

connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 33 No. 3 – March 2009



Take good care of yourself for you are infinitely valuable!

Editorial about Care
A String Too Short to Save
Kampmeeting Workshop
Kinship ▽ News
Book Review

Building a Life – Building Community
Snapshots from Paris
Coming Out of Heterosexual Relationships
Gene Robinson's Blessing on Barack Obama
Memories: Women's Weekend '06

KINSHIP BOARD

President: Bob Bouchard
 Vice President: Isis Montalvo
 Secretary: Bev Winsted
 Treasurer: *To be appointed*
 Director of Church Relations: Dave Ferguson
 Director of Communications: Jacquie Hegarty
 Director of Diversity: Obed Vazquez-Ortiz
 Director of Women: Brenda McColpin
 Director of Youth Interests: Ruben López
 Directors-at-Large: Carrol Grady, Ruud Kieboom
 Connection Editor: Catherine Taylor
 Kampmeeting Coordinator: Naveen Jonathan
 Membership Services: Fred Casey

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Advisory Council: Dave Ferguson
 Communications: Jacquie Hegarty
 Executive: Bob Bouchard
 Finance: Samuel Pang
 Governance: Bev Winsted
 International Growth and Development: Floyd Pönitz

REGIONAL COORDINATORS, USA

Region 1 (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY, PA, DE, NJ): David Thaxton and Catherine Taylor, region1@sdakinship.org
 Region 2 (MD, VA, WV, NC, SC): Yolanda Elliott, region2@sdakinship.org
 Region 3 (TN, AL, MS, GA, SC, FL): region3@sdakinship.org
 Region 4 (MN, IA, MO, WI, MI, IL, IN, OH, KY): region4@sdakinship.org
 Region 5 (AK, KS, LA, OK, TX): Floyd Pönitz, region5@sdakinship.org
 Region 6 (ND, SD, NE, WY, UT, CO, NM): region6@sdakinship.org
 Region 7 (AL, WA, OR, ID, MT): region7@sdakinship.org
 Region 8 (NV, HI, CA zip 93600+): Obed Vazquez-Ortiz, region8@sdakinship.org
 Region 9 (AZ, CA zip 93599-): region9@sdakinship.org

AFFILIATED INTERNATIONAL REGION COORDINATORS

Australia-New Zealand: Noel Thorpe, info@sdakinshipaustralia.org
 Brazil: Itamar Matos de Souza, matoso25@yahoo.com.br
 Canada: Jerry McKay, ba360@ncf.ca
 Central & South America: Alexander Gomez Pasco, alexgpasco@yahoo.com
 Europe: Ruud Kieboom, kinship@xs4all.nl
 Germany: Roy Raetzer, kinshipgermany@sdakinship.org
 United Kingdom & Eire, Mike Lewis, kinship_uk@scotmagic.co.uk
 Philippines: Jonathan Coo, cancer108@hotmail.com

OTHER COORDINATORS

Intersex: Carolyn Parsons, intersex@sdakinship.org
 Transgender/Transsexual: Sandra Hoffecker, transgender@sdakinship.org
 Older Adults: Ren Reynolds, olderadult@sdakinship.org
 IMRU? (Young Adults Under 30): Ruben López, imru@sdakinship.org
 Webmaster: Linda Wright, webadmin@sdakinship.org

WHO WE ARE...

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

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) 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 1,550 people in more than 43 countries.

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

SUPPORT KINSHIP

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

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



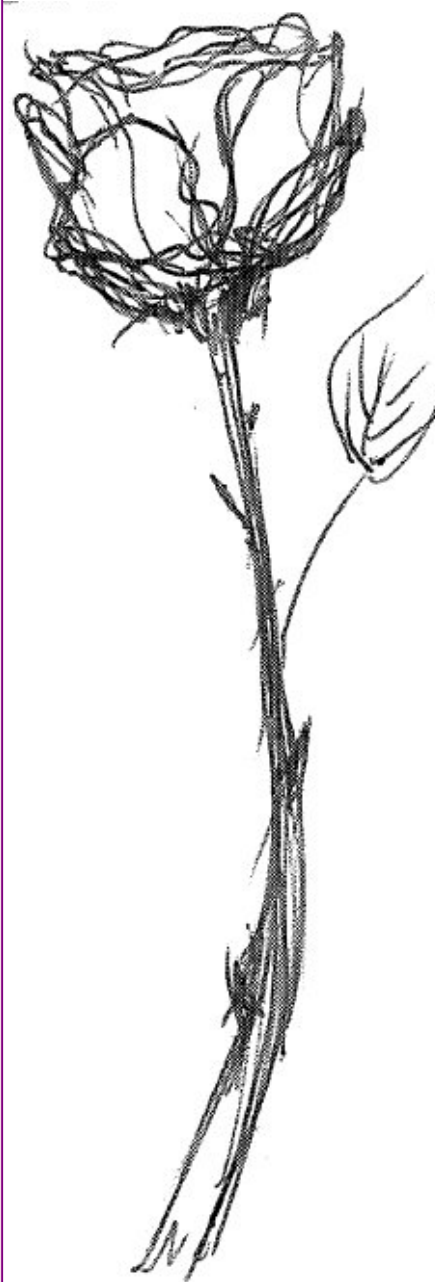


From the Editor

Two weeks ago I picked up the phone to hear, "Is this too late to call you? David said I had better dial now because you go to sleep very early." As I am beginning, I want to make sure you know that the rumors of me nodding off over dinner are false. In fact, for the first three days I am in Europe, jetlag leaves me staying up till the wee hours of 11pm, just like normal people. Even if I had been dozing off, this particular conversation had me wide awake with pure gratitude and appreciation for Kinship. A young gay Seventh-day Adventist had the kind of talk with his pastor that would have discouraged many, but fortunately sent this soul to the computer to look up resources that might be relevant. SDA Kinship popped up. David Thaxton got the first phone call, probably because his face on the website has the sunny openness that leaves us knowing we can always call and get support and understanding from him. David said I would probably enjoy talking Bible texts, so I got the next phone call. For an hour we carefully studied all the texts that have been used to assault the hearts and relationships of Christian LGBTI people. I just love that I can use my Adventist school training in Bible studies! I also heard a story of hope, isolation, and craving for a community that can understand; a yearning for both spirituality and relationship. It was wonderful to be able to suggest Carol Grady's book *My Son, Beloved Stranger*, her website *Someone to Talk To*, and her wisdom. I was so glad I could also talk about the work Dave Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David Larson had done in putting together *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*. I wrote to Ron Lawson and Bruce and Eddie (Acosta/Tichnor) to see if they might be willing to support and mentor. Sure. Several e-mails and phone calls later in the week there was more connection. Ruud Kieboom sent PDF files of past *Connections*. Jacquie Hegarty sent updates of future events and electronic newsletters. This week I heard more appreciation for the way people had responded and a wondering "if there might be some people in Kinship who are more my age?" I laughed and said that for sure there are some of us without wrinkles, and wrote to Naveen Jonathan who also wrote to Ruben López who has probably already written to.... Well, you can get my drift. As I type here this morning, I am grateful for a community that cares and works and remembers our own journey. If you have been in Kinship for a while, thank you for the ways you have added a healing touch to the lives of others. If you are new to this community and wondering if you can gain support, here is an example—one of tens or dozens or hundreds. Please feel welcome to talk to us.

This month's issue has several stories of the way we build community. Ruud Kieboom has been carrying on a correspondence across continents. Elodie Souil writes to us from Paris. We included Gene Robinson's prayer for a new United States President and Michele O'Mara's helpful hints for people coming out of opposite-sex relationships. We wanted to include a book review written by Billy Glover of the Homosexual Information Center so you could see how non-Seventh-day Adventists might respond to the work we are doing. And, of course, we've included Rom Wilder's thoughts in *A String Too Short to Save*. Take good care of yourself for you are infinitely valuable!

Catherine



Rom Wilder

A String Too Short to Save

I cannot recall who sent me an invitation to join Facebook. If you were the one, accept my thanks! As Facebook is proving, there indeed are only six degrees of separation.

I've found, or have been found by, grade-school playmates I haven't seen since we hit puberty; high school friends missing (in my life) for almost 50 years; and a couple of students, one from the mid-sixties, who was shocked when she realized I'd only been 22 years old when she was my seventh-grade student!

One of my old classmates, an upbeat, sunny, and fun person who is still married to her high school sweetheart, shared the fact that they have a disabled adult child. That fact reminded me of the saying my mother said to us a lot. "Never judge a person until you've walked a day in their moccasins."

We here in Kinship share the common links of either being a current or former Seventh-day Adventist, glbti person, or being the friend or relative of one. Beyond that, our lives are as diverse as any group of humans can be. As with any group of people, we can only see a part of each of the other individuals here. Like the blind men whose description of the elephant was based on each one's juxtaposition with the elephant, not only do we only see a part of each person here, but we see that part through the lenses of our own experience.

I hope I remember this the next time I view someone a certain way. I hope my mind recalls the fact that my view of anyone is tinted with my own lenses.

And even more important than that, I hope I remain cognizant of the fact that others' view of me is colored by their lenses, their experiences. I am not who or what anyone on the planet might perceive me to be. I am so much more and so much less than anyone's view of me. Knowing this, I hope I remember to weigh carefully their judgment of me, and let it be something to ponder rather than something to place me on the highest peak or in the deepest valley. ▽

We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.
-Aristotle

COPENHAGEN 2009

worldOutgames

World Outgames is an international event for the body, the mind, and the spirit. We celebrate the talents and contributions of homosexual, bisexual, and transgender men and women from every corner of the globe. World Outgames will be held from **25 July to 2 August 2009** in Copenhagen. From the 100-meter sprints to the 200-meter backstroke, from badminton to wrestling, sport is one of the main attractions at World Outgames 2009. Planning is underway to accommodate a minimum of 6,500 athletes in more than 38 disciplines and to offer a number of workshops. We have already heard that some Kinship members will be attending and/or participating. If you or anyone you know is planning on being in Copenhagen and you would like to connect with each other or share some of your experiences or thoughts with Kinship, we would enjoy hearing from you. Please feel free to write to us at

connectioneditor@sdakinship.org. ▽

Public Relations Cards:

These 4" X 10" rack cards have information on one side about our book, *Christianity and Homosexuality*, and can have Kinship regional information on the other side. They are perfect to have in any gathering place for LGBTI people, such as pride parades, or other public events. For more information you can contact us at communications@sdakinship.org



Floyd in Bremen (European Kinship Meeting 2008)

Building a Life – Building Community

Ruud Kieboom and Adam

Over a period of several weeks, Ruud and Adam, a Kinship member who lives in Asia, corresponded about some of the issues Adam is facing. Both of them decided to share their letters with you because this is the kind of story and life that many of us are living. They wanted to let all of us who go through these issues, know we are not alone.



1 Dear Ruud,

Thanks for your love. The bad news is W's father passed away two weeks ago. As the eldest son, he is still in a state of high stress organizing the funeral and settling affairs left behind by his late father. His plans of visiting me this Christmas and New Year have now been cancelled. We are hoping he would get the job in G next year so we can see each other more often. I have to admit that it has been a challenge trying to keep a long-distance relationship alive, but before long we will be together again. Since July, I have been attending a gay Christian group which is an inclusive and welcoming inter-denominational fellowship of the MCC (Metropolitan Community Church) persuasion. Adventists who used to be friendly seem to be keeping their distance from me and I feel increasingly alienated from them. I'm not sure if that's a good thing but that's the way things are right now. I would like to hear from you soon.

Love, Adam

2 Dear Adam,

I am so sorry to hear about W's father's passing. I'm so sad that you cannot be with him now that he might need you most. I hope all will be settled soon and that he is able to meet you next year. I'm also sorry to hear about the reaction of the church. Did you tell them you are gay? Well, that is how it still works in this conservative and stupid church, at least outside Holland. I am fortunate to have a church leadership here that is liberal about the issue. The important thing is that you have found a community in which you are accepted for who you are. The Adventist Church still has a long way to go in understanding Christ's unconditional love! That's why it is so important that Kinship exists. In fact, I just sent a message to be printed in the Dutch church magazine for a meeting of LGBTI Adventists in the Netherlands. I hope to get a good response to start a group here. Though I wrote about Kinship before in the magazine, many LGBTI Adventists still did not find their way to me. I hope that will change by this meeting, and that it will be published in the February issue. Take care, sweet man! Love from Holland,

Ruud



Leaflet

Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?

in different languages can be printed from www.kinnet.org/leaflet

3 Dear Ruud,

Thank you for your email. It brought smiles to my face knowing you understand and are on my side. I did not actually come out to the Seventh-day Adventist church but I guess I didn't need to. Any thinking person would have put two and two together and figured it out by now. I suspect there might be rumors flying around about me but nobody has confronted me yet. Recently I ran into the pastor who had the most influence on me in my teenage years. This time around he did not raise the subject of a girlfriend, which is unusual. I don't want to be jumping to conclusions, but he probably knew more than he cared to let on. Anyway, I am no longer in denominational service after a number of years in the field. Now I just want to be free to be myself. How I wish there was Kinship here, where I live! The next best option is probably an MCC group, although I don't agree with everything. Well, I don't have to. Our young pastor is a Baptist. He had been praying for a way to quit his ministry at the church because of mounting evidence suggesting he is gay. Then just a few months back, his senior pastor confronted him about his sexual orientation and he could no longer lie about it. He told the truth and was asked to pack his bag and leave! The entire conversation was without compassion. In a way it was a sad relief for him. Anyway, he has left his former church and now ministers to the LGBT community full time, which is a blessing. Only he doesn't get a salary. An MCC of a US city has raised some funds for our little group, which started over a year ago and membership has not even become official. The pastor has now made me his official interpreter. I am also translating Reverend NBL's books in defense of queer theology. So far the feedback has been very positive to say the least. And what's more for my soul, I'm being useful again! A lesbian couple was looking for a welcoming church here who would bless their commitment ceremony. They called up the MCC in S. who referred them to us. So we are going to have our very first same-sex wedding on 31 Dec, New Year's Eve. It's a record not only for our group, but for the entire country! The 'groom-to-be' comes from the US and her beautiful bride-to-be is Oriental. Interestingly, they met on an

online lesbian network last New Year's Eve, and fell in love with each other after months of correspondence even before meeting face to face. They actually saw each other for the first time just a week ago when Sheila arrived from the US for their historic wedding! I salute what you are doing in Holland! I pray that more LGBTI Adventists/ex-Adventists will find their way to Kinship soon. It's so important to their life and soul.

More power & love to you, Adam.



4 Hi Adam,

Thanks again for your reply to my mail. That's often how it works in this church. They use you whenever they can. But when they find out about your 'sin,' they put you on the street like a garbage bag! They're forgetting the fact that their garbage bag looks so much similar to yours, and that they should have been grateful their sin had not yet been discovered. Fortunately, God is the Garbage Man who will come around to collect you (r bag). Don't worry; your garbage bag will change in His hands into a jewel bag. You love God, and you have worked for Him on many occasions. People won't forget the word of the gospel that you spread around. And you will continue doing that, but in a different place where there is no rock on which the seed dries out and dies, but fertile ground for people hungering for unconditional heavenly love. A question. Now and again I interview people for the Connection. Since you have experienced things in your life, would you be willing to answer some questions for an interview in the Connection? I would appreciate it very much. My questions will be about your life and upbringing, your faith and experiences of being Adventist and gay, and your relationship with the church (good and bad). Your hopes and dreams for the future. Would you like to do that? Thanks in advance. Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer

☞ 5 Hi, Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer,

Merry Christmas!

Thanks for the message of the garbage bag. Love it!

I had always wondered if God wanted me to reach out to people just like me, the gay community. This year when I came back here and found this group of gay Christians, I knew that was the answer.

Yes I could use my theological background to serve a group of people having the same struggle as me and who I could well understand and relate to. Many are those who are hungering and thirsting for the love and acceptance of God when the traditional church has abandoned them (or left them for dead as in the story of the Good Samaritan), of whom I am one.

I think the interview for the Connection is an interesting idea. I had never in my wildest dreams imagined that I would be sharing my life story that way for the whole world to read. I'm just wondering, what if those who knew me in the church were to read it? It is frightening to step out of your comfort zone and suddenly become vulnerable. But for the good of the community, and for the love of God and His people, I am willing to brave the consequences. I don't see why I could not do an interview with you. If God be for us, who shall be against us?

Enjoy your white Christmas!

Love, Adam



Adam and Ruud have continued their correspondence and plan to publish more about Adam's story in future issues of the Connection. ▽

Kampmeeting 2009 workshop

Making Room for Gay Spirituality

Gay spirituality, an unthinkable term for preceding generations, has become a concept that deserves some serious consideration. While many faith communities continue to struggle and reject homosexuality, there are growing numbers of people in the GLBT community who are developing healthy spiritual lives. They have not only discovered that their spirituality and sexuality can co-exist, but that it can nurture every aspect of their lives.

This multimedia workshop will present selected recorded interviews in which GLBT people share their stories of resilience, acceptance, and transition that moved them from a place of spiritual toxicity to one that is life-giving. We will explore what current research says about how wholeness results when sexuality and spirituality are properly nurtured, and see how that may apply to our lives. In the past, many GLBT people of faith just merely learned how to survive. Together we will explore what it would take for gay people of faith to really thrive. ▽



July 15-19, 2009

Seattle, Washington

www.sdakinship.org/km2009.htm

Bio: Ken Burr, M.A., LMFT, is a Clinical member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, and an ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches USA. He has presented several national AAMFT seminars on this topic and has recently published a new book entitled, **"Coming Out, Coming Home, Making Room for Gay Spirituality in Therapy"** (Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2009). He maintains two offices for his private practice one, near Lake Union in Seattle, and the other on Lopez Island. Ken specializes in couples counseling, as well as individuals and family systems working through life's many challenges. He has a keen interest in helping people process the intersections of their spirituality and sexuality.

S.n.a.p.s.h.o.t.s

Elodie Souil

This morning, the Parisian sky was clogged; it was raining. The Avenue des Champs Élysées was deserted and dull. Its shops and movie theaters were still closed; sadness leaked out of the sewage. As we decided to have a coffee in a cafe to get rid of the wetness that was drenching our clothes, our eyes met the man's figure. With a unique brown blanket scarcely clothing his nakedness, he was limping along. We suddenly came to realize why—there were no shoes on his feet, only an indescribable filth! At this sight, we were taken aback and filled with disgust before this grimy body. Then we got closer to the poor soul.

- "Good morning, sir! Are you hungry? Would you care for something to eat?"
- "Yes, please."
- "Would you like a petit croissant as well? And what about a café?"
- "Yes, thank you."

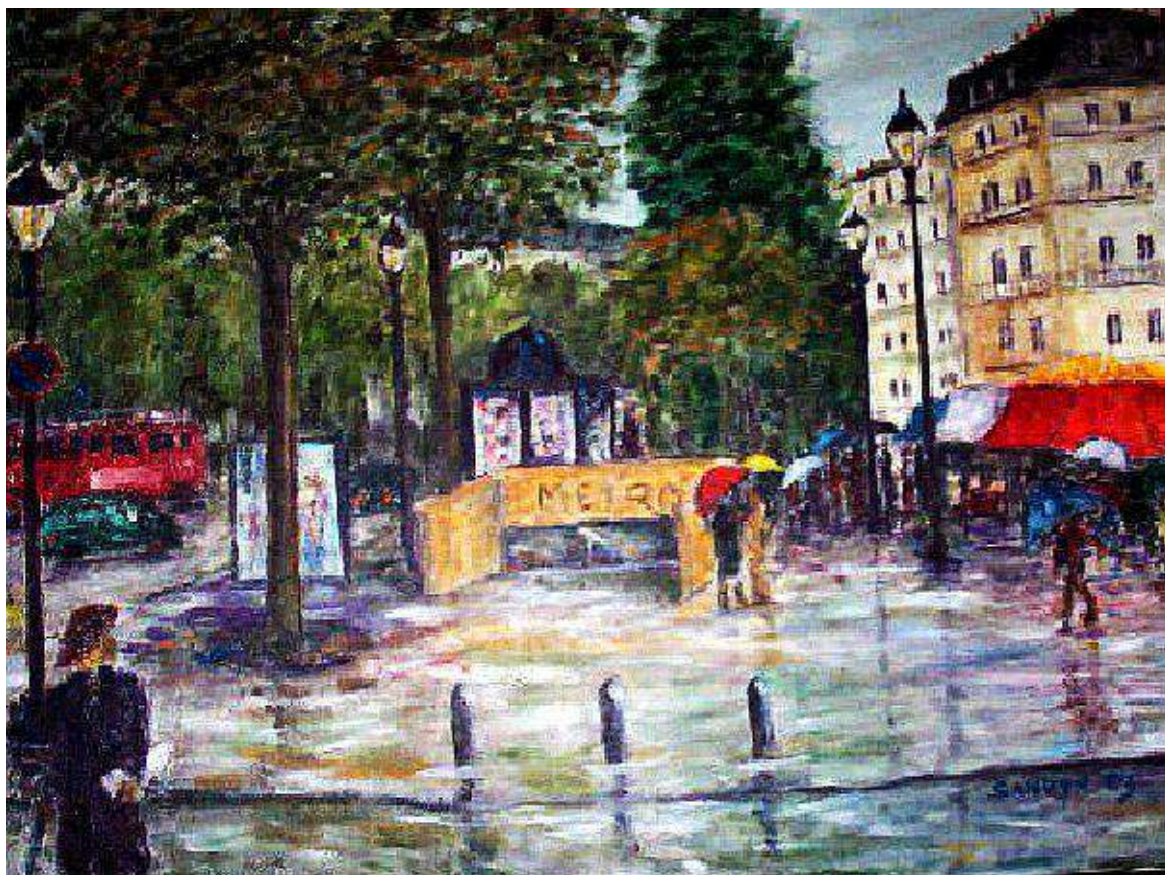
We were quite speechless before our own steaming café afterwards, somehow ashamed to be able—and allowed—to sit in such a heated and cozy place. So much helplessness! Could we have done anything else like buying the poor buddy a pair of shoes? What about the several organizations giving clothes for free to these discarded people? Should we have taken him to our place so that he could have taken a shower? What about the fact

that our apartment is very small and crumbling under renovation work? Besides, we would then have had to travel back home with him; would he have followed us up there? Why, he was so filthy! Who knows? Maybe the poor lad had chosen to be homeless...

So many questions are quickly answered with stereotypes! For it is so much easier and comforting to categorize people. We are so gifted at this vile game that we do not even realize it when, indeed, we are playing it!

Two months ago, I was appointed to my new job and came to meet my new colleagues. Though I quickly realized that our professional relationships would be rather pleasant and interesting, I also found out that many of them were inclined to regularly make homophobic jokes. My colleagues don't

know that I am homosexual because, when it comes to my personal life, I am rather unobtrusive. I came to think that disclosing my sexual preferences to them might be enough to stop my colleagues from telling these jokes, at least when I am among them. Despite that, I was sad and depressed because these words had hurt me. I was also furious that my colleagues could be so simplistic and narrow-minded when speaking about homosexuals, and cross with myself for being unable to tell them the truth. I spoke about it to my partner Nathalie. She is quite pragmatic and pessimistic/fatalistic as regards human nature and, as usual, played down the importance of these words by telling me that, like many people, her colleagues, too, would make offensive remarks about homosexuals ➤





Elodie Souil

without realizing how hurtful these could be, unaware that these jokes could be very biting.

A few days later, I was having lunch with my colleagues, and one of them was describing the time spent by his wife at the hospital (following her child delivery). She shared her room with another woman, a gypsy. My colleague's description of the gypsy's clothes and his imitation of the lady were so funny that we all burst out laughing. I, too, laughed without realizing that someone could have heard and been hurt by our simplistic, narrow-minded, and stereotyped conversation.

I haven't told my colleagues yet that I am a lesbian and haven't invited any homeless to my house, either. Nevertheless, I am still struggling against the tendency to categorize people and be categorized myself; for I believe that this, too, can be a way to take care of and care for the other. ▽

DVD

Open Heart, Open Hand contains stories of three supportive Seventh-day

Adventist parents of gay and lesbian children.

This DVD can be ordered online at

www.sdagayperspectives.com

Inauguration

Gene Robinson is the first openly gay bishop of an Episcopalian diocese. He was asked to offer the blessing on the opening Inaugural Event for United States President Barack Obama. Given the historical nature of his presence and the lack of television coverage of his prayer, we thought we would share it with you.

By The Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson,
Episcopal Bishop of New
Hampshire
Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC
January 18, 2009

Welcome to Washington! The fun is about to begin; but first, please join me in pausing for a moment to ask God's blessing upon our nation and our next president.

O God of our many under-standings, we pray that you will...

Bless us with discomfort – at the easy, simplistic "answers" we've preferred to hear from our politicians, instead of the truth, about ourselves and the world, which we need to face if we are going to rise to the challenges of the future.

Bless us with patience – and the knowledge that none of what ails us will be "fixed" anytime soon, and the understanding that our new president is a human being, not a messiah.



Bless us with tears – for a world in which over a billion people exist on less than a dollar a day, where young women from many lands are beaten and raped for wanting an education, and thousands die daily from malnutrition, malaria, and AIDS.

Bless us with anger – at discrimination, at home and abroad, against refugees and immigrants, women, people of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

Bless us with humility – open to understanding that our own needs must always be balanced with those of the world.

Bless us with freedom from mere tolerance – replacing it with a genuine respect and warm embrace of our differences, and an understanding that in our diversity we are stronger.

Bless us with compassion and generosity – remembering that every religion's God judges us by the way we care for the most ➤ ➤

Inauguration

vulnerable in the human community, whether across town or across the world.

And, God, we give you thanks for your child Barack, as he assumes the office of President of the United States .

Give him wisdom beyond his years, and inspire him with Lincoln's reconciling leadership style, President Kennedy's ability to enlist our best efforts, and Dr. King's dream of a nation for ALL the people.

Give him a quiet heart; for our Ship of State needs a steady, calm captain in these times.

Give him stirring words, for we will need to be inspired and motivated to make the personal and common sacrifices necessary to facing the challenges ahead.

Make him color blind, reminding him of his own words that, under his leadership, there will be neither red nor blue states, but the United States.

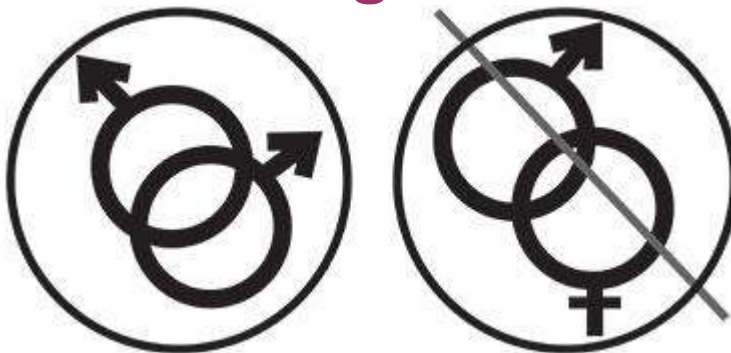
Help him remember his own oppression as a minority, drawing on that experience of discrimination, that he might seek to change the lives of those who are still its victims.

Give him the strength to find family time and privacy; and help him remember that even though he is president, a father only gets one shot at his daughters' childhoods.

And please, God, keep him safe. We know we ask too much of our presidents, and we're asking FAR too much of this one. We know the risk he and his wife are taking for all of us; and we implore you, O good and great God, to keep him safe. Hold him in the palm of your hand that he might do the work we have called him to do; that he might find joy in this impossible calling; and that, in the end, he might lead us as a nation to a place of integrity, prosperity, and peace.

Amen. ▼

Coming Out of



Heterosexual Relationships

by Michele O'Mara, LCSW

Coming out is a challenging process, whether you are 15, 21, or 50. The first step toward “coming out” is self-awareness or recognition of having feelings of attraction for persons of the same sex. This awareness may lead to confusion, attempts to deny or repress feelings of attraction, anxiety about unwanted feelings, or even attempts to “pass” as heterosexual. It is no secret that in our society there are a lot of societal stigmas and negative feelings about being gay. As a result, some people delay, deny, avoid, and reject having any awareness of feelings of attractions for persons of the same sex. Sometimes these attractions are repressed deeply enough to be out of one’s conscious awareness.

In this state of denial (which can be either conscious or unconscious), men and women sometimes pursue heterosexual relationships. Some men and women experience many years of heterosexual relationships that sometimes include marriage and children. Sometimes, though, these men and women, for various reasons, begin to develop a greater self-awareness. This awareness may be triggered by various things such as: an undeniable attraction to someone of the same sex; a function of

maturity and greater self-exploration; or a sense of emptiness or longing which stems from having emotional needs that have not been met by their heterosexual relationships because of their same-sex attractions.

If you are someone in this position, and you are starting to explore, or allow yourself to become aware of, attractions you have long denied, this can be a painful experience. Coming out to yourself and others is complicated when you experience this in the context of a committed heterosexual relationship. It is important, however, to know that you are not the only one experiencing this. There are many others like you. The following suggestions offer you some guidance about how to embark on this journey toward a greater understanding of your feelings and your authentic sexual orientation.

1. Identify a supportive friend or person with whom you can begin to identify and share your conflicting feelings.
2. Start a journal. Document what you are feeling and find a way to express these feelings. Containing conflicting feelings can be overwhelming and confusing. Take your time. Pay close attention to your feelings and expect to feel very sad and confused for

some time. That is normal.

3. Find a gay-friendly counselor with whom you can process your feelings.
4. Acknowledge to your partner that you're struggling with some confusing feelings. If you are in a relationship, acknowledge to him or her that you are struggling to understand some things about yourself that are confusing and that they are about you, not him/her. Explain that, when you feel ready, you will share what you are experiencing with hem/her. Reassure your partner in ways that feel honest to you such as: "You have done nothing wrong," "This is not about you," "I need to understand myself better before I can explain to you what I am feeling and that's why I am going to a therapist—to get help doing that," "I would like you to be a part of my process, but I need to understand what my process is before I can include you in it."
5. Identify your potential losses (former identity as heterosexual and all that accompanies that), and allow yourself to feel sad about these potential losses.
6. Explore with your therapist what it means to you to be gay. Growing up we either learn incorrect information about homosexuality, no information, or accurate information. It is essential to recognize the messages you grew up with that may not be accurate or true. These incorrect messages can negatively affect how you feel about yourself.
7. Recognize feelings of shame and find ways to let it go. One of the most painful parts of what you are going through is the intense amount of shame that often overshadows how you feel

about yourself. Shame is the feeling that you are a "bad" person or that you have done something very wrong. Shame is a common emotion felt by people in this situation and it can revolve around a lot of things, such as:

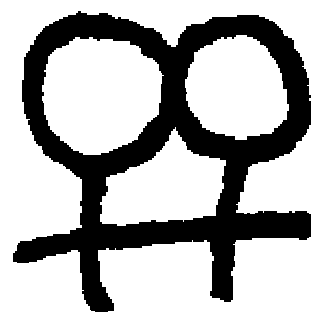
- Feeling a sense of self-betrayal for not allowing yourself to explore your orientation more directly, sooner.
 - A feeling of betraying others and feeling like you've "lived a lie" or misled loved ones.
 - Feeling like you've wasted years by not being honest with yourself or others.
 - Simply thinking that being gay is a bad, sinful, or wrong thing.
- If you can identify your shame (if you are aware of this feeling) and let it go (by talking about this with your therapist, journal writing, etc.), you can also get rid of some of the denial, fear, disgust, etc., that may keep you from being honest with yourself in this process.

8. Be honest with yourself. (Often we become confused to protect ourselves from our own truths. One of the things that we gay and lesbian people tend to do is distrust our own feelings because we are socialized to believe that what we feel is "wrong," "bad," or "not real.")
9. Journal what you are feeling. Writing is an excellent way to clarify and sort through conflicting feelings.

10. Read books on being gay, coming out, and related issues.

11. Find other gay/lesbian-identified people with whom you can connect. This is an important part of decreasing the sense of aloneness and isolation that you may be feeling.

12. Maintain balance in your life (such as eating, sleeping, working, time with kids/family/friends, etc). Coming out to yourself and others is an emotionally draining process. The sense of loss during this process can be overwhelming and leave you with a very lonely, scared feeling. Be sure to tend to the other important areas of your life so that you can retreat from this process to a place that is comfortable and familiar to you if you begin to feel overwhelmed. ▽



Once you become active in something, something happens to you. You get excited and suddenly you realize you count.

-Studs Terkel

Australia

We now have a place for Kinship women to join. I hope that the women will make full use of it. It is a place especially for you. Visit us at http://www.sdakinshipaustralia.org/sdakinship_women.html. As part of our focus on making Kinship Australia more accessible to women, we are looking for a Women's Coordinator for the women within Kinship Australia.

We have developed a new events page that is announcing our Australia Kampmeeting in Sydney this September. Please feel welcome to check out our site and meet new people from our background.

<http://www.sdakinshipaustralia.org/> - Noel Thorpe

Scotland

We have almost completed our planning for Kinship Europe Advisory Meeting to be held in May. We've taken the ideas and enthusiasm of several people and are putting together a weekend that will include worship, presentations, group discussions, dramatic presentations, communion, and plans for ways to support LGBTI present and former members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We will have participants connected to three divisions of the world church.

- Mike Lewis

The Netherlands

Last month the Netherlands Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church allowed me to put an announcement for a Kinship meeting for Dutch-speaking GLBTI church members. I have already gotten several responses! From what I hear about the Adventist Church in other parts of the world, I am grateful that my denomination here in the Netherlands is so open and accepting.

- Ruud Kieboom

Board Meeting - March 14 and 15, 2009

The spring Board meeting of SDA Kinship Intl. will be held in Glendale, California. Even with the economic challenges facing the world, we continue to work on ways to reach out to GLBTI people with Adventist backgrounds. This is an open meeting. You are welcome to join us, to share your thoughts, to meet the leadership team, and to learn more about your community. For directions, please feel welcome to contact Dave Ferguson at churchrelations@sdakinship.org.

Advertise Your Business or Organization!

The *Connection* is delighted to announce that we are accepting advertisements from Kinship members and our allies. You can purchase spaces that range from a one-inch column to a full page. For more information, please feel most welcome to contact us at connectioneditor@sdakinship.org.

European Kinship Meeting 2009

This is a perfect time to see if you can save money on flights to London in October. It's also a perfect time to research the beauties of Sussex, where we will be enjoying thoughtful meetings, delicious meals, and the chance to get to know each other. As we have been telling you, our European Kinship Holiday will be in the Cornish portion of Southwest England where the cream teas are legend, as are the stories of pirates. King Arthur's castle is just up the coast. Penzance is where we purchase our groceries. St. Ives has shops, beaches, and a Tate Gallery designed like a ship's prow. The best part is the people. We invite you to join us!

- Mike Lewis



US Region 2: Registration for Rehoboth Beach Mini-Kampmeeting is still open!

You are invited! Come one and come all to the 2009 Mini-Kampmeeting on the shore. Walk along the boardwalk. Fly kites. Go shopping. Worship with us. Dine with us. We are looking forward to seeing you on the weekend of **April 17-19, 2009**.

Speaker: Dr. Ben Kemena, a long-time Kinship member and former board member who is a hospitalist at a teaching hospital in Denver, CO. He enjoys writing and staying healthy and spending time with his partner of 15 years, Mike.

Cost: \$80/person/weekend if staying on-site (includes room for 2 nights, 2 breakfasts, 1 Sabbath lunch and programs); or \$40/person/weekend if staying off-site (includes 2 breakfasts, 1 Sabbath lunch, and programs). You may download a registration form at <http://region8.gaysdas.net/images/stories/pdf/rehoboth-2009.pdf>, or you may register online at sdakinship.org. Go to the Region 2 page for online registration.

- Yolanda Elliott ▽

Book Review of *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*

It is clear that the problems homosexual Americans have in gaining civil rights come directly from religion, all religions. In most cases, thinking homosexuals have left religion, because religion has left or rejected them. But some have not left their religion, so there is conflict in the gay community over how to deal with the opposition coming from religious institutions and people. It is time that homosexuals stop doing to each other what bigots in religions have done to us, in refusing to listen to other views and methods.

A good resource to start this dialogue is found in the book, *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*, edited by David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David Larson, published in 2008 by The Adventist Forum in Roseville, California.

The problem, as usual, is getting such an excellent tool to the very people who need it—not only members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but all people dealing with religious issues. For while there are a few small sections that deal with specifically Seventh-day Adventist issues, over 90% of this book has material, both facts and views, that are not only useful to everyone, but in a few cases have not been seen in print anywhere else.

Since religious problems are a personal issue, the first section includes personal experiences of a gay, a lesbian, and a parent, each from a solid Adventist background. Next there is a remarkably good “history” of the bio-medical professions in dealing with homosexuality. The major people are covered, such as Hooker, Kinsey, Bergler, and Bieber. Also discussed are the behavioral and sociological aspects. A study of scriptural issues follows, which is somewhat overwhelming and, as is later pointed out, irrelevant to most people since logic is not a compelling argument to people who have a fixed view, whether pro or con. Finally, the question of how the church should respond to the issue is examined, including how it should deal with legislation regarding gay rights. This is an especially sensitive issue for Adventists, since in the past some church members have suffered from the restrictions Sunday laws placed on their keeping of the Saturday (seventh-day) Sabbath. While some homosexuals will not understand those who want to stay with their church, this book suggests that

some of us are incurably homosexual and incurably religious.

The book was co-produced by the group, Seventh-day Adventist Kinship, International. They have been active since 1976, incorporating as a group in 1981, and were later involved in a legal battle with the church over the use of the church name, which Kinship won.

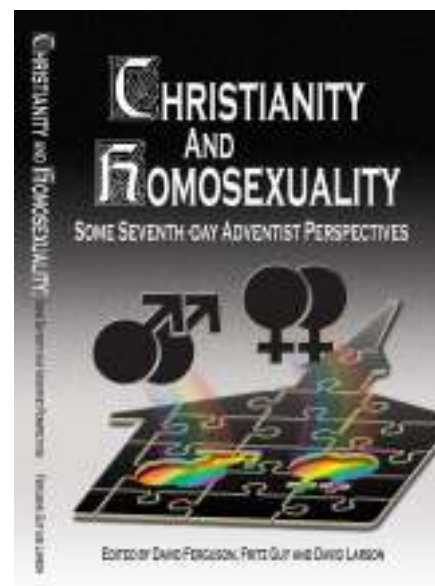
An Adventist way of thinking about the Bible and history is called “present truth,” which means that new light may be shed on how the Bible is understood at a time when people are ready for it.

There can be no doubt, as is illustrated in the book, that the behavior of the church has harmed young people, so the book is useful in showing young homo-

sexual Adventists that other gay Adventists have overcome the terrible injustice of the church.

As an aside, I thought the issue of having a partner was handled well when it was said that if you can't find a good Adventist partner, it is better to have a good Methodist than settle for a bad Adventist.

One problem I have with the excellent coverage of how the world has looked at homosexuality is the complete failure, with only the unusual exception, to acknowledge that the advance made in this area has been the result of the civil rights movement for homosexual citizens started mainly in Southern California ➤



by Billy Glover:
Coordinator of the
Homosexual Information
Center in Louisiana

in 1950 with early Mattachine, moving onward with *ONE* Inc./Homosexual Information Center, later Mattachine, the Daughters of Bilitis, and *SIR*. It is hard to understand why all of the writers seem to ignore or not know of this history and only think this movement started as virgin birth at Stonewall in 1969. It will not make those people happy to know that the one mention calls it a riot, since those who were there constantly point out that it was a revolution—a big difference. This is relevant since there might not have been a Dr. (Evelyn) Hooker, or even a good Dr. (Alfred) Kinsey had there not been the help of Mattachine and *ONE*. Yet their work should be presented in a good timeline of events and people in the long procession toward today.

The writers do accept the relationship among the various civil rights movements for blacks, women, etc., making it clear that the people who then and now rejected homosexuals, also rejected blacks, women, and the poor. This again makes it hard to understand why so many blacks stayed in the church that supported racism, or why women stayed as major supporters in a church that kept them as second-class members, and also why homosexuals stay.

The book discusses the ex-gay movement, especially how the church accepted a fraud, Colin Cook. It also points out the fact that, as some relatives kept saying to those who came out as gay, “You know what the Bible says,” and “You know the devil knows how to use it.” That applies to our movement, which seems to worry about letting our work be known. In both cases the fact is that “Satan knows the Bible better than we do,” and our enemies know what is going on in our movement faster than we do.

The idea is presented that having companionship is important, both as a support group and as a partner, bringing up the issue faced in the very first public discussion of gay marriage, in *ONE Magazine* in 1953: This may lead to the idea that good/moral homosexuals are monogamous, and those who are not monogamous are bad.

The point is made that long, factual arguments do not always work. I want to say that people should have read this issue long ago, in such books as *In Defense of Homosexuality*, by R.O.D. Benson. Logic doesn't work with bigots or fanatics; the more religious someone is, the more judgmental. For example, relatives often constantly harass a person who says he or she is homosexual.

Another aside: Some of the authors in this book are the type of guests Oprah should have, instead of suddenly-outed celebrities who have never suffered the loss of job, family, church, etc.

One of the better chapters is by the mother of a gay

son. She covers all the usual stereotypes and dismisses them, and gives a list of resources.

I also found it interesting to know that the daughter of the late H.M.S. Richards, Sr., a radio preacher, has two gay children. So being a leader of a church does not mean your children will not be homosexual. (I had listened to Elder Richards, but don't recall him discussing this issue.)

In a list after each chapter there are resources, references, and discussion questions. I noticed Wayne Beson's name, and wondered if he and others have seen this book.

One writer raised the issue of encouraging the church to start discussing homosexuality. At first thought, the answer today would be No, since the discussion would be a negative one. That is like what Don Slater and *ONE* said about having sex courses in school: It shouldn't be done, because the homosexual viewpoint would not be allowed, and it would be more harmful. Of course, abstinence-only classes have proved worthless; think of the daughter of the governor of Alaska.

I don't recall hearing the term *social degenerates* before, but it is used wisely. It seems in years past many people were classed as social degenerates, usually referring to those who were not white men, and this led to racism, slavery, anti-Semitism, anti-homosexuality, and anti-poor. Medicine often did not correct this anti-human view; and the book makes it clear that, while Freud did not consider homosexuality a problem, later Jewish physicians did and often caused harm, because their views were not based on medicine or research, but on their religion. They often tried to prove that Jewish doctors were just as good as non-Jewish. Only later did sociologists and other professionals understand that it is not homosexuals who are ill, but society. It is to the shame of what should be a great medical school, Loma Linda University, which works to make people healthy, that it would discriminate against homosexuals. At Loma Linda, as it is in too many medical schools, a person could graduate without ever hearing homosexuality discussed.

In this regard, the change in the view of the psychiatrists and psychologists is discussed; and it is pointed out that it was *not* politics that made them change their views. Indeed, it was politics that had made homosexuality an illness in the first place.

The point is made that, in medicine, the issue of homosexuality should not be a theological or moral one. It is past time for prejudice to be allowed as evidence. And no matter what its view, a school cannot allow bullies to harm a child or they can be sued.

In the discussion of “change” it is pointed out that if someone claims to no longer be homosexual, the claim

is disproved when their dreams are still homosexual in nature.

The church claims to be a caring church; but, on the subject of homosexuality, it turns out to be like President Bush's compassionate conservatism—nonexistent.

A question being asked today is where the church's priority lies on the issue of homosexuality. In the past, the Adventist church spent much money on Colin Cook and his *Homosexuals Anonymous* and Quest Learning Center; more recently it has campaigned against gay marriage. This is in direct opposition to the church's historic stand on the separation of church and state (also supported by the early Baptists), because of its past persecution under Sunday laws.

This church has often talked about freedom, yet has fought against gay marriage. And much of the religious discussion seems to deal with Paul; it's strange that Christians ignore Jesus and push Paul. If the church is not ready for gay marriage, then it may not be ready for Jesus. Certainly the first humans must have practiced incest, and polygamy was apparently countenanced and blessed in the Old Testament. No one talks about David and Jonathan. But the worst sin of this church is that it is not using these wonderful resources, these fine gay men and women who seek to join and serve God through the church.

Certain phrases stand out: The gospel is first; the law is second. We can be "correct" and still be wrong. The closing pages go directly to what seems irrelevant, but is pure Jesus. Rethink what is said in the story of the Good Samaritan: Lawyers and preachers passed the hurt man by, while the outsider did the right thing. Those representing the church might seek to call a conference to deal with the generic issue of criminals, set up a committee, find any excuse, but talk rather than act and take responsibility. And finally, there is the return of the prodigal son. He is given equality, which doesn't make his brother, who stayed behind, happy.

The church today has to face reality: If Ellen White allowed members who lived in the South to accept racial segregation, and if she did not try to end prayer in school, then it is past time for the church to deal with the fact that a Bible that accepted slavery should not be used to make homosexuals outcasts. The future of our nation will not have a place for a church that is less Christ-like than the government.

This book is almost a one-stop history of all issues of homosexuality. Every library should have it, and every young person should be able to read it. It gives no false hopes, but it gives an honest view of the past and present and perhaps the future. Considering the world of a President Obama, that is a good start. ▽

*Christianity and Homosexuality:
Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*
can be ordered online at
www.sdagayperspectives.com

connection ▽

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

Editor : Catherine Taylor
Circulation : Fred Casey
European editor : Ruud Kieboom
Photography : Karen Wetherell, Pearl
Pangkey, Ivan van Putten
Production : Ruud Kieboom
Proofing : Bob Bouchard,
Floyd Pönitz, Carrol Grady,
Jacquie Hegarty
Printing : Doolittle's PrintServe

The *CONNECTION* is published by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141. Submissions are welcome and may be directed to the editor at 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). If an item is to be acknowledged or returned, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Some *CONNECTION* contributors have chosen to remain anonymous or use pseudonyms. The *CONNECTION* reserves the right to edit manuscripts for length, syntax, grammar and clarity.

The mention or appearance of any names, organizations or photographs in this publication is not meant to imply a fact or statement about sexual orientation or activity.

Subscription requests or address changes may be sent to Subscriptions, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141 or emailed to office@sdakinship.org. The Kinship mailing list is confidential and used only by Kinship officers. The mailing list is not sold, rented or exchanged for any purpose.

© 2009 SDA Kinship International, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of SDA Kinship International, Inc.

Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

Memories from Women's Weekend '06



Connection



People are often unreasonable, illogical and self centered:
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies
Be successful anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you:
Be honest anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, people may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow.
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.
Give the world the best you have anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God.
It was never between you and them anyway.

adapted from Mother Theresa