

connection ▽

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Who we are...

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

Founded in 1976, the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the US. Kinship has a board of up to 15 officers and 13 regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes several thousand people in 26 countries.

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

Support Kinship

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

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

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Welcome to 2005!



This new year includes a number of significant milestones for SDA Kinship. It is the organization's 25th anniversary! In July of 1980, the first truly national meeting of gay and lesbian Seventh-day Adventists was held (we called it Kampmeeting) outside Phoenix, Arizona. Two months later, in September, a number of those same people met again to put together an on-going organization. The process of picking a name and creating a structure was begun. Everyone in attendance agreed that we wanted to have an organization that would be there to help women and men as they dealt with their sexual orientation issues. We knew that only someone with an Adventist background could have a chance to answer the questions that needed to be answered. We knew we needed to meet, to communicate (had to be a newsletter; internet use was not widespread then), to pray, to sing, to worship, to discuss together, to support each other. Kinship was born.

When they first came out, many of our early members thought they were the only lesbian or gay Seventh-day Adventists in the world. Now, SDAs have at least some chance of knowing about Kinship and other Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered and Intersex Adventists. Even if they haven't had contact with Kinship yet, people are much more likely to have seen a movie or TV show on a gay topic (like "Will and Grace" or "Angels in America").

Sadly, even with the changes that have happened over the last 25 years, many of the people who contact us today are still in great pain over the Church's teachings on homosexuality. They have fear in their lives and they are delighted to know that there are people, just like them, that are past that fear and willing to talk with people in whatever stage of their coming out journey. I do believe that there is still a need for Kinship. Happily, there are lots more of us, including you, who can help, than there were in the past.

This year, we will be co-producing a new video to help parents understand what it means when one of their children comes out. We are also supporting Heartstrong, a ministry to students and Carrol Grady's parent-supportive network. Carrol's organization, Someone To Talk To, has become more active than ever overseas, including Europe, Australia and Africa.

I'm excited about Kinship's 25th anniversary. I hope you will join us in whatever way is good for you---come to Kampmeeting in July; go to a meeting in your area; read the Connection; join and post on Kinnet. But, in particular, look for ways to help if you know someone who is coming out. Share your experience and offer your wisdom. Together we'll start on the next 25 years of being there for each other.

Bob Bouchard

President, SDA Kinship Int'l Inc.

Happily Ever After

Elena Davis-Stenhouse and Erin Stenhouse

Ours is an unlikely story; we still marvel that we ended up together. We met in the winter of 1992 when I, Elena, was 20 and Erin was 23. Erin was at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia and I was at Northern Virginia Community College. I was in the midst of a tumultuous break-up with a dysfunctional high-school girlfriend. Erin had recently endured a sordid break-up. Neither of us was looking for another relationship. We were just trying to have some fun hanging out with mutual friends at Washington D.C.'s local lesbian bar, "The Hung Jury." On the dance floor one night, we found ourselves dancing together. Somehow a kiss was exchanged. To this day, I swear that it was Erin who kissed me, and she swears it was I who kissed her. We dated a bit but somehow lost touch in the whirlwind of our lives. A few months later we ran into each other at a club and realized how incredibly happy we were to see each other. Erin had come with a date. She hid from her so that we could spend hours talking outside on the patio. It was a magical evening where we both realized there was a strong connection.

We began dating again and soon decided to commit to one another as girlfriends. We were inseparable and gloriously happy -- most of the time. There were instances where our relationship would quickly deteriorate through the influence of friends or our own naiveté and stupidity. We broke up three or four times in our first few years - each of us making our own share of mistakes and transgressions. Somehow we let each other grow as people from each experience. As we matured, our love matured as well. We survived a long-distance relationship when I went away to finish my final two years of college at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia. I would travel the two hours to see her one weekend and she would do the same the next. It was a very difficult separation, but we made it work.

One of the weekends when I made the trek to DC, I found Erin acting oddly. She had a shy smile and a quiet excitement. She drove us to a nearby park, took my hand in hers, and presented me with a small wrapped gift. Inside, I found a card key for the Dupont Plaza Hotel. She coaxed me to look further into the box. I saw that a diamond engagement ring was taped to the bottom. She asked me to marry her! I threw my arms around her and immediately said, "Yes!" She had planned an entire special weekend for us. Earlier that day, Erin had decorated the hotel room with beautiful flowers. We dined in Dupont Circle, went for coffee at

the "Pop Stop," went for nachos at Kramer Books, and had a glorious engagement weekend. It was with great sadness that I returned to college at the end of our weekend.

Erin says that from moment we got engaged, I changed - for the better. I became fully trusting of her and confident in our relationship. Prior to our engagement, I would say that I couldn't tell her if we'd be together in the future; I could only speak for the immediate present. I think I was afraid to let my guard down; to fully trust her. With this commitment, I was suddenly able to be completely in the relationship and to let our love blossom.

I graduated with my B.A. in May, 1995 and moved back to northern Virginia. We rented a small apartment and began our engaged life together. For some reason, neither our family nor our friends appeared to be particularly happy to hear the news of our engagement. Even our gay friends did not embrace this idea; they wondered why we wanted to copy straight couples. We were perplexed. We wanted everyone to be as thrilled as we were. It seems it took everybody a while to warm up to the idea of gay marriage.

As we began to plan our wedding, we made a wonderful decision. We would elope to Hawaii - just the two of us!!! After months of planning and coordinating with a company called "Royal Hawaiian Weddings," we flew to Maui, Hawaii and had a commitment ceremony. The date was April 15, 1996. Yes, our anniversary is tax day. It just happened to work out that way but we'll never forget the date! A local woman named Andrea was our minister. She provided us a beautiful service. A flute player and a photographer were also part of our wedding. Erin and I each wore cream-colored cocktail-length dresses. We stood together under a palm tree on the beach; our bare toes wiggling in the sand. The sky was bright blue, the sun shining, the surf playing in the breeze. It was surreal. I remember it like it was yesterday; the details are so crisp and clear that I can still picture Erin's beautiful face radiating in the sunshine.

Two weeks after our return to the mainland, we had our reception. I had mailed out special printed invitations months earlier and had coordinated the details. I ordered flowers, a tiered cake, the garter belt to toss, party favors, helium balloons, pink and white streamers, and champagne. We were both pretty poor at this time; just coming out of college with lots of bills to pay. Luckily, we had a friend who offered to do all the catering, another friend who was a DJ, and another friend who was a photographer! My immediate family attended as did a part of Erin's family. Together with

about 60 of our friends and family we celebrated our commitment with a wonderful reception that was affirming and uplifting.

Our decision to get married was about wanting to make our commitment to each other public for the entire world to see. We wanted to show our love for one another and to pledge that we would be together always -- through thick and thin, rich and poor, sickness and in health. In the gay and lesbian community we had found absolutely no respect for relationships. People always seemed to be scamming on one or both of us, disrespecting our relationship and trying to break us apart. This changed immediately after we made this formal commitment. Our relationship had new prestige; a newfound respect. We were the first of our friends to make such a step, and so became the role models for many of our friends. They ended up aspiring to emulate us in their own relationships. It was quite a switch - and it felt great!

Our marriage has seen many, many rough and rocky bumps. We've improved our communication, made time for one another, and worked to meet each other's needs. Together we've gotten through dysfunctional family turmoil, a few deaths, graduate school, and a nearly catastrophic fire.

Spirituality and religion initially was a touchy conversation topic for us. Erin was raised Seventh-day Adventist. She is unwavering in her faith and resolute in her passion for leading others to Christ. Her family was not overly strict with doctrine, but was very clear about the importance of the church in their lives. I was raised without any religious upbringing; attending Catholic Mass with my grandparents only a handful of times. I probably would have described myself as agnostic but always felt a strong inner spirituality outside of any formal religion. Erin's faith has been one of the things I love about her. It inspired me in my own spiritual path. I always enjoyed going to church with Erin and her family, but was very leery of "organized religions." However, after many years, I felt the calling to commit myself through baptism and to join the Seventh-day Adventist church.

It was wonderful to be able to worship together. The dark cloud was that we worshiped with an air of secrecy about our relationship. Our congregation had a "don't ask, don't tell" mentality that made me uneasy. Then one day Pastor Milton spoke out in his sermon against



"homosexuals" - whom he equated with pedophiles. It was crushing to hear these words and to understand their meaning. I hurried home, put a pen to my fire, and crafted a letter of earnest protest. I wanted to educate this misinformed, prejudiced pastor and to separate myself from the church. He ended up

calling me to request a conversation. He said he felt awful that I had been so hurt and wanted to talk more and to keep me in the church. We met several times, during which I out-ed myself (and Erin, with her permission). To make a long story short, this Pastor ended up telling me that he and several of the elders were going to pray to figure out if we could stay in the church -- and that they hoped to have an answer in six months! Needless to say, we did not hold our breaths. It was a very sad, sad experience and left many wounds for both of us. I often grieved for Erin. I have zero religious guilt and feel embraced by God - gayness and all. I know Erin struggles with the religious teachings and with whether or not being gay is okay - or a sin. Amidst all this, we just kept going on in our lives. We kept busy and focused on our goals. This past August the rift began to heal.

Twelve years since our first meeting, Erin and I live in a quiet suburb, nestled by the foothills in Littleton, Colorado. We've replaced the Washington D.C. rat race with hiking and skiing in the Rocky Mountains. We have three wonderful dogs with whom we love to hike and camp. God has been very good to us. Our relationship has grown and matured into a wonderful union. We both value laughter, love, and enjoyment of life. At present, we are looking for a church home; hopefully one day we'll be able to find one. In the meantime, finding Kinship has been an incredible blessing. Although we've only been to one conference, I can feel the change it has made in our lives. The love, support, compassion, and communion we experienced in Oregon filled our thirsty souls and started the healing process for some deep wounds. It brought Erin and me closer in our individual relationships with God - and also with each other. The Kinship family has my undying gratitude and we look forward to being a part of this great community for a long time to come. Praise God for Kinship!



Roy and Pieter

At the European Kinship Meeting 3 Catherine asked Pieter and me to write something about our relationship. She wanted us to share how we met, what it is like for us to be together and, how we see the future. Pieter is the one who likes to talk but I'm the one who writes. So, here I am thinking about what to say.

Pieter put an ad with Chanton.com looking for friends. I went there to look for a pen pal. I thought it would be nice to have a friend from South Africa. We began to write on May 13, 1998 and that is the day we celebrate as the beginning of our relationship. After just a few letters we realized that we had things in common, that we wanted more than just a friendship, and that we were falling in love. We decided to give this long distance relationship a try. I cancelled my plans to visit South America and booked a flight to South Africa. In October 1998 I went to Pretoria for three weeks. The relationship we had begun with e-mails crystallized as we spent time together. On October 24 we celebrated our engagement with family and friends. Pieter's family accepted our relationship from the beginning and his mum sees me as her son, too. My family was a bit more careful because I had come out so recently. Pieter came to Germany to spend December, January and February with me. We had wanted for him to emigrate permanently but we could not get the right papers from the German officials. We were able to spend our first wonderful Christmas and New Year together.

Four months later I left again for Africa. On July 3 we got married in Deo Gloria church, a primarily gay/lesbian congregation in Sunnyside, Pretoria. Our wedding song was "You're Still the One" by Shania Twain. Our Bible verse was Ruth 1: 16, 17. Both really express



what we feel for each other. Again, immigration issues forced me to leave South Africa and we had to spend more time apart.

Fortunately, South Africa changed their immigration laws. At the end of January 2000, I was able to move there to live with Pieter. For the first time we stayed together longer than 3 months. Life was not easy. Pieter lost his business - a franchise. We will never do that again. We had to start a new business; a food delivery service. Pieter took orders over the phone and I did the driving. I think I know Eastern Pretoria better than many South Africans.

Germany changed their immigration laws and in October, 2001 we moved back here. On November 30 we were legally married near my home. The state calls it a Registered Partnership. We are both unemployed; living from state welfare. Pieter had a one-year contract in 2003. We have been looking for work but the East German economy is having a difficult time. We have our stresses because our money is just enough for the daily life. We've had fights. We've spoken about having a separation. But we are still together and I imagine we will stay together. We love each other. We realize that even though we are different personalities we want our

relationship to work. And it does. I'm an introvert. I don't need people around me and easily can live alone. Pieter is the extrovert. He needs friends. He needs to go out. He needs people around him.

While Pieter is the more feminine person in our relationship, we do not have those cliché roles. I'm the one who cooks. I bring Pieter the coffee. I often vacuum the house. Pieter is the one who does the dishes, irons and also cleans the house. We are not like a stereotypical straight couple. We share the work.

Pieter is not a Seventh Day Adventist. He has a charismatic Pentecostal background. He says the Seventh Day Adventist church services are boring and he cannot feel the Holy Ghost in our churches. He might be right. We don't feel welcomed by the church. People do not respond to us and others in a loving way. We are not comfortable with how much of Christianity reacts towards gay and lesbian people. Because of this we don't attend church and this is a time in our lives when we are having a difficult relationship with God. I hear spiritual people say that we should blame Satan for the evil in the world but it seems to me that if God is this supernatural Power stronger than Satan, He is also responsible for the hurt and the evil in this world. He has allowed Satan the freedom to wreak this havoc. I have been having discussions in "GaySDA's" (a Kinship Yahoo discussion board facilitated by Taylor Ruhl) about my feelings toward God because He has not helped us get a job and has allowed gay and lesbian people to be treated so horribly. We haven't found our answers yet and we haven't been able to see a loving God. We enjoy being with the German members of Kinship and with other Kinship people. We enjoy being with gay and lesbian

Something to Sing About

Brenda McColpin

Country living is great! We have fresh air, green fields, springs, and farm animals. Our farm has chickens, goats, dogs, and cats. Chicken Little was one of those yellow balls of fuzz you buy at the local co-op for \$1.00 each. You know; the ones we used to get for free. She came with seven other tiny hens to live on the farm. Of course, we also brought home a rooster.

Chicken Little enjoyed living in a stall in the barn until she grew big enough to fly. Then she began sailing over the field fence along with her siblings. At 15 weeks she realized that our goats got to go all sorts of interesting places. She would follow them through the fields. At the end of her adventures each day, we would tuck her away in a stall in the barn. This ritual continued for quite some time. Her only scheduled interruptions were the occasional breaks for chicken feed. The call "here chickee, chickee, chickee" would bring her, and everyone else, on the run for meals.

One day I counted one - two - three - four - five - six - hens at feeding time, with their one rooster. I looked all around the barn and called out. I got no answer. I walked into our field and retraced the path from which the chickens had arrived for dinner. As I investigated the fence row, I



suddenly heard "squawk, squawk, squawk." I felt something near me in the thick grass. I looked down and found Chicken Little lying in the grass. I picked her up and noticed a bump on the right side of her head, a very slight amount of blood, and a right eye swollen shut. I carried her ever so gently back through the field to the barn. I checked her legs, and wings. I couldn't feel anything broken or out of place. I noticed that if I sat her down she would fall forward. She couldn't stand up.

I brought Chicken Little to the house and placed her in a large dog kennel. I put newspaper in the bottom and gave her food and water. She could scoot around when she laid on her side. I experimented with slings to support her so she could exercise her legs (chicken physical therapy). The first sling made out of dog harnesses was not at all effective. She was very tolerant with me and

my efforts to help her. We kept experimenting with slings. Chicken Little also let me bathe her as needed, and clean her kennel. I took her to our local nature center for a consult. I explained her injuries and my assumption that a goat kid had accidentally kicked her in the head while frolicking through the fields. They assessed her. Their report was that she had some brain damage but could relearn to walk.

Through all this trauma and change in life and routine Chicken Little began whistling and making sounds that seemed like singing. She would whistle and I would whistle back. Our serenades would continue. Separated from her siblings and all she had known, held captive in a kennel, she would whistle, and sing. Morning, noon, or night when I would whistle or call to her, Chicken Little would sing. She seemed content to scoot around, pushing her feet to the side; as she moved her body to reach food and water. All the while she sang, whenever possible.

1 *Thessalonians 5:18*, in the New Revised Standard version, says "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." It seems Chicken Little is a perfect example of how to give thanks in all circumstances. As we start this New Year with new resolutions, one of mine is to try to learn from my own story of Chicken Little and to "give thanks in all circumstances." ▼

Roy and Pieter

Seventh Day Adventists and with other GLBTI Christian friends but spirituality is difficult for us at the moment.

This December, Pieter's three-year residence visa in Germany expires. By law, the government needs to extend it but we don't know if it will be

permanent or temporary. Applicants need a job to get permanent visas. To apply for citizenship immigrants also need a job. We would feel more secure if Pieter could become a German citizen. We don't know what our future will bring. We hope that we can make a living with good jobs. We don't want to be dependant on the state welfare system. We don't

know if gay and lesbian people will one day get the 100% equal rights we deserve here in Germany. We don't know if churches will ever really accept us. We do know we want to live together forever. We do know we love each other. We do know we will make our relationship solid. We do know we will work on these other problems. ▼

Kinship News...

Australia: Noel Thorpe

You are invited to come join us in an information meeting with a non-denominational religious focus on Youth



Suicide. The speakers will be Dr. Wendell Rosevear who is a general practitioner and Deanna Pitchford who is a clinical psychologist. Our seminar will be held on Sunday, 6th of February 2005 at 11am at 139 Constance Street, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, Queensland. A light luncheon will be provided afterwards. We will gratefully accept a gold coin donation. So we can know how much food to prepare, please RSVP SDA Kinship: 07 33211101 or Email sdakinshipaust@iprimus.com.au by the 31st of January. Everyone is welcome but since our space is limited, please register in advance. This program is coordinated by Seventh Day Adventist Kinship Australia. Wendell Rosevear has his own medical practice and was in Los Angeles to speak with us during that Kampmeeting. Deanna has been Women's Ministries Coordinator for our conference. We are certain you will enjoy their program.

Central America: Alex Pasco

I am working on getting in touch with the people in my region to gather their thoughts and opinions. We will write to you more in the February issue. We are honored to be able to have an article here.

Germany: Roy Raetzer

We will have a special members meeting on the 22nd of January to cancel the legal status of our group and finish with our involvement with the government. Stephan and Joachim continue to

plan for our spring meeting.

Philippines:

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM MANILA! Most of the Philippine Kinship members, who get together almost every Saturday in Malate (the gay district), are musicians, so it was impossible for us to get together in December. Christmas is a boom for our rehearsals, gigs, and concerts. Two of our members are tenors of the San Miguel Master Chorale. The choir performed every day in all the malls, including the two days before Christmas Eve. Have you heard about the VAGINA MONOLOGUES? Well, here in the Philippines, we started our own play...ALL ABOUT MEN: PENIS TALKS. The Gay Pride March also happened in December. Although we don't get to see 50% percent of our members (the rest of the members are from the islands in the Visayas and Mindanao; down south), I'm sure they will most likely visit Manila sometime in April or May, which is summertime in the Philippines. If you know how to send an SMS message, you can text me at +63921-217-2617.

From the TEXT CAPITAL OF THE WORLD, **Jonathan Arevalo Co.**

Scotland/Kenya via RK

It is my pleasure to say Jambo (hallow)! I was glad to hear from you and to hear the replies through the group. I thank God for His mighty power and mercy to us these days. For the last three years have been in Scotland, where I live with Ross, who is my companion. We met in NAIROBI where I worked for a charity body called VSO. Ross asked me if I could move to Scotland. And so I did. We have a lovely church in Glasgow. As you know, in Kenya gays are looked down upon by everybody. The church pastors are very fiery preachers against the gay

community. Here in Scotland I do feel safer as per my sexuality. I remember that everybody in my Adventist Youth Group was married. I was the only gay person. The pressure was too much for me. I tried to fool about with a girl friend but it was a waste of time for the lady. I have gone through difficulties, but I thank God for where I am now. We are going to be in touch and will plan on attending the next meeting in Scotland. May the grace of our Lord be with us. Absolom

Serbia via RK

Thank you for writing and wishing me such warm welcome! I was really looking forward to getting in touch with someone from the Kinship. Here in Serbia the situation for gays and lesbians is not dramatic, but it's hardly good. There is no anti-discrimination legislation, and LGBT topics are rarely discussed in the media. When they are, it is almost always in a negative context. Gays are predominantly seen as perverts, more often then not confused with pedophiles (even the common word for gay man in Serbo-Croat - "peder" - is short form of pederast). Most gays never out themselves, some choose to be in a heterosexual relationship as a cover. The dominant denomination, Serbian Orthodox Church, is extremely nationalistic and conservative. There is no ministry whatsoever providing help to gay Christians. There are several national gay rights NGOs. Most of them are not willing to have anything to do with Christianity. They do some lobbying, but it's all very low profile. Anglican chaplainry in Belgrade is the only Anglican parish in Serbia. It's an English-speaking community consisting mostly of ex-pats, various embassy staff, etc. There is a small local contingent, as well.

It's not as welcoming and liberal as I'd like, but it's still the most nurturing and gay-friendly congregation that I know of in this country. Although I am an Anglican, I am committed to a kind of gay ecumenism, believing that we all, as gay Christians, have got something major in common, a wonderful gift that should not be denominationally constricted and limited. I am thus very happy that I can be in touch with SDA gay folks, sharing and growing in our common faith together. I was wondering if there's anything I could do as a volunteer. Being an interpreter, I could offer to translate something for the web site into either Serbian or Croatian (or both). There are practically no gay Christian resources on either web or in print in those languages and perhaps we could do something to change that. By the way, there are large SDA communities nationwide, and I'm sure there must be a number of gays and lesbians SDAs who would greatly appreciate and benefit from such resources. Do tell me how do you feel about this idea. I am certainly willing to do whatever I can for the Kinship. With kind regards, Nenad

US Region 1: Catherine Taylor

Samuel and Andrew hosted our December gathering with a candlelight potluck dinner, fireplace hospitality, and parking space acumen as we attended the Boston Gay Men's chorus Holiday Concert. Since our region covers such a variety of geography we are planning meetings in different areas. Bob has offered to host our next meeting in New York on February, 2005. We plan to go to the Forum Sabbath Services, have a potluck lunch with Bob and Vince and then see some local sites of the season.

US Region 2: Yolanda Elliot

Region 2's Holiday Party was held on Saturday night, December 18, at Jim's lovely home in Washington, DC. The menu consisted of fresh fruits and

vegetable trays, corn pudding, walnut balls in a very nice, light sauce. We also had croissants filled with a



spread made with vegilinks. The dessert was a frozen delicacy of peppermint ice cream in a little waffle cup with hot fudge and whipped cream and nuts. Jim did all the cooking and did a very fine job of it, too. After this delicious meal, we played a Christmas trivia game where we acquired our number for the Yankee Exchange based on how fast we missed the question. So the longer you stayed in the game, the better position you held in the Yankee Exchange. We had a lot of fun during the Yankee Exchange and most everyone ended up with a gift they liked. If you don't know how to play the Yankee Exchange game, please plan to come to next years' holiday party with us here in Region 2. Have a wonderful New Year!

US Region 3:

Hi, I am Brenda McColpin, Region 3 Coordinator. I do live on a small farm near Athens, TN. (hence the story of "Chicken Little)." I won't bore you too often with stories of farm animals. I have met some of you at Kampmeeting in Oregon. I have recently become acquainted with one guy in my local area, and received an email from a guy in Memphis. I am awaiting the official listing of people in this region from Kinship. I am sure there are a lot more of us out there. I would love to hear from you. You can email me at im4pepsi@yahoo.com. I need some news to report from this region. If you have some ideas about what you would like to see happen in our region please don't hesitate to share!

US Region 5: Floyd Poenitz –

The Dallas/ Fort Worth Metroplex is planning a potluck and movie night in January. The



exact date has not yet been set, but it will be after all the holiday parties and activities, when life has settled back down again. There

will be a concerted effort to poll the members to see what they are interested in doing and how they envision the face of Kinship Region 5 looking. I hope to be able to get to some of the areas outside of our section to have some local area meetings as well.

US Region 7: Betty Hale

We had a small but significant start with re-activating region 7 with our Thanksgiving dinner in November. While there were no takers for the December meeting in Seattle, there are people who are interested in a meeting there after the holidays, so another one will be planned for January or February.



US Region 8:

A meeting will be held on Saturday, January 15 at 3:00 PM in Sacramento. There are plans to begin a local Kinship chapter in this area. For more information and exact location of the meeting, please call Elena Thomas, Region 8 Coordinator, at (408) 247-0512.



US Region 9: Bruce Boyd

Over the holiday season some of us attended the concert of the Los Angeles Gay Men's Chorus. Several of our members sing in it. On New Year's Day we enjoyed food and companionship at the home of Dave Ferguson and his partner Peter. Thanks for the great hospitality!

Older Adults: Ren Reynolds - Our program will ship out thirty issues

Continued on page 10

of the Weimar Cookbook for healthy living to our segment of the Kinship community. We are trying to focus on tips for staying active and healthy.

Women and Children First

Weekend: Yolanda Elliot

We are pleased to announce that our Kampmeeting Coordinator has already found accommodations for our meetings, which will be the weekend before Kampmeeting: July 8-10, 2005. We are looking forward to seeing you there!

KinNet continues to grow and be active. There are

now 710 members with access to KinNetTalk. If you have any questions about how to use the discussion

board, or how to get the most out of it, drop Floyd an email at FloydP@comcast.com and he will be happy to help you. Folks are frequently forgetting their passwords or how to login, so don't be shy about asking questions. He says that is what he is here for. In the new year, Floyd hopes to facilitate a couple of discussions. One of the topics will be the 27 fundamental beliefs of Adventism and what do they mean to a homosexual Adventist. We'll be looking at each of the beliefs one at a time and discussing them. If this type of discussion goes well, Floyd has a few others that he'd like to present on KinNet as well. We hope you will use KinNet and the Kinship Online web site to stay connected with Kinship on a frequent basis. Your input on KinNet is appreciated.

Office Projects: Everyone who has an email address

listed in the Kinship address database should have gotten an email from Floyd in November asking to verify their

contact information. The reason for this was to update our records and



to make sure we have the most current methods of contacting you. When you move or change your email, don't forget to drop a note to the office letting Fred know your new information. This will help you stay connected with the organization. The address to send the info to is easy:

office@sdakinship.org
<<mailto:office@sdakinship.org>>.
The same goes if you change your phone number or find a new partner (and unfortunately break up with one). If appropriate, Fred sends each regional coordinator the address list of the members in their region so they can contact you with local activities. I got a very good response from the hundreds of emails I sent out. Thanks to everyone who responded. Together we can all help Kinship make a difference in the lives of other gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and intersex Adventists! Many thanks to Floyd and to Fred for taking on this daunting task!

One of our members sent this letter to the New York Times

Dear Editor:

You might want to send your reporters out to check the facts about how the civil rights movement for homosexual citizens has been in 2004 and is going to be for 2005. If people only hear the gloom and doom of most of the media and even gay/lesbian "leaders" and political and religious "experts" they will be completely wrong about the life of the average homosexual American. It is difficult to explain how in a year when Bush won election with help from a backlash of voters against progress of homosexual issues, evidenced by the victory of the anti-gay force in many states, passing laws trying to stop gay marriage, and even civil unions. But the evidence is all around you. Come to the Ark-La-Texas area, as "red" as any area in the nation. You will find 2 new organizations

working for homosexual equality, one as part of the national effort (with the Human Rights Campaign) and one working with other Louisiana groups on state issues (Forum for Equality).

What sociologists, as well as your readers, should find interesting, even exciting, is that these groups are formed by young men and women who have had no previous contact with the movement/community. A good question to ask them is how they came to get involved, since most seem to not even have noticed the election or anti-marriage problems.

So 2005 will find more people working for justice than ever before, something you would not know if you have heard that people are running away to Canada or some other supposedly better place. Somehow the word hasn't gotten out to young people who don't have time to hear the "experts."

Sincerely,

Billy Glover
(Co-founder and Vice Chair, of the Homosexual Information Center-see website: tangentgroup.org)



Kampmeeting Corner...

The Road to St. Louis (USA)

Isis M., Kampmeeting Coordinator
2005 (USA)

I hope everyone had a Happy Holiday! I'm on Holiday myself and will be back next month!

*Plan on Meeting Me in St. Louis –
July 10-17, 2005.*

Connection Corner

For the February issue we would like to pack as many stories of Kinship relationships as we can manage within our page limits. Please feel free to call Catherine or write to us with the story of your relationship between now and the 23rd of January. Many thanks!

Board Meeting

Over the weekend of November 19th, Fred, Nelio, Jan and Subby hosted the Autumn Kinship Board Meeting in Sarasota, Florida. Our hosts organized perfect weather, beautiful accommodations, and delicious food to help our work go smoothly. We also appreciated the visits and input from our guests who joined us; either for the weekend or for Sabbath. Samuel's husband Andrew is a consultant to non-profit organizations. He led us in a vision quest for building the organization. He will also be helping us do some fundraising for special projects. We wanted to share with you both pictures from the weekend and the decisions we made. Many thanks to Bruce for getting the minutes of the meeting to us quickly and efficiently.

Decisions:

With great pleasure, the board accepted Uganda into membership as our newest region!!

Some parents of Kinship members have produced a film about their experience. The board authorized the expenditure of up to \$2,000 for the initial production and distribution of the video.

The staff of the Connection is working to find more cost-effective ways to mail each issue. The board authorized the use of the reduced non-profit postage program if the project research group feels this system would be effective.

We would like to develop an online store to sell Kinship items. We will develop a work plan and present it to the board at a future meeting.

We voted to support Ren's distribution of a health and fitness book to the Older Adult Membership of the Kinship Community. Thank you to Ren for your work with this project.

We have decided to undertake a strategic planning process that is likely to take board-meeting time over the next few years. We appointed Taylor Ruhl to lead the

connection

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Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

organization in this process, with the assistance of Andrew Pang.

We voted to hire Andrew Pang as an independent contractor to provide fundraising assistance for specific projects. We requested a written proposal for his work, including expenses.

We changed the international Kampmeeting scholarship policy to give priority to one individual from an area outside the US, which has not previously been represented at Kampmeeting.

We authorized the financial support of up to \$2500 for a hospitality suite and literature at General Conference.

We agreed to provide Carrol Grady a loan of \$4,800 for the re-printing of her book. The loan will be repaid from sales of individual copies of the book. Thank you, Carrol, for your invaluable support over these last few years.

We plan to purchase a magnetic calendar for distribution with the December 2005 Connection.

We authorized establishing new bank accounts that have no fees attached.

The Inland Empire chapter has been reactivated and renamed as the Southeastern California chapter.





In The Beginning

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty darkness was over the surface of the deep. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Genesis 1:1

It was a dark time; the darkest of all. The earth was waiting for the sound of waves against sand; the cries of gulls and egrets; the sight of meerkats peeking up out of their burrows. And God was hovering. Hovering is what we do when the children are young and helpless; when our absolute positive regard and attention is focused on their well-being. Hovering is what the eagle does as she prepares to settle protectively on her nest. Hovering is when we are so close the ground can feel our breath. Hovering was God's breath getting ready to speak.

In the beginning the Bible says there was water - and there was waiting. And God created. The Hebrew bara means "the Divine release of creative energies that produces something out of nothing". An ancient Egyptian rendition of the creation story reads that "the word dripped off the tongue of the Lord and the world came into existence". From the waiting and the hovering and the word, came light, and atmosphere, dry ground, seas, vegetation, a view of the stars and galaxies and nebula that scatter brilliance across the night sky of our planet, the sun, water creatures, land creatures, sky creatures and a day of rest to share our gratitude for them.

In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made and without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life. And that life was the light of all humanity. The light shines in darkness. And the Word became flesh. John 1: 1-5, 14

This chapter is the story of continued creation. The time was as dark, in terms of human history, as the literal darkness before bara. And this creation also brought something from the unexpected; a band of disciples from rough hewn fisher folk, wine from water, a courageous follower of The Way from night skulking Nicodemus, a missionary from the woman at the well, a feast from five loaves and two fishes, a believer from a centurion, and a flood of love from a craggy barren hill that resembled a skull.

Our God is in the business of creating not just "something" but something extraordinary out of what looks like impossible situations. How many of us have found community when we had only seen isolation? How many of us have found relationship when we saw no one on the horizon? How many of us have found comfort when we were encompassed with grief? How many of us have found support where we "knew" none existed.

Welcome to the beginning of the year. Like other times, these twelve months have not yet been formed. But the same God who hovered then and spoke then is close enough now that we should feel His breath. The Word is waiting to create for us light out of darkness, hope from despair, growth out of stagnation, surprise from complacency. The Word is wrapping eternity's accumulated riches of love around us, whether or not we can feel it at the moment. What heaven asks of us at this place in this time is to buy of me eye salve so that you may see. Revelation 3:17.

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