to the increasingly complex technologies available to serve us and respond to the growing number of members we have in sixty-three countries around the world. We wanted to keep the organization from being administratively top heavy but able to incorporate the gifts and energies of Kinship members as we all work to build our community.

We have voted that board officers will have both experience for their positions and term limits. The Kampmeeting Coordinator, *Connection* Editor and Member Services Coordinator will now be appointed positions without term limits. We are committed to and working on the technologies that will allow Kinship members all over the world to vote for officers of the organization: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and President Elect. We will have five Program Directors who are responsible for the following programs: Church Relations, Communications, Diversity, Women's Interests, and Youth Interests. They will also be elected by the membership of our Kinship Community. We have made provision for several standing committees: Executive, Finance, Communications, Kampmeeting, Governance, Member Services, Diversity, International Growth and Development, Nominating, and Advisory Council. If you would like to know more about each of these functions or any other part of the new bylaws you can access the bylaws in their entirety at the Kinship OnLine website.



Appreciations in the Transition Time

Farewell - Karen Wetherell has been our Treasurer for the last four years. Recently she sent the Board her



resignation, citing her need to spend more time now caring for family members. During her tenure in this position Karen has added new features to the position and expanded the programs the Treasurer supports. We have gone from processing one yearly

Kampmeeting to helping with the registration for Kampmeeting, at least two mini Kampmeetings and one European Kinship Meeting. Ruud Kieboom reports she has been an invaluable help in strengthening European Kinship. Additionally, Karen has upgraded the program Kinship uses for fund accounting with IRS compatible receipts, worked on tripling the number of members giving systematic monthly donations, and improved the reporting of our assets to have them be understandable to more people. She helped research and set up the postage meter system for the Connection and helped obtain the non-profit bulk mailing permit that saves Kinship thousands of dollars each year. She has been a proponent of developing budgets for our various programs. We now offer two books and a video for sale through our PayPal accounts. Karen has helped organize ways to manage that shift in volume sanely.

Welcome - David Bayless has been kind enough to come on board as our Interim Treasurer until



Kampmeeting elections. He was born in Farmington, Missouri and went to Sunnysdale Academy and Union College. He has been doing accounting for eighteen years, six of them as an accounting supervisor for General Motors Automobile Corporation and three of them with the Riverside

County Public School system. Presently he works as a bookkeeper for a university library. David enjoys

traveling, philosophical discussions, photography and cross stitch. He is looking forward to getting to know all the different aspects that are part of being the Treasurer of Kinship.

Farewell – Ted Compton has been Connection's layout guru for the past five years. He (and our extraordinary contributors) are the reason so many of you enjoy the quality of this publication.



He has researched and utilized new publishing programs. He has created methods to improve our use of photography. He has developed means to efficiently distribute the PDF file to both our printer and

our website team. He has worked out a way to have the Connection in quality color for our website and simultaneously in a mix of quality black/white and color for our print copies. Though he is neither LGBTI, SDA or a member of Kinship, Ted did the first year of layout for our newsletter completely free of charge (well, there were the boxes of chocolates). He personally trained the editor to order the articles in a reasonable fashion and develop techniques of copy production that are sane for layout consultants. Ted, we will miss you. This editor, for one, is grateful you grace our planet.

Welcome – Ruud Kieboom has just joined the Connection staff as our new layout expert. Many of you



know this man of many talents as the Coordinator for Kinship Europe. Ruud did the layout work for his congregation's publications for more than twenty-five years. He works as a networking support person in a government office for the Netherlands. Ruud is a member of the gay men's singing group Mannenkoorts

(koorts = fever; koor = choir; a play of words like H-/Gayfever). He is a passionate flower arranger. For the last several weeks he and Ted have been working together to create a smooth transition for our newsletter.

We would like to introduce you to:

Carol Brown was born in Belize City, Belize. She and her family immigrated to Brooklyn, New York and then to Palo Alto, California. In California her family



converted from being Sunday Christians to Seventh-day Adventists. Carol and her siblings were enrolled in the Miramonte Adventist School. She attended Sarasota High School when her family moved to Florida. Carol colporteured in the Sunshine State heat,

selling *Message* magazine, to defray expenses for her Oakwood College nursing studies. She works in the ophthalmology department at Stanford Hospital and Clinics. She enjoys movies, plays, concerts, the outdoors, open houses and relaxing. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her partner Chris. Carol says, "I am excited and challenged by being this year's Women's Coordinator for Kampmeeting. I look forward to seeing you all there."

Yolanda Elliott arrived on the planet in Fredricksburg, VA. She went to Atholton Junior Academy, Highland View Academy and Columbia Union College. Yolanda



owns and manages Yolanda's Home Assisted Living. She has five residents, ages 85 to 95, two dogs, a cat and her best friend living with her. She says she's looking forward to having her sister come live with her soon. Yolanda attends New Hope Seventh-day

Adventist Church and has been Kinship's Region 2 Coordinator, Vice President and Women's Coordinator. She says "Kinship is my life" but she also has some time for reading, racquetball and her friends who mean a lot to her.

Brenda McColpin has definitely been part of what we call the great Adventist Movement. She was born in Nashville, Tennessee, went to Spaulding Elementary,



popped down to Costa Rica for seventh grade at the Collegio del Pacfico, then back up north to Tennessee for eighth grade. She spent her freshman and sophomore years in Wisconsin at Fletcher Jr. Academy and finished up her schooling with the American Correspondence School. Brenda got her nurse's

training at Southern Adventist College and then a BS in organizational management at Covenant College. She is a charge nurse for the psychiatric emergency department of her local hospital. She and her partner Pearl share a love of music and their two Shih Tzu dogs, Tucker and Tia. She has been a Kinship Vice President and Region 3 Coordinator.

Mike Richhart was born in Fort Worth, Texas. He spent his entire kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade career in the same Fort Worth Public School system. He earned his bachelor's degree in



psychology at Wheaton College and his Master's of Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary. He pastored a conservative, evangelical Bible church in Keller, Texas and found Kinship through Floyd

Poenitz. He says, "There are no gay-friendly movements in my church tradition. My relationship with God and with God's people is very important to me. Kinship offers the kind of spiritual connection that my current church tradition does not offer. I've attended many Board meetings, Kampmeetings and have helped out with Member Services. I am part of US Region 5. Kinship is a gift. My favorite book of the Bible is Ecclesiastes because Solomon taught that it is not things that matter; it is the gifts that God gives us. I thank God for the gifts of breath and life and sunshine. They give me great joy. I've learned to be intentional and look at those things that God offers. I get joy out of

my nightly glass of chocolate milk, times with my friends, traveling, architecture, pulling weeds in my yard. My family brings me great happiness. My twelve-year-old niece is the center of my universe. My new vocation as a massage therapist brings me great happiness. Strangely, it is not much different from my role as pastor. The massage table is a place for counsel and for spiritual growth. I just work with bodies as well as people's minds and spirits."

Linda Wright was born at White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles. She went to church school in Columbus, North Carolina with five other students. She attended Fletcher Academy, Mount Pisgah Academy and Indian



River Junior College in Florida. Most of her many skills were self-taught or learned in training classes. Linda is married to Jacquie Hegarty. She has one child. She works as an office manager for the Allen Organ dealer for Northern

California. She is Kinship's webmaster. When asked what gives her joy in the morning, Linda responded, "Anything that involves music, children or technology." She generally coordinates the Kampmeeting children's programs and is the organist/choir director for a Seventh-day Adventist and a Baptist church.

Bruce Harlow was born in Salt Lake City, Utah and went to school at the ten-grade Salt Lake Junior Academy. He graduated from Campion Academy in



Loveland, Colorado. He attended Southern College but managed to begin medical school at Loma Linda University without an undergraduate diploma. Because Loma Linda was offering year-round courses he managed to complete medical school in three

years. For the last twenty-nine years Bruce has been part of the Adventist Health System. Currently living in Chicago, he is director of information systems for the

Homecare and Hospice Division of Hinsdale Hospital. Bruce and Paul are in a ten-year relationship. They recently registered as domestic partners. Bruce described this event as, "...about as exciting as getting a passport." We congratulate them anyway! He enjoys genealogy, learning languages, travel and reading. Right now he is immersed in and recommends a series by Diana Gabaldon that shares the adventures of a woman from the 1940s who journeys back in time to the 1700s. The first book is *Voyager*. Bruce is in his fifth year as the Kinship Board Secretary. He says, "I'm also Region 4 Coordinator under duress."

Marcos Apolonio was born in São Paulo, Brazil. He attended the Escola Adventista de Cidade Ademar from first through fourth grade and went to a variety of



public schools for the next eight years. "When I finished high school I began a program in business administration but it was not my thing. I had always wanted to be a pastor. I left my program and enrolled in the Universidade Adventista

de São Paulo where I completed my theology training." He is the media pastor for the Glendale City Church and also works as a counselor in Martinez, California. Along with his other work, Marcos is in the process of getting a master's degree in social work and translating the Kinship website into Portuguese. He coordinated Kampmeeting 2006. He has two children, almost-seventeen-year-old Filipe and eleven-year-old Amanda. Marcos and his partner Obed live in the San Francisco Bay Area where he enjoys reading, biking, swimming and spending time with friends.



If you are patient in one moment of
anger, you will escape a hundred days
of sorrow.

- Chinese Epigram

If You Cut Off My Ear I Can't Hear What You are Trying to Say to Me

Mike Lewis

Easter occurred very early this year; the earliest that it can be. I like Easter—time off work, time for daffodils, signs of spring (at least, in my part of the northern hemisphere) and specifically a time to remember what the great Christian festival is all about. I have always regretted that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, by and large, ignores Easter, treating it as a pagan-based, fertility-based temptation. Talk about throwing the baby out with the bathwater! Over the years I have been to Anglican/Episcopalian parish churches, Methodist services, a great English Cathedral and a Metropolitan Community Church. I have taken part in and been blessed by the communal joy and remembrance of a Seder feast on Maundy Thursday evening, the darkness of a Good Friday meditation, the celebration of Easter Sunday at sunrise. For Christians, Easter should be a fundamental of our faith. I believe it is good to take time in our busy lives each year to remember that first Easter.

A couple of lines hidden away in the gospel might be relevant to us today. Here's how. As Jesus and His disciples leave the upper room to go to Gethsemane, Peter says they have two swords and asks if that is enough. Jesus appears to acquiesce. (Lots of stuff there—



why did they have swords in the upper room? Why did Jesus allow them to take even two swords? Were some of those hunky fishermen Stewart Grangers in disguise? Oh sorry – that does date me!)

Anyway, when you've pondered those questions consider, if you will, where we meet Peter next. He has just cut off the High Priest's servant's ear. O come on Peter, get real. Do you really think you and the other eleven could defeat the Roman guard? Why take it out on a servant? Why not lash out at the High Priest himself? Or take the head off one of the hated Romans? What were your motives? What did you think you could achieve? And why do it that way? Brute force before brain again?

Last evening I happened to watch a film about Spartacus and

the rag-tag army of slaves who stood against the Roman army and were viciously defeated. They all died but they won their battle because they died as free men who did not live to go back to Rome as slaves. A small army defeated, yet undefeated. The name of Spartacus lives on to this day when that type of slavery is no more.

Other battle lines continue to be redrawn, invisible ones. The battle of Established Church vs. LGBTI Children of God has been raging for centuries. The Christian Church has membership in the tens of millions. Most of its members are armed—armed with fear, armed with prejudice, armed with hatred, armed with agendas, “proof” texts, arguments, blindness and deafness. Most churches are backed by an organization whose structure is seemingly unassailable; layer upon layer of bureaucracy, committees and procedures. How can the ordinary LGBTI believer fight such a beast? S/he cannot. Not without being crushed and defeated.

“Put up your sword,” Jesus told Peter. And He healed the servant's ear. What went on in Peter's brain just then? What went on in the mind of the servant? What goes on in our brains, individually and collectively? In the battle of Church against Gay, what part am

I playing, and how? Have I wielded my sword and just cut off the ear of my brother/sister/pastor? Have I attacked a defenseless individual just to maintain my perceived rights? Have I agitated (which is my right and duty) in ways that are not Christlike (which is neither my right nor my duty)? Or have I followed the example of Jesus, and sought to bring about healing?

Oh yes, you may say, it was easy for Him. All He had to do was use His Divine power and a miracle of healing could (and did) take place. We are not in that fortunate position. Oh no? I believe we are. As sons and daughters of God we CAN bring about healing. Didn't Jesus say "you will do greater things than these"? Maybe not instantaneously like Jesus did, but slowly, painfully and painstakingly. The healing process itself is often painful, but the end result is always worth the pain.

I notice that on the Kinship website there is a link to an article on the official Seventh-day Adventist Church website: "Annual Council session of the General Conference, October 2007." The Church is re-stating its position. No room for Queers. Another battle line drawn in the sand. "Dear Dr Paulsen...." I would like to write. "...may I pick up my Bible and box your ears with it? May I beat you with a new book that has just been published?" No, I must put up my sword (...of the Spirit, which is the Word of God...), and continue to seek to bring about healing by other means.

Jesus "touched the servant's ear and healed him." How can I touch the lives of my fellow Church members to bring about that same healing? How can I pour a "healing balm of Gilead" over the administration of the General Conference that will flood its soul and bring about a rejuvenation of inclusivity? These are questions for me to ponder and pray about. Then, perhaps, I can go find the ear of someone in my Church and whisper the message that God's Love is for all.

The Battle has been won. Jesus did that for us. Yes, we know there are all sorts of stuff to deal with until He returns, but let us always remember that The Battle has been won already. Praise God! Let's also remember that Jesus, the source of living (running) water, stands beside us on the battlefield and reminds us that His running water so easily washes away all the battle lines that have been so futilely drawn in the sand.

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No pessimist ever
discovered the secret
of the stars or sailed
to an uncharted land
or opened a new
heaven to the human
spirit.
- Helen Keller

connection

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Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.



Herzlich Willkommen!!

You

are enthusiastically invited to European Kinship Meeting 7

Dreaming Dreams and Building Visions

Bremen, Germany

September 5-8, 2008

We have created a weekend that will introduce you to our city, our accepting Seventh-day Adventist congregation, to more Kinship members and to the meetings that will help us change the conversations we have with our families, our communities and our churches.

We have developed several ways to make our gathering affordable to all. Our church has opened its doors, meeting rooms and kitchen to us. We can prepare our own meals in a way that expresses the cuisine of the many countries that will be represented. There are three options and price ranges of places to stay. If you choose our very comfortable hostel the cost will be €100 for the weekend. The hostel is within walking distance of the church. We have a nearby hotel that is more expensive but also within walking distance of our meetings. If either of those options is too expensive, you are most welcome to bring your sleeping bag and stay in the church.

Schedule: September 5-8

Friday evening: Check-in, dinner, meet the congregation, walking tour of the nearby area so you won't get lost.

Sabbath: Worship with the congregation, Sabbath dinner with the congregation, Dreams and Visions meeting.

Saturday night we are planning to attend a concert in the Bremen Cathedral.

Sunday: Tour of the harbor at Bremerhaven. Sunday evening we will have our second Dreams and Visions meeting.

Monday: Evaluation, planning meeting and departures for home or European Kinship Holiday!

Kinship Europe on Holiday

A warm welcome to Deichhof
at the North Sea!

We have chosen a holiday house near the shores of the German North Sea. The spacious former barn has an open fireplace (which we hope that we don't have to use!), three bedrooms and can fit up to eight people. Bed linens and towels are provided. We have the options of cooking our own meals, having Friesian breakfasts in the open air and dining out. Beaches, biking, horseback riding and beautiful walking trails are all nearby.

You can register by contacting Ruud Kieboom at kinshipnederland@sdakinship.org or by accessing the Kinship website at <http://sdakinship.org/mapEurope.htm>. We are looking forward to seeing you!