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# connection

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Kinship's Spring Board Meeting, page 12

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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, intersex and physical well-being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbian, gay men, bisexual, and transgendered individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBT 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 20 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 (VISA and MasterCard also accepted).

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# Growing a Relationship as an Adolescent

*Alexia and Jodi are the pseudonyms for two adolescent members of Kinship who have been involved with each other for 19 months. Because one of them is under the age of eighteen and one of them is still working on projects involved with the organized Seventh Day Adventist Church they have chosen these names for publication. They ran into each other on the internet when they lived on different sides of the planet...*

## Jodi and Alexia

We met in a chat room for teen lesbians on Yahoo. Jodi was the one who wanted to get to know Alexia better and we say she was a stalker, for at least a month. Every time Alexia got on the internet, Jodi would instant message her. Jodi says "there was something really nice about Alexia. Our conversations seemed fulfilling. We had real conversations; not small talk. Alexia doesn't usually go in chat rooms and well, Jodi didn't either. It somehow happened that we both ended up in this chat room that day. We think it was meant to be.

Our conversations felt real from the beginning. Jodi says that she's not normally a person who gets close to others. "When I make friendships they are not emotionally intimate. It was different with Alexia. I could be close to her." Alexia says that Jodi was "talking" with her cousin on the computer. "Marti asked Jodi if she liked me. Jodi said 'Yes, I like her a lot. I really like her. I really really like her.' So Marti said 'Ask her out!' Obviously she knows about our relationship." Alexia says she wanted to ask Jodi out but didn't "want to look like an internet psycho, so I'm glad she asked me."

Alexia shared her religious beliefs with Jodi from the beginning of our conversations. She didn't talk about being a Seventh Day Adventist but about being a Christian girl. As we talked more she began to share her basic

Adventist beliefs. Jodi says "I'm not a religious person so coming out for me wasn't as difficult. I had supportive friends who didn't have the same perspective on the homophobia thing. About two



months after we got together Alexia broke up with me because she couldn't deal with the whole issue of being involved with a woman and with her religious beliefs. I didn't understand it at first. I got angry because I thought it was shallow. But I now understand it's because I had a really different background than her. Now I see it more. I think there are benefits to Alexia's religious beliefs. Teenageish life was such

an American way for me. I was good at home but here I was a little wild. No, I was really wild. Alexia helped me understand things that are bad for me. Because I am around people who have not learned to take care of themselves, it has been good to have Alexia give me a spiritual side."

Alexia says that "dealing with my mixed feelings about having this relationship and being religious is still difficult. The thing is, we really want to be together. I think if we want to be together enough we can make this work. We need to be willing to learn new things and to try to understand where each of us is coming from. We need to accept each other for who we are and not try to change each other. Jodi stopped some of her drinking and other behaviour, even though she didn't understand why I didn't like it. She knew I had my reasons and she just stopped doing them. I think being with Jodi is strengthening me spiritually. I'm not trying to preach at her but I can express my ideas and my views to her and she listens. Jodi is very willing to listen and she feels free to disagree. I like that she often takes my ideas into consideration. It makes me feel better that she's actually listening. When I talk I reinforce my own beliefs."

Alexia goes on to say "We talk about our problems and we talk about ways to solve them. Our lives and some of our issues are working out in ways we didn't think were possible. Working them

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## ***Jodi and Alexia...***

out changes me." Alexia continues to deal with her internalised homophobia because of her religious background. Jodi says "I have a friend who is Cuban. He had a bad break-up with his boyfriend and went back to Cuba to recuperate. When he returned here he hated gay people. He thought we were not trustworthy. My friend hung out with anti-gay people and he began to feel the way they feel. Alexia wants everyone to be happy. When she hangs out with friends that are homophobic she will try to be with the majority and make herself heterosexual because she wants to make them happy. I hate not being able to show affection in public. Alexia is more skittish about being able to be open about our relationship. I get hurt and angry and I shut down. When I have time to think, I realize where her feelings come from and I find them more understandable."

When Jodi gets upset like this she needs to take a break and then come back. Alexia says "I never let her just turn away and go off. I want her to talk about how she is feeling and will sit right next to her until she will talk to me. Now that we have spent time together I don't like to talk on the internet. I tell her that she is frustrated because she wants us to be together and all we have is the phone and the internet. I say that it's what we have and we have to make the best out of it until we can be together. She tries to understand. Every free time she has we're always on the phone. She gets frustrated that I might have things to do. We don't have our own life away from everything and we have to mix our lives. She used to get upset about why I can't talk to her right now but this trip we have talked a lot about all of this. Jodi says "Even though we are in a long distance relationship I want to work towards it not being long distance. Sometimes I feel like we

are two hamsters running around the wheel in a cage, trying to get somewhere."

Alexia says "It's got to get frustrating because Jodi came to the States for our relationship and I feel helpless because I can't move in with her yet, drive out there, pay for plane tickets, or be awake for late night phone calls all the time. I fall asleep. I used to beat myself up over it. I want to drive out there. I want to buy Jodi things. So then I feel like she has a right to be upset. Like in May, I was planning on getting my license right away and then I would drive to New York to go get her but I probably won't be able to do that. I am not getting much experience driving. She wanted me to spend a couple of days in her city before we came back here. Jodi thinks that one of her issues is that she has been more independent. "My mother lets me live in foreign countries." Alexia's mother "would never let me go away like that. I try to let Jodi see I would be willing if I could. I want to go to the Middle East to see Jodi's world. I want to see where Jodi was when we got together."

Both Alexia and Jodi think their relationship has many strengths. Alexia is amazingly patient. There is a good side of trying to make everyone happy. Alexia tries to put herself in Jodi's shoes. One of the challenges is that she doesn't stand up for herself. She needs to work on that issue. Alexia has said she would marry a guy to make everyone happy. Jodi doesn't think that is fair, to either one of them. Alexia thinks that Jodi's willingness to hear her out is huge. They've been through a lot together. "We talked for a year and three months with no physical contact. We didn't have a sexually based relationship. We got to know each other from a perspective that was different than usual. We had to work extra hard to talk and to trust during our time that was just on the internet. We couldn't see each other's facial expressions. We're not sure if the phone is better or worse. The first time we

talked on the phone Alexia wouldn't say a word. Jodi finally said "I'll call back".

"We don't make empty promises. I want to make her world better. I want to treat her better than anyone in her life. I want to be the person that makes her happy. I want to make it easier for Alexia to talk." Alexia says they've worked on many creative ways to build emotional intimacy. "For a long time I would write in my open on-line diary and then Jodi would comment on it. Then we would do the same thing in reverse. Jodi never used to be someone that opened up to others. She was cautious." Jodi agrees that she was more used to having acquaintances; that she was not used to trusting others."

"We look at all the relationships around us. I tell Jodi the things I admire about one of my parental units and her partner. We look at the others. There were lots of people who we know who started dating around when we did and they have already broken up. And they break up over the stupidest things. It's positive and reassuring that we've had stupid things in our life and gotten through them. We have good relational role models. And we get to look at the mistakes other people make and we learn from them."

Alexia says "I'm pretty bitter with a lot of the pettiness I've seen with the Seventh Day Adventists. I don't always want to think about their affect on me. On a positive note, one of the reasons why I have so much patience is because of my religion. My relationship with God and good Adventist role models have let me know I'm loved. They show me the kind of love I think God wants to show all of us." Jodi thinks it's important to do what's comfortable and avoid the things that aren't comfortable. We hurt other people if we are not true to ourselves." Alexia still thinks "people cannot go into a relationship thinking it's going to be easy. They have to know it's going to be a rocky road."



Homophobic people don't think for themselves. They often don't know that we are all around them. They get affected by the people who say that being gay is wrong. The people who condemn us use just a few Bible verses and they don't really want to study out the entire issue.

Alexia has support from her family. She says that growing up with them has taught her to be accepting and non-judgmental. "I like to give everyone a huge chance and not jump to conclusions. Jody says 'Lots of people have a hard time coming out to their parents. I didn't have to deal with that. My mom is amazingly supportive. When I first told her about Alexia she thought I was going through a phase. I've heard people talk about their families kicking them out. I feel lucky that my mom tries to understand my life. My mom is willing to fly Alexia out to the Middle East so she can meet my family.'" Alexia is concerned that she has to prove herself to Jodi's mother. "Jodi has done so much for this relationship. I don't want her mom thinking I really don't care about it. I don't want her to think it's one sided. I'm also frustrated because what I believe and what some other Adventists believe is so different. It's almost like we are another branch of the church".

We both are only starting our life. We don't know if we will be together forever. We both say we don't want to break up but this is definitely not a mature relationship yet. It's a growing process. This interview has been kind of odd because we've never talked out loud about our relationship like this before. But we think it's been good to have us think in a different way.

## Question of the Month

"What are the gifts in your life from being both gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered/intersex and having a Seventh Day Adventist background?"

**Shelby:** I have found that being both lesbian and SDA challenges people to think outside the box in which they've grown up and don't even know surrounds them. This mix challenges people to expand their view of God, to see that God is bigger than their original pictures. For me, when I lost my church family I had to decide to still be a Seventh Day Adventist. I had to decide again to have a relationship with God. I have learned that being Adventist is much bigger than being a part of an individual church.



**Sam:** That's a tough one. Being raised a Seventh Day Adventist made me judgmental and rigid. Being gay forced me to re-think my entire paradigm. The discipline of being raised Adventist helped me discipline myself as a gay man.



**Bruce:** It probably kept me alive. I was repressed and not out to many people. I didn't catch AIDS and I'm alive. My love of music is a huge part of my growing up SDA. Every Friday we would sing for an hour. We got a love and appreciation of music. Wherever I



go, I know someone. I took the sense of family that I have with Adventists and expanded it and made it unconditional. As different as I was I never got bashed like I would have in public schools. I was valued. I was able to survive playing hopscotch and not football.

**Yolanda:** I went to small Adventist schools and I have a large family so I've always had a sense of community. When the issue of sexuality and spirituality came up I searched for community. I



went all the way across the country by myself. When I walked through the door of Kinship, I found family. I know we are family. When I walked through the door it was about lunch time and Jesse and Lamont snatched me up and took me to the head of the line.

**Mark:** A sense of family and a sense of community. Being Adventist gave me a structure of spirituality as I was coming out as a gay person. It was something good to hold onto as I was finding out who I was. Once I did decide who I was, the family and sense of community was there in Kinship. When I was ready, it was there.



*Continued, page 7*

# Running as Metaphor

Ben Kemena

8 AM; March 7, 2004: I was in Los Angeles at the Bonaventure Hotel for my fourteenth running of the LA Marathon—along with 24,000 other fellow runners. At the time the event started, it was already 75 F—another balmy day in southern California—soon to be scalding at 90 F by mid-day! Fine beach weather to be sure, but a little warm for a 26.2 mile run in the sun.

This event always stirs old feelings within me. The marathon is my winter running goal. I need the motivation to keep running through the Denver snow. But it is also a homecoming of sorts. I lived in southern California for twelve years. Furthermore, the Marathon generally coincides with alumni gatherings at my alma mater, Loma Linda University. Thus, I usually see many of my classmates, friends, and family. This year was no different.

My presence is a conundrum for most I meet—and is best met with humor and charity. Some realize that it is politically incorrect to be "openly" anti-gay—but they can barely contain their zeal to "steer me straight." Others are impressed that I still seem to be so "normal"—I disappoint their flamboyant expectations. Some are actually gay tolerant, but would rather not make any public comment within a stone's throw of the pepper trees that Ellen White saw in her vision of the "pretty hill". A few are overtly gay-accepting and toss Adventist decorum to the wind by giving me a hug—a "public display of affection" for a gay man—which I genuinely appreciate. Yet, no matter what their position is on "the issue," all of the runners in my reunion group aim to make sure they "beat the gay guy"—or perhaps a more colorful phrase comes to



mind.... I muse about my time in the "gay closet" at Loma Linda; the open air isn't always invigorating either!

As we assembled Saturday evening for the event (appropriately after sundown, filled with pre-race contrition!), the conversations are something out of an old dormitory locker room. The straight men discuss their training strategies and interval workouts. They talk about their special socks, shoes, "power bars," and hydration plans. Perhaps this is the closest I will get to seeing Adventist metrosexuality. I may want to talk about the athletic bodies, the latest style in running singlets, and whether I should use hair gel—but alas, that might be "too gay." A few guys talk about the "running babes"—just because they are married doesn't mean they are blind—until they look over at me and realize their casual indiscretion. I smile demurely and nod my forty-something balding head. I am out-numbered, to be sure. This isn't another episode of "queer eye for the straight guy"—more like "straight plan for the gay man." I listen respectfully and try to "butch it up"—but perhaps I mis-stepped when I suggested that church organists must be great athletes given all of their foot work on the pedals....

I have to give my running mates—most are members of the

Loma Linda Lopers, the largest running group participating in the LA Marathon—credit for hanging in there with me. With the Adventist "grapevine" being what it is—complete with Internet augmentation—everyone knows I'm "queer" in about ninety seconds. They knew this last year too, but the power of denial is so strong that I must "come out" every year as a reminder. This usually occurs when someone unwittingly inquires, "so, where's your little woman?" - I explain and he/she apologizes for making the same mistake last year.... My running friends get past this quickly, but they are aware of the gossip—and the speculation of who I might be sharing a room with.... For the sake of Adventist propriety, I shared my pre-marathon hotel room with three lovely women this year. But within thirty minutes of room check-in, I felt trapped in something akin to cable television's "Lifetime Channel"—programs for women (and some gay men)—particularly as discussions turned to the finer nuances of "jogging bras". No offense to high-powered estrogen-driven women, but I was almost willing to return to a debate regarding running shoe tread design.

I did find "escape time" during my running preparations. What did gay men do before cell phones? I called my "own tribe" for moral support. Of course, every one expressed appropriate concern for my travails, but to a person, they also think I'm nuts. Certifiable. After all, why would a gay guy participate in an activity that might result in blisters and toenail separations—just when "sandal season" was approaching. All agreed that well-toned perspiring men might be adequate reward, but couldn't that be accomplished

in running one or two miles...with one's fans waiting at the finish line with a laurel wreath, loud cheers, and a cappuccino (decaf, naturally). These days, my partner, Michael, lets me attend running events—which he describes as "testosterone gone bad"—alone!

As the mayor of Los Angeles and Mohammed Ali fired the gun to start the race, I knew this would not be a "pretty marathon." The sheen of perspiration soon mixed with dust to create filth. By noon, it was 90 F and race organizers were running out of drinking water. It happens—but at the time, I was cursing (which my devout Adventist grandmother condoned as a God-given coping mechanism next to prayer...). Civil authorities finally turned on fire hydrant sprinklers. It would not be my best running performance, but I finished while ambulances circled the race course scavenging the injured and wounded.

At mile 16, I found a group of gay runners—their rainbow flags drooping in the mid-day cauldron. I told them I was from Denver and that it was a relief to see "family" at the event. They smiled politely—and hoped I might never remember them from this event as they "looked dreadful"—which was mutual. Amidst our panting, we talked about their reasons for running. No one had a witty answer—so I spoke up. I suggested—with the tone and zeal of Adventist preachers of yore—that our presence at the marathon was a testimony to the entire rich amalgam of our being. As I became lost in my own verbal reverie, I suggested that this physical challenge personified our core spiritual values and desire to live beyond simple labels and stereotypes.

As certain as the smell of kimchi as we ran through Korea-town, I knew my gay social blunder was obvious. What the heck was I thinking? These were gay men trying to survive their own sweat, pain and body odor—my metaphysical piety was

meaningless. Furthermore, I began to realize that my profundity came long after our collective "endorphin rush" (which had likely peaked at mile 2!). My over-the-top comments apparently prompted one of the guys to drop-out and head for an aid station. I felt terrible and apologized for my lack of sensibility—I stood self-accused as an embarrassment to "my tribe." The other fellows told me that their limping teammate had been complaining about blisters for the last ten miles and not to worry otherwise. Yet, I felt their eyes roll back into their heads as they assessed me as a gay eccentric from the hinterland (which does have a ring of truth). The gay lads followed their fallen teammate—they were staying together as a loyal group and aborting their run. I knew that if I sat down in the cool shade of the aid station, I was a "goner"—so I bid tearful farewell and kept moving. I was very proud of them for staying together and tempering their training and testosterone for the men they loved. I thought about my pontifications and laughed ruefully. Yes, I am nuts. Certifiable.

Those air-conditioned ambulances were certainly a temptation. But, I kept moving and proudly crossed the finish line. My MP3 player was trashed and I knew I would lose a few toenails, but I was happy. I met my Loma Linda running buddies in the Bonaventure hotel lobby. Even in our fatigue and sweat, we were still sizing each other up. Who were the real men who beat me - and who were the sorry tripe who would face another humiliation (in addition to pending heat stroke) losing to the gay guy? There was a lot of whining and complaining about the heat and water shortage, but I knew that a gay man complaining of the same would simply indict his sexuality all over again. So, I kept quiet (unusual for me) and let the straight-folk grumble and lend voice my own complaint. After all, I had already said enough today.

On the sober sixty-mile drive back to Loma Linda—with car windows open "for air" as we anxiously awaited showers and "foot damage assessment"—we didn't say much. Intuitively, I think we knew that our "filters" and inhibitions were silenced by a screaming fatigue. Awkwardness gave way to pragmatism. One of my buddies just looked at me and said "screw it"—as he put his arm around my neck and fell asleep on my shoulder. One of the lady runners (I shared a hotel room with her), slipped her sweaty training bra off from under her sweatshirt and threw it out the car window—to cheers of glee and laughter! I returned to Loma Linda as a gay alumnus of reasonable standing (denial temporarily derailed)—finishing with a respectable time and beating most of my friends and family (I know it shouldn't really matter, but I have a superficial side). We arrived back to the wealthy neighborhoods of the "new Jerusalem south of Barton Road" and thanked God for a safe sojourn. As we waited in turns for showers and clean clothes—and gingerly removed our shoes and examined our feet—we were all one in the same: human beings prayerfully nursing our wounds.

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### ***Question of the Month...***

**Bob:** This particular combination made me understand, early in life, that the world is complex and we need to have sympathy with those who travel different roads. Seventh Day Adventists are a minority. Gay SDAs are even more of one. I needed to inspect my beliefs. From a personal point of view, I love the communion in the family of Kinship. We have shared values.



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# Growing Into Our Years...

Ren Reynolds

When we get right down to the significant nitty gritty of age and aging, it appears that many of us are fearful of arriving at this unknown place. We have not had personal experience with the waning and yet the most growth filled years of our lives. These, for a brief period of time, remain an unknown. We may rant, rave, rail and perhaps dodge the issues about aging, illness and death, but at some point, we have to face our own foibles. It's easy to think that because we are getting older or have certain illnesses or an accumulation of problems related to health or age, that we will automatically realize the need to focus on wisdom, courage and a quality of life for ourselves. That realization is not necessarily a given. We need to figure out our journey for ourselves. We also need input from others. We need to surround ourselves with those who give us positive thoughts and enough gumption to set our own contemplative direction. We need dignity and we need to define that dignity for ourselves.

When archeologists go into the field they scrape and dig very carefully. Perimeters are established, measured and marked. The archeologists do not know what they will find or if they will find anything of importance. They delve methodically, screening and sifting layer after layer. They search for clues that will tie past with present in order to yield understanding and knowledge. Archeologists spend weeks at a time on a dig. They protect their site if they must shut down due to weather or some other interruption. We can use similar processes to investigate our own history and future journey. Just as the archeologist searches for history,

cultures, tools, food, utensils, games, music, weapons and instruments that may have helped to sustain a person or people, we look for the tools of our life to sustain us. Curiosity is one of our greatest gifts and most important tools. Many cultures and belief systems feed us on our journey. They help us navigate new territory with less fear. They help us build strength and compassion that will bolster us and give us unexpected depths.

Many of us first experience our fear of death when we perceive friends, family members, and ourselves reaching a maturity where age and health become factors. Perhaps that first gray hair grabs our attention for a second---long enough to pull it out, hardly thinking. I did that in my teens and early twenties. It was more of a reaction to something out of place. You know, an "out of sight out of mind" kind of moment. When we reach our forties we begin to think longer but not yet seriously about age and our relation to age. Sometimes it's a specific birthday that brings these nearly squelched thoughts back to us. We begin to reflect from a different perspective. We begin to use our curiosity to consider what our cache of thoughts means over the long haul. We seek books, music and film to ponder. We develop new hobbies. We re-evaluate friendships. We have begun to change. And it is in changing that we find the best chance to avoid sinking into the blues. Instead of disintegrating, growth happens at a time of life that surprises us.

At some point we begin to lose family members and friends. Their loss is the greatest lesson that we ourselves are not going to be here forever. I was uncomfortable with

this realization. And I am not alone. I began to have conversations with those to whom I was closest. I began to truly equate serious illness with death. I began to have age related dreams. (A common theme is having our teeth crumble or fall out.) I think it's important to give voice to our thoughts and our dreams. We should never become isolated. Isolation is one of the true killers of the soul. But, we need to realize that everyone's emotional clock runs at different speeds and in varying time zones. We need to talk to others who are willing to have the conversations we are contemplating.

That we age and become ill is inevitable. How we deal with that knowledge is what matters today. How we deal with that knowledge is what affects ourselves, our friends, our family and our community. Let's begin by celebrating life. I believe that our celebration is one of the most important components of living. It is the very act of celebrating that builds us longer and healthier lives. It is that celebration that breaths oxygen in the atmosphere of our friends and our families. We become teachers by example. We live into one of our greatest gifts to this old world.

Malvina Reynolds wrote songs to express how she felt on many issues, including her own death. Below you'll find my take on her take of "This World," which is what Malvina supposed she might miss after her death. It is not surprising that she wrote of her family and their home on Parker Street. Malvina had about a dozen years to sing this message for audiences all over the USA. It is still a favorite at concerts and appears on the Smithsonian CD. I use "This World" by permission.



## THIS WORLD

by  
Malvina Reynolds

Baby, I ain't afraid to die,  
it's just that I hate to say goodbye  
to this world, this world, this world.  
This old world is mean and cruel,  
but still I love it like a fool, this world,  
this world, this world.

I'd rather go to the corner store  
than sing hosannah on that golden shore,  
I'd rather live on Parker Street  
than fly around where the angels meet.  
Oh, this old world is all I know,  
it's dust to dust when I have to go  
from this world, this world, this world.

Somebody else will take my place,  
Some other hands, some other face,  
Some other eyes will look around  
And find the things I've never found  
Don't weep for me when I am gone,  
Just keep this old world rolling on,  
this world, this world, this world.

*Words and Music by Malvina Reynolds.  
Copyright 1961, Schroder Music Co.  
"This World" is used by permission.*

*...And then there are the times when we find  
ourselves wrapped in the next Stage of Life.*

## Surviving Grief

Ron of Washington

From time to time I read on KINNET or hear thru the grapevine that one of our KINSHIP members has experienced the loss of a loved one such as a parent, dear friend or a partner. As I hear about their sorrow I am reminded of some of the difficult times I went thru as I grieved all by myself and wished for answers to the many questions and emotions I was experiencing. A number of years ago I was at the bedside of my best friend as he was dying of cancer and was there to support his wife and family. After returning home I experienced a lot of sorrow and many tears but never really grieved or worked thru my grief and had no one to talk to (or so it seemed).

Eight years ago the love of my life died and this time I knew I had to get the help I found thru a Grief Support Group. Here I learned a number of things that I would like to share in hopes that it will help others. Whether it was recently or a long time ago that you experienced your loss I am sure you will find things that you can identify with and are helpful to you.

### NORMAL AND HEALTHY RESPONSES TO GRIEF

Immediately following a death, there is a sense of shock, numbness and disbelief that can last minutes or weeks. The person may feel panicked or overwhelmed and experience strong physical reactions. When there has been a lengthy illness the griever may experience a sense of relief for the persons who died and for themselves now that the stresses of care giving are over. This period allows the person to take information in at a slower rate and to prepare for the adjustments that lie ahead. Most people who suffer a loss, experience one or more of the following

#### **Social:**

- Withdrawal from others
- Dependence on others
- Fear of being alone

## FALLING APART

by  
Eloise Cole

I seem to be falling apart.  
My attention span can be measured in seconds.  
My patience in minutes  
I cry at the drop of a hat.  
I forget things constantly.  
The morning toast burns daily.  
I forget to sign the checks.  
Half of everything in the house is misplaced.  
Feelings of anxiety and restlessness are my constant companion.  
Rainy days seem extra dreary.  
Sunny days seem an outrage.  
Other people's pain and frustration seem insignificant.  
Laughing, happy people seem out of place in my world.  
It has become routine to feel half-crazy.  
I am normal I am told.  
I am a newly grieving person.

---

## Surviving Grief...

### Cognitive

Confusion, sense of unreality  
Poor concentration,  
forgetfulness  
Denial, disbelief  
Constant thoughts about the  
person  
Dreams of the deceased

### Physical

Palpitations  
Shortness of breath, crying  
Diarrhea, constipation, vomiting  
Tightness in the chest or throat  
Change in appetite or sleep  
patterns  
Lack of energy; fatigue

### Spiritual

Blaming God  
Lack of meaning or direction  
Loss of faith  
Wanting to die/join the dead  
person

### Emotional

Sadness  
Numb, empty, flat expression  
Guilt & self-reproach  
Anger and/or anxiety  
Indifference to daily activities

### COMMON "GRIEF EXPRESSION"

"Why is this happening to me?  
What did I do to deserve this?"

"If only I had told him/her one  
more time, I love you."

"I think I 'm losing my mind; I  
can't concentrate on anything."

"The nights and weekends are  
the worst for me--empty and  
lonely."

"If my faith were stronger, I  
would be able to handle this."

"I have trouble getting to sleep,  
and after I finally do, I only sleep a  
few hours before I am up again."

### EXPECTATIONS YOU CAN HAVE FOR YOURSELF

Your grief will take longer than  
most people think it should.  
Your grief will take more energy

than you can imagine

Your grief will involve continual  
changes.

Your grief will show itself in all  
spheres of your life and who you  
are. It will affect your social  
relationships, your health,  
thoughts, feelings and spiritual  
beliefs.

Your grief will depend upon  
how you perceive the loss.

You will grieve for many things  
( both symbolic & tangible), not  
just the death itself.

You will grieve for what you  
have lost already as well as for the  
future--for the hopes, dreams and  
unfulfilled expectations you held  
for and with that person.

Your grief will involve a wide  
variety of feelings and reactions:  
some expected and some not.

This loss will resurrect old  
losses, feelings and unfinished  
business from the past.

You may have some confusion  
about who you are; this is due to  
the intensity and unfamiliarity of  
the grieving experience and  
uncertainty about your new role in  
the world.

You may have a combination of  
anger & depression: irritability,  
frustration, and intolerance.

You may feel guilt in some  
form.

You may have a poor sense of  
self-worth.

You may experience spasms,  
waves, or acute upsurges of grief  
that occur without warning.

You will have trouble thinking  
and making decisions; poor  
memory and organization.

You may feel you are going  
crazy.

You may be obsessed with the  
death or preoccupied with  
thoughts of the dead person.

You will search for meaning in  
your life and question your beliefs.

You may find yourself acting  
differently.

Society has unrealistic  
expectations about your mourning  
and may respond inappropriately.

You will have a number of  
physical reactions.

Certain dates, events, seasons,  
and reminders will bring upsurges  
in your grief.

Certain experiences later in life  
may resurrect intense grief feelings  
for you.

*Reference; Theres A Rando,  
Ph D., How To Go On Living  
When Someone You Love  
Dies*

### WHAT WE NEED DURING GRIEF

**Time:** Time alone and time with  
others who you trust and who will  
listen when you need to talk:  
months and years of time to feel  
and understand the feelings that  
go along with loss.

**Rest:** Relaxation -  
Exercise-Nourishment- Diversion-  
You may need extra amounts of  
things you needed before. Grief is  
an exhausting process emotionally.  
You need to replenish yourself.  
Follow what feels healing to you  
and what connects you to the  
people and things you love.

**Security:** Try to reduce or find  
help for financial or other stresses  
in your life. Allow yourself to be  
close to those you trust. Getting  
back into a routine helps. You  
may need to allow yourself to do  
things at your own pace..

**Caring:** You will need  
acceptance and caring throughout  
the grief period. Try to allow  
yourself to accept the expressions  
of caring from others even though  
they may be uneasy and awkward.  
If you lack support make finding it  
your first goal. Helping a friend or  
close relative also suffering the  
same loss may bring a feeling of  
closeness with that person

**Goal:** For a while it will seem  
that much of life is without  
meaning. At times like these,  
small goals are helpful.  
Something to look forward to, like  
playing tennis with a friend next  
week, a movie tomorrow, a trip  
next month helps you get through  
the immediate future.

**Small pleasures:** Do not  
underestimate the healing effects  
of small pleasures, as you are

ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food- all are small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself. Don't be afraid to have fun--laughter is good medicine.

**A little about me.** I am a member of the Region 2 group in the Maryland / DC area. My interest in dealing with grief goes back to my childhood when I heard people making statements about individuals who had lost a spouse etc such as "Why it has been 6 months since he died she should be over it by now". I also recall the death of my grandmother who I was very close to and how long I grieved her death all on my own as a kid. Over the years I have lost a number of friends. I was with my best friend, his wife and family member when he was dying of cancer and later had a tough time with grieving but never really worked thru it until 6 years later. As a buddy for people living with AIDS I have lost a lot of friends and one was the love of my life. When Ken died I knew I had to join a support group which was a life saver for me and I learned that grieving is a lot of hard work but so important. Now I try to share the knowledge thru support groups or sharing with printed information as well as just being a friend to talk to. I have recently been able to start a ministry with my church in remembering people on the year anniversary of their loved ones death by sending them a special letter, and members of the Sabbath school class call or also send notes. Often the year anniversary can be as hard if not harder than the day the person died so we are trying to help people thru this rough time.



# Letter From Larry:

To family and friends. . .

Had a great 7 weeks in Africa. Ethiopia is so beautiful I don't understand why more people don't visit it. I'm told northern Ethiopia (yet to visit) contains 60% of all the mountains in Africa. I flew by small plane toward the south and west of the country and was amazed at the number of volcanic craters. All this, plus interesting people. I wouldn't recommend the capital for a week's stay, but certainly the rest of the country is worth a month or two. I must go back a third time! And now I'm also interested in the Dinka and Nuer tribes of The Sudan. (Anybody else interested?)

Dell Russell and I got treatment started in Addis Ababa for 4 or 5 tribal-area kids with club foot, and gathered information for rounding up a new batch of kids for cleft lip operations--along with numerous other miscellaneous stuff, such as delivering a wheel chair and ordering another one, setting up patient housing, meeting with new doctors, following up on old cases, etc. While I was in the more outlying town of Jinka, on my own, I treated numerous cases of sores and skin ulcers (infections) plus put one person in a local hospital and sent another to a distant hospital where more advanced treatment is available for a facially-disfiguring tumor. It's amazing how fast money can go, even where things are cheap. I spent all the money I took for the trip (including the excess I thought I would return with) plus got cash advances on my credit card THREE times!

There are many stressful aspects of visiting in third-world countries, and the cumulative effect can really start to annoy you after a few weeks (I often dreamed of a big fat

hamburger at the first fast food place I could find upon my return to the Newark airport; and back in Chicago I consciously marveled at the clean, paved streets and the existence of sidewalks.) But the highs are well worth it! I often wished some of you were there to help me enjoy the aspects that are so beautiful they could never be described. Countless times, I felt as though I were on a movie set, given the scenery combined with colorful people plowing their fields with oxen, grinding grain with a stone or vertical ramming post, herding goats or cattle of all colors with huge horns, or walking 15 miles on market day with live chickens over the shoulder and a sack of maize on the head to be sold in the village.

More later... I want to keep working on the photo CD I'll be sharing with you, which will contain a more detailed general narrative, plus photos & details of how charity money was spent, for those interested in that aspect.

Otherwise, my urgent order of business is to contract for my new roof and front window installation, putting my 2nd & 3rd floors back into rentable condition, a quick 3-day trip to visit Dad in Arkansas and Tijuana in Pinckneyville, wrapping up work for a couple of clients and the car trip east (before the end of fall) that I had to postpone twice already.

Plus a lot of promises to keep and follow-up correspondence to Ethiopia, Ghana and southern African countries visited last September.

For the record: according to plan, I sent only ONE postcard this trip (to Tijuana). My postcard to you will be the photo CD. Eventually.

Larry

# Kinship's Spring Board Meeting

## March 2004



Your Board hard at work.

It's always a bit of a journey. First, the organization has to decide when and where we will meet. We have to find a location that won't "break the budget". We look for venues that are accessible to airports. We calculate seasons or climates that won't instigate depression. We try to account for the work of and vagaries in the lives of at least twelve to fourteen people. And we begin to plan the weekend. Usually people offer their homes to us. Often they also do



A working break

the cleaning and the cooking. We are always bathed in graciousness. This year someone, who generously cares about Kinship, opened their home. Fred's mother and step father prepared the food. Paolo helped clean and host. Dave facilitated the home, the church, the concert, and some lovely California sun with almost no pollution. We flew in from the deep south, the far north, the tip of Florida, the tundra of New England. Bob arrived from Hawaii,



Fred's parents, Subby Salanitro and Jan Casey, worked wonders in the kitchen

after a brief layover in New York. Friday afternoon the Finance Committee met in Redondo Beach where one of its members was camping out in a hotel next to a family of sea lions, who also wanted to be part of any discussion going on. Friday evening Fred's family prepared dinner for the new arrivals. Sabbath morning we met for breakfast, very hard work, and then a field trip to the Glendale Church for their eleven o'clock services. As is the nature of both



Time alone

the Adventist and the gay world, there were unexpected and welcomed reunions. Back for lunch, work, sun, flowers, work, children, dinner, photos, and the Gay Men's Chorus singing their tribute to Los Angeles. Like school children (or groupies) we were quite excited to see Jesse and Dave on stage. We even got some sleep. Back Sunday morning for breakfast and the rest of our agenda. We could write more but, in this case, pictures really are more fun.



In church



All work and no play...

### Business of the Organization

A very brief overview

We unanimously welcomed Betty Ann Hale as Region 7 Coordinator.

We discussed ways we can be a presence at the General Conference Session in St. Louis next year.

Fred shared some of the amazing plans for our Reunion Kampmeeting this August. Robb has created an online registration form that is available at [www.sdakinship.org](http://www.sdakinship.org).

Robb also talked about ways he is working to prepare articles for the website and about the advertising he is doing for the organization.

Karen Wylde and the finance committee continue to work to build better processes and resources for our organization.

We spent a great deal of time discussing ways we can work with the administration of the Seventh Day Adventist Church using avenues that will be constructive. We are also beginning to build a list of GLBTI friendly congregations for our members who are looking for benevolent venues in which to worship.

Ah yes, Floyd continues to work on the Kinship Calendar, which we know you will be saving your pocket money in order to purchase. We will develop ways for you to access this very hot item without standing in long lines.

Bruce was kind enough to send the editors of this august newsletter a rough draft of the minutes. Many thanks.

### Question of the Month...

**Obed:** The networks of the church cross over to the gay world and



back again. If we are part of the educational system that is particularly true. Schools provide a space of connection. If I was raising kids today I would send them to SDA schools for the first five years. There it's easy to find a sense of belonging. People who have not been to church schools or church have a harder time getting into a group. There is a great diversity in the gay Adventist group. I also find a great

level of connection with music as well as education. The people of Kinship have a lot in common.

**Taylor:** The ironic and cultural carry over from Adventism to Kinship. I



don't think friends would be the same if we didn't share the same background. Kinship is a better place

because of the social connections. Even though I may have a glass of wine with dinner, I think it's a benefit that Kinship is a dry organization.

*Continued, page 15*

## Health Tips of the Month

Research has revealed that a diet that is high in fiber may boost weight loss efforts. In a study, people who consumed a low-fat diet with 26 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories lost more weight than the people who consumed a fattier diet with only 7 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories. And each group was allowed to eat as much as they wanted.

More and more research is suggesting that depression can impact heart health. Now a recent study in postmenopausal women revealed that even a mild case of the blues may increase the risk of developing heart disease down the road. When you feel a blue mood coming on, cut it short by spending time with good friends or going for a brisk walk.

According to the latest sleep research, morning headaches may signal an underlying health condition requiring professional medical treatment. Some of the most common causes of morning headaches were depression, anxiety disorder, insomnia, sleep-related breathing disorders, high blood pressure, and musculoskeletal diseases.

There may be a link between a fear of novel situations and a shorter life span, according to research. Of course, shyness and vigilance have their time and place. But if you've nothing to fear but fear itself, take a leap of faith the next time you are presented with an opportunity to experience something new.

Exercising regularly is an important part of preserving strength. However, in people over 65, high blood levels of antioxidant vitamins also were associated with musculoskeletal strength. Get your fair share of antioxidant vitamin C with citrus fruits, bell peppers, and strawberries. Most people need a supplement to meet their antioxidant vitamin E needs.

Research suggests that age-related macular degeneration, an eye condition that can lead to blindness, will grow more common in populations where the average life span is increasing. However, you can help safeguard your eyes against macular degeneration by wearing shades when in the sun.



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# Devotional:

## The Seven Gifts Of Eden

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 and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Genesis 1:1,2

Seventh Day Adventist beliefs are uniquely, Biblically, and sometimes startlingly focused on The Garden. We trace the Great Controversy from the one forbidden tree. We consider our dietary standards based on the original diet. We talk about relationships as they once were at that beginning time. We find the sundown seventh day Sabbath with its roots in a time when the Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden, where He put the red earthed ones (adama) that He had formed. Genesis 2.

Given that our foundations claim to be laid in that foundation, I think it's important that we take a look at the gifts of Eden.

**First:** we have been given this tiny little blue planet to care for, to nurture, to learn the lessons of stewardship, to view from the small and large cameras of space and our imaginations. This is our heritage and our home.

**Second:** We have been given plants: lofty trees, shrubs, blades of grass, orchids, walnuts, persimmons, strawberries, amaranth flowers, thyme....to fill our visual souls, olfactory glands, and digestive tracts. In the original mandate we were given the lesson that even plants need not die for our living. Nothing was given us for consumption that would be destroyed in our taking. I wonder how different our world would be if we would learn that lesson and

protected that gift.

**Third:** We were given dominion over the beasts of the earth. Dominion is an interesting concept. We've used it to justify conquests and abuse. We've used this word to define a use of power that can make the subservient tremble. I believe that we were given dominion to understand Heaven's vision of power and of rule. We were to care for, to nourish, to protect, to be loving towards. Animals were given to us to let us have a small object lesson of what it means to be in God's place. The way we treat animals, gives us a picture of how we can imagine God treats and feels toward us.

**Fourth:** We were given family. The red earth created ones met the created beings whose home is heaven. They learned of the created ones who are stewards of other worlds. And they were given each other to be "helpmeets". In the ancient Hebrew, helpmeet means "power equal". What a lesson it would be if we could love, negotiate with, rule with, serve with "power equals". And what a lesson it would be if we could learn what it means to have a sense of family embrace entire galaxies of diversity and color.

**Fifth:** We were given the opportunity to know and come to understand the Deity. God themselves came down to the Garden to meet, to teach, to converse, to train, to love. We got to meet face to face with the Ones whose veil between the compartments of heaven is the scarlet blue hues of the Orion Nebula.

**Sixth:** And God blessed the

Sabbath Day and made it holy. What an odd concept. God took a segment of time made up of hours and made it a lesson book for all eternity. The Deity created a sanctuary to make sure that each week we remembered the equality and sanctity of all created beings. El Shaddai enveloped our task filled week with moments specifically designed to revel in relationship. They wanted to give us a designated meeting place to find joy in the horizontal and vertical conversations that are to feed our soul as the vineyard and the honeycomb feeds our need for caloric intake. Like the forbidden tree in the Garden, the day has special significance only because God bequeathed it so. The lesson is not in the place but in the trust. God asks us to trust Them enough to see with other eyes and to believe that if Heaven tells us there is a blessing, we might have enough adventure to experiment and find it so.

**Seventh:** All the gifts of Eden have extraordinary significance. But, there was only one gift given in this place for which the Creator was willing to die. As God breathed into our nostrils the breath of life and raised us up living beings, we were given the birthright of choice. Without that gift there is no danger. Without that gift there is no death. Without that gift we are robots to be controlled by some supernatural power source. And with this gift of choice for us, Jesus made His own history changing, structure changing, universal changing decision.

Take good care of yourselves. You are invaluable.

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## Question of the Month...

**Leif:** The church's emphasis on the fine arts which includes music, of course. That's a core of our being. Growing up in east Africa 95% of the students took piano lessons. How often would that happen in a non-Adventist college. I've always appreciated the church for their focus on the health message. As a gay person it is also important for me to watch my health. As gay SDAs there is a very strong sense of family and of belonging. Being part of Kinship makes that sense even deeper. Being part of the SDA family, being gay, and being a world traveler I meet people from where I've grown up. If people are also gay or lesbian, the bond is even deeper.

**Catherine:** One of the first things that struck me about the Adventist church was its belief in focusing on the entire human being; on being whole. The Adventist belief system focus is on psychological, spiritual, physical health. I think being lesbian is also about being whole. I learned from Adventism to follow truth; no matter what others told me or thought of me. That is also a lesson that has been invaluable as I have lived my life more and more honestly and openly. Ellen White said we should memorize and live by Isaiah 58. We as LGBTI people need to also live by those rather incredible principles.



**Joyce ssst:** I would like to find a place in the Adventist church where I can use my gifts. I think being a lesbian helped me in my leadership roles in the church. I think the health message is a huge gift. It helped me decide who I would date. Being honest is a great gift. I used the SDA criteria for dating to pick the women in my life. I read Messages to Young People as Mrs. White said we should cultivate friends who would make good spouses. Almost everything I did was based on my upbringing. I was always looking for someone to "marry".



**Paolo:** I wouldn't like to meet the gay lifestyle in my culture. I would not have liked to see the drugs and alcohol. When I went to Pathfinder meetings on Sunday morning I would see people coming in from the night before. They made me realize how much I liked having a Sabbath with many things to do and then on Sunday I could go to church again to be with my friends. The people I saw looked sick from drunkenness. If I had been used to drinking and drugging it would have been easier to keep on when I came out. Another gift of being both gay and Adventist is my understanding that God is leading my life. That is very very clear to me.



**Karen:** I believe growing up Adventist has made me a better lesbian. I think being closeted for so long made me come out of the closet like a rocket ship. Had I not had my SDA background, I believe I would have found myself in very unhealthy situations for me. It is what made me want to look for another SDA for a partner. Having the same background and ideals is such a blessing to our relationship. I believe growing up in the 'system' also made it much easier for me after finding Kinship. Finding there were others the same as I that I actually knew and had gone to school with made it easier for me to feel accepted by God. I learned being a lesbian SDA was not on oxymoron.



**Coretta Scott King** (from AARP, The Magazine: May/June, 2004):

"When Martin was criticized for protesting the Vietnam War, he said, 'I've struggled too long against segregated public accommodations to now end up segregating my moral concerns.' He felt that peace and justice are indivisible. I often think about that. I don't believe you can support the rights of all people, then just choose the ones that you don't support. And I don't see how you can separate human rights and the rights of all people no matter what their sexual orientation is. They have the same rights as I. That's the way I feel--we're all God's children."

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Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.

—Paul Boese



# **25th Annual SDA Kinship Kampmeeting**

August 15-22, 2004

Portland, Oregon USA

Register online at [www.sdakinship.org](http://www.sdakinship.org)