

connection.

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 33 No. 5 – May 2009

Rehoboth Mini-Kampmeeting

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of
Directors
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What do we live for
if not to make life
less difficult for each other?

—George Eliot

Light

Honesty

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Wholeness

String too Short to Save

A Letter from Rehoboth

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WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a non-profit 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 thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

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

SUPPORT KINSHIP

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

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





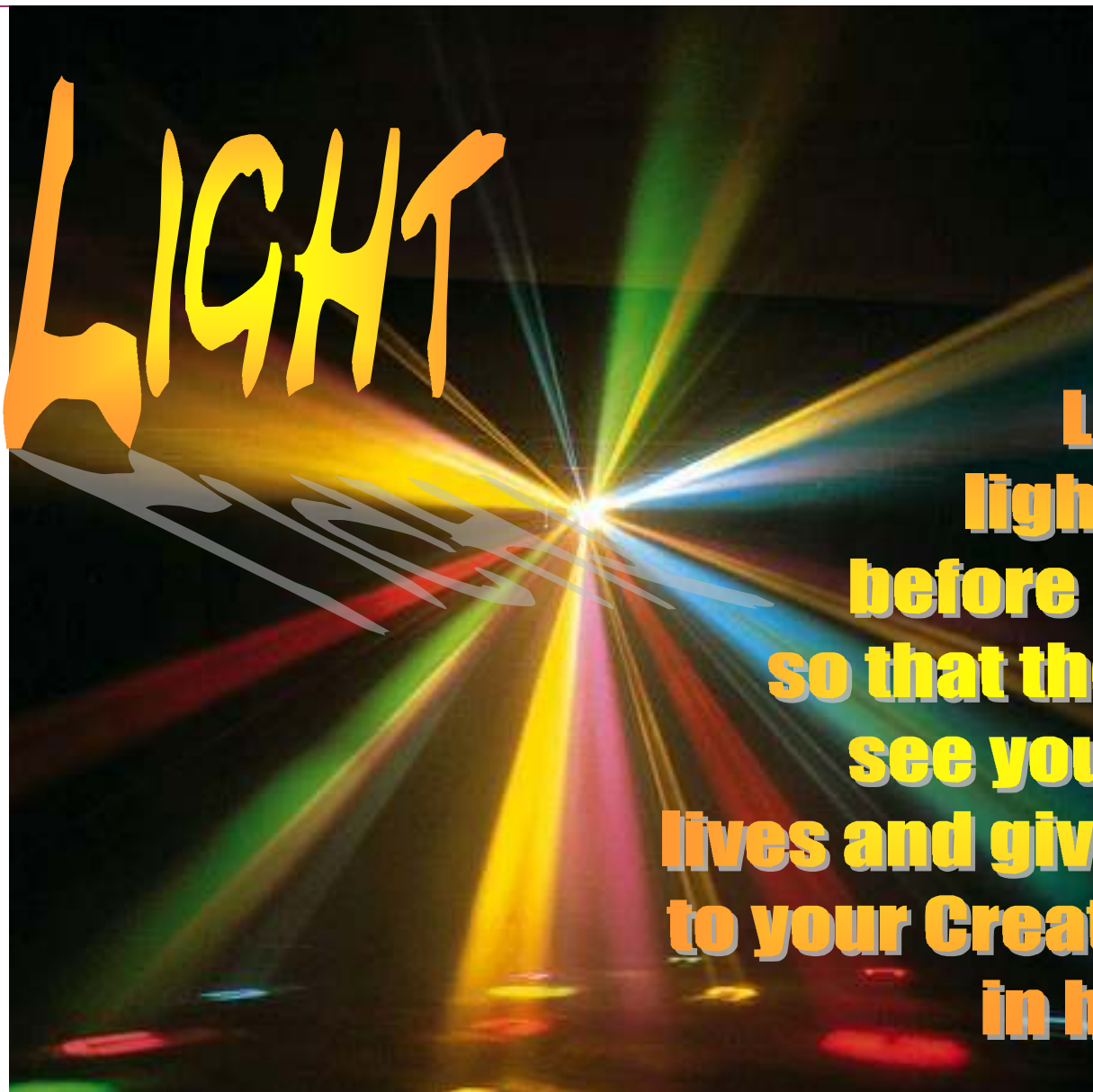
From the Editor

Welcome to mini-Kamp-meeting! We have just returned from a remarkable two-day retreat hosted by Region 2 and its coordinator Yolanda Elliott. We witnessed a Kinship baptism in the waves of the ocean, sunrise walks, an evensong concert, special music, wonderful meals, thought-provoking discussions, and inspiring talks. Karen Wetherell opened Friday evening with special music. Jim Chilson led us in a discussion of nurturing and the Golden Rule. Steve Chavez got us thinking about *Hope* during Sabbath School. Ben Kemena gave us eye salve with which to look at our values and our calling. Anastasia and Linda Elliott shared their love of Offenbach, Lucke, Tchaikowsky, Lvov, Kaiser, and the traditional hymn, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand." And the people—what remarkable Kinship people! We flowed into the beach house, along the boardwalk, around the meal tables, and to the edge of the baptismal sea, filling the weekend with excitement, laughter, and tears. Two of our participants had just found Kinship this year! We wish we could share our interactions with you. We wish you could have been there! This *Connection* issue is the best we can do.

This month we've got Ben's presentations, lots of photos, and a chance to introduce you to some of the people who journeyed to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. We're also including some thoughts about relationships, life in Kenya, and health tips. Martha wrote to me asking if she could contribute. These are the moments that warm this editor's heart. I so enjoy having any of you who want to be part of the *Connection* contact me with your thoughts, poems, essays, questions, and photos. I want all of you who read the *Connection* to take good care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine





**Let your
light shine
before others,
so that they may
see your good
lives and give glory
to your Creator God
in heaven.**

Matthew 5:16

by Ben Kemena

We are not called to let our light shine before others for our own glory, but as a witness to God's love and healing grace. This can be challenging because we are called to share our light without sounding unduly prideful. Yet, for the sake of our own community and church, we are called to witness the wonder and journey of our lives where spirituality and sexuality are bound together with honesty and integration.

Our limited human imaginings of God's love are based on our human experiences, as limited as those experiences might be. To be denied

intimacy as a matter of routine or institutional contrivance impacts our ability to maturely understand the nurturing nature of God's love. When we move past denial to an honest embrace of God's boundless love, our light shines without a quiver.

To further consequence, as we share more forthrightly within our communities and church, we increasingly project an image of worth, worthiness, and value. Indeed, we become "worth our salt"—a value that is based on open sharing and honest example over the course of our entire lives. We have a unique opportunity to

address the problems associated with spirituality without physical body and sexuality without divine direction.

We are called to illumine life and to keep that illumination modest and tasteful. Our light guides our lives and hearts to grace beyond our imagining.

Let my light shine so before others that they may see God's glory at work in me as a daily journey.

(Paraphrased and written from multiple sources, but inspired most by *The Word is Out*, by Chris Glaser, 1994, HarperCollins.)



If I have seen farther than other men it is by standing on the shoulders of giants. —Isaac Newton

**Before I formed you in the womb,
I knew you; before you were born,
I set you apart. Jeremiah 1:5**

By Ben Kemena



The crisis of our time is that honesty is seen as a virtue rather than a moral necessity. The foundation of our spiritual journey as people of faith depends on being as honest as we can possibly muster! Without a genuine footing in what is grounded and essential in our own lives, and collectively in our culture, everything else becomes irrelevant. In other words, a life built on deceit eventually leads to moral bankruptcy.

Our real problems and real challenges are difficult enough already! To live lives that are dishonest, deceitful, and disingenuous not only makes our problem solving impossible, the world—and our light in it—is made less through such deceptive efforts.

So, as people of faith, how do we make our own moral journey more real and more honest? And how do we create more forthright intentionality in our daily walk? This is not a new question for Christians; rather, it has only taken a retooled, 21st-century frame. I challenge each and every one of you to be more honest within your interior lives and, to the extent that it is safe to reveal, to be more honest in your public life. Remember, I come to you from the land of Matthew Shepard; I realize the complex issues around public disclosure. However, on all counts, honesty is a foundational moral necessity; and it is honed by daily practice. It is my sincere hope that everyone is generally moving in truthful direction!

As people introduced to God's love, we should take it as "a given" that our spiritual journey is predicated on as much honesty as we can embrace! Certainly, we all have our blind spots. Nevertheless, honesty, insofar as we are able, is an abiding principle of our walk with God. So why don't we do it? And perhaps an even more important question: How do we change hearts

(including our own) if we betray our own integrity by keeping secrets (including secrets from ourselves)?

While I have you ponder the issue of honesty, we still have to admit the limitations of our present century. There remain many reasons why gay and lesbian Christians have avoided full honesty, and most of us already know these reasons. We speak to these deceptions and careful deceptions by all sorts of names: the closet, the down-low, the mistakes of a confused weekend. And we know that these are basically defense mechanisms in the name of survival. Some of you still face these basic threats to your personal survival on a daily basis; but, frankly, many of you do not face these fears.

However, for those of you languishing in a world of cleverly contrived deceptions, I call you to the process of leaving a dishonest lifestyle and moving towards a more truth-filled destiny. Living your life in dishonest pieces and parts—hiding in the shadows—is a toxic pattern of living and, left unchecked, will separate you from our Creator God. For, you see, as we come to know ourselves and those around us more honestly—and yes, intimately—our view of God grows, matures, and becomes a daily part of practical life. God makes more and more sense to us!

Not everyone has the opportunity or choice to ➤

We would like to introduce you to:

Ben Kemena is a graduate of the Seventh-day Adventist school system. He attended Mile High Academy in Colorado and the Loma Linda University School of Medicine in California. He is a physician who works as a hospitalist in the Denver area and is just beginning a fellowship to become board certified in hospice care. Ben enjoys mountain and rock climbing, backpacking, photography, running, and writing. He discovered Kinship in 1991 as part of his coming out process and says one of the things he most enjoys about our community is the fellowship.

When we asked him what would make Kinship even better he replied, "Just love it." For Ben, the most important part of his spiritual journey is being both gay and Seventh-day Adventist. He has been with his partner Mike for fifteen years. One of the things that has been most exciting for Ben this year is his parents' 50th wedding anniversary. Both of his parents served in Adventist denominational employment for more than 40 years. ▼



God knew us before the womb, set us apart, and calls us to let our light shine in daily witness.

decide on the manner of their public persona, but honesty remains the foundation upon which decisions must be made. When I was asked to leave Loma Linda University for “being gay,” the charge leveled against me was that I had been dishonest. Adventist church policy openly and publically states its views towards people like me, and I had to face that issue honestly. And, yes, I had been deliberately dishonest (or less than candid) with Adventist officials at Loma Linda by suggesting that I was living fully within the church rules when, in fact, I was actually living outside of those directives. Therefore, I accepted my fate because, at the most fundamental level, I knew that I had been dishonest; and no amount of rhetoric or clamor would ever alter that! If the Adventist church rules had been private and hidden, I could have claimed ignorance; but I knew the rules (then and now). I do give the church credit for being open about their policies. Given the rules, I had to confront my own dishonesty—indeed, confront a pattern of spiritual double talk in my own daily life—and accept the consequences. It was time to “talk the talk” and “walk the walk.”

I must tell you that it’s been a very interesting privilege over many years to provide “safe harbor” to gay church employees and Adventist college faculty struggling in their “coming out” process, on their way to a better and more honest wholeness. Many of you have done the same, and you will never know all of the good you have accomplished. We all share in the joy of our stories and process! When I lost my family, friends, peers, colleagues, church, and my history, I still had several good fortunes. I had a solid religious education that convinced me that God would not forsake me, and I met you and this sustaining worship community! We can say that being a gay Christian is not an oxymoron; but it’s more important to witness it in the lived experience. I thank all of you! This Sabbath is about living the real deal! For, as we all know, with God, we are, and remain, enough.

Sometimes good Christians will disagree with one another, and we have to be mindful of that painful reality. I believe that Adventist church policies towards gays and lesbians are wrong; but that does not grant me moral permission to be dishonest should I choose to live and work amongst them.

Furthermore, I cannot be a moral agent arguing against any church policy unless I’m living honestly in my daily Christian walk (with or without the Adventist church). Most importantly, upon emerging from that

crucible, I promised myself that I needed to re-read the Bible, focus on the fundamentals of Christianity (honesty, love, charity, wholeness, grace, and forgiveness), and re-double my effort to become the person God calls all of us to be! Addressing my lies and false pretense came at a personal cost; but it has been more than offset by a candid, loving walk with God.

As one spends less time and energy in deceit, one has more time and energy to celebrate the goodness all around us—a goodness that can only be accessed by a more honest approach to living. We call this journey, as a process, “coming out,” or in other circles, a “rebirth;” and, for Christians, this process should be lifelong. We also meet healthier believers along the way who bring out the best in us. When I am around gracious, loving, honest, and integrated people, it tends to rub off on me. Similarly, when I’m around fearful, suspicious, disintegrated, and dishonest people, it tends to have a negative impact on me. You might recognize that this is at the heart and soul of a worship community, and is why God supports our life in a community of healthy believers.

As a small minority on this planet, we must understand that our survival depends on the health of our own “tribe,” first and foremost. This health is foundationally determined by our own willingness to share honestly—to be as honest as we can be and to decline the temptation to deceive whenever possible. Honesty is the absolutely necessary requirement, the lynch pin, the catalyst for both health and life transformation. If honesty can only start in your interior life, start there. If honesty can only include a few others around you, start there. If honesty can build upon open self-disclosure, start there! Keep moving forward and building upon the relief that only truth can bring; and remember that “coming out” is a manner of traveling rather than a station of arrival.

I can try to treat a dishonest patient; but I will be crippled and hamstrung in my efforts and, even worse, I may harm my patient! The grace of our Creator God is available to the deceptive soul; but the full mature majesty of grace will remain less than its potential, and sometimes unfulfilled because it is tragically unrecognized! Indeed, I have seen the Scripture used to unscrupulous ends when people respond to it by dishonest agenda rather than the sweet relief that only open and truth-filled acceptance brings. Honesty is not a virtue; it is a necessity. ▽

Forgiveness means giving up all hope of a better past.

--Landrum Bolling



Letter from Rehoboth



Hello Everyone,

I want to begin by thanking Yolanda for hosting one of the most wonderful weekends I have had in my entire life! Yolanda, THANK YOU! You will never know how much I appreciate what you have done. I also want to tell everyone it was a pleasure meeting you. My heart has been touched in a way that I can't even explain in words. You all have a special place in my heart.

Before finding Kinship I felt alone. I thought that there was no one out there who would understand. I was so wrong. I thank God everyday for leading me to find this group. Kinship means so much to me. This weekend has shown me God's love for me in many ways. I want to thank all of you for taking the time out to speak to me. You are my new family, and I must say that I miss you all already!

Jim's talk on Friday night made me really think. I also loved hearing everyone's thoughts that night. Karen's song was absolutely beautiful; it touched my heart so powerfully that I almost broke down and cried. On Saturday I got to know more of you and got to hear Ben speak. Ben, your words touched me. Thank you for that! I also want to thank you for taking time to speak to me and mentor me on Saturday night. Your words were greatly appreciated.

I can't wait to speak to you again! As we gathered at church on Sabbath morning, God gave me a glimpse of what heaven will be like; again, I had to hold back my tears. I loved every moment of it!

This weekend went by so fast I couldn't believe it was over. I am so happy I have found this new family. I can't wait to see you all again, hopefully soon. I could say wonderful things about each of you, but I won't take up your time. Just know that you all have enriched my life this weekend. As I was driving home in the car, my heart was filled with so much joy that I cried all the way home. I imagine that Dwight thinks I'm too emotional, but I know he understands. A part of me knows that he was touched in a way that none of us will fathom. He just keeps saying how wonderful everyone was. When driving to Rehoboth on Friday afternoon, Dwight told me he wouldn't be coming to another one of these retreats. He said he was just coming to this one to be supportive. It's funny how the Lord works, because now Dwight is talking about the Vermont Mini-Kampmeeting and how we have to make plans to attend that one. So he is looking forward to the next one. I'm glad he is, because I am, too!

I hope to see you all and hope that I can stay in touch with you all. Thank you to David and Catherine. Because of you I have found this wonderful new family. I appreciate everything you both have done for me.

God bless you all!

—Angel ▼



We would like to introduce you to:

Angel Rivera was born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, and lives in New Jersey. He is a bridal gown designer who is about to begin production under his own label. He says, "I love that I get to be creative every day!" Angel's hobbies are sewing, reading, and learning more about God's love. Angel found Kinship this year after his pastor very "lovingly" told him he would go to hell if he stayed in a relationship with his partner. At that point Angel thought there should be some other resources. He Googled "gay" and "Seventh-day Adventist" and found our community. He says his favorite thing about Kinship so far is making new friends who are gay or lesbian and Adventist. He would like to meet more Kinship members in the New York/ New Jersey area. Angel says the most important thing for him about his spiritual journey is "getting to know God and to know that He loves me just as I am!" He has been with his partner Dwight for five years and says "he is a very friendly, intelligent, and spiritual person." ▼





Notice of Annual Meeting and Election of Directors.

During the upcoming Kampmeeting in Seattle, Washington, July 15 to 19, Kinship will hold its annual meeting and election to a number of its director positions. The following positions are up for election this year for two-year terms.

The Nominating Committee, pursuant to the SDA Kinship bylaws, has nominated the following people for election to those offices:

President Yolanda Elliott
Vice President Naveen Jonathan
Director of Church Relations David Ferguson
Director of Women's Interests
..... Brenda McColpin, Karen Wetherell

Anyone wishing to be added to the list of those running for election to any of these offices must send a statement of interest in running as well as a

statement of support from at least four additional Kinship members to the following web address: nominations@sdakinship.org no later than Friday, May 22. Also, a statement of no more than 150 words should be included. This statement, as well as a picture provided by the applicant, will be published in the Connection that will be issued before Kampmeeting.

A nomination from a person who is suggesting the name of another party is also acceptable if the person being nominated knows s/he is being nominated. The person doing the nominating should get the photo and written platform from that nominee, along with the four (4) endorsements, before submitting her/his name by May 22. Additional information is available in the SDA Kinship bylaws which are posted on www.sdakinship.org or by contacting Bob Bouchard at president@sdakinship.org. ▽



Dear Friends,

I am writing to tell you about a challenge I have taken on and to ask for your help. On Sunday, June 7, 2009, I will be at AIDS Walk Boston, walking with over 10,000 other people to make a difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS in our community. This is my eighth year of walking.

As a participant, I have committed to raising money to support the programs and services of AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts. AAC is the oldest, largest AIDS organization in New England. They provide vital services to over 2500 clients living with HIV/AIDS, helping with healthcare management, legal assistance, utility assistance, and counseling support. AAC also conducts statewide prevention programs that reach tens of thousands of individuals at risk of infection. In addition, AAC is involved in essential advocacy and policy efforts, such as developing a National AIDS Strategy. These programs and services need our help to ensure they continue. By walking on June 7, I hope I will inspire you to make a gift in support of this worthwhile cause.

If you choose to donate, you can do so online by visiting my personal Walk page. To visit, just follow the instructions at the bottom of this message. Your generosity will help me reach my ambitious goal of \$1,000! I realize that the economy is terrible right now and I don't want anyone of you to feel bad if you can't give.

You can learn more about this event by visiting the AIDS Walk Boston website at www.aidswalkboston.org. If you would like to participate in the Walk, you can also register easily online.

I hope that you'll support me in this effort. Thank you in advance for your gift!

Travis Roe ▽

You can visit Travis' page by going to www.aidswalkboston.org (shown above). Click on the big green DONATE on the left side of the page, then in the Sponsor a Participant screen, enter Travis Roe in the first name and last name fields, and search. You can support Travis as an individual or support his team.

Rom Wilder

String too Short to Save

How do you explain a calm you want to keep, a spell you don't want broken? Like the last few bites of ice cream in the dish, you take smaller bites to make it last longer. Like a tub of water that's the absolute perfect temperature and you don't want it to get cooler, so you run some hot water in slowly to make up for the cooling. You know the ice cream will be gone and you know the water will get too cool, but for a brief moment you try to trick yourself.

I tried to trick myself at Rehoboth. If only everyone would just sit absolutely still and just breathe, instead of slowly standing up and leaving. If only the plates would not quite get empty. If only nobody would say it was getting late or it was time to go home.

How do you go home when you are already home? And how do you explain that to people who seem reasonably intelligent? How can one last car pull away—even though you grabbed a tissue and tried to pull an Uncle Lou? (It didn't work for him either... We always waved back at the handkerchief, but we still pulled out of the driveway and watched the hankie get smaller in the rear view mirror.)

I wonder where it came from, that calmness, that being at home, at oneness? The music? The music was beautiful—voice, piano, cello, familiar, hauntingly new. Or was it the food? It was soooo good—oatmeal patties; the peas, please; the

We would like to introduce you to:

Rom Wilder was born in Los Angeles and, while her parents decided where they were going to live and whether to be married or divorced, she did an educational tour of the Adventist school system: Mt. Vernon Academy, Glendale Union Academy, Lynwood Academy, and Shenandoah Valley Academy (Class of '61); Columbia Union College, La Sierra College, and Atlantic Union College (Class of '95). She feels that her history gives new meaning to "The Great Advent Movement." She works for a large corporation where she's able to work from home 90% of the time doing the best part of her job, which is being the "go-to" IT person for her regional team, working with a global team to create learning modules for new software, and exploring ways to demonstrate and teach how widgets, feeds, and cyber conference rooms are beneficial. When not working, Rom enjoys paper crafts, computer graphics, and games. Her "drug of choice" is knitting. Last year she was joyfully surprised to find that a couple of women who admire and love (and are admired and loved by) her very straight-but-not-narrow mother were actually Kinship members!! It has added a beautiful new dimension to "family." Rom found Kinship 26 years ago after "searching for it high and low. It wasn't easy to find back then." When asked what she enjoys about our Kinship community Rom replied, "Fellowship, fellowship, food, and fellowship." She and her partner Lynn have known each other for nearly 40 years and have been together for more than 25 of those years. Lynn is currently raising a dividend child who was turning three a few days after the Rehoboth weekend. When we asked Rom what was the most important thing about her spiritual journey she replied, "The freedom to make the journey." ▽



strawberry shortcake. Maybe it was the people—familiar old faces grown older and dearer; sweet new faces. The Scrabble game? The chocolate chip cookies? The coffee-house? The church, the beach house, the hotel lobby? The perfect blue sky, the spring flowers? The laughter, the silence?

Perhaps it will come again. I will recognize it. It will recognize me. ▽



We would like to introduce you also to:

Reginald (Reggie) Garcon

was born in Brooklyn, New York, and grew up in Miami, Florida, where he attended various schools and Adventist churches. He currently resides in Maryland. Reggie is so outgoing that, even though this was his first mini-Kampmeeting, he gave us the sense that he was the greeter welcoming us for our initial visit. His smile is contagious. Reggie works in administration where his favorite part of the job is interacting with students. He just began this new job in February and reports that it is one of the highlights of the year for him. When he is not working, Reggie enjoys sports, karaoke, travel, entertainment, and friends. He discovered Kinship through his friend Brian who also introduced him to mini-Kampmeeting. He is so excited about finding Kinship that he would like us to have even more activities than are already on the calendar. The most important thing in his spiritual journey is being connected and interacting with like-minded people.



Helmut Arevalo

was born in Peru and has lived in New York City for the last 6 years. He says, "I like everything about this city—its magic in the summertime and in the winter. I like the subway system because the whole city can be covered in snow and I can still get around. I appreciate the diversity represented here. It's helped me be more open about my sexuality." His enthusiasm and outgoing personality are contagious. He has collected all fifty of the state flags of the U.S. as well as flags of United States' territories. He also collects Broadway show magazines. Helmut found Kinship via what may be our upcoming greatest referral source, Google. He says that the things he likes best about Kinship are meeting the nice people, hearing our histories, and integrating our orientation and spirituality. ▽



It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that God set God's heart upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because God loves you! Deuteronomy 7:7

Public Authenticity

Ben Kemena



Ben Kemena

Many more of us are actually more comfortably "out" than ever before. Despite our worries and concerns, what are our present impediments to ongoing honest sharing? And, as an aside, does it even really matter? In other words, if one is comfortably "out," why can't he or she simply live in peace without making a big deal out of it? I am here to tell you, both individually and collectively, that it *does* matter!

What is the explanation for our lack of candor or cause bearing? We must recognize that our silence colludes with ignorance about us and, as such, continues to promote dishonesty and cruel stereotype. This question has been the battleground of my current 49-year-old, middle-aged life. And I have honed the explanation to three basic challenges that face "gay and gray" adults: **complacency, vanity, and isolation.**

Many of us are on "data overload" in a world that is rapidly changing. There is a weariness and fatigue which can be difficult to overcome. But too many of us stop learning new ways to steward our energies more creatively and just stop trying and actually stop learning altogether. It becomes easier to ignore all of the information and allow complacency to rule our hearts. Before we know it, our hard-earned time, talent, and treasure are squandered when they are needed most.

Our involvement in “causes” will change with age; but, on our lifelong spiritual journey, we are actually never, NEVER called to completely opt out!! Each person of faith continues to be called as their energy allows; and, whether a protest marcher or senior statesperson all voices need a full airing. We have good news to share, and we are always called to let our light shine!

There is a great danger in this type of complacency, for we also deny our community the wisdom that has often been accrued in our personal experience and process of “coming out.” We know the curse of our information-overloaded world—and, yes, we need the data—but we need discernment even more. Complacency threatens our full understanding of issues, and it can place good decision making in practical jeopardy.

Sometimes complacency comes in the form of “acceptance fatigue” as we sit in readiness while the world catches up to us! Since leaving Loma Linda, I’ve always fully disclosed my identity in job interviews. If the group doesn’t want a gay guy in it, I want to know it right upfront. In Colorado, as it is in 40 other states, it’s perfectly legal to fire or dismiss a staff member on the basis of sexual orientation alone. When I joined my present medical group, I was the first “out” employee in the 30-year history of my 700-physician medical group; and I spent the next six years learning why. For six years, I spent most of my days working in a civil silence. No one wanted to sit and have lunch with me or invite me (or us) to their homes for a social engagement; after all, what would people say in Denver, Colorado? But good things were happening during that time in my workplace. I pitched in when things were tough; I covered my colleagues for family births, deaths, and illnesses. I went to bat as a character witness for colleagues that were mistreated or wronged. And finally, it happened one day—a colleague joined me for lunch! Happily, it was a day when I was not sleep deprived, and I actually appreciated the importance of the moment in real time. Instantly, I knew that I could either be sullen as to why it had taken so long, or I could seize the opportunity and rejoice. This guy, who has become one of my closest friends over the past eight years, joined me at lunch full of questions and ready to address his own prejudices. He struggled with words, terms, and his own fears, but it was all in good faith; and it’s still the most memorable day of my professional life.

Vanity is a tougher issue. It’s a tougher issue in our culture because aesthetic is so heavily mixed with and co-opted by youth, gender, race, and class distinctions. Our notions of value may also be driven by a set of unhealthy pretensions and impossible images. But today, I’m not talking so much about appearances; rather, I’m

speaking more to the concept of self-esteem. As we age, as we invest in the outcome of our lives, we must maturely recognize error, flaw, and defeat. Yes, defeat. As it turns out, this is difficult to accomplish—even though we already know that no person is perfect!

As we grow in our lives and spiritual journeys, we may happen upon data and information which threatens long-cherished ideals. Upon looking at the data and evidence, we may be asked to admit a flaw in our previously held logic and reasoning. And ultimately, there may be some flaws so large that we must consider the defeat and embark on a new pathway! After all, is it not exactly this process argument which we hope will ultimately motivate Adventist church leaders to alter formal church policies towards us? Should we expect anything different from ourselves than from the church leadership? I think not!

Whether our issues revolve around reconciling human sexuality, reconciling the geological record to the literal sharing of Genesis, or reconciling the ordination of women in our church, all of us understand Jacob’s wrestle. And, as an aside, we must also consider the limitations of a cultural “western model” as we redesign better ways to admit mistakes, no matter how embarrassing, and focus more intently on the reward that should be showered on the actual recognition of error and flaw! This is the Good News, after all!

Isolation is the third insidious reason why so many of us “out folk” unwittingly collude with ignorance to promote dishonesties by our silence. There is a tendency for all of us to create a refuge and safe place to dwell in our daily lives. While I certainly don’t discount the need to have a safe haven in the cultural storms swirling around us, we are also called to leave our safe port now and then. How many of you have recently stepped out of your “comfort zone” to learn more about injustices facing others? This is not unlike how we hope others in our society might embrace us! In other words, have you attended a rally looking at issues such as racism, genderism, anti-Semitism, classicism, ageism, or any number of discriminations that are morally indefensible? We are not simply called to address our own issues; we are called to recognize that we are part of a greater set of moral reckonings! In grappling with these issues, we most need those that have already been fully engaged in the wrestling and carry the wisdom of their experience and reflection!

For those of us who are “comfortably out,” we are still called to grow and, yes, even pioneer our moral causes and journeys. For me, these efforts have been exceedingly hard-fought and represent ongoing concern. But I am a big believer in the notion that our personal witness over many years successfully meets the challenge of fear and ignorance, even if some of ➤

the steps along the way don't always tickle! I have spent most of my adult life fighting the "glass ceilings" that gays and lesbians often face in our culture, including: issues around insurance benefits, disability income, adoption leave, marriage and divorce, elder care, hate speech (and worse), and the subtle slurs that remain with respect to job promotions; the explanation of metaphor (when does gay become queer become faggot?); and the use of religion as a weapon against us. In these struggles, I have had to fight my own personal complacency; and there is indeed a time to hike and a time to fight. I have had to fight my own vanity, recognizing that when people ask good questions, they deserve thoughtful answers. And when I'm wrong, I need to humbly move past my shame or embarrassment to a mental space where relief comes by letting go of a falsehood. I have to move past my tendency to think that gays and lesbians are the only

people facing injustice, and recognize that I must pierce through my isolation to fight discrimination across a broad cross section of social injustice. For, you see, when we better understand and fight for the rights of women, Jews, Gentiles, Romans, Greeks, the elderly, and people of color, we also fight for the rights and full inclusion of all of us!

The honesty born of "coming out" is our lifelong calling as people of faith! "Opting out" does not have sustainable moral footing; and, sometimes, silence from our most discerning minds with mature reasoning (wisdom!) creates more harm than anything our detractors might inflict, because our silence colludes with ignorance to foster the most dangerous dishonesties. For those who are able, we need to share throughout the full and mature course of our lives with ourselves and our community! Our light is not a snapshot, but the full width and breadth of our entire life! ▽

Wholeness

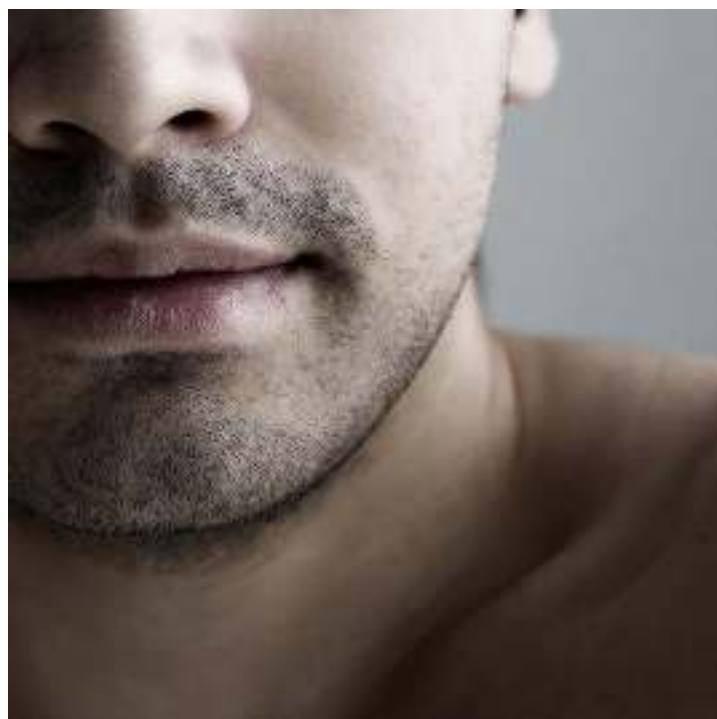
Ben Kemena

Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen God! Isaiah 6:5

I have many Adventist friends and family who just "can't get" the blending of my spirituality and sexuality. Indeed, when they have heard me speak on Sabbath or write articles on spiritual concerns to our community and church, they have been unable to reconcile this with my fun-loving and rowdy spirit on Saturday night. They have been unable to accept the notion that the same lips that can quote God's Word can also kiss a man—or more!

Now, their respectful awe of God's Word is very appropriate. Isaiah felt this awe at his calling, for he knew he was both mortal and sinful. Yet, when God asked Isaiah (in chapter 6, verse 8), "Whom should I send; who will go for us?" Isaiah replied, "Here am I, send me!"

I, too, am a person of unclean lips. I am painfully aware of this whenever I say something thoughtless or hurtful. I will say that my life is a daily journey—trying my best to honestly present myself as a whole person—and hoping that the motives of my maturing heart are what matter most! If my words or manner have created offense or concern, please accept my abject apologies. However, mindful of our traditions, I also have to say that kissing someone and savoring a morsel of tuna are not defiling, in and of themselves,



nor does fearful celibacy and dining on *Tuno* make me a holier person by similar token.

Whether it be in sharing the good news of the Gospel or our intimate love-making, we must examine ourselves openly and honestly; we must take great care to not call unclean what God has given us as gifts; and we must have enough forgiveness in our hearts to realize that we are called to try our best rather than achieve some false perfection.

May we heed the call to Isaiah and respond when called by the Holy Spirit: Here we are, God, send us! ▽

Paraphrased and written from multiple sources, but inspired most by *The Word is Out*, by Chris Glaser, 1994, HarperCollins.

Thoughts from Kenya

Martha Wangoi

We who live in many of the African countries know that it is a rare gift to have individuals or a culture embrace change. We're a rigid set of communities. I have found the Adventist church in my country to be so conservative that it will turn a blind eye to important but delicate issues.

I personally believe we should have only one partner or spouse. I believe that is God's plan. But the church is so strict about divorce that its policies will cause misery in families.

One of our most talented pastors was the happily married father of two children until his wife came down with a virus that affected her brain and left her quite mentally ill. She became violent. To protect his family, the pastor filed for divorce. I was shocked to hear that the Adventist leaders threatened to fire this pastor if he finalized the divorce. Eventually he began to date a member of his church. When the conference found out she was pregnant they fired him. He now earns his living as a truck driver.

The Adventist church is burying its head even deeper in the sand about the subject of homosexuality. Church leaders refuse to discuss the issue. Gay people are being driven to desperation. Some do drugs. Some opt to hide in fake marriages. ▽

The Truth About Cheating

This article was sent to us by a Kinship member who has asked to remain anonymous.

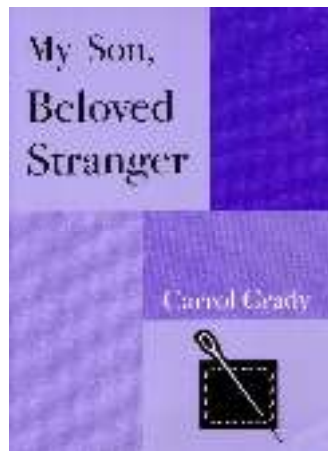
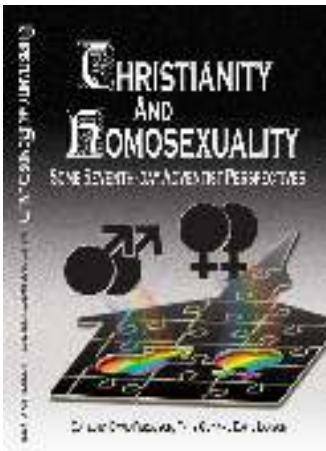
Many years ago I had an affair with a married co-worker. I believe having affairs is wrong; but, while I regret the embarrassment it caused at work, the fear, the stress, and the lies to my partner, I don't regret the affair. The reason I don't regret this event in my life is that I gained valuable knowledge. I want to share some of that knowledge with you because knowledge is power.

It seems that many people believe we have a finite amount of interest in sex and affection. Thus, if we have an affair with another woman or man, we lose interest in our spouse or partner. Following that logic, if a partner becomes too tired or busy for sex or shows less affection, it is an indication that they are having an affair. Right? WRONG! I have found that interest in sex rises and falls, ebbs and flows. I have found that when my interest in sex rose when I had my affair, it also rose with my partner. When that interest ebbed, it also ebbed with my partner. Of course, sometimes relationships lack sex and affection because of fears, worries, alienation, loss of respect, stress, etc. These are indications of other problems, not necessarily indicators of an affair.

I have heard injured partners say, "I cannot believe s/he had an affair! How could this happen? We had a great sex life!" They are assuming their partner's finite amount of interest in sex is being satisfied at home and there isn't enough left for anyone else. I don't want to inject suspicion into happy relationships, but I have seen the devastation of violated assumptions. Remember, knowledge is power.

Another assumption is that affairs don't happen in truly loving relationships; when the affair happens it indicates that the cheater is not really in love with their partner. We also assume that somewhere deep inside of the cheater is an alienation or some sort of lack of love for their partner. It took me many years to fully understand why I was vulnerable to being seduced. I always knew it was NOT because I didn't love my partner. I learned that the problem was with me and not with my relationship. In my case, I grew up with parents who didn't want me; I was starved for affection. Even though I was finally in a loving, satisfying relationship, deep inside I still had the assumption that I needed to take whatever affection I could get because I couldn't turn down any offers. Once again, knowledge is power. I CAN say no. ▽

For those of you interested in more information about this issue, two of Kinship's family therapists recommend After the Affair by Janis Abrahms Spring, PhD.



These books
and dvd
can be ordered
online at

[www.
sdagayperspectives.com](http://www.sdagayperspectives.com)

Women & Children First, July 13-15, 2009

This year's Women and Children First Event is being held in beautiful Mount Vernon, Washington, USA. We will be staying in the Best Western CottonTree Inn which provides spacious rooms, a full breakfast buffet, pool, and free high-speed internet access. Children 17 and under are free in room with one paying adult. Dogs are allowed with a \$25.00 refundable fee. Deadline for registration is June 15, 2009.

Kinship Kampmeeting 2009 – Naveen Jonathan

Kampmeeting will take place in Seattle, WA, July 15-19, 2009. Online registration for Kampmeeting is available on the Kinship website. Please visit <http://www.sdakinship.org/km2009.htm> to register and to obtain the most updated information about Kampmeeting.

Please note that you can take advantage of the reduced rates for the full Kampmeeting till May 31! On June 1, 2009, the rates will go up by \$50 per person for all room types, so register *now* at the lower rates! For more information, please feel free to email kampmeeting@sdakinship.org. *See you all in Seattle!*

Australian Kampmeeting 2009 – Noel Thorpe

Mark your calendars! Reserve your holiday time! Book your flights while the rates are down! Join us down under for our wonderful gathering 25-27 September. Our theme is "Incurably Gay and SDA." You can find more information on our website at <http://sdakinshipaustralia.org>.

European Kinship Meeting 2009 – Mike Lewis

Airplane fares are down at the moment. This is the perfect time to book your flight to London so you can join us for our 22-25 October gathering. Daniel Duda will be our speaker. His work as an administrator and pastor in the Trans-European Division touches Adventists in many countries. Each Kinship gathering has its own special feel. This yearly meeting has brought people from such different places as Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Scotland, England, Kenya, The Netherlands, France, Spain, Germany, the United States, Norway, Canada, Australia, and South Africa. It is a place where, despite the effects of the Tower of Babel, people who speak many languages find common laughter, common hope, and common ways to communicate with each other.

Kinship Europe Holiday 2009 – Catherine Taylor

There is such a thing as good temptation. Good temptation is when Kinship Europe invites you to enjoy museums and shopping in St. Ives, harbor-bottom walking in Mousehole, spectacular views of Mounts



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Embracing Our Future

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Grow your business! Make new contacts! We at Kinship are constantly thinking about ways we can strengthen our community and utilize the remarkable resources available here. If you would like to advertise the work you do or consulting you may offer, please feel free to contact us. Ruud is a remarkable layout artist and can take your copy and work with you to make a splash! Or you can send us your work in a "camera-ready" format. Our rates (in U.S. dollars) are: 1 column inch for one month at \$25.00 or for three months at \$60.00; one-quarter page for one month at \$50.00 or for three months at \$130.00; one-half page for one month at \$100.00 or for three months at \$255.00; one full page for one month at \$200.00 or for three months at \$545.00. For more information and rates, feel most welcome to contact Catherine at connectioneditor@sdakinship.org.

Bay, leisurely dinners at sunset, cliff walks, art galleries, Tresco Gardens and helicopter rides, clotted cream teas, Eden. For more information, you can contact us at kinship@xs4all.nl, kinship-uk@scotmagic.co.uk, or connectioneditor@sdakinship.org. ▽

Health Tip of the Month May

Antioxidants

When it comes to antioxidants, there's a certain fruit group that may be giving blueberries a run for their money. And you'd be "plum" foolish not to eat 'em. Stone fruits—specifically, certain varieties of plums and peaches—may have antioxidant levels on par with those of the nutrient-packed berries.

That's particularly good news in these tough economic times, because stone fruits tend to be much less expensive than antioxidant-superstar blueberries. A recent study showed that red-fleshed plums and red-fleshed peaches generally contained equal-to-blueberry levels of phenolics and anthocyanins, two major disease-fighting antioxidants. (Yellow and white peaches and nectarines, on the other hand, did not quite match up.) Ask your grocer about antioxidant-rich red-flesh plum and peach varieties next time you're shopping.

We already know that beans are a great source of fiber and vegetable protein. But red kidney beans are also stellar when it comes to packing an antioxidant punch. In fact, red beans are right up there with blueberries when it comes to total antioxidant value. So brighten up your salads and stews by tossing in some crimson-colored beauties.

In addition to red kidney beans, other antioxidant champions include artichokes, russet potatoes, pinto beans, sweet cherries, plums, and pecans. What's so great about antioxidants? They help guard against the cell damage that can lead to cancer, heart disease, and early aging by swiftly mopping up free radicals—cell-process by-products that can damage DNA. ▽



connection

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Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

Impressions from Rehoboth Mini-Kampmeeting



"I Found You"

*I was baptized into this church forty years ago this year;
Seems like it was only yesterday.
I thought I knew the life I'd lead till Jesus came again,
But many things have changed along the way.
I lost my job, I lost my home, I lost my family,
And then I lost my loneliness when I discovered me.*

*And I found you, I found you,
A family of choice and friendships that are true;
I left the past but I found you.
God let me be a part of bringing Kinship to your heart;
I left the past behind, but I found you.*

*The church had many plans for me; they feel I let them down.
They say that my heart has gone astray;
I think it went in search of God's relentless love for me,
A love no doubt could ever turn away.
So when the weekend's done, I can still look in your eyes
And say, no matter what I've lost, I've found a greater prize.*



*And I found you, I found you,
A family of choice and friendships that are true;
I left the past behind but I found you.
God let me be a part of bringing Kinship to your heart;
I left the past behind, but I found you.*

*And in those quiet moments when my faith seems to have flown,
I hear one of your voices say, "You're the one who led me home."*

By Marsha Stevens and John Stevens. Copyright 1999, Balm Publishing. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
Paraphrased, with permission, by Karen Wetherell and sung by her at the opening of Rehoboth Beach Mini-Kampmeeting April 17, 2009.

