

# connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 39, No. 6, September 2015

**How Traditional Biblical Views Can Cut Off Love, Enlightenment, and Even Life  
Courageous Authenticity | Brothers in... | We Are Ambassadors  
Jerry's Journey (part IV) | Impression in Pictures of EKM2015**





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#### WHO WE ARE...

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

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 2,500 people in more than forty-three countries.

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



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 or visit Kinship's website [www.sdakinship.org/resources](http://www.sdakinship.org/resources)  
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- Find a Gay Friendly Church
- *Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?*
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#### CHAPLAIN

Marcos Apolonio, [chaplain@sdakinship.org](mailto:chaplain@sdakinship.org)

#### CONTACT/INFORMATION

[info@sdakinship.org](mailto:info@sdakinship.org)

#### SUPPORT KINSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to SDA Kinship Int'l, PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563 or donate securely online at [sdakinship.org](http://sdakinship.org). (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting [treasurer@sdakinship.org](mailto:treasurer@sdakinship.org). You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

#### RESOURCES

- [www.someone-to-talk-to.net](http://www.someone-to-talk-to.net)
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- [www.itgetsbetterforadventists.org](http://www.itgetsbetterforadventists.org)
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- ... and more

## From the Editor

In the years before Alzheimer's disorder decreased her mental bandwidth, my auntie chronicled our family and her friends, literally. In notebooks kept by her phone, Auntie took meticulous notes of our long-distance natterings. I have found logs of the days I went swimming, what classes I took in graduate school, the color of a shirt I wanted for Christmas, when and how the dogs temporarily misplaced themselves chasing a deer (or maybe a moose) into the woods, what day she and Uncle Charlie should arrive for a cookout, and what food was on the menu. It was the same for anyone in her orbit who took the time to call. We and the details of our life mattered to her.

As we are building and caring for our Kinship family, it seems we have the opportunity to do something similar. With Facebook, Twitter, the *Connection*, *Kinship eNews*, texting, and Instagram, as well as with our gatherings, we have a chance to learn about the gifts, challenges, opportunities, transitions, thinking, fears, hopes, and life events of our Kinship family—and to be part of them as we are able. On Facebook I admire, pray for, and root for Rena Otieno's amazing courage. Many of us prayed for Dahlia and Andrea as they supported their son through his cancer treatment. When one of our Kinship students needed assistance leaving a hurtful family, Kinship members did what healthy families do—helped with the rent. David Thaxton has been coordinating parts of Gay and Carol's upcoming Book and the Beach wedding, via text. This list began at the first Kampmeeting and has so many names and stories, they would not fit into a year's worth of *Connections*.

We, in the leadership of Kinship, want to encourage you to share your life, as much as you are comfortable doing. This is the way we can honor and care for you. I love to have your stories in the *Connection*. I am honored to hear them when I travel. I am humbled by the ways so many people reach out to welcome new members of all ages, and then become part of their lives. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and exhortations. What a treat to have Eliel's article, Jerry's story, and Jefferson's IAGC news in this issue. It is an awareness of this commitment so many of you share that leads us to close every *Connection* intro with *take good care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable*. Auntie would be proud.

Catherine



## European Kinship Meeting Impressions



▲ Lisa and Kees

Terre ▼



▲ Erik and Ingrid

Kees and Bob ▼



▲ Erik and Ingrid

Kees and Bob ▼





# How traditional biblical views can cut off love, enlightenment, and even life

By Eliel Cruz

Photo credit: Joshua Martin

**t**heology doesn't happen in a vacuum. We come to understand our faith through a prism of relationships.

So why is it that when Christians reach a new or different—for them—understanding of scripture and how to live their faith in relationship with others, we sort them into two camps?

One camp: The people who base their theology in the narrow terms of only traditional male-female relationships.

And the other camp: The people who—through relationships with LGBT people as family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and congregants—accept or “affirm” them as fellow travelers in faith.

Affirming individuals in their identity in Christ, their sexual and gender identities, and their relationships is important. It makes a huge difference not only to the people being accepted but also to the people who have found a way, in their faith, to accept their neighbors—all their neighbors.

Here are three ways to understand the impact of relationships on affirming theology on same-sex relationships.

## 1) It doesn't matter who you know but that you know and care about people beyond yourself.

**t**his is why every time someone from a traditional Christian denomination steps forward, announcing their affirmation of LGBT believers, it starts with a personal story. A family member. A friend. A couple. Someone they already know.

This relationship marks a turning point in their theology when they begin to reevaluate their sincerely held beliefs. This was the case for Christian ethicist David Gushee, Pastor Danny Cortez, theologian James Brownson, Christian blogger Rachel Held Evans, and evangelical leader Tony Campolo.

It'll be the case for others to come.

Traditional conservatives write off these individuals as simply biased toward their friends and family. This is particularly true when Christian parents affirm an LGBT child. Critics assume they are just letting emotions cloud their judgment of their child (as if every parent's judgment is not clouded by love).

## 2) Trying to talk theology without talking about the real people in our lives is dangerous.

**O**ur theology affects those around us.

When families reject their children, it increases the likelihood for suicide among LGBT youth.

Reparative therapy has proven to be harmful. Medical professionals acknowledge that there is nothing inherently unhealthy about being LGBT. Indeed, last month a jury found that offering such therapy is “consumer fraud.”

When Christians affirm same-sex couples they are opening their minds and hearts and eyes to see what these relationships

Yet, it's traditionalists who have their approach to theology all wrong.

What Christians against same-sex relationships are trying to do is divorce the LGBT experience from their theology.

That simply will not work and it's unbiblical. The word of God was made flesh for this very reason. Jesus informs our legalistic views of theology. He told us to include Gentiles in the church and to include *all* at the table. He dined with tax collectors and befriended prostitutes. The relationships Jesus formed with sinners are a model for us.

Relationships allow us to humanize a subject. We aren't just talking about theology; we are talking about people. We're talking about me. We're talking about families and friends. We shouldn't be treated like we're nothing, like theoretical subjects. We are in your lives. We matter.

mean not only to the couple but to the wider world. They add to the love in the world.

I've met thousands of LGBT people of faith who are better Christians than many who condemn them. Their faith compels them to be part of a church that, for the most part, preaches against their humanity.

There are devoted same-sex Christian couples raising their kids in the church so that their kids get the experience of being part of a community of Christians. There are LGBT seminarians finishing ▶



# Courageous Authenticity

By Michele O'Mara

**A**s I have been reading and researching for my upcoming new class, *Designing My Life Courageously*, I have been very tuned in to the devastating power of fear.

Fear wears so many different disguises, which gives fear the power to linger for long periods of time without us realizing it. We need fear to survive; but, for most of us, we have allowed fear to really take advantage of its important role in our inner worlds.

Four very common disguises for fear are:

- **Confusion.** This is probably one of the most common forms of fear. See what happens when you replace, "I am unsure if I..." with "I am afraid if I..." Confusion is the opposite of responsibility. To be confused is to reject responsibility for how you feel, what you think, and what you want. Sometimes we need more information to gain clarity, but confusion born of fear is a frozen state of indecision that stems from worry about the outcomes.
- **Procrastination.** Often what we delay is something that we fear. Maybe it isn't the activity itself that we fear, maybe it is what it will lead to, what it means, or how we will be perceived; or perhaps it is not something that is true to who we are, or maybe it is something that is not aligned with our highest good or truest self, or maybe we fear we'll fail at that thing. (And I suppose sometimes it's not actually fear; it's just that we don't like cleaning toilets, but you get the difference, right?)

## ▶ traditional biblical views

years of study for churches that will never accept their service.

### 3) Time and time again Christians change.

**W**e already know what it means to have our experience inform our theology. In the civil rights era, we came to read Genesis 9:25, which speaks of the curse of Ham, in a different light. Sometimes it's because we were simply wrong (see slavery) and other times we upheld archaic patriarchal standards (see women's role in church) to cloud our judgment.

But we have (sometimes) repented for our views and have come to better understandings in our theology. The same must be true with same-sex relationships.

We should use our experiences together as the lens to our theology. It's not only biblical, it's also necessary for a life-sustaining interpretation of scripture. ▼

See more at: <http://elielcruz.religionnews.com/2015/07/30/traditional-biblical-views-can-cut-off-love-enlightenment-even-life/#sthash.PvTWVvUr.dpuf>

- **Perfectionism.** Our desire to do things perfectly generally stems from a fear of failure, ridicule, disappointing others, or other fear-based motivations. Perfectionism stems from fear.
- **Anger.** At the end of the day, the only reason we get angry is to protect ourselves. Anger is always a response to feeling wronged or violated—it is the only reason we feel anger. Anger is designed to keep us safe, and what we often do not realize, is that anger is also fear.

**F**ear is not real. It is a by-product of our thoughts. It's not even a thing—it's a thought that creates an emotion, that signals our brain to release powerful chemicals that increase our heart rate, energize us, keep us on guard, and further convince us we are in danger (ironically, to keep us safe!). F.E.A.R can be thought of as a False Evidence Appearing Real. The point is, fear is an illusion.

Another casualty of fear, and perhaps the most painful of all, is the inability to dream, to think big, and to pursue the truth of who we really are. Most fears can be traced back to two major sources: the fear of death and the fear of disconnection. To our brain, these are the same. The fear of disconnection harkens back to our infancy, and the early development of our brain. In order to survive, we relied on the involvement of our caregivers. When there is an interruption in this connection—a disconnection—our survival is literally threatened. As we grow and become more independent, the connection is less about food and shelter, and more about love and acceptance. Fear, then, becomes a natural response when we are unsure if who we are, what we do, how we think, and what we want may threaten our connection to those we love.

How many times have you **not** done something that inspires you, or feels true to who you are, because you believe it may disappoint another? You can thank fear for that.

Courageous authentic living requires the ability to tolerate the fear of disconnection long enough to open yourself to real and meaningful connections with those who see you as you are, not as they wish for you to be.

Cheers to courageous authenticity! What would you be doing differently if you knew you would be loved and accepted no matter what? ▼

# Brothers in.....

*"How very good and pleasant it is  
when brothers live together in unity"  
(Psalm 133:1).*

By Kent Hansen

The October moon climbs the sky in full, golden glory. It pulls the tide of my heart over the whitewashed, adobe wall of the retreat center. I resist that tug, earthbound by the material. My pen is missing.

It isn't just any pen. It is a \$70 gold-plated Sheaffer™ Classic fountain pen. It is my favorite. I love its rasp as it pushes words across the pages. Words are gifts, but writing them down is work. The sound and heft of this pen remind me of both.

There is some guilt associated with this pen. I bought it on sale for \$45—bargains are in the deluded mind of the purchaser. It took mechanically challenged me two months of ink-spattered failure to learn how to place the cartridge correctly. I put it away for weeks until I happened to read the instructions on the back of the cartridge package and got the idea.

Tonight, when I went to meet with the retreat leader, I took my journal, my pocket New Testament, and my Bible, and I put the pen in my jacket pocket. After I returned to my room, I opened up my journal and reached for the pen—it wasn't there.

I looked around. The pen wasn't with my other stuff. "Shoot, I must not have zipped my pocket." I tried to write with a \$2.49 Pilot Varsity™ fountain pen (best writing pen and most reliable pen I've ever used). The thought of the missing pen would not let me rest.

So I am retracing my steps. At some point I left the walk and crossed the lawn. I don't remember where. I see no gleam of gold in the moonlight. The retreat leader crosses the walk ahead of me. I pick up my head and quicken my step around the corner and out of sight. This is a man who once spent five months in prayer in a cave eating nothing but potatoes and water. He probably thinks that a 79-cent Bic® ball-point will do just fine and he's right.

My pen isn't in the empty conference room. Turning out the light, I step outside. To my left, in the dappled shadows of the porch, sits my brother Terry. We exchange nods. It is the third evening of a five-day guided silent retreat. Terry and I haven't exchanged a word for two days and three nights.

He sees me slowly zigzag across the lawn. "Did you lose something?" he calls out.

"Yeah, my pen. It's my favorite."

"The gold one?" he asks.

I say, "Yes," knowing that he means my

\$5.00 Pentel® roller ball (I am a pen junkie) that he borrowed on the first night. I don't correct him because he probably won't approve of a \$70 pen either.

I am across the first square of lawn before I realize that Terry is behind me and also looking.

The moon is higher now, flooding light over us. Down the ridgeline, across the valley, I see the tallest hill that interested me during the day. It looks like it has antennae on top. My heart longs to wander beyond the walls, to explore the hills in the night.

I glance back at Terry, thinking, "My brother loves me. He is restless tonight and I'd like to do something special with him."

But I don't want to break his silence, and I move ahead of him continuing the search. I wait for Terry to catch up to me in the rose garden, thinking I should get back to my prayer and the journal. The Spirit speaks to my heart, "The pen is gone for a reason. You came out here for more than a pen. Terry is waiting for something. Ask him."

I whisper to my brother, "Are you up for something silent, but crazy?"

He looks at me quizzically. "Sure."

I gesture at his legs clad in shorts. "Are you warm enough?"

"Let me put on my long pants."

"Knock on my door when you are ready," I tell him.

Terry is a hospital executive. I am an attorney. Seven years separate us in age. We have different personalities and paths for our lives, but the spiritual riches we've encountered while following Christ are a shared bounty. I love my big brother and cherish the journey that we're taking together.



I open my door when I hear his door open and we walk into the night without a word.

We cross the highway and start up the grassy slope beyond. It is steep. I lean into the hill and push for traction off the soft clods of a fire break. Terry follows a few steps behind. I suck air deep into my lungs to regulate my panting. Terry does the same. We stop to rest and I think that we are both a lot older than the last time we climbed a hill together.

Our shadows against the illuminated ground are the difference of night and day.

We take a right on the ridge and walk down a saddle on a hard dirt road. Below we can hear engines accelerate, squealing tires, sirens, and an occasional indistinct voice.

When we ascend the hill it turns out to be a big knoll commanding a view of what must be the ocean, dark and flat to the south, the blackness of the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton to the west, mesas and ravines in broken patterns to the east, and mountains on guard to the north—360 degrees of horizon. The antennae turn out to be two spindly, old Yucca plants stretching out of a patch of prickly pear. We stand in silence taking it in, Terry a bit higher on the slope than I am.

Something flutters in front of me. A bat, I think, or a night hawk. It is gone and then there it is again—a moving shadow crossing the moonlit landscape. There are two of whatever it is.

I point. Terry follows the line of my finger and also sees the movement coming straight at us. Over our heads in swift, smooth flight are two great horned owls. They swoop past us in a moonlit flash of golden eyes and glowing feathers. They

settle on the yucca above us, one over the other, the big one on top, in the same positions that Terry and I stand on the hill. Maybe 30 feet and no more separate us.

Terry and I turn carefully in unison to watch. I am afraid that any movement will break the spell.

Silhouetted against the eastern sky, the owls begin to call to each other in deep, thrilling tones—who-o-o, who, who, who-o-o, back and forth at intervals, a conversation.

“O God,” I pray in my soul, “this is amazing grace. Thank you for calling us here. Thank you for this brother of mine.” My mouth is parted in wonder. All my thoughts, feelings, and physical being converge in focus. The moon shines down. The moment is perfect.



Unhurriedly, the owls unfold their tremendous wings and take flight, one after the other, rising in slow, swirling flames of gold, bronze, and copper ignited by the moon. They spiral up above us, coming together, then moving apart, then together again, exchanging calls in a dance of joy for the moon, the stars, and the night air on which they float and glide in freedom between the earth and heaven—a reverent and wild expression of praise for the God that made us all. Then as one, these night visitors return to their hunt over the fields, gliding away from our view.

Our world remains hushed for a long moment of benediction. I whisper to Terry, “That is one of the most wonderful things I’ve ever seen.”

“Pure gift,” he says.

He walks down to me, puts his arm around me and kisses my forehead. He squeezes me hard. I squeeze back. We hold each other for a while, brothers by blood and in spirit, called to this time and place to witness the delight of God.

We start back, walking side by side with ease, downhill, around corners, back to the retreat center. Only one thing more is said. I whisper to Terry, “A Psalm says, ‘The moon is a faithful witness’.”

He murmurs, “M-m-m,” in response.

The same Psalm is the first place in Scripture that God is called “Father.” In it God speaks his love to and through David:

*He shall cry to me, “You are my Father, my God and the Rock of my Salvation!... Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will stand firm... It shall be established forever like the moon, an enduring witness in the skies*

(Psalm 89:26, 28, 37).

Two brothers stand side by side on a moonlit hilltop in silent communion, as naked in soul before God as each of them was in body on the day their mother bore them into the world. The golden pen is forgotten. For the deepest secrets of God there are no words.

“O taste and see that the Lord is good. Happy are those who take refuge in him” (Psalm 34:8). ▼

# Book and the Beach

## Mini-Kampmeeting

### Sep 30 – Oct 1, 2015

### Nags Head NC

Info & registration on [www.sdakinship.org](http://www.sdakinship.org)





By Jefferson Clark

I would like to take a few moments and share with you what the Intercollegiate Adventist GSA Coalition (IAGC) has been doing over the past year, as I and each of the IAGC officers and member-group leaders have been very busy!

### An IAGC Update

#### The 2014-2015 School Year

**A**t this time, the IAGC now has gay/straight-alliance student groups on seven Seventh-day Adventist college and university campuses across North America:

- **Andrews University** (*AULL4One*)
- **La Sierra University** (*PRISM*)
- **Southern Adventist University** (*SHIELD*)
- **Washington Adventist University** (*Q&A*)
- **Walla Walla University** (*Students for Equality*)
- **Pacific Union College** (*GASP*)
- **Union College** (*Beacon*)

Since this past June, when I was elected as IAGC President, I was able to attend the Gay Christian Network conference in Portland, Oregon (read my reflection piece: *Heard, Understood, and Loved*) in January, and the Reformation Project conference in Atlanta, Georgia in June, where I attended a variety of presentations and workshops regarding the topic of LGBTI Christians. Each conference offered valuable information that I am now able to use as I work with the IAGC member-group leaders and students regarding the conflict of sexuality and spirituality that these individuals face and work to understand.

I have also been working with students and allies on our campuses that do not have gay-straight alliances, as they work to create safe spaces on their campuses, from creating documents with questions and advice, to counseling them as they speak with campus administration and helping to find support for the new groups in their areas. Through this, the new student group at Union College, *Beacon*, was formed with the help of alumnus AJ Oetman; the campus has been doing a lot to move forward in helping marginalized students. It has been awesome seeing the leaps and bounds this new group has made, as the campus has been fairly open-minded and willing to help the LGBTI individuals, to a certain extent. And on the Burman University campus in

Canada, Eric Anderson has been working to build the foundation for a the new student group, *This Is Me*, in hopes that students will soon step up and take on leadership roles in forming a strong group that will serve the LGBTI and allies in this area.

Our student group at Andrews University, *AULL4One*, has had a busy year as well, after students were told they could not hold a fundraiser on campus for Project Fierce, a Chicago-based organization that works to help LGBTI homeless youth. After news about this went viral, the group set up a Kickstarter campaign which ended up raising close to \$17,000 for Project Fierce. From this, university administration has created task forces that will focus specifically on these issues and will hopefully work more closely with our group.

And at Southern Adventist University, the student group *SHIELD* has had multiple presentations on campus specifically covering LGBTI topics and issues. Although the presentations have not been as harmful as was experienced in the Winter 2014 semester, they have not been beneficial or helpful. As the Committee for Education Regarding Student Sexual Activity (CERSSA) became more visible, the president of *SHIELD* (Mischka Scott) and I were invited to a meeting, after I met with Alan Parker, the committee chairman, to discuss the future policies regarding LGBTI students on campus.

As for the other groups, they are slowly working to grow. Sydney Portela at Washington Adventist University has taken on the student group there, *Queers & Allies*, working to revive the students' interest in having the group. Summer Thrasher has been doing the same with *Students for Equality*, the group at Walla Walla University, but both have been facing resistance from administration, making it continually difficult. And the leaders of *GASP* at Pacific Union College have been mentoring future student leaders, as they continue to make plans on how to best work on campus and with administration.



## The 4th Annual IAGC Summit

### A Business Affair

This year, the IAGC Summit was held at the Kellogg West Conference Center and Hotel on the beautiful campus of Cal Poly in Pomona, California! Without the assistance of SDA Kinship International, this would not have been possible. We had a total of 11 attendees, which included students and alumni from Andrews University, La Sierra University, Southern Adventist University, Pacific Union College, and Union College, as well as our own SDA Kinship Adviser, Dave Ferguson, and faculty advisers Paul Mallory (La Sierra University) and Randi Robertson (Andrews University). It was wonderful and encouraging having this many attendees, knowing that they took time away from their busy schedules to discuss the work being done on their campuses.

On the first day of the Summit, each of the student-leaders gave an update on their campus and the work being done, the difficulties, and what they have planned for the coming school year. We also received a message of encouragement from Candace Hartnett of *Agape Empowerment* via Skype, sharing the work she does in evangelical churches for LGBTI individuals with her wife Erika. It was during this time that attendees Daniel Perez, Eliel Cruz, and AJ Oetman, came up with the idea to record the young adults' responses to the question: "What message do you have for a Seventh-day Adventist LGBTI individual who is struggling with their identity?" As the excitement grew, plans were made to film these short two-minute video clips on the following day!

On the second day of the Summit, the advisers gave their perspective on the student groups, how they felt things were going, and what possible improvements could be made. Dave Ferguson, the IAGC adviser from SDA Kinship International, also shared the work he has been doing—speaking with administration and faculty on each of the campuses, and sharing his brief conversations with many of the college and university presidents at the General Conference this year. Mischka Scott, who graduated from Southern Adventist University in May with a degree in social work and who now works with a Chattanooga-based HIV/AIDS awareness and support center, gave a presentation on LGBT sexual health. Although this is a very controversial topic with these stu-

dents attending conservative Christian institutions, the demographic that the IAGC works with makes this a very important topic for the leaders to be familiar with, in order to address general questions that may be asked by members.



### The Future IAGC

#### The 2015-2016 School Year

As a part of the IAGC Summit, the IAGC held its required annual business meeting, where our officers for the coming school year were elected. It was decided, before these elections were made, to amend the IAGC Constitution and Bylaws to allow recent alumni to hold officer positions from this point on (in addition to current students), as they are able to dedicate more time to the organization than individuals who are balancing school and leading the GSA on their campus as well. Therefore, the following individuals were unanimously elected:

- **President** - *Jefferson Clark*
- **Vice President** - *Jonathan Doram*
- **Spiritual Vice President** - *Sarah Ventura*
- **Treasurer** - *Daniel Perez*
- **Secretary** - *Mischka Scott*

With a renewed energy to continue this work, the IAGC will be making a diligent effort to heighten awareness-building methods. The following areas are receiving an overhaul in order to better the organization, and thus, the work that the IAGC does:

- **Student groups** - to continue working on campuses where there is not a GSA

If you would like to receive e-mail notice of our events, projects or activities, you can contact us at this link: <http://eepurl.com/buOY7D>. ▼



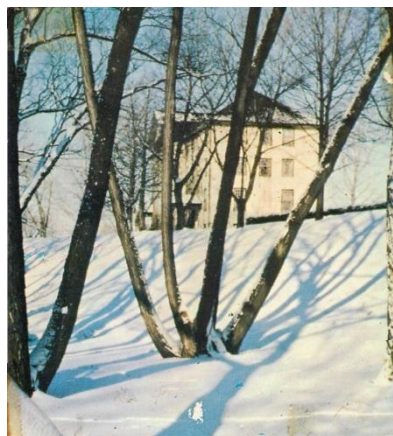
## European Kinship Meeting (Villa Aurora)

Hanz, Francesca, Luca, Ruud, Kees and F.

# Journey

By Jerry McKay

(Part IV)



**Awareness of Orientation  
during High School**

Earlier, I mentioned my roommate Kelvin, and that we were roommates for almost four years. Speaking generally about our friendship, Kelvin said that, “from the start at Kingsway I never thought of you as being anything but a regular guy. I admired your spiritual status on campus and felt honored that you would consider rooming with me, an underclassman. I will always be grateful for that and recall many pleasant memories of our times together. We enjoyed similar activities and friendships.”

Then he asked this question. “Did you ever feel sexually attracted to me or other guys we were friendly with? I certainly never suspected it.”

His question is a perfect segue into those moments when I was aware of my attraction to the same sex.

The short answer to Kelvin’s question is, yes, most definitely, I was attracted to him. I felt different things for different people, and I wasn’t attracted to every guy just as no heterosexual is attracted to every person of the opposite sex.

It is important to understand that although I write as if I were fully aware of my orientation the truth is I was not that aware of the extent of my attractions and how they affected me. To use a common phrase, *I was not out to myself*. By that I mean I had not consciously named what I

was experiencing. Throughout high school, for sure, and on into college, I never defined myself as homosexual or gay. I would not name my experience for another ten years. I did not do so for at least two reasons.

First, I lacked the vocabulary needed to say anything to anyone. The only language references I had were Biblical. From the Old Testament, I had terms like abomination and sodomite. From the New Testament, I knew what Paul seemed to say about *those* people in his letter to the church in Rome—they were people with dishonorable passions and unnatural desires. While I had feelings that seemed to fit Paul’s description, I don’t remember thinking I was one of *those* people. The text did trouble me a lot, however.

This lack of vocabulary was compounded by the fact that there was nothing about my world that was set up to help me name what I was experiencing. There was no gay-straight alliance group on campus, no stated policy by the school counsellor or nurse that acknowledged the existence of LGBT people and their concerns, and no internet for any personal research. If there was anything in print, it was hidden away in reference books in the library. Preachers never even talked about the subject in the early 70s.

I have no idea what would have happened had I confided in a dean, a teacher, or the pastor. I expect there were some understanding faculty on campus, but I had no idea who they might have been. Talking to someone would have broken my sense of isolation; but based on the experience of others, I would probably have been shamed into silence and or requested to withdraw from school. Had that happened, I would have been devastated. Instead, I lived my moments of awareness in isolation.

Despite this vague sense of awareness, I remember what I felt and how it affected me. Sometimes my attraction was subtle and more like background noise—always there but manageable. Other times, it led me to modify my behavior in subconscious ways. On other occasions, it broke into my awareness and overwhelmed me.

My first example of awareness reflects the subconscious tension I felt about being physically attracted to roommates like Kelvin and others in the dormitory and how I changed my behavior because of it.

Living at a boarding school, even a Christian school, had its challenges for someone physically attracted to the same sex—those community showers.

Most modern campus residences are





Group of week of prayer speakers

similar to hotel suites where two or maybe four people share a bathroom with some semblance of privacy. The showers at Kingsway, however, were rather public—too public, for me.

The showers I remember most were not large and open with multiple places to bathe, but small and intimate. There was one entrance into a small ceramic room that had just two shower heads. When there was a curtain, it was not there as a divider between the two occupants. It simply closed off the small entrance to prevent water from spilling out onto the main floor.

As often as I could, I headed to the showers earlier than necessary hoping to get in and out before others arrived. Although I was bashful, that wasn't the primary reason for hitting the showers early. I did not want to deal with the distress created by my appreciation of the male body.

I think most guys, Christian or not, would feel awkward if they had to shower with their female friends. If they did peek, they might feel guilty but normal. Even if I wanted to peek, I felt ashamed and abnormal.

I must emphasize that I wasn't necessarily thinking about what was below the belt. Nor was I thinking about *doing* anything. I was distressed because, in my eyes, the male body was appealing and I wanted to look at it.

When a friend or roommate, for whom I had a spiritual and emotional attraction, was naked and within arm's reach, the distress was exhausting. Believe me, it is only when you try not to peek that you realize how much you can see with good peripheral vision!

Living in a dorm meant there were plenty of guys roaming about clad only in a towel. This, too, was stressful. Every time I was met by a friend in his briefs, I was afraid my gaze would be different in some way—a few seconds longer than normal or in a way that betrayed my secret. I'm eternally grateful that Kelvin was not an exhibitionist!

Despite those everyday occurrences, I welcomed my male friendships, but I was always overly cautious about avoiding any physical contact shying away from hugs or simple touch of any kind. The odd unexpected touch on my back or shoulder, though pleasant, was electrifying and made me anxious.

On the other hand, I never minded the fact that activities like assemblies and church services were segregated—the girls had to sit on the left, and the guys had to sit on the right. Being *required* to sit snugly between male friends in church was a cross I bore willingly. Unlike my classmates, I never did dream of the day when I would be in the upper grades and therefore have the privilege of sitting with female friends.



The old boy's dorm

**M**y next example illustrates how emotionally attached I could be to classmates, roommates, and friends and yet be very much out of touch with those feelings until some event pushed them to the surface.

Within hours of returning to school one year after Christmas break, I learned some news that jolted me emotionally.

Del was one of the spiritual role models on campus, and I admired him. He was articulate, intelligent, and dynamic. He was also attractive. He often led Bible study groups and prayer circles in the dorm. He had been dating one of the girls on campus. I had been okay with that, or at least I thought I was, until he announced that they had gotten engaged over the holidays.

My reaction betrayed my true feelings. Although I was able to put on a happy congratulatory face, I remember being overwhelmed with emotions. I hated that I felt anger, jealousy, and even bitterness. Mixed in with those emotions were feelings of grief and loss. In retrospect, I know I had feelings for Del.

This experience would repeat itself a number of times with respect to other friends.

Many people feel a sense of loss when a close friend or family member announces an engagement. When that happens, we know the dynamics of the relationship will change, and we eventually accept the new reality. Most people have someone to talk to about it.

I, however, experienced a wound I could not talk about. I had feelings I could never have expressed verbally let alone acted on. I had no one to share my feelings with. The only thing I could do was stuff them deep inside.

Constantly experiencing strong emotions and denying them takes a toll. The toll for me was the slow numbing and

shutting down of emotion.

**M**y third example was a one-time event and had to do with beauty in the eyes of the heterosexual beholder.

One evening after the mandatory study period was over; a group of us younger guys were hanging out in an older guy's room. Not surprisingly, the subject of women came up. The older student unquestionably loved everything about women. You could tell he had given much previous thought to what he was going to say because his eyes widened with enthusiasm as he elaborated on why he found women so physically attractive.

"A woman," he said, "possesses a layer of subcutaneous fat that softens her body to both sight and touch." This, he emphasized, was in contrast to the sinews and muscles visible on the male body. The implication was that the male body was not appealing.

The comment caught me off guard and made me very uncomfortable.

Instantly, the situation triggered that familiar fear response. It was as if someone had punched me in the gut. I could feel anxiety move through my body. In his comment and my reaction, I was reminded again of what I was supposed to be thinking and feeling. I did not feel the way Perry did, and I knew it.

Perry's comment startled me so forcefully for another reason. It made me aware of what I had actually been doing while he was speaking. I had been observing every sinew and muscle of his body as he sat there in his armchair wearing only his briefs!

It would have been healthier, for me, if I could have talked and joked about what I was thinking. Instead, I repressed what I was feeling. Even worse, I felt compelled to lie about my truth. Although I was in a state of panic, I made a pathetic attempt to show knowing agreement.

**I** returned to my room with my mind overrun with those why questions. They were not just questions about why I felt drawn to guys. I was plagued over why I felt no physical attraction for any of my female friends. There was never an end to wondering what was wrong with me.

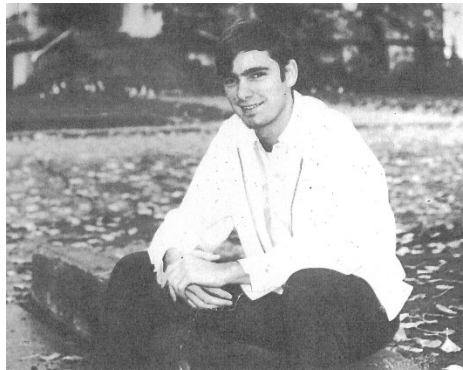
This is a critical point. I was not hetero-

sexual as is typically understood plus one oddity. I was not attracted to women *and also* interested in men. I had *no* attraction to women. This was so troubling because I knew I had not chosen to reject women in some fist-in-the-air act of rebellion against God in exchange for the unnatural. I was not exercising a preference I could turn on or off.

I said my prayers and went to bed hoping things would change, but the next morning everything was the same. The energy I used to manage, repress, and lie was so tiring.

With all of these details about my devotional habits and distress over my orientation as background, you can see how intrigued I was by another of Kelvin's observations. Although I had often seen Kelvin pray, I would never have said of him, "I remember wondering what was going through your head when you would spend long periods kneeling by the radiator at the window, apparently praying." Then he added, "I thought in subsequent years that you were possibly trying to figure yourself out."

Kelvin had no idea how accurate his *wonderings* were.



Don

**M**y final example of sexual awareness and accompanying distress revolved around a summer job. I had two summer jobs between the time I enrolled at Kingsway and my graduation in 1974. One of those involved evangelistic endeavors. The job in question illustrated what it might be like trying to work in church ministry and cope with same-sex attraction.

As part of a church-sponsored student work program, I joined a two-person team that went to help a local church with its evangelistic activities. As it turned out, I was teamed up with one of my camp coun-

sellors from years back. This time, Don was around 20 and as attractive as ever. I was about to turn 17.

A local family provided us with room and board. We spent every day together driving around Bellville in an old black and white van full of Bibles, Bible study guides, and evangelistic literature. We helped the local pastor with church services, carried the weight of that summer's Vacation Bible School, and went door to door signing people up for Bible studies. It was a rewarding summer, and it was my introduction to what a pastor's life might actually look like.

The only constant downside was my orientation. It was exhausting showing up at someone's door for a Bible study or trying to lead out in a church service with the image of a tanned shirtless construction worker filling my thoughts. There was construction going on all over Bellville that summer, and those guys didn't have an ounce of subcutaneous fat on their bodies.



The old black van

Those why questions drained my energy and detracted from my work.

While Don may have had visions of a scantily clad woman on his mind, I doubt he beat himself up because of them. If he did have twinges of guilt, I'm sure he never thought of himself as an abomination or a sodomite. I doubt he went to bed weary from a tyranny of whys plaguing him. If he had had a few lust-filled thoughts, at least, his were *natural*.

I am also sure Don did not end his day distressed because he had found me attractive in the way I found him attractive. Like other friends and classmates at Kingsway, Don was attractive not just physically



but spiritually. This combination made my feelings of appeal and guilt more potent. As always, I suppressed, denied, and prayed in silence.

For a moment of comic relief, I want to share a bit from one of my other summer jobs.

That summer, I attempted to sell religious and health related magazines door to door. That experiment did not last long.



### And Then There Was Dating

In addition to all the same-sex attraction stuff going on, I did date during high school. Although my dating may have outwardly resembled that of my heterosexual counterparts, I know I never felt much like they did.

Another of Kelvin's observations confirmed what others saw me doing. Regarding my social life, he wrote, "I remember wondering why you were liked by quite a few girls but you seemed unable to get too close to them."

He specifically remembered two of my "girlfriends"—the only two, in fact, that I remember. We apparently shared a common interest, because he said he was especially surprised "when I broke up with Beverly at a time when he thought she still wanted to be my girlfriend and he, in fact, had a secret desire for her to be his!"

Regarding my other girlfriend, he noted that Donna and I were "always good friends but never a 'couple'."

For most of one year, I "dated" Beverley in what should be described as "in form only."

I don't remember how we started to date. I think it was just the natural outflow of circumstances and expectations. Most were dating or trying to date in one way or the other.

Beverley was a grade ahead of me, but we were a part of the same circle of friends. She was shy and beautiful and kind. She was also a talented pianist. Of

I hated it. First, I despised our uniforms.

Being Canadian we dressed in our colors—red and white. Every day we headed out in our red shirts, white ties, and white polyester pants, or skirts, depending on your gender. Those colors would have worked for a gymnastic team, but not for walking the streets of Ottawa. I felt as self-conscious as a dog that had just had its coat sheered too short. That wasn't the real reason for abandoning that job, how-

ever.

No matter how informative those magazines were or how much the team leader tried to encourage me to continue in "the Lord's work," I knew I would rather pile lumber than try to convince people to buy magazines. That summer I learned I was not a salesman. I quit and headed back to Kingsway to work in the furniture factory for the remainder of the summer.

course, she was spiritual. Throughout one year we went to those after-sunset Saturday night activities—skating, movie night, and concerts. Like the others who were dating, we exchanged letters on "letter night"—the night approved for runners to shuttle letters between the dorms.

Once, probably twice, we went as a couple to the big social events of the year—Open House and Reception. Each event included a formal dinner with suits and gowns and corsages. I still have the photos!

Although there was nothing obligatory about holding your date's hand as you escorted her to and from dinner, there was an understanding that such a display of affection might occur. On those special evenings, I did hold Beverley's hand, but that was the extent of our intimacy. I never struggled with wanting more.

For one summer, we wrote back and forth sharing our day-to-day activities, but again that was it. Not that there needed to be anything steamy going on between two high school students at a Christian boarding school, but there really was little about our relationship that could have been considered more than platonic—at least from my perspective.

I don't remember when or why I ended the dating relationship. It clearly took everyone, included Kelvin, by surprise. I suspect I was just tapping into something deep inside of me that knew it had to end because I wasn't going to be able to move it forward in any meaningful way.

My relationship/friendship with Donna was more complicated.

Our on-again off-again friendship would last for years and went beyond high school through college and included mission service together. Sometimes it seemed we were dating and at other times we behaved more like friends. We shared theological and spiritual interests and a love of nature. We had the kind of deep conversations that only soul mates can have.

Compared to Donna, I was the dim bulb. I had to work hard for my grades while she breezed through most classes with minimal effort. During exams, I always needed the full two hours allotted to finish the test, while Donna would pack up and leave the room after an hour.

The first time that happened, I assumed she didn't do very well, and I felt sorry for her. In fact, she scored higher than I did. That experience repeated itself every semester.

We were in the band together, as well. She played the flute. When visiting small churches we occasionally accommodated a request for special music. I am positive we were the only trombone-flute duet anyone had ever heard. Somehow, we made it work.

Donna and I attended at least one of those elaborate yearly social events as a couple, and I did hold her hand on those evenings. We spent a great deal of time alone, but again, nothing intimate ever

happened, because I never initiated anything. I never struggled with any vow of chastity. There were no desires or urges to struggle over.

Ironically, the absence of any sexual urges on my part only heightened the respect I had in the eyes of many, and of course, no Christian girl wanted to be the one to lead me into temptation. I know I confused Donna, because I was definitely confused, and we confused everyone around us. I have more to say about Donna later.



Graduation

A few final thoughts as I bring this part of my life to a close.

Because people saw me going through the motions of dating, they rightly assumed I shared at least some of their passions. There was something ironic about being known to have a deep faith and an even stronger control over earthly desires. If friends had only known that my orientation was the force behind my control, they might have felt better about their struggles, and I would have felt more honest and authentic. Having godlike control over my urges, however, meant that male friends used to confide in me about their relationship problems and urges.

I often heard about "the kiss" that took place earlier in the evening and the guilt about wanting more. I watched friends open their love letters, and shared their excitement about being in love. Later, I consoled them when their relationships ended. On the rare occasion, I was approached by a troubled and timid soul who wanted me to share my thoughts on the subject of masturbation. The query usually implied he struggled with the vice but had no one to talk to.

I guess I seemed like a safe and understanding person to go to. I always tried to listen and counsel with compassion. All the

while, I was strangely silent about anything that was going on in my heart and veins. Editing out the important stuff of life became my norm. Only the experienced observer would have picked up on that. Although I was able to manage the tension, it was not easy; and clearly some wondered about me but couldn't put a finger on what I was about.

My high school years rank near the top of enjoyable periods of my life. Friendships developed that have continued to this day, and those friendships made up for much of the void my orientation created at the time. I graduated from high school in the spring of 1974 and started my Bachelor in Theology the following September while still at Kingsway. During my first year of college, I made a decision that would significantly impact the next six years. While trying to finish my degree in theology, I would crisscross the Pacific three times as a student missionary in Japan.

Before moving on to my Japan and second year in college, I want to digress and look at two published sources that created a lot of angst, affected my self-image, and set me up for future difficulties. One source was in the Bible—the first chapter of Romans—and the second was the Adventist publication *You and Your Health*. ▼

There is no such thing in anyone's life as an unimportant day.

— Alexander Woollcott

#### First Vacation Bible School in Belleville Makes Good Impression on Citizens

By ALETHA MUSTARD, Pastor's Wife

July 3 saw the start of the first Vacation Bible School ever to be held in Belleville! Most of those helping out had no previous experience; but, with a prayer in their hearts and the pioneer spirit flowing in their veins, they prepared for the new venture with enthusiasm.

Pastor Andrew G. Mustard led out, ably assisted by Mrs. Helen Van Dusen, Mrs. Judy Nickol, Mrs. Barbara Trupp, pianist Mary Gee, song leader Sandy Trupp, and ACT Team Members Don Sands and Jerry McKay. The writer acted in the capacity of program co-ordinator. Two other stalwart helpers were Mrs. Jennie Knister and Mrs. Millicent Calvert.

Several children who attended came as a result of the door-to-door visitation carried out by Pastor Mustard and the ACT Team. Handbills and posters were also distributed by other members of the church, signs placed inside buses, and articles sent to the local newspaper office and radio station. Even so, the VBS Team was concerned as to the response, but they need not have worried. On opening day, the Pastor arrived half an hour early in order to attend to last-minute preparations, and was surprised to find no less than 20 children already waiting outside the church. More arrived, and finally a grand

total of 41 children — a most encouraging response.

Much could be said about the happiness of the children as they participated in the various activities, and how their enjoyment mirrored itself in the faces of their teachers, proving that it is truly "more blessed to give than to receive". Special features were planned for each day. A fireman came in full regalia and lectured on fire prevention. When, at the conclusion of his talk, he asked whether there were any questions, every hand shot up, and he spent several difficult moments trying to explain to his youthful audience as to what happens when one's hair catches fire, or one's coat, or firehose; in fact, those children displayed most astonishing feats of imagination as they thought of just about every possible part of one's clothing and anatomy that might catch fire! But the able fireman's handling of the situation was indeed masterly for he never cracked a smile, even though the adults present had great trouble in maintaining their composure. Other features of special interest were the lady archer who brought along bow and arrows to demonstrate her particular sport; a breeder of showdogs whose Irish Setter presented a remarkable example of how large dogs, as well as little children, can learn obedience; and a film on the hazards of cigarette smoking.

arete smoking.

Graduation service was held on Sabbath morning and parents were invited to attend, resulting in a nicely filled church. The children performed admirably in the program that followed, after which the visitors were invited to view the interesting crafts which their children had made. Many expressed their thanks for this fine community service and said they would certainly be sending their children back again next summer. One mother related how her young son had come home a few days earlier looking extremely unhappy, and when asked what the matter was he explained that he had just found out that there was only one day of Vacation Bible School left, and he had been of the opinion that it was to last ALL SUMMER! "Only one more day," he wailed. "I wish it could last ONE HUNDRED AND ONE days!" Which echoed the sentiments of all the children who came.

In response to the invitation made during the Sabbath morning service, several children not of our faith have already expressed their intention of attending Sabbath School. It is hoped that in the evangelistic meetings to be held in Belleville this fall, many of the families represented will attend as a result of Vacation Bible School.

\* Adventist Collegiate Task Force



Pastor and Mrs. Mustard presenting certificate to Eddie Luffman during graduation service.



Children's response when asked how many were enjoying the Vacation Bible School.



Breeder Tim Tinlin demonstrates obedience tests with Irish setter in foreground.



Frieder and Ingrid

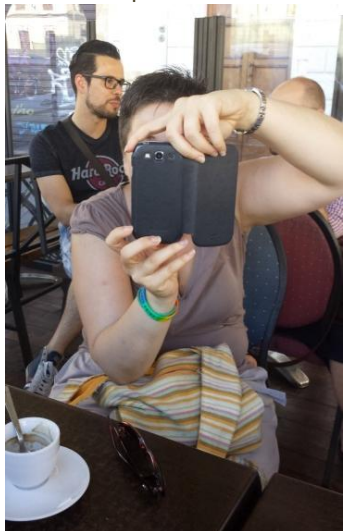


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Lisa's smartphone

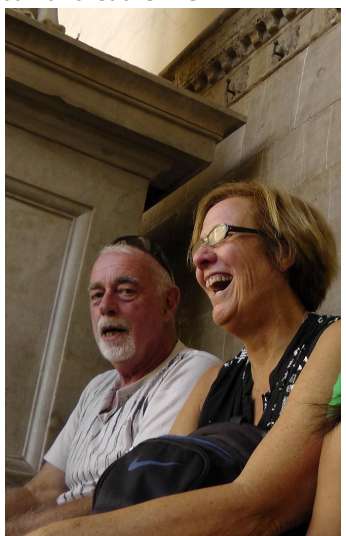


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Jan and Catherine



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Erik, Kees, Leif, Lisa, Ingrid



# connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist  
Kinship International, Inc.

Editor : Catherine Taylor  
Circulation : Floyd Pönitz  
European Editor : Ruud Kieboom  
Production : Ruud Kieboom  
Proofing : Jonathan Cook,  
Yolanda Elliott, Carrol Grady  
Jacquie Hegarty, Floyd Pönitz  
Printing : Doolittle's PrintServe

The *Connection* is published by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141 USA. Submissions are welcome and may be directed to the editor at [connectioneditor@sdakinship.org](mailto:connectioneditor@sdakinship.org) or mailed to the principal office address above. Include your name as you want it published along with your address and telephone number(s).

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Joachim and the EKM-holiday dogs

