

connection ▽

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Be who you are and say what you want, because those who mind don't matter
and those who matter don't mind.

Theodor Seuss Geisel
March 2, 1904 - September 24, 1991

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Who we are...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. (Kinship) is a non-profit support organization which ministers to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is an organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people.

Founded in 1976, the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the US. Kinship has a board of up to 15 officers and 13 regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes several thousand people in 43 countries.

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

Support Kinship

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

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

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This is the last issue where we will be focusing on the January workshop, Homosexuality and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. This month we will share synopses of Carrol Grady's presentation about being an Adventist family with a gay child, Rene Drumm's work on the Social Experiences of gay and lesbian Adventists, and Dave Lawson's talk on Sexuality and Personal Ethics. Thor Montgomery's column on living with AIDs/HIV is back along with the first of a two part series by Andrew Dykstra. Remember to fill out your application/s for at least one of the many great Kampmeeting or Mini Kampmeeting experiences that are being advertised here. During 2006 our Kinship community will have Kampmeetings on at least four continents!

Growing in Love

Carrol Grady (USA)

I am going to tell you about our son who is gay. As I share our story, I am also representing nearly 600 families with whom I have become acquainted over the past ten years through my ministry for families of gay and lesbian people.

Paul, the youngest of our three sons, was born in Hawaii, where Bob was a departmental director for the mission. As a preschooler, Paul was a sunny, outgoing, lovable little guy who instantly made friends with everyone he met. When he was three, we moved to Singapore, then the headquarters of the Far Eastern Division. Paul was excited when he was old enough to start school, but his enthusiasm quickly faded as the older boys in his grades 1-4 classroom started teasing him and calling him a sissy. This was just the beginning of the harassment he faced throughout his school years - most of which we were unaware of at the time. He started piano lessons when he was seven, and took to music like a duck to water. He was a bookworm who read far beyond his years. He also wrote poetry, and showed talent in art class. Every other year in the grades 5-8 classroom, the boys took cooking and sewing, while the girls took woodworking and auto mechanics. Most of the boys were less than enthusiastic about this, but Paul thoroughly enjoyed learning to cook and bake bread. He made our bread at home, and baked chocolate chip cookies at the drop of a hat! When he entered academy he had the job of baking bread for the cafeteria.

As he neared puberty, Paul was frequently moody. We later learned that it was in his 7th grade Bible textbook that he first discovered the name for what he had always sensed was different about himself. From that moment on, he began praying earnestly that God would change him. He was the only student in his class during his 7th and 8th grade years at the mission school, but he began laying



plans to have a girlfriend as soon as he started academy. He was determined to overcome his unwanted feelings and be "like the other boys." In academy Paul had many friends, but seemed to march to the beat of a different drummer. There was just something different about him and his interests were different from those of his classmates. On a very subconscious level, this stirred a sense of uneasiness in me that I didn't recognize until later. On a conscious level, I just chalked it up to being a teenager. I eventually learned that some of the academy guys had guessed he was gay and made fun of him. He has told us this was when he first thought of suicide.

All three of our boys graduated from Far Eastern Academy and went on to Pacific Union College. We returned to the States after Paul finished academy. When he was in college I noticed little signs of rebellion, such as sometimes staying home from church, and I sensed even more strongly that something was troubling him. I still didn't know what was wrong. I thought we were talking about all the things that were important to him, but I now realize that he was holding a lot back, as he began to come to terms with his sexual orientation.

He later told us his number one priority when he went to college was to find a nice girl to marry. He was sure if he did this God would change him. And he did meet a very sweet girl while working at Wawona Junior Camp the summer before school started. Although he told her he thought he was gay, she believed she could change him. They announced their engagement near the end of his freshman year and planned to get married at Christmas of his senior year. Just when it was time to order wedding invitations they broke up, for no apparent reason that we could discover.

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In desperation, I decided to call the college church pastor to whom Paul and his fiancée had gone for premarital counseling. I told him what I suspected and asked if he thought I should talk to Paul about it. After a long, tense moment of silence, he said, "Yes." That moment divided my life into before and after. Up to then I had scarcely given homosexuality a thought. I had somehow absorbed the idea that gay men were perverted and obsessed with sex. I certainly never dreamed that homosexuality was something that could touch me or my family. When I learned Paul was homosexual, I realized that something had to be wrong with my understanding. I knew Paul wasn't perverted. He had always been a very spiritually-oriented child.

My heart churned with fears, questions and grief. I managed to keep everything inside, but I couldn't sleep. All the unanswered questions kept churning through my mind. The stress was tremendous. I began to have various physical symptoms. When I went to the doctor, he was concerned because my blood pressure was elevated. Finally, I broke down and told him everything - after several months he was the first person I had been able to talk with about it. He counseled me to see a therapist. For me there was shame connected with that, too. But the need for someone with whom I could share despair was greater than my feeling of humiliation. After I started my ministry for other families, I learned that fear and shame mark the initial, and often continuing, experience of many Adventist parents. Recently I talked to parents who had kept their secret hidden for over 30 years because

they were afraid they would be condemned and rejected by their church family.

Because God had not answered his prayers or rewarded his efforts to change, Paul finally accepted the fact that he was gay. He was tired of trying to deny and hide from this reality, so he began "coming out" to his friends. For the most part, they were accepting and supportive, but as word began to get around, some of the guys in his dorm started to harass him. One day he went into the bathroom and saw the words, "Paul Grady is a fag!" Another time, a bunch of guys tied the bathroom door shut when he was in the shower, and when he tried to open it, they shouted, "Get out of here, you dirty queer! We don't want you contaminating our dorm!" Paul talked to the men's dean, but nothing was done to stop the abuse. The last straw was when he found another sign on the bathroom mirror that said, "Death to all fairies! Kill Paul Grady!" That frightened him, and he moved out of the dorm. He was in the middle of student teaching at this time, and the fear and stress made it difficult for him to concentrate. Although he had always been a top student, he was unable to get his teaching credentials.

One of the most urgent and painful questions that troubles Christian parents when they first learn their child is gay, is: What does this mean for my child's salvation? Is my child going to be lost? Suddenly it becomes very important to know just what the Bible says about homosexuality. Whether they've ever really thought about it before or not, most Adventist parents start out believing that homosexuality is a sin and homosexuals won't go to heaven. It's not until they discover their child is gay that they begin to question that

assumption.

At first, in my search for answers, I was careful to read only what I felt supported my belief system, but I didn't find helpful, satisfactory answers to all my questions. Eventually I began to read more broadly. I discovered that there is a wide range of views among theologians about the interpretation of the so-called "clobber texts" (You can read more about this on Carrol's "Someone_to_Talk_To" website.) I believe that unless theologians and church leaders have come to know and love Christian gays and lesbians as real people and to sympathize with the painful dilemma they face, those leaders are usually unwilling and unmotivated to look beyond tradition and study with an open mind. But I believe God understands and empathizes with His gay and lesbian children with a tender love that far surpasses our own.

I read several books about "curing homosexuality" by authors such as Leanne Payne, Tim LaHaye and Elizabeth Moberly. They all subscribe in some way to the theory that homosexuality is the result of dysfunctional parenting and that it can be cured through therapy, prayer and faith. Of course, this lays a heavy burden of guilt on parents. Bob and I went through years of painful regret and guilt over our perceived role in making Paul a homosexual. We knew we hadn't been perfect parents, but we had tried our best to give our boys a good Christian foundation.

After realizing that all his prayers and pleading had not brought about change, Paul decided he could no longer trust and believe in God. He met Jeff, a young Catholic man a couple of years older than him. Jeff invited Paul to sing in the choir at his large Catholic church, and

even though Paul had turned his back on God, his love of music kept him from completely losing contact. They lived together another six years, and then parted as good friends. Paul went back east to work for a Catholic foundation. When he moved back here, he went to a therapist who blamed his issues on his family and seemed to separate us from him. This was very painful for me.

Paul moved to Portland for a while, but couldn't find a good job or place to stay, so after several months he returned to Seattle. Gradually he began calling us more and coming to see us, until we were back on a friendly basis. He was in therapy for three years altogether. About a year ago he bought a house and could no longer afford his therapy. During this past year we have become quite close again.

He brings his friends over for meals and games at our house and has invited us to his house on a number of occasions. He thinks he is ready to see if he can have a relationship with a girl. He joined a Catholic singles website, went on an Alaska cruise with a singles group, and has traveled as far as Spokane and Vancouver, BC, to date girls he has met on the internet. He tells us about each one, but after one or two dates he'll say, "She was a nice girl, but we decided there just wasn't any spark." I wish I could tell him, "Honey, there probably never will be a spark," but he has to figure that out himself.

I have had the God-given opportunity to know many gay and lesbian people. I have seen the difference between those who have made peace with who they are, found a lifetime partner

and established stable relationships - and those who are involved in the constant struggle of trying to deny who they truly are and suppress their natural desires for love and companionship. I don't want to be sacrilegious, but if Jesus were here today I wonder if He might paraphrase His statement about the Sabbath and say, "Marriage was made for people, and not people for marriage." More than anything else, I long for our church leaders to be willing to study this issue with an open mind and to show those who struggle with it that they care and want to help bear their burdens. How can we answer God in the Day of Judgment if we have turned a deaf ear to the cries of our own children? ▼

Interaction And Angst: Experiences Of Gay And Lesbian Seventh-day Adventists

Rene Drumm (USA)

What is it like to grow up in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church and, in that growing up process, discover you are gay or lesbian? Given that homosexual behavior is sinful according to traditional interpretations of SDA doctrine, how does a person make such a discovery? How does that discovery then impinge on gay and lesbian Adventists' daily lives? I am going to talk about the social reality of growing up in a setting poised for rejection. I will discuss the influences of the family, school, church, and other social institutions on the lives of gay and lesbian people brought up in Adventist homes. I will conclude by offering suggestions to enhance our responses to these members of

the Adventist family.

The emotional and cognitive functioning of a person are key elements in determining sexual orientation. Emotional functioning addresses the issue of who a person is emotionally drawn to and who that person can truly "love." The key issue in emotional identity focuses on which gender the person is most attracted to on an emotional level. Cognitive functioning centers on erotic fantasies and who people picture themselves with as life mates. Research indicates that the emotional and cognitive components of sexual orientation are fairly stable.

A component in understanding sexual orientation is sexual preference. Sexual

preference refers to which gender appeals to a person as a sexual partner. While the biological, gender identity, and emotional aspects of sexual preference are known fairly early in life, as a general rule, the sexual preference aspect of sexual orientation appears sometime after puberty. This helps explain why some people seemingly "become" homosexual later on in life. Sexual preference can be suppressed by external factors such as societal and religious expectations.

A common myth exists that sexual orientation is a choice. Sexual behavior is a choice, however, the configuration of sexual orientation depends on

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many factors as stated above and some of those factors are ascribed. In addition to the biological and gender differences that research demonstrates, original research into the lives of gay and lesbian Adventists attest to the lack of choice in orientation. One of the clearest findings from my research into the lives of gay and lesbian Adventists is that from all accounts, their sexual orientation was, for them, never a choice. All of the people I interviewed told of many ways they tried to NOT be gay or lesbian. If a choice would have been available at the time of discovering their sexual orientation, the choice would have been for heterosexuality. For some people, many years were spent searching for a technique, a connection with God, some revelation that would change their orientation--all to no avail.

Gay and lesbian Adventists I interviewed recalled generally typical childhood experiences and close relationships with their parents. It is clear through discussions about family life with gay and lesbian Adventists that their homosexuality was not caused by poor parental relationships or any particular configuration of parent interaction. By far the majority of gay and lesbian Adventists I interviewed described relationships with their parents as loving and warm.

Growing up in an Adventist family for gay and lesbian Adventists appears to be no different than growing up Adventist as a heterosexual person. Adventist families where gay and lesbians are reared hold similar values and traditions as families with only heterosexual children. Gay and lesbian

Adventists went to Sabbath School and Church, attended church schools, academies and Adventist Colleges, adhered to vegetarian diets, avoided tobacco and alcohol, and felt guilty when they attended movie theaters.

The first step in coming out to others is to come out to self or acknowledging one's own homosexuality. Coming out, even to oneself, is often difficult and sometimes lengthy process for gay and lesbian Adventists.

Parental reactions varied greatly. Some parents received the news through stunned silence, others fearful questioning, angry outbursts, and some with confusion mixed with love. One of the most heartbreaking stories of coming out I heard was the son of an Adventist pastor "My dad took it hard. At one point he came into my bedroom and said, 'if your mother and I would have known about this [your homosexuality], she would have had an abortion.'" Some lesbian and gay Adventists were forced out of their homes when they came out to their parents. Some of the parents of lesbian and gay Adventists were supportive of their child as he or she disclosed their homosexuality.

Gay and lesbian Adventists who were heterosexually married generally avoided coming out to spouses until some direct confrontation required them to come out.

Sometimes, close friends of gay and lesbian Adventists were the ones that were entrusted with the secret of their homosexuality. Risking the loss of friendship, gay and lesbian Adventists often shared their homosexual orientation with their friends with fear. The reactions from friends varied greatly. One person summed up his experience, "Most of the people I've come out to have been

supportive, but the truth is some have been brutal. Makes you wish you could rush back into the wardrobe and even hope there would be a door into Narnia.... alas, once you're out to someone, there's no going back."

Many lesbian and gay Adventists have been fired from their church-related employment because of their sexual orientation. For their employment status to be secure, lesbian and gay Adventists choose self-employment or work for non-church related organizations. I did speak with one person working for an organization that uses the Adventist name, although not directly a denominational employee and recalled a positive experience. I came out to my boss and she said, "I don't see it [your sexuality] as an issue." Then she told the president of the company, and the president said the same thing. While this reaction was the exception rather than the rule, it is notable that not all Adventist organizations fire gay or lesbian employees solely on the basis of sexual orientation.

Gay and lesbian students in Adventist schools experienced a wide variety of interactions and reactions with teachers, administrators, and fellow students in terms of gay acceptance. Some of the most difficult circumstances existed when fellow students exposed the person's sexual orientation. Besides dealing with students who endeavor to entrap gay and lesbian students, administrators were also known to discover and expel gay students. In contrast, some faculty members at Adventist institutions helped gay and lesbian students deal with their struggles.

One notorious experiment of the Adventist Church in addressing homosexuality was

the development and support of a residential treatment facility called Quest Learning Center. (You can read more about this in Ron Lawson's articles that are excerpted in the February and March issues of the Connection) These individuals suffered fraud at the hands of this Seventh-day Adventist supported institution. There was and is no "cure" for homosexuality-as much as the church leaders wanted to believe there might be. The recovery from the disappointment and abuse suffered at the center proved a long and difficult journey for the participants. The experience left significant emotional scars on the victim-survivors that they later had to address.

Three primary processes need to occur when a person desires to be both an active GLBTI person and a Seventh Day Adventist: developing a new understanding of scripture that refers to same sex activity, finding supportive people who have integrated their identities, and becoming connected with an accepting church congregation. Besides coming to understand the Bible texts differently from traditional Adventist interpretation, many gay and lesbian Adventists rely on support groups such as SDA Kinship International with KinNet, or IMRU? to help integrate their identities. ▼



Recommendations to the Church

Rene Drumm (USA)

1. Get to know gay and lesbian people--both Adventists and non-Adventists. The scriptural mandate: "Love your neighbor as yourself" is reason enough to do so. If you do not know your neighbor, how can you love him or her? It is important to get acquainted with and include homosexuals in your circle of friends. Determine to come to the point in your life that you would go out of your way to minister (show friendship and fellowship) to someone who is gay or lesbian.
2. Be aware of resources for gay and lesbian Adventists and their families. SDA Kinship International is an excellent resource for gay and lesbian Adventists to find support and understanding. Their website is: sdakinship.org. Another important resource for families and friends of gay and lesbian Adventists is "Someone to Talk To." That web address is : www.someone_to_talk_to.com.
3. Get educated about sexual orientation. Be able to distinguish between fact and myth concerning the formation of sexual orientation. For example, there is no research-based information indicating that sexual orientation is a choice.
4. NEVER suggest that a gay or lesbian person engage in a sexual orientation change endeavor such as Exodus or change therapy. There is no science-based evidence that such programs work and much evidence that they do great emotional harm to participants. Change ministries hold out hope that is ill-conceived and highly unlikely for most Seventh-day Adventist gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. In addition, change ministries can expose participants to possible sexual-abuse by the leaders and/or other participants of these groups. Knowing the likely outcomes, referring to these types of programs is unethical and immoral.
5. NEVER suggest that heterosexual marriage might "heal" homosexuality. It doesn't. The following quote addresses the misconception that marriage "cures" homosexuality. "Even if I found out that I have to be celibate, then that would be better for me than living like this [married]. The church's position is that even if you're gay, you can find release with a straight woman and that is terribly wrong. That hasn't helped me and she deserves more than that. She deserves someone to appreciate her in every way. I can't appreciate her for the sexual creature she is."
6. Recognize and block any communication within your hearing that represents slurs to gay or lesbian individuals. It is never appropriate to tolerate negative characterizations of children of the King.
7. Don't be afraid to expose your children to gay and lesbian persons. One common myth is that gay men, in particular, are sexual predators. The truth is that 90% of all sexual offences occur at the hands of heterosexual males (Greenfield, 1997). A second, related myth is that homosexuality is somehow contagious; that gay and lesbians have the power to "recruit" heterosexual young people to the "other side." Because of the biological roots of sexual orientation, there is no danger for children to be exposed to homosexuality. It cannot be "caught" and neither can it be "taught." ▼

Sexual Ethics

David Larson (USA)

All sexual encounters take place in relationships of some sort and these relationships should be the targets of our ethical attention. Every sexual act gains its meaning and value from the relationships of which it is a part. We can discuss relationships without talking about sexual acts. The opposite is not true. We cannot talk about sexual acts without discussing relationships.

One of Philadelphia's most famous outdoor works of art is a sculpture that is a gigantic clothespin towering above all those who view it. It is called The Kiss, a title that may seem odd at first. More careful examination of its "face-to-face" tops, its "torsos" pressing against each other and the clip that joins them like "embracing arms" all make clear what the artist had in mind. Despite its provocative beauty, this statue is unable to tell us whether the kiss it displays is ethically appropriate. This is because it conveys nothing about the relationship of those whose moment of intimacy it captures. Without this additional information we are unable to assess its moral worth. When it comes to Christian sexual ethics, relationships count most of all.

Christians hold that the relationships in which sexual deeds occur ought to be characterized by true love. To the extent that this is so, the relationship is ethically attractive; to the degree that the relationship is not loving, it is ethically repulsive. This kind of love is affection for someone else in all of their concrete particularity. It differs from the

type of love that Plato apparently preferred in which our affection is not directed to someone else as such but only to those features that are transparent to beauty, truth and goodness. Much to the contrary, the kind of love we Christians champion is directed to someone else as a specific person with all that this implies. We do not love others as though they are windows through which we connect with true excellence. We love them.

Steadfastness or loyalty is one of the most pervasive and important features of love in the First Testament, the initial two-thirds of Scripture. This kind of love lasts for generations. It is praised throughout the poetry in the first part of Scripture as well as in its prophetic literature. Love as loyalty casts a dark shadow of ethical doubt on sexual promiscuity. The more sexual partners one has, the less loyal one can be to any one of them. This objection to promiscuity is strictly ethical, not one that is merely concerned about medical dangers. Relationships in which sexual acts occur should not be intentionally casual or fleeting but permanent and exclusive. Love as loyalty requires no less.

For the same reason, plural marriage is ethically disappointing. This is so whether it is simultaneous, as is common in some Third World cultures, or sequential, as it often takes place in the First and Second Worlds. With each new marriage one starts the process of bonding all over again, much like a student who repeatedly completes primary school instead of earning a graduate



degree in the same amount of time. Love as loyalty hopes for more.

That we should treat others as we wish to be treated is probably the distinctive feature of love in the Second Testament of Scripture. This preference for mutuality embodies the logical principle that equals in equal circumstances ought to be treated equally. When the Gospel of Matthew depicts Jesus instructing his disciples to "do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets," it presupposes the ethical parity of persons. The Letter to the Ephesians says that "no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does the Church, because we are members of His body."

Partners within truly loving relationships should be free to enjoy each other sexually as they see fit, providing they honor two guidelines. The first of these standards requires that both partners truly desire their various

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Andrew Dykstra (Canada)

sexual activities. Refusals must be reasonable, however. The second guideline specifies that those in loving relationships should not engage in sexual activities that are harmful, even if they are desired by both.

Virtually all Christians agree that human sexual capacities possess both unitive and procreative purposes. Jeremy Taylor in the seventeenth century agreed with Augustine's *The Good of Marriage* that this institution's goodness is threefold: fidelity, offspring and sacramental grace. He then added two more aspects of its goodness that he regarded as equally natural: "to lighten and ease the cares and sadnesses of household affairs" and "to endear each other."

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that there is no such thing as "the homosexual lifestyle," just as there is no single heterosexual way of living. People of all walks of life organize their sexual activities in many different ways. Some of these alternatives are healthy, others aren't. Each occurs among both homosexuals and heterosexuals. When it comes to Christian sexual ethics, no reason exists for one group to feel superior to the other. When we get right down to it, what possibly could be wrong with any relationship that is characterized by genuine love, particularly when with Scripture we understand love as loyalty and mutuality?

We do well to avoid all activities that are inconsistent with genuine love when this is understood with Scripture as loyalty and mutuality. We should ever keep in mind that God's graciousness greets us each moment as forgiveness and inner strength. ▼

Every teenage boy grows up, meets the right girl and gets married. As a teen, I became aware that the assumption others took for granted was not true of me. I felt a bit like an imposter, someone seeming to be like everybody, but secretly different. I knew within myself that "the right girl" would not be my experience. This didn't make me feel deprived; it made me feel a little different, like I had something unique.

When I was about 20, I worked with an Adventist man. I have always had lots of religious questions. When I went to Sunday School as a child I asked about the Sabbath. I wanted to know what happened to people after they died. I had lots of questions, and my Adventist co-worker had lots of answers. He helped me as I did a series of Bible studies, read "Great Controversy" and "Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine." I was baptized at age 22. I had found something exciting and unique.

Now, as an Adventist, I surrounded myself with interesting people, discussed lots of ideas after Sabbath dinners, listened to audio taped sermons, and read lots of Ellen White. I looked at time-line charts of earth's closing events. I wanted to know if the "Loud Cry" was before or after the "Close of Probation." What would usher in the "Little time of trouble", what distinguished it from the "Great time of trouble" and how severe would be "The time of Jacob's trouble?" When would my name come up in the Investigative Judgment? What events surrounded the sealing of God's people while others

received the mark of the beast? What would it mean to receive the "latter rain?" I didn't want to be merely another Christian. I wanted to be exceptional, an informed Adventist on an inside track.

Ellen White wrote, "Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message, in verity.'"-- *The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890.

"The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. For it is the work of every one to whom the message of warning has come, to lift up Jesus, to present Him to the world as revealed in types, as shadowed in symbols, as manifested in the revelations of the prophets, as unveiled in the lessons given to His disciples and in the wonderful miracles wrought for the sons of men. Search the Scriptures; for they are they that testify of Him (Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 362).

Many church leaders at the time resisted this idea. I came to know how they felt. It is very difficult to learn something you think you already know. My mind was so accustomed to the more exciting subject of last day events. I traveled far to hear sermons on Justification by Faith, and to listen to taped sermons on this subject too. I learned the gospel, really for the first time. Ellen White's comments above stated

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explicitly that the Gospel was really the most central truth, the only worthwhile inside track.

What is so special about the gospel that many Adventists don't realize its centrality within the Adventist message? What characteristics must it have to be so widely embraced that it will one day "Lighten the earth with its glory..."?

Firstly, the gospel is simple. Simplicity should be our guide. The gospel is as deep as God himself, the angels desire to look into it, mankind will study it through all eternity and yet it is simple. The most gifted and the most limited of persons should be able to reach out in faith. Children should be able to "get it." If the gospel is to lighten the earth with God's glory, it must be stripped of all secondary issues. There is room for nothing but the gospel. The gospel, rightly understood, defines who we are, illuminates our values.

Secondly, the gospel has context. Adventists believe that there is a great controversy between Christ and Satan. This may not be entirely unique to us, but it is more fully developed in Adventist thinking. We earthlings are living within the context of that conflict. Soon

after Satan enters Eden, we know something is amiss. The first chapter of Job continues the theme. Jesus' life on earth was often lived under Satan's opposition. The Book of Revelations, that great picture scrapbook gives us visual representations of the great controversy. Satan urges his hearers to believe that God is not who He says he is. When our ancestors were tempted to believe his claim, God knew He could gain nothing by mere counter claims. God had the more difficult task or regaining trust through another means. The gospel is the story of what God did.

Thirdly, the gospel is historic. God picked an unknown man from what is now Iraq. He made promises to him, to his son and to his grandson. God worked with the tribes who were the descendants of these three and entered into a covenant with them. Actually, it was rather one-sided. God promised to give them any number of advantages (inside track) and they only had to promise not to pursue "other" Gods. God promised that through these people He would enrich the whole world. They were not chosen because they were special; rather to fulfill a task: to reveal God's true character. God's dealing with Israel was a

miniature of God's dealing with the rest of humanity. Jesus was God's way of regaining man's trust, to speak truly of Himself. Trust is regained through time and shared experience.

Fourthly, the gospel is a sign of the end. The generation following Jesus' resurrection thought they were the last one. It wasn't because they had flow charts enabling them to determine a date. They believed it was the time of the end because God Himself had invaded history. Not since the Exodus had God done something so startling. In the Person of Jesus, the long awaited Kingdom of God had broken into the present. Somehow, God had done something new. The old order was gone. Everything may have looked the same, but all bets were off.

Finally, the gospel is for the outsider, the marginalized. We are used to questioning assumptions others take for granted. What does the first coming of Jesus mean? What does it say about God? What does it say about the great controversy between God and Satan?

Look for this space in future issues of the Connection for further thoughts on the gospel.



Kinship News

Kinship Australia: Noel Thorpe

Over the last twelve months Simon, Rudy and I have focused our outreach on Pride Fair Days and Carnivals in different parts of the Continent. I am hearing that Kinship Australia is more visible than ever and seen favorably by other GLBTI Christian groups of about the same size. We had a

pastor say he believed it was a privilege to speak to our group last September. Joy Butler, the Director of Women's Ministries and Prayer Ministries Coordinator for the South Pacific Division is a contact we were given through Carrol Grady. She has been a help for us in finding speakers for our meetings. We have been surprised at some of the openness we have found. With the help of a local MCC, we are trying to get a group,

similar to the US Roundtable together in Brisbane.

We are preparing for Australia's Kampmeeting that will be held September 30-October 2. For our Kampmeeting we have three pastors, one of them a woman, who are willing to be speakers. Dr. Wendell Rosevear will be sharing some information on health issues.

I am absolutely impressed with the meeting on

Depression and God's Love

Part II

Thor Montgomery

I hope you remember my article for the January issue about how HIV-related Depression seems to be more than many can bear, especially following the Holidays. Well, this one is meant to address how the Bible's words of love and encouragement can help us cope with this issue. There are so many verses in the Bible, related to how God lifts up those who are dealing with depression. If you recall, HIV and depression very often go hand-in-hand. I studied various portions of the Bible and 2nd Corinthians 4: 7-12. This portion of Scripture really stood out to me as being well-aimed towards those of us who are both physically and mentally challenged with feelings of inadequacy, etc.

The Scripture is as follows: "But, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us but life in you."

From this passage, much can be gleaned. What stood out to me is that, although we feel as though we can't go on, God will not forsake us. He stands right beside us and his Spirit fills our very soul. It often feels as though the feelings of depression will overwhelm us, but when we study this portion of God's Word we see His Love. Also, that, even when our body and in turn our mind; being part of our

body; wants to give in, we can still shine the light and love of Christ Jesus to those around us. Those of us with HIV/AIDS wonder sometimes whether we will make it from one day to the next but we need to remember that God will not and does not forsake us, and what we need to do is look to Him for the strength to make it through each day. Jesus' love is in our Spirit at all times, and all we need to do, is reach out to him for the power to get positive reinforcement. This support will provide the ability to replace those depressed feelings with His sweet grace and the knowledge that we can do even what feels impossible. When our mind is telling us that we have nowhere to go but further down, the light of Christ is just waiting for us to let it shine through and illuminate the darkness which is depression. I pray and hope that we can work towards both Christ's ardent love for us as well as getting the help from the medical community which is to be had. Both the Spiritual nourishment to be found in our personal relationship with God and the medicines which can, chemically, enhance our ability to see clearly are options to be pursued. They may be used in tandem to increase our energy and allow us to look even more clearly at our lives as Christians and as human beings. Though we may be disillusioned and feel cast out by our Church and by God Himself at times, we can re-build our trust in Him by studying such portions of His Word as I quoted above and by connecting with Him in personal prayers. Though the Church may frown on our lives as LGBTI persons and the ignorance that can push us off the Shepherd's path, we can reach out to the Good Shepherd to rescue us from our depression. ▼

Homosexuality and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Congratulations to all of you who made it possible. We would love to have many of you visit us in September. Here is our website.
www.sdakinshipaustralia.org

Brian in Sydney sent along a few cyber links for us to see some of the events and offerings that have been happening "down under". Check out the

fine website:
www.heroicgardens.org.nz to view a few other Gay gardens.
www.hero.org.nz shows some of the Gay Pride events.

Kinship Europe: Ruud Kieboom

I have given the Open Hands/Open Hearts DVD that I bought during our last board meeting to the Dutch SDA board. I hope they will subtitle it for Dutch audience to be shown in congregations.

Roy reports: There is good news from the Czech Republic. The parliament there overrode the veto of the Czech president so that the new gay partnership (marriage) law will soon be in place. That will make the Czech Republic the first ex-communist country with a marriage law for gays and lesbians.

Continued on page 13...

SHE BEAST and THE HOSPITAL

Robert (Robb) Sundin

Everyone knew she was coming, unwelcome. Category four or five: no matter, she would be no beauty. Katrina arrived in a raging scream of wind and rain. At her height, windows began to crack and break. Members of the pre-landfall activation team; we were already in the hospital. Staff moved all patients, employees and their families into the hallways-no small feat in a block long nineteen-story building. In the storm's wake we breathed more easily since our Lady NOLA did not take a "direct" hit. Then, the 17th Street Canal retaining wall gave way. In less than five days, our beloved Crescent City became a third world country.

The rising waters destroyed our emergency generator. As they threatened the hospital's first floor, we evacuated our entire Emergency Department, to the second floor auditorium, in ninety minutes. The flood stopped less than one step from the door. There were 1,300 patients and staff in "Old Charity" for the duration of the horror. Our physicians, nurses and other personnel were heroic; doing the impossible and doing it with almost nothing. Every person and every department became part of one unified team. Many learned skills and did things they never dreamed possible. These extraordinary people created miracles without electricity, adequate water or enough food. For six days we had no showers, no shaving. During the last forty eight hours, a typical meal for the patients was two packets of crackers, a peal pack of jelly and a half

glass of juice for breakfast. Lunch was a half cup of tomato soup and supper a half cup of creamed corn or a three-bean salad. The staff ate the same but only after each patient meal service was completed.

Telephone capabilities were bizarre. We could not make a local call. Someone discovered the long distance Watts line worked. That line allowed us to get out the word that our Hospitals still needed evacuating. You may have seen on television or heard of the 29 babies who were rescued. They were from the University Campus of our facility, six blocks away.

We broke out more windows than Katrina did to combat the humidity in the building. Temperatures hovered between 98 and 100 degrees. When necessary, we plugged in an IV to re-hydrate staff so they could get back to work, running dark stairways, as many as twelve flights up or down, multiple times a day (and never empty handed).

Even though our generators went down, the critical care patients were fortunate. As our staff started showing severe exhaustion from manually ventilating our patients, someone remembered that part of a Homeland Security Grant was used to purchase oxygen driven ventilators (no electricity needed). There were enough to handle the patient load.

Evacuation was slow in coming and when it did, was mostly local talent. Bayou fishermen, weekend boaters, Wildlife and Fisheries staff and others took our patients to safety.

We had five intensive care units: the 12th floor alone had 12 patients, 10 of which were on ventilators. Getting all our ICU occupants safely down the stairs was an intricately coordinated and heart stopping ballet of raw muscle power coordinated with life-sustaining care that could not be interrupted. It was a logistic nightmare. The route included travel through chest high waters by boat and later by high axle military vehicles, to the top level of a parking garage across the street. Helicopter evacuation was slow and tedious. Oxygen sources for patients requiring manual ventilation by our physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists, ran dangerously low. In some instances, staff got on board the helicopter with their patient to continue care. Pilots rarely knew their destination until airborne.

There was no transport for those that didn't have to board rescue craft with their patients. There was a very real fear of sniper fire. These care givers spent the night sleeping on the tarmac. In their concern for those still in the hospital, several spent part of the next morning wading back through chest deep water tainted with fuel, sewage and other unknown contaminants to help make sure everyone had been evacuated. The last staff left the Emergency Department Ambulance ramp via an air boat to land and then on to Baton Rouge by bus.

We picked up our cats, Sherlock (the investigator) and Persi (for persistent), who had been housed in our car in the parking structure. When we

took them out of their bags and cradled them in our laps, they started purring up a storm (pun intended). Those on the bus with us couldn't believe the cats weren't sedated. When we arrived at the "displaced person" staging area in Baton Rouge, children quickly spotted our felines and began to giggle and pet the two purring balls of fur. Looking around we saw adults who were finally able to smile as they watched the children. Sherlock and Persi were good therapy for some confused, frightened and miserable "displaced" people.

May God hold close all the Medical Center at New Orleans employees who are among the heroes of this disaster. May He hold close the many who have lost so much. May He hold close and richly reward the many "angels of mercy" that so willingly opened their homes and their hearts to the multitude of victims from this historic storm. May our grand old New Orleans have a beautiful new dress. And most of all, may goodness somehow come from all of this massive destruction and loss of life.

Kinship members Robert (Robb) Sundin, Associate Nursing Administrator and his Partner, Kirby, Medical Director, were the last ones out of the building.



Kinship News...

US Region 1: Catherine Taylor

Sean was kind enough to host thirteen Kinship members in his South Boston home for worship, food and conversation. Many thanks to him...and to David, Travis and Jeremy, who led out in the service. This was our first time to welcome Warren Pang to a meeting.

US Region 1 Album



US Region 5: Floyd Poentz

Fourteen Region 5 members met to watch the Oscars and have an Oscar party at my house! We had a good time with lots of food.

Kinship Women and Children: Yolanda Elliott

We are in the midst of planning our Women's Weekend. During June 30-July 2, we will be staying near Merritt Island/Cape Canaveral area of Florida. I am in the process of finalizing a hotel. The cost for the weekend, not including meals, is approximately \$125 per person. The hotel will have a complimentary breakfast. If you arrive at the Orlando International Airport, transportation will be provided,

if you can arrive relatively early in the day. Our hotel is 30-40 miles from the airport. We will have dinner together at 6pm during which we can catch up with each other and plan our activities for Sabbath. Our options include the Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge with hiking trails, a Manatee observation deck, seven mile auto tour route (Black Point Wildlife Drive) and an observation tower. The Canaveral National Seashore is nearby. I've been told it's just beautiful. For those of you who do not revel in the heat, I've discovered a planetarium we could visit. We are looking forward to seeing many of you! The reservation form will be online shortly or you can register with Yolanda at ysellott@aol.com. ▼



connection

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Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

Kinship Calendar

April 1-2: Kampmeeting Africa, Kampala Uganda

April 21-23: Mini Kampmeeting in Rehoboth Beach Delaware

April 7-10: Kinship Germany Weekend Meeting in Leipzig

June 30-July 2: SDA Kinship Women and Children First - Orlando, Florida

July 2-9: SDA Kinship International Kampmeeting

July 14-16: Kinship Europe Meeting in Sweden

July 17-22: Kinship Europe Holiday gathering

September 30-October 2: Australian Kampmeeting

November 3-5: Region 1 Mini Kampmeeting. Windsor Vermont.

December 31: Region 2 and Region 1 First Night in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Resources

Book:
My Son Beloved Stranger
by Carrol Grady

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



Video:
Open Heart Open Hands

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





Welcome to Rehoboth Beach Mini-Kampmeeting!

April 21-23. Friday evening: beadmaking bee, sumptuous buffet, spellbinding vespers. Sabbath: Heatwarming Breakfast, Scintillating Sabbath School, Welcoming Worship Service with the incomprable Zack Plantak, festive lunch, walks along the ocean, dinner together. All Weekend: Remarkable people and amazing conversations. For more information and to register for this event: Yolanda Elliot can be found at yselliott@aol.com



You are invited to European Kinship Meeting 5!!

We are gathering **July 14-17** with holiday options afterwards. Welcome to the land of the midnight sun. Welcome to travelers from three continents, more than twelve languages and at least as many countries. Welcome to Gerard and Annelies Frenk, only two of our guest presenters! Welcome to pilgrimage history. Welcome to Swedish hospitality. Welcome to a chance to fill your soul and

experience a bit of the diversity of heaven! Welcome to laughter and unexpected surprises. For more information and to register: reino.kullko@telia.com is the cyber address of our coordinator for this year. Reino is putting the final touches on preparations and needs our decisions by the end of April. You can also contact Ruud Kieboom, our European Kinship Coordinator @ Kinship@xs4all.nl

Kinship Australia Invites You to our Spring Kampmeeting!!!

September 30-October 2! We are already accepting registrations for all of you would should have the chance to experience Aussie hospitality, a weekend focused on the health and well being of our community, and a chance to meet Kinship members from the South Pacific. For more information you please feel free to contact Noel Thorpe sdakinshipaust@primus.com.au





NO ONE LIKE YOU

CELEBRATING UNIQUENESS

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



Let's Talk About:

The richness of being you!

Limits and Boundaries.

Coming out:

the family/the process/as a young person/as an older person

