

KINSHIP ANGELS

Catherine Taylor

I was in Los Angeles visiting my childhood church last month. I know *some* of the people because I met them 35 years ago. I know *some* of the people because I try to visit my family every eight weeks and have gradually gotten to know the present day congregation. There was a middle-aged man there that day, a man I had never seen before. I overheard him say he was from Quebec which is far closer to my New England home than to Southern California. The locals were welcoming him. That seemed fine to me because they took *me* off the hospitality hook. I was feeling tired and a little shy that day. I almost didn't speak because I just wanted to sing some songs, survive a sermon, and go back home.

I have no idea why I decided to ooze out of my shell. I somehow found myself telling this gracious soul,

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OUR WEDDING

Catherine 'Linrud' Bidwell

I peek around the corner of the farmhouse hoping to catch a glimpse of her and the signal to start the ceremony. The clay caldron in my hand dangles from its chain, bubbling and steaming. The warm May sun streams through the trees and onto the faces of the handful of guests waiting on the lush green lawn of Michelle's parents' backyard. A small table draped in lavender silk and white lace and filled with ceremony items, stands in front of them. White roses bedeck the ivy that obliterates the trunks of the fur trees that stand as pillars of green, creating the perfect backdrop. Everything is in its place.

It was here at last, the big day. So many details and worries had accumulated in the past few months as is typical of wedding plans.

We decided early on that this would be a simple ceremony with only a few family members and friends present. It was heartbreaking to me that the church family that I grew up in would not allow us to celebrate our happiness within the church structure. Undaunted by this reality, we determined that our relationship should be publicly noted as a commitment.

We made up announcements on the computer and handed them out to the larger group of people that we felt needed to know but likely would not want to attend. Then we personally invited a handful of folks that we knew were supportive and would not faint when we kissed publicly.

No white gowns this trip. We picked out all black garb and I made matching sashes for us to wear that had purple wheat sheaves on them symbolizing the hope for prosperity and fruitfulness in our relationship. We chose freedom rings to wear around

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WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a support group which ministers to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered and intergendered persons, and their families and friends.

SDA Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of g/l/b/t/l Adventists and among themselves and within the SDA community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation.

Founded in 1976, the non-profit organization was incorporated in 1981 and has a board of 15 officers and 10 regional coordinators.

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 gay or lesbian has its roots in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

SDA Kinship supports the advancement of human rights for all people. SDA Kinship can be found on the internet at www.sda Kinship.org.

SUPPORT KINSHIP...

SDA Kinship depends on you because it is supported solely by contributions. Help us reach out to more gay Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to this address: SDA Kinship, PO Box 7320, Laguna Niguel, CA 92607. [telephone: 949-248-1299]

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our necks as a reminder of our commitment for change and the community that brings us together.

For months we sneaked around making gifts to present to each other at the ceremony. I spent hours working on a wood carving of a crane for Michelle and she in turn was busy doing one of a woman that she said symbolized me and my metamorphosis in recent years. Michelle labored for days to make bags for the gifts to go into, even drawing our respective favorite trees on the outside of them.

Then there were vows to write and practice, wedding bands to buy, a modified tea ceremony to learn and tiny fir trees to pick up and prepare to hand out to our guests as a living memory of the seedling of our relationship.

Now, as I wait for Michelle to give me the signal to walk toward her to the table to begin the ceremony, the strains of the Seattle Men's Choir singing, 'We are a Family' float out across the fields and in amongst the waiting guests. A sense of contentment, happiness and completion makes me smile. I never dared to dream that I could feel this way but here I am, about to join my life with that of the woman of my dreams.

She waves her caldron. I take a deep breath and walk toward her. And in her eyes I see the excitement that I feel, knowing that there really can be an 'Over the Rainbow.'



See page 16 for "Your Eyes," a poem by Cate, and page 9 for her bio under Region 7.

Ten Ways To Slow Things Down

What can you do if you feel like life is rushing by insanely fast? Here are 10 ways to at least slow it down a little bit and help you keep your sanity:

- ▼ First of all, stop multitasking. That's computer talk for doing several things at once—talking on a cellular phone while driving, for example. When people try to multitask, they don't do any task well.
- ▼ Ditch the TV. Try going for a full week without turning the stupid thing on. If you're a typical American, you're likely to discover that you suddenly have a lot more leisure time.
- ▼ Don't get hung up on your telephone. Why should you jump whenever it rings? What are you, Pavlov's dog? If the phone interrupts you in the midst of doing something, let the answering machine pick it up.
- ▼ Sit. Do it for a while, say half an hour, and don't do anything else. Just relax and let your mind drift. If you start obsessing about your job, stop and say, "That's quite enough of that!"
- ▼ Listen to some music. How often do you sit down and actually listen to a piece of music without doing something else? If your answer is never, then you've never really listened to music.
- ▼ Keep a journal. Take a few minutes each day to write down your thoughts or to describe something that

happened to you that day. You will develop a better understanding of yourself.

- ▼ Rediscover a childhood pleasure. When you were a kid, did you like to paint? To collect bugs? To wade in the creek and catch frogs? Why not do it now? If you have children, they can help you do this. Do what they do.
- ▼ Have some quality time with your dog. Or cat. Or bird. Take the time to grow close to your animal. Pet him. Talk to him. Throw the saliva-soaked tennis ball for him.
- ▼ Have a conversation. Most of what passes for conversation these days is not. Take the time to really listen to someone else, to hear his or her thoughts and to share yours.
- ▼ Be. This is sort of like "sit," except you're not sitting now; you're doing whatever you happen to be doing. But as you're doing it, you're really paying attention to what you're doing. If you're eating a cookie, for example, take the time to look at it, smell it and feel it before you stuff it in your gob. Dissect it, and eat it the way a kid would. Ah, the texture of life is made of moments like this.



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BEN'S QUESTIONS

What follows is a "thread" from KinNet. Each person who posted on this has given permission for their post(s) to be printed here in the Connection.

As editor, I've tried to keep all "articles" at two pages or less (preferably less, as you've noticed), but I think you'll find as you read this "thread" from KinNet that as each 'voice' comes in, it is almost like a new article. In fact, you'll be at the end of the five pages before you realize it! Bear in mind that these were notes/letters posted on KinNet, and were not originally intended as "articles for publication" ... so any lack of literary finesse is to be 100% overlooked. Frankly, I think it makes for better reading!!

If you'd like to add YOUR thoughts to this, feel free to do so. If you have a computer, write to floyd@home.com and ask to become a member of KinNet. Once you're a member you can go to this thread and post your opinions. Or you can send them to me at RomWilder@aol.com.

If you don't have a computer or aren't online, please feel free to send your comments to the editor (indicate your response is to "Ben's Questions") at the SDA Kinship address on page 2 of this publication.

*In "online" typing, people often either put lines before and after the words that would otherwise be underlined. Sometimes people put an asterisk or two around thing they want to ****emphasize**** so I left these markings as they were to keep the "online" feel of this piece.*

~ Rom Wilder, Editor



By Ben K on Thursday, April 20, 2000 - 10:19 am:
Hi everyone,

Recently on SDAnet, Duke Holtz and Steve Gungl have announced a new Adventist gay and lesbian ministries program. This program is spearheaded by the San Francisco Central SDA Church with growing support from their local conference. Furthermore, they have been allowed website space on the Three Angels Network (TAGnet). Their ministry specifically promotes Adventist church acceptance only for

those gays and lesbians committed to lifelong celibacy.

It has been argued that people like me (a non-celibate gay man) should support these efforts because such represents an incremental step forward in Adventist church acceptance of gays and lesbians. So, I'm currently pondering this question:

If the Adventist Church considers accepting lifelong celibate gays and lesbians, is this a genuinely incremental step forward?

I believe in an incremental strategy promoting the acceptance of gays and lesbians by the Adventist Church. However, I'm concerned as to whether an acceptance of lifelong celibate gays and lesbians is a step towards inclusion or whether it might actually reinforce exclusion. What do I mean?

I fear that the notion of accepting only lifelong celibate gays and lesbians by the church reinforces a literalist approach to Scripture. In this particular case, only accepting celibate gays and lesbians is "legally" based upon what the Scriptures omit rather than looking at the relational spirit of the entire Bible. It is this same literal legalism that has been used to justify patriarchy, slavery, and anti-Semitism. I am concerned about any process that reinforces a literal rather than interpretive approach to Scripture. I am worried that supporting groups lobbying for Adventist church acceptance of celibate gays and lesbians may actually make it more difficult for genuine gay and lesbian inclusion in the future. In addition, adopting this type of approach may give the impression that "Church compassion" can be extended toward gays and lesbians — while not affirming their lives, relationships, love, families — or spiritual journeys.

I believe that a spiritual life is centered upon relationships with church, God, spouse, family, society, friends, and world and I am concerned by the exclusionary ramifications of the SF Central program. When one demarcates and judges intimacy in the way the SF Central ministry currently does, one also alters that person's relationship with God, church, etc., because all of these relationships are interlinked by meaning and understanding. By requiring lifelong celibacy of gays and lesbians, one changes the face and meaning of God.

I also wonder what kind of lifelong "support system" the SF Central church plans to ensure lifelong celibacy of gays and lesbians in this ministry. This is no small commitment — it's one thing to call people to lifelong celibacy as the only option — it's quite another to support human integration and spiritual maturity within a context of celibacy. And of course, what does "celibacy" really mean in this context — are gays and lesbians allowed to hug, kiss, caress, etc.?

I've been called all kinds of names (both in charity and frustration) over my unwillingness to support Adventist ministries calling only for the acceptance of lifelong celibate gays and lesbians — programs which simultaneously exclude everyone else — or worse, promote a "don't ask, don't tell" approach to spirituality (afterall, Who are we trying to fool here?). In some circles, I have felt like a voice in the wilderness. Am I all wet on this? I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts.

Hugs, Ben
drbenke@dimensional.com

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Larry W on Thursday, April 20, 2000 - 11:27 am:
Ben,

I think you only have to look to the military's "Don't ask, Don't tell" policy to see if an incremental step can work or not. As far as I can tell it does not, and some of the press I have read on this subject support that gays are being discharged from the military in ever higher numbers. I am sure you have more accurate information to draw a conclusion on the present military policy. I simply wanted to point you in that direction to examine the incremental step approach.

Larry Whitford
lwhitfor@storm.com

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Larry H on Thursday, April 20, 2000 - 02:03 pm:
Ben, I have never really understood the word "accept" in this and other contexts.

When we say somebody "accepts" the Advent message, for example, I guess we just mean the person **believes** it. But the term almost implies room for a certain kind of reluctance (as in "I will

accept your terms" or "I don't feel it, but I accept it" or "if that's the way it must be, then I accept it.")

We ask our GLBT friends, "Do your parents 'accept' you?" Well, what does that mean? If they haven't kicked me out, but they vehemently disagree with my lifestyle, have they accepted me? If they lock me in a closet after school to reform me, but still love me, have they accepted me? How many of us have parents who "accept" us, but still have many reservations, some understandable? I don't think I could ever answer the question about "acceptance" with a mere yes or no.

With the case in point, what does that local church mean by "accepting" celibate GLBTs? Do they mean FULL membership in the church, including holding offices and even becoming ordained? Or do they only mean celibate gays can attend services? I suspect it means they could attend plus hold SOME offices, like song leader, or even sit on the platform and offer the morning prayer. But in most local churches it would stop short of higher offices, and certainly short of ordination. So for this discussion, I would first want to know what they mean by "acceptance"?

The next issue as I see it, is: how do they want to differentiate their "acceptance" of the celibates and their non-acceptance of the non-celibates? Surely they let non-celibates attend services at least. So what is the difference, merely one of attitude? The one group is considered okay and the other isn't? And in their minds, one group is saved and the other isn't? (So much for salvation by grace alone.)

I suspect another difference is that the holding of church offices or leadership positions would be different. If the non-celibate was allowed to do anything at all (like lead a song service for certain lower-level events, but probably not for church), he or she would be ***stopped short of holding as high a leadership position as the celibates.***

So what I'm getting at is, I imagine they merely want a two-tiered level of "acceptance," with the bottom line being that one group is okay and the other isn't, which will be ***clearly made known*** by remarks and innuendo that are routinely made and by what the different individuals are allowed to do in terms of leadership. PLUS one more biggie: now the very existence of the new program itself will promote this dichotomy even better!

I see the mindset behind such a program as a very fundamentalist one: exclusionary. Now it will be easy for the church to handle gay issues in black or white (which isn't nearly as easy without such a program). No thinking or discussion required... you wanna lead the song service and you're gay? Let's see, are you on the list? Nope, sorry, you are apparently still sinning *deliberately.* Only those who are on record as sinning accidentally (being in the program and *trying* not to sin) may apply.

There is this odd thing about organized religion. At the top, much of it is just a business—often no really genuine spiritual concern for the well being of the individual parishioners. Yet somewhere in there, there are those who sincerely care. Maybe some who would administer such a program are sincere and want to save gays. But in the over all, such programs are really quite discriminatory and merely facilitate what fundamentalists love to do: categorize, make lists, avoid thinking, make rules, avoid the broad spiritual themes and principles.

For those who may doubt this "fundamentalist mindset" notion behind the program, I would just ask: Where is the church's special program for heterosexual marriage, which they so strongly claim to cherish? Look at what a shambles it is in, with more than half the marriages ending in divorce and countless others failed but continuing in misery without divorce—often because of adultery. Do they have a 12-step program for that? Do they determine whether a person is a "deliberate" adulterer before deciding whether to "accept" him or her (whatever that means, presumably a factor in whether the person is allowed to lead a song service for prayer meeting... or rise all the way up to ordination). Enough to rest my case?

But I haven't answered your question directly. Should such a program be considered an incremental step toward a full "acceptance" of GLBTs. (We will leave aside the "fact" that this is as far as they will ever go, until they stop being the SDA church.) The answer is no. While it is easy for them to package such a program as such, it is really just an easy, comfortable way for them to deal with the issue. Now they can say they are doing something, when it is, after all, just a formalized pro-active statement of what they've really been doing all along. Most churches have said for

quite some time now that it's okay just to BE gay. So I think this formalized program is more about them and their own comfort than it is about the gays they say they want to help. (Yes, some of the individuals involved are no doubt sincere, but I speak in the over all.)

Again, I can provide some proof for doubters. If any fundamentalist church—in this case the SDA church in particular—really cared about GLBTs (and go ahead and limit this to the celibate ones, if you want), they would have long been preaching to the world against discrimination against gays in areas such as housing, jobs, crime, etc; but not only haven't they in the past, they STILL aren't, not even in this age of enlightenment and this age of thinking they should have a program to save gays' souls. Doesn't that say it all? Seems pretty telling to me.

Someone may say, Well, they just don't get involved in politics, that's all. Not only is that absurd on the face of it (they should always preach against injustice), they in fact DO get involved in politics. ...Not to help us, mind you, but to HURT us! ...Urging the flock to vote for discrimination. Utterly incredible, coming from a church!

So I think no. It is not an incremental step toward "acceptance."

How, then, to we relate to the church and the people running this program? I mean, what do we SAY, how to we ACT and dialogue with them? What is our stance in our real-life interaction with them? I think I would just remind them that a church is for sinners and that while they may wish to inquire of everyone as to whether they are "deliberately" sinning or just accidentally sinning (they love that distinction when it comes to gays), it doesn't sound like something Jesus would do. The whole idea of it just smacks of exclusion and seems counter to the very essence of true Christianity. That's what I would tell them.

I would convey to them that I think Jesus would spend more time instructing the flock on how to treat each other, including sinners, than pulling out all stops to get a certain group of sinners to stop committing a particular "sin of passion."

And finally, what if a member in good Christian standing simply disagrees theologically on this

celibacy point? Should that be a test of "church fellowship"? This seems utterly absurd to me. Many disagreed with the church's theology on wearing makeup and jewelry, but weren't disfellowshipped. Do they disfellowship people for smoking. (Maybe they do, I have a mental block here. I think they do. And I'm appalled!) What I'm getting at is, Where do you draw the line in terms of what is sooooo important you can't belong to the club and what isn't? **Given the profound elements of this homosexual issue (the compelling mitigating factors, if one wants to reduce it to that legalistic terminology), why wouldn't it just be one of those matters an individual decides for him/herself?*** What could possibly be more Christlike (and thus Christian) than that?????

The answer: because that's just not the way fundamentalists do things! Nope, you are good if you are celibate, bad if you're not... we "know"... and if you sincerely believe otherwise, then you just can't belong to our club, no matter how monogamous and decent you are. You can have a differing opinion or belief on some things, but NOT on this VERY, VERY IMPORTANT matter, which, by the way, is SO CLEAR!

What a hoot.

I don't see the above as church bashing at all. I hope it is taken as a sincere and thoughtful analysis. IMO, to laud the church for its exclusionary stance is like praising a thief for not stealing more than he did. The church is ALREADY supposed to be "accepting" non-celibate gays, according to its own doctrine, so why would it deserve praise for what it should have been doing all along? And on top of that, by this program they are simply announcing *more emphatically* to the world that gays who think God blesses their relationships are OUT OUT OUT!

Larry Hallock
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Mel on Thursday, April 20, 2000 - 04:48 pm:

Ben, Thanks for the request for other's opinions/thoughts on whether or not the SDA church is taking a positive step forward on the gay issue by allowing or supporting, to some degree, celebrate gays. Also, thank you, Larry, for all you had to share and

especially for all your lost but found hugs and kisses! I feel "uncelibated" by just receiving such a show of affection from you! My take on this...I, personally, don't need to share with the church or anyone what sexual activities I do or don't do with my partner. I did not share with the church or others what my sex life was like when I was in a legally allowed and church-blessed straight marriage. But, I do find a church which would only accept me IF I claim celibacy much more offensive and backward than one that is up front and won't accept anyone who is "gay"!

Mel Everett

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Kevin R on Thursday, April 20, 2000 - 07:30 pm:

Hi Ben and all

Thanks for expressing viewpoints on developments with the SFCentral outreach. I've been following the development of this outreach with interest and only have two issues which I disagree with. One is the use of the term SGA or same gender attraction. This term sounds so very fundamentalist and probably came from the Exodus movement's basket. To me, its a cop out for denying one's orientation. But if that term is used by them and is clearly clarified, its up to them to explain it.

The second issue is whether it's catering for mainly those who are celibate. This is also a touchy subject with me because I feel that it gives the impression that you must be celibate to be fully accepted. I'm against being exclusive of all others. God loves all and accepts all and its an issue that is between Him and His gay/lesbian children. As far as I'm concerned, no organization has the right to decide what is acceptable or not. Its none of their business.

Anyway these are my thoughts.

love n hugs
Kev (Kevin Rabe)

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Brian S on Thursday, April 20, 2000 - 09:41 pm:

Hi Ben,
Just a brief thought regarding the acceptance of celibacy only as an incremental step. The above answers have some great thoughts so I won't attempt

to duplicate them but for me acceptance of celibacy implies, at least for some, (should we say many/most?) a willingness to remain ignorant of the fact that truth is ever vibrant and expansive and which contains a freshness undreamed of. The above notion is non-scriptural and has no part in Gospel truth. God does not condone such willful ignorance on this matter or any other for that matter for it contradicts His love which is so deep and impartial.

It could be an incremental step for some who are approaching the notion for the first time, but it behooves those of us who know better, to continue to try to educate, educate, educate by God's grace. NEW OCCASIONS TEACH NEW DUTIES; TIME MAKES ANCIENT GOOD UNCOUTH. THEY MUST UPWARD STILL AND ONWARD WHO WOULD KEEP ABREAST OF TRUTH.

And the following poetic thought, taken out of context but relevant nonetheless is thought provoking at least for me—

"Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes to the very end.
Will the journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night my friend."

Greetings from the land of Oz,
Brian

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LarryD F on Thursday, April 20, 2000 - 10:22 pm:
In our (Lutheran) Maundy Thursday service this evening, our pastoral intern preached (female...maybe someday the SDAs will legitimize females as pastors?!). She said something that I've never thought of before...

Jesus gave the "Lord's Supper" to Judas, EVEN KNOWING that he would betray him and had evil in his heart. Therefore, she said, we have no right to deny ANYONE the Lord's supper. It is between each individual and God.

So even though SDAs don't accept "practicing" gays (I'd like to practice more!!), how do they dare to determine who is acceptable to God? This analogy is somewhat flawed in that I don't equate being gay with being like Judas but it still makes a point...at least to me. I know that despite my many flaws, one of them is NOT determining what qualifications or characteristics someone must have to be a part of

God's family.

Un abrazo muy fuerte to all of you,
LarryDon (Larry Don Furr)

P.S. Another point she made was to love our enemies and treat them always with respect and love even though they treat us unkindly.

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Floyd P on Friday, April 21, 2000 - 02:03 am:
I was excited about the outreach by the San Francisco church... but was afraid the celibacy issue would come up. I haven't seen it directly mentioned in any of the email. Is that definitely one of the stipulations? The personal choice of celibacy is exactly that... PERSONAL... and no one's business. In my opinion, as soon as we proclaim our celibacy, we are boasting that we are able to do something that others aren't... but the same is true for those (perhaps like me) that claim their non-celibacy.....

LarryH's note on acceptance was quite interesting and appropriate. If the "accept" me only if I'm celibate... then are they really accepting anything at all. I mean that would make me no different in their eyes (meaning I wasn't sinning by having sex outside of a M-F relationship) than the deacon sitting next to me. So if I'm not different, then they certainly don't have anything to accept about me. I KNOW that God accepts me exactly AS I AM, and bestows His grace on me just because I believe it. If a perfect GOD can do that, then why can't a fallible human treat a fellow sinner the same way.

And, yes Ben, then you get into my favorite topic... exactly what constitutes sex... or celibacy (or non-celibacy) between two individuals. Can they kiss? Hold hands? See each other naked? Squeeze their celibate partner's butt... etc, etc. Once you go down that road, then you realize exactly how comical this whole debate is... and how legalistic. Every single straight person that has debated with me on this topic, and I have brought up the question of where does sex begin and where the line is, has asked me to "table the discussion" and let's get back to it later. It certainly makes the supposedly clear black and white lines turn grey.

I'm happy to see people posting!
Hugs,
Floyd — floyd@home.com

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REGIONAL NEWS

REGION 1 ▼

My head is hanging SO low (says Rom) because Bruce & Eddie sent me a report from the fabulous concert at Carnegie and, uh, let's see, oh, no, the cat ate it. NEXT month there will be news from NY! Promise!!!

REGION 2 ▼ (see photo p. 10)

On April 15th, fourteen people converged on Arlene's house for movie night. We also had snacks consisting of a veggie & dip platter, cheese and crackers, tortilla chips and dip and a cake platter. We had delicious munchies along with two great movies. The guys watched the movie *Trick*. I heard much laughter from them. And we gals got to watch *Better Than Chocolate*. It was a very good, very funny movie. I would recommend it for everyone. It was closed-captioned so that Denise could really appreciate it also. We all laughed alot—so much so that the guys came down to see what the commotion was all about. We had separate movies because we thought the guys would want to see one thing and the gals another. But I think we all would like to have seen both. Well, there's always next time!

Natalie Clothier was graduated from Columbia Union College the last weekend in April. Many of the Region 2 people attended the Baccalaureate service on Sabbath at Sligo to rejoice in Natalie's milestone. This was followed by a potluck at Yolanda & Joyce's home.

Yolanda (Yolanda Elliott) YSElliott@aol.com

REGION 6 ▼ (See photos pp 10, 11)

Nine of the local members met at my [Floyd's] house for some Kinship fellowship. Costumes were encouraged with a Mardi Gras theme. Masked and Beaded accurately describes those in attendance. We had a devotional discussing the importance of taking SABBATH moments and time in our busy schedules. There was lot's of sharing about Sabbath experiences from childhood. We indulged in a tons of good food.. everything from spicy pasta to home made Adventist Oat Patties!!! For dessert there were brownies and Blue Bell Ice Cream!!!! We then divided into 2 teams and had such a fun game of pictiary we decided to play that again at a future meeting. We watched the Showtime Movie "Common Ground" which was VERY well done with some really good stars acting in it.

Hugs,

Floyd floyd@home.com

REGION 7 ▼

When I asked Cate (see pp 1, 3, 16) for a 'bio' she sent the following info and said to choose what was/is relevant. It all seems relevant to me (rw), so here are 'the facts, ma'am' about Cate 'Linrud' Bidwell. (Hopefully we'll get more input from the Region 7 people in the future.)

Cate: Raised SDA; Graduated from Thunderbird Academy then Southern Adventist University- B.A. in Communication; was married for ten years; Have 2 children; Kevin 14 and Aubree 10; Met Michelle Biggs 6 1/2 years ago; we were married May 20, 1995; I work as an office manager for a medical facility; None of my immediate family has been supportive of me/us; Michelle and I gave a presentation on lesbian marriage on the Walla Walla College campus for the Gay-Straight Alliance; Active in PFLAG; Live in College Place, WA; OUT- (except to the landlord!!!)

REGION 8 ▼

Those of you who were not present at our Kinship meeting on March 18 missed an excellent presentation by Tim Mitchell, the Sunnyvale SDA Church pastor. His talk was based on Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development. This led to an insightful and informative discussion on what motivates us to do the things we do. Pastor Mitchell brought a friend, a doctoral student attending Andrews University who is open minded and accepting of gays/lesbians.

We were delightfully surprised by the presence of Marsha, a new Region 8 member. Providentially, Marsha was at the Sunnyvale SDA Church a few months ago when Tim Mitchell preached on the topic of Sodom and Gomorrah. One the most profound things he said during the sermon was, "the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is not about homosexuality!" Hmmm...how about cloning him?!

(Just wanted to thank Pearl for writing most of this for me this month. I think she does a much better job. KL)

Hugs,

Karen (Karen T. Lee) karenlee1@hotmail.com

REGION 9 ▼

Region 9 has been fairly quiet this month due to the coordinator dealing with some heavy personal issues. One church in the region met with their pastor for lunch after church and discussed ways in which the church and the group could be beneficial to each other and more active in the area. it was a very positive meeting and we hope to see much come of it. i only hope more churches start taking these steps.

Jason



Members of Region 2 help keep the highway by the General Conference Office in Maryland clean. (The General Conference Office is headquartered in the building shown at the right behind the clean-up crew.)

Photo by Yolanda using Denise's camera!

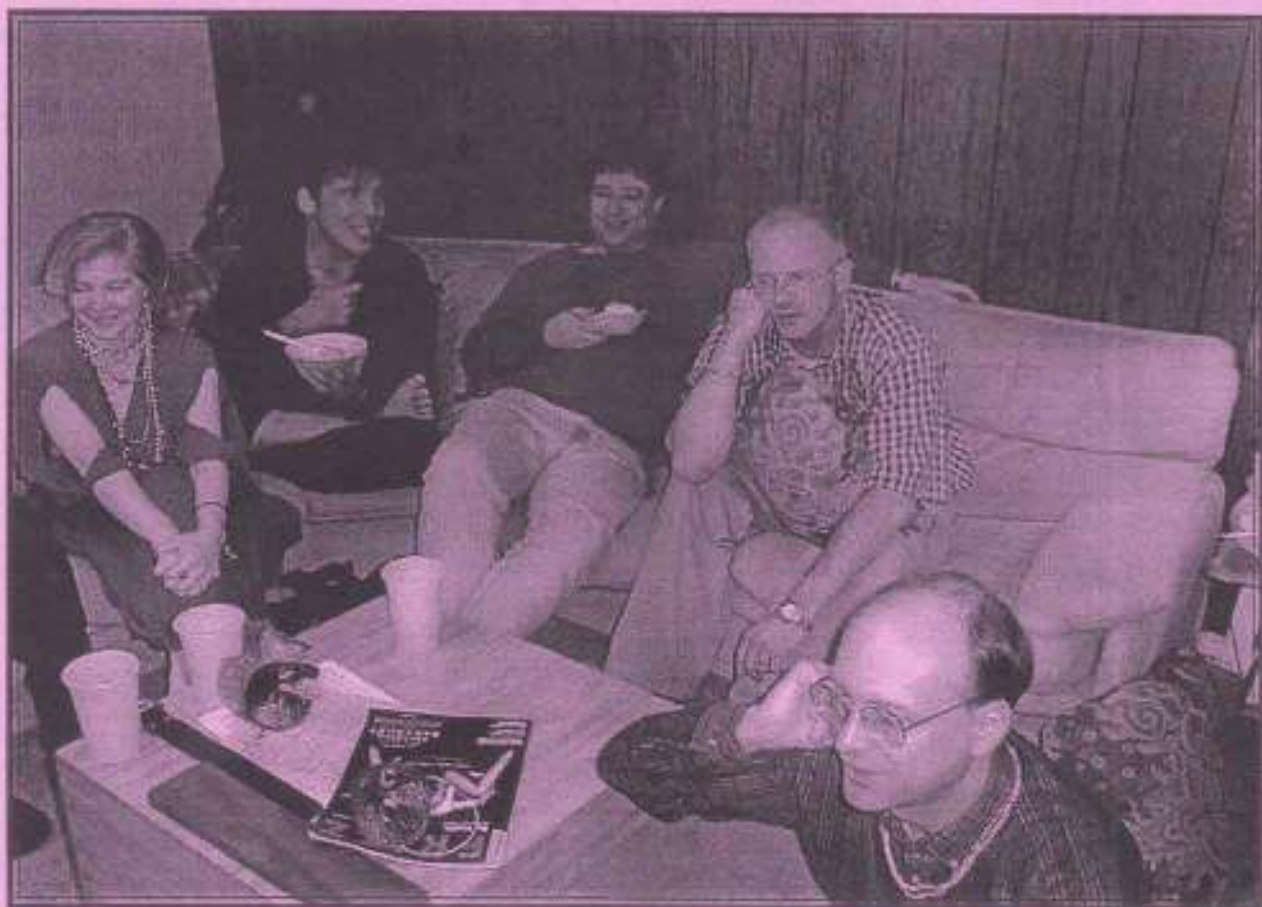


When Region 6 has a party, they do it right!
 At the left is the fearless masked man
 who is the ListGuru for KinNet.
 A round of applause here for
 Floyd Poenitz
 who has had so much to do with
 Kinship members' being able to
 communicate with each other online!





REGION 6 HAS A MARDI GRAS CELEBRATION ...
... at which many seemed to be either bored or concentrating on something!!
▼▼▼▼▼



who said he wandered around two countries writing articles for car magazines, about the churches he might like to visit on the New York border and about the people there who make the greatest pot luck dinners in the world. He talked a little bit about the churches he had visited, his retirement, and his wanderings. I forget why I asked for his card. I think I wanted to tell my northern tundra friends they might have a dinner guest someday. And I have no idea why I gave him mine. But I travel some. I often exchange addresses. And, no one ever writes afterwards.

Church started. I sang a few songs, survived the sermon, and slipped out of the church early because I could see that my mother had come to pick me up.

Imagine my surprise when I returned home from the airport to find a message from this church gypsy on my answering machine. My word, is this Canadian hospitality? Does he want to pick me up? Did he forget how to find churches in Northern New York?? Did I forget a recipe?

I was raised to be polite so I called back. I found myself enjoying the conversation. Somehow I thought to ask why he said he wasn't an Adventist when he went to church every week.

Well, yes. You all probably have figured out the answer already. He was kicked out of the church a millennium ago because he was gay. So much for my being afraid he was picking me up. James figured out who I was the minute he saw my e-mail address. He knows half the Kinship people I know.

I had one of those "it's a small world after all" moments. It has been a treat to hear the stories and the thoughts James shares when he writes. I am glad he survived his apartment fire last month. I am fascinated by the fact he has managed to keep his spirituality in spite of all the ways the church tried to sully the Name of God. I may actually try some of his recipes.

How amazing that I met this local man by traveling across the country and almost avoiding being basically polite. Maybe I will learn the lesson of entertaining strangers because I may be the host of (Kinship) angels, unawares.

Stay warm, drive safely. Enjoy the folks life throws at you.

Blessings
Catherine
(Region 1)



ROOM FOR A VIEW OR TWO

Rom Wilder

Last month an amazing thing happened. Probably there are people who spend hours and hours and hours trying to make a newsletter like we ended up getting with no effort whatsoever.

I'm speaking, of course, about the Missing F's. Evidently there's a 'glitch' between the Pagemaker and the PDF file creation and AOL on PC's. It drops ALL capital F's in a document.

This happened in a small two page file I sent to someone, so now Hal and his computer are off the hook. (Not that he was ON a hook!)

Here's one of the many responses to the Missing F's from a reader:

I thought the missing Fs was a contest. Find all the missing letters and win!!!

Rom, I'm enjoying the Connection. Thanks for putting in all your long hours, hard work and creativity. I especially like the personal articles that make it feel like a community newspaper.

John Hughey

Big thank you's to all the people who responded to my shameless plea for copy for this edition of the Kinship Connection. I'd especially like to thank our regular columnist Catherine (from Region 1) and the other Catherine (from Region 7). If any more of you are named "Catherine" ... watch out. I am going to be asking for YOU to write for us also!!

Below is a special invitation from Karen & Pearl. Those of us who are fortunate enough to be in Hawaii for KM this year will be able to attend. I'm sure the rest of us will send Karen & Pearl congratulations and best wishes for a long life together!



Commitment Ceremony
Karen Lee
&
Pearl Pangkey
August 2, 2000
5:00 P.M.
Kalani Oceanside
Eco-Resort
Hawaii

All are invited to attend



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February 27, 2000

Tom Mostert, Jr.
President, Pacific Union Conference
Box 5005
Westlake Village, CA 91361

Dear Mr. Mostert:

I'm writing in response to your *President's Perspective* entitled "In the Name of Compassion" in the February 2000 issue of the *Recorder*.

In my 48 years of being a Seventh-day Adventist, this is the first time I've felt strongly enough about an issue to write to a church administrator. Your thoughts have compelled me to respond.

The summer I turned 30, my girlfriend introduced me to a young man in our church. He was a singer; in fact, he had been talented enough to sing with the Heritage Singers for a while. We were all active in the Young Adult Sabbath School at the largest church in town. I was a pianist, so we did lots of music together and soon became friends.

I still remember the afternoon I watched the young man walk down my driveway after practicing for special music for church. It finally occurred to me that he might be gay. I decided that his sexuality was between him and his God, that I valued his talents and his friendship, and it became a non-issue in my relationship with him. It remained so until sometime later when he told me that he was in love with me. That's when it finally became a personal issue for me.

I skipped the first Sabbath of campmeeting that summer, and took my Bible up into the mountains to study alone. Sixteen years of Adventist education had taught me how to study the Bible and I thought I knew what the Bible had to say. I also remembered hearing in recent years that there were an increasing number of churches that had come to believe that the Bible does not condemn homosexuality as a lifestyle. I came down from the mountain a changed man. Later, I read the chapter in *Prophets and Kings* by Ellen White and realized she made no reference to the sin of homosexuality as one of the sins that resulted in the destruction of Sodom. Christ had many things to say about the evils of his day, but again, homosexuality was not mentioned.

This brings me to what I believe is the crux of the matter. Every congregation, every religion, every Christian has many and varied beliefs. Most of those are passed on to and accepted by the next generation with little or no thought. It is only when an issue has personal importance that one takes the time and energy to study and learn what God has to say through the Bible to that congregation, that religion, or that person.

People over the centuries have used the Bible to support many beliefs. During the Civil War in our own country, it was used to support slavery. In some churches, it's still used to keep women from speaking in church and music from being sung.

continued on the next page

When a new convert to Adventism became my brother-in-law, he wouldn't wear the matching sweaters I bought him and my sister because they were of mixed fabric. I exchanged the sweaters for ones made of 100% cotton because I acknowledged his understanding of the Bible. He no longer believes that. I used to not mail letters on Sabbath because of my beliefs. That has now changed.

Christian beliefs about marriage have also changed since the Bible was written. Wives used to be considered the property of their husbands. We now consider them as partners. The Adventist church used to condemn interracial marriage. In the same issue of the *Recorder* as your letter was a picture of an interracial couple from Union College. I remember being a member of a church in Tennessee in the 1970s that disfellowshipped a couple after their divorce. Since moving to California in 1984, I've attended churches in the Southern California and Southeastern

California Conferences where the pastors were both divorced and remarried while being able to keep their positions of leadership and responsibility.

To summarize, the Bible can be used to support many beliefs and positions. The Adventist position on issues related to marriage has changed during our relatively short history as a denomination. Adventist leaders and parishioners need to remember that fact whenever either group attempts to describe what you called as "...the Biblical definition of marriage." That being said, I believe Christians and Adventists need to support the partnerships of both straight and gay couples who are committed to long-term relationships. I believe this does not weaken the family unit, but supports and enlarges it.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,
Chaz Shields

Living in the present brings the one thing most people spend their lives striving to achieve: peace. Relaxing into the present moment puts you in the mental and physical state of calm, quiet, and tranquility and finally gets us off the here-but-gotta-get-there treadmill. If you are in the moment doing whatever you are doing, then there is not time to examine the gap between your expectation and the reality of how things are, or between where you are and where you think you should be. You are too busy being in the moment to analyze it and find fault with it. "If Life is a Game, These are the Rules" 4/18/00

BOOK REVIEW

by Harvey Brenneise

Dudley, Charles Edward, Sr. **The Genealogy of Ellen Gould Harmon White, the Prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.** Nashville: Dudley Publishing Services, c. 1999.

This recently-published volume is self-published and self-edited. It asserts that Ellen G. White was descended through her mother's family, the Goulds, from a family of mixed races: white, African-American and even Native American. Even though he calls her black, in no place does he demonstrate this historically or genealogically.

What Dudley does do, though, is give a fascinating

glimpse into a too-little-known part of 19th Century American history - that of the life and times of Americans of mixed blood, and in particular the mixed-blood community of Gouldtown, New Jersey. He also discusses the Underground Railroad.

The book is filled with factual errors (for example, the author doesn't even name the original 13 colonies/states correctly), and desperately needs both editing and copy editing. Many statements are not documented (for example, the assertion that two Ellen and James White's sons visited their "cousins" in Gouldtown, even though one of the named sons only lived to age 16). Thus it is hard to trust either the factual accuracy or the historical conclusions of this book. The Ellen G. White Estate has hired a professional genealogist to trace the Gould genealogy (the Harmon one having already been done in the past), which may provide more answers.

Interlude

Fragile leaves rise up and down
on golden ripples of water.
Listen...hear the gentle lapping?

Still, still...mellow moon
reflects on rippling glass.
Moonbeams rise and fall—
Leaves rise and fall,
They seem to write a song;
Laughing lullaby,
Lifting me to depths of peace.

Still, still...weeping waters,
cry your happy melody.
Notes ascending to the moon—
Chords descending, melancholy tune.
Symphonic sounds and moon aglow
You bring the night alive,
Harmonious music to my soul.

Larry Don Furr

Fate

Beautiful eagle, soaring high above
In waters of blue,
You look so still way up there.
Do you know where you're going
Or are you a drifter too?
Do you have a mate anxiously
Awaiting your return in some
Lonely mountain crevice?
Or are you searching for
Something new?

Beautiful eagle, you are now only
A small dark shadow,
Disappearing in the bottomless sky
And I am left to wonder of your fate...
And mine—

Larry Don Furr



Larry Don Furr writes from Arlington, Texas. He is Minister of Music and Organist at Trinity Lutheran Church in Ft. Worth. He competed in the Chantres, France International Organ Competition and lived in Spain for a year, studying harpsichord at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Madrid on a Fulbright Scholarship. He is currently finishing a Ph.D. dissertation in humanities with an emphasis in music history and art history of Madrid, Spain. He also loves slimy boiled okra, opera, traveling, gardening, and white-water rafting.

Protection for Whose Marriage?

Fam Roberts

The Coalition for the Protection for Marriage has raised 20,000 of the 44,000 signatures needed to place a marriage initiative on Nevada's ballot this fall. A group similar to the proponents of California's Prop 22 is gathering signatures for a petition to add an amendment to Nevada's Constitution which would define marriage as between one male and one female. Nevada's law already defines marriage as between a man and a woman. The LDS Church has been assigning members to wards throughout the state and are requiring members to help in gathering the necessary signatures. A Decline to Sign Campaign has been launched by the Coalition for Unity, an ad-hoc group of individuals and organizations led by the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN). Many clergy, state and local elected officials, straight and gay community leaders, as well as the editorial boards of the major newspapers in Nevada have come out in opposition of the petition stating that is unnecessary, divisive, discriminatory and intrusive on our constitutional liberties. Members of the grassroots opposition remain hopeful that Nevada, known for its libertarian attitudes, may be the first state in which the citizens turn down this deceptive appeal to "protect the sanctity of marriage." If the required signatures are gathered by June 20, 2000, the ballot measure still must be approved by voters on two consecutive election years before the Nevada Constitution would be amended.



Fam Roberts writes from Nevada where she and her partner live with their two sons.

Your Eyes

Catherine 'Linrud' Bidwell



I stared at you so long
that first day.
Not so much because
of what I saw
But for what I might see
through a momentary expression
slipping past your barrier
of calm repose.



Later I got the courage
to wander through your eyes
careful to note the deep
colorings of past experiences.



And in my wandering
I found you -
Someone, that until now
I had only experienced in passing.

I recognized some all too familiar hurts
that were almost lost
to me
through time.



Not far away
I found a library
of childhood and adult dreams
earmarked for use tomorrow.



I ducked as a dull gleam
halfheartedly danced past,
Almost tripping on a
hidden sorrow
that peeked out
just at that moment.

Then you blinked it all away
and I tried to
make my way back.
But now there was a tear
In each eye,
clouding the passageway
and releasing some
long kept expressions.

You looked away
and so did I.
But I keep the memory
of my voyage
through your silent eyes
that spoke to me from
the heart.



I wonder what you
found in mine.

