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WHO WE ARE...

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

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit 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 forty-three countries.

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

SUPPORT KINSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to 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.)



PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA

or visit Kinship's website at: www.sdakinship.org

El
Shaddai



From the Editor

The One of the Breasts. The Guardian of the Doors of Israel. The God who is Sufficient to Meet Our Needs. The One who Nourishes, Supplies, Satisfies. God Almighty. The Infinite One uses many names to help us understand the infinite qualities of the Deity. In a world and through times in which women have been demeaned and denigrated, where the functions of mothers and mothering have been dismissed, this quality of God points to the power and importance of nurturing love.

El-Shaddai makes a covenant of posterity with Abraham. Isaac invokes the blessing of El-Shaddai as Jacob flees for Paddan Aram and his fate with Laban's family. When an exhausted and shaken Jacob returns home, it is El-Shaddai who confirms the blessing and the promise. El-Shaddai is the promise of "peace like a river" to Isaiah. Like a mother lion, it is El-Shaddai who rises up in Revelation with judgments against those who harm the children of God. And it is El-Shaddai and the Lamb who are the temple and the glory that outshine the sun when time ends and eternity resumes its course.

To those of you who nurture in the most difficult and painful of times, to those of you who yearn for a "mother," to those of you who fight to protect the innocent, to those of you who *are* the innocent, El-Shaddai is the example of the most powerful kind of mothering.

From the rainbow round the throne
And the River of Life,
Through the Gates of Pearl,
Down the corridors of light
S/He's reaching down,
S/He's reaching down.
Past the purple Nebula in the starlit sky,
Cross the galaxy's edge
To a child that cries
S/He's reaching down.
S/He's reaching down.
S/He comes to our anger and
S/He comes to our fears.
God touches our hearts and
Dries our tears.
S/He reaches down,
S/He reaches down....

Take good care of yourself for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine

▽ Kinship ▽ News ▽ Kinship ▽

Rena Chogo of GALK (Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya) is working to address the issue of decriminalization of homosexuality with the colonial government of Kenya. There is a strong belief that colonialization of Kenya encouraged sodomy laws. In earlier times queer Africans led their lives without undue notice.

Events Calendar 2011

June



- 4 Region 8 at Sacramento Pride
- 11 Region One at Boston Pride
- 11 Washington Pride
- 26 Region One at New York Pride Fest
- 26 Kinship Netherlands at "Open Day"

July



- 17-19 Women & Children First
- 20-24 Kampmeeting USA

September



- 9-12 European Kinship Meeting Paris
- 12-18 EKM Holiday week France
- 30-Oct 2 Board Meeting in Nags Head NC

October



- 20-23 The Book & The Beach

November



- 3-6 Vermont Mini-Kampmeeting

December



- 17 Boston's Gay Men's Chorus Holiday Concert
- 30-Jan 1 First Night in Williamsburg, Virginia

Latest information: In August a Region 8 Retreat will take place!

Pamphlet

Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?
in various languages can be printed from
<http://www.sdakinship.org/leaflets/leaflet.html>

Can a Mother Forget?

Jos Anderson

**“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!”
Isaiah 49:15**



I recently heard a news story about a girl who was reunited with her mother after six years. Kidnapped at ten days old, Delimar Vera, when finally home with her biological mother, smiled and waved at reporters from her front window.

Investigators believed Delimar was kidnapped from her parents' row house by Carolyn Correa who covered her actions by setting fire to the girl's bedroom. Delimar's mother, Luzaida Cuevas, said she spotted her daughter at a first-grade birthday party, recognizing her by her dimples. In order to verify her suspicion, she told the little girl she had gum in her hair and proceeded to take a few strands to use for DNA testing. The test results verified Delimar's identity. With only ten days to memorize her daughter's features, Luzaida kept those features in her heart and mind for six years.

God loves us more. He promises He will never forget us. God knows every nook and cranny of our being. He knows us like no one else; the hairs on our head are known and loved. Only a God of love would take the time to remember each facet of our face. Because we are created in the image of God, we are a very significant part of Him, his Son, and the Holy Spirit. We were kidnapped, we were tracked, and we have been rescued at a high price. God never gives up on us.

So many of the mothers reading this have brought their own version of God's love to the work of raising children. This month we would like to honor you. ▽

On Mothers and Mothering

A Lesbian Mom

Debbie Hawthorn



For the most part, I raised my two boys with my ex-husband. I left and divorced him when they were 17 (DE) and 19 (DR). When I moved out, DE came to live with me. DR had learned to treat me with the same lack of respect and abuse as his father. I decided that if I was leaving one abusive person, I was leaving it all. I did not ask him if he wanted to live with me.

Life was peaceful for the first time in my life. On weekends DE was usually with friends or his Sea Cadet Corps. Members of my support network kept inviting me for visits every weekend. This was kind even though all I wanted was to spend some alone time in my apartment.

One of the families that took so much interest in me was the Toop family. I found out later that they were afraid that if I was left alone, I would go back to my ex and his abuse. By spending so much time with the Toops, I got to know Joy better. After almost a year, we discovered we were falling in love with each other.

I had raised my sons in the Seventh-day Adventist church. They

had been taught that homosexuality was wrong. When I told them I was falling in love with a woman, they had a difficult time wrapping their minds around all the changes.

At first DR seemed okay with it, but living with his dad took its toll. His dad constantly put both Joy and me down. He told both boys how bad I was. After a while DR decided that he could not handle it and cut all contact between us.

DE also had a tough time, but never cut contact, even after he moved out on his own. Our relationship did become somewhat strained. This was tough because we had always been close.

Both boys took their own steps to work through their feelings. DE's mother-in-law talked to him a lot. She even told him that "I was still his mom." Over time DE and I were able to get our close relationship back. He even lived with Joy and me for a few months before he got married. I believe seeing how happy I am and how good Joy is to me helped him accept our relationship.

DR contacted me after a couple of years. We met for coffee. I got to meet my two-year-old granddaughter for the first time. We slowly started rebuilding our relationship. He too has moved in with Joy and me and has come to the same conclusion his brother did. Their mom is happy. She has found someone who truly loves her and treats her with love and kindness.

Both boys have come to love and respect Joy. They call her step-mom. They both ask her for advice from time to time. Their children address her as GiGi, as she is completely accepted as one of their grandmothers.

This process was not easy. There were many, many tears shed. I think what helped was my choice to "be there" when my children called, my willingness to constantly tell them I love them, my refusal to pressure them, and the prayers I sent to God. ▽



On Sharing Care

Vickie Danielsen

We've done it so many times, Myrna now tells people, "You're welcome to stay with us, but you need to know we're the only long-term survivors in this house." Over the years, it's become clear to us that caregivers get the added bonus of spending the most high-quality time possible with people we've loved during their final years and final illnesses. Although Myrna and I have now run out of elders in either lineage, five times we've had the caregiving opportunity for immediate family.

The first set of circumstances for us came early in our relationship when Grandpa and Grandma, then aged 91 and 85, moved in with us in 1968 during the second year of our relationship. Grandpa died three years later in 1971. Grandma continued on with us another six years.

They were each three months short of 94 when they died in our home, six years apart.

Our next life-sharing opportunity came when Myrna's dad's health declined quickly. He'd always been a witty, vibrant, loving, and caregiving man himself; so it was a special treasure to be a significant part of his final months during which time he went from fully functional to bedridden. In this case, we stayed with and cared for him in the home



where he and Myrna's mom had lived for more than 40 years. He passed away at age 84 in 1991.

During the summer of 1992 my mom was diagnosed with gall bladder cancer. She was not someone with whom I'd spent much time during my developing years as I'd been raised by her parents, so I experienced her almost more as a distant older sister. Not long after her diagnosis, she was in hospice care in our home where she died at age 67, three months to the day after learning her condition. Interestingly, this experience was one of the most richly rewarding of all as my mom and I had many hours to sit together or lie side by side on her bed, hold hands, and just visit in quality ways which had never previously been known to us. During that three-month period, an emotional gap was bridged that I never thought possible.

Myrna's mom moved in with us Christmas Eve of 1994 following a brief but significant decline. She underwent serious surgery and died here at age 90 in August of 1995. Again, those months of caregiving were joyful and love-filled. During her lifetime, Myrna's mom had been known by her family as "Toots." In our garden, we made a path to facilitate ease for her to get to a specific area without going dangerously close to one of our ponds. That path will forever be known to us as "The 'Toots' Path."

I have always been accepted by Myrna's family as she has been by mine. It was somehow logical that we would be the caregivers for both our families, and we welcomed the opportunity. Caregiving has been a priceless gift to us; and it will not be unusual, we think, for any caregiver to say the time spent in the experience is some of the most precious time possible in human relationship.

It turns out, caregiving goes both ways! During a life-threatening MRSA infection and amputation I experienced from late 2009 through early summer a year ago, Myrna and I were attended, pampered, and loved in all the most important ways by many dear friends, especially Dan and Tony, who live about three blocks from us. They coordinated many evening meals for us, accompanied us to and at the hospital during several of my hospitalizations, and generally made it obvious they wanted us to survive our ordeal. As an added joy, our friends Bruce (whom we met nearly 30 years ago at a Kinship Kampmeeting) and Nitin came to Colorado to enjoy our state's fall colors, prepare an amazing Indian feast for 15 of our area friends, and celebrate our survival!

Call it karma, being "family," "casting bread on the water"—or give it some other name. By whatever descriptions, caregiving and care receiving are good things! ▽

Vickie Danielsen and Myrna Windecker previously known pseudonymously to *Connection* readers during Vickie's tenure as *Connection* editor (1982-1987) as J. Vicki Shelton and Emy Lou Johnson. [CT]



*A hug is a great gift...
one size fits all.
It can be given for any occasion
and it's easy to exchange
- unknown*



Always There

David Coltheart

When I was a child, my mother was always there. As the wife of a busy evangelist, she somehow juggled being a wife, mother, homemaker, secretary, and evangelistic assistant all at once. When we walked into the house from school, she was there. When we went to a different church every week to hear my Dad preach, she was there. When we accompanied Dad to countless evangelistic meetings in towns and cities (first the length of New Zealand and then later across Australia), she was there, helping him, and somehow looking after my younger brother, sister, and me all at the same time.

We moved to a new location almost every year. Despite the stresses of shifting to a new, and sometimes less than ideal, rented house and adjusting to a new school and church, Mum always seemed to have things at home organized and running smoothly within days. The house was always neat and clean, the beds were always made, and the garden always flourished. Growing up as kids, it was normal for us to be always on the move. The one constant was Mum's cooking—and I still remember the smell and taste of her home-baked chocolate puddings that were my favorite treat!

We shifted to the London area when I was 14. My dad was the director and speaker at the New Gallery Evangelistic Centre. Since the Adventist school was outside London, my brother and I boarded at the school from Monday to Friday and came home on weekends. With evangelistic meetings all day on Sabbath, and then again on Sunday afternoons and evenings, we spent most weekends at the New Gallery before heading back to school on the underground train. Somehow in that busy schedule, Mum managed to wash and iron clothes for us to take back with us. At the same time, she was there behind the scenes to make sure the evangelistic meetings unfolded as scheduled, looking after a thousand details that only she knew about.

During summer vacations, we toured Europe by car and tent; and Mum was there to feed the family and still look after us on the road. We walked for miles through the Waldensian valleys and mountains of Switzerland. We visited countless cathedrals and castles, and poked about historically significant churches and cemeteries. We walked the streets and explored museums—and there was still a meal prepared over a single burner gas stove in yet another campground that night.

During my college years, she was still there for me—although it was now limited to semester breaks and summer holidays. She welcomed me home as always, even when I brought friends home unannounced. Fortunately home was only 40 miles away from Newbold, and she was only a phone call away most days.

After my dad died and we returned to Australia, our roles reversed slightly. Now I was the pastor/evangelist, and I looked after her, helping her find somewhere to live. But, during the years that followed, she was still there. She became the sweetest grandmother to my three sons and was always available for a good chat on the phone. Now I was the one who moved every year or two, going home to visit Mum at Christmas or some other annual holiday.

After a decade of being alone, Mum remarried—and I had the privilege of conducting the wedding. I had already learned to love my stepfather, who was, and still is, the most gracious Christian gentle-





man anyone could meet. They will celebrate 25 years of marriage this year. Mum learned to operate a computer and connected to the internet years before me. Not only that, but she taught the other residents at the Adventist retirement village how to use Word® and Explorer®. She mastered PowerPoint® and is still one of the main IT operators for the church service. Recently she bought her first notebook computer.

Never the public speaker, Mum has always had the gift of listening to people's problems and providing encouragement and spiritual affirmation to help others in their walk with the Lord. In her quiet way, she radiates confidence and hope, faith and courage. Never once in all my years have I heard a word of criticism or doubt. Never has she ever had a problem that she needed to discuss. Mum always sees the best in people and chooses to live on the bright side of life.

Mum was always there when I needed her. Perhaps the hardest test of our relationship was the day I told her that I was gay and that I was leaving the daughter-in-law that she loves dearly. We both cried a bit and then dried our tears and got on with life. I know she struggled at first, trying to understand; but from the very first moment of hearing my story, she has been supportive, affirming, and loving. In the days that followed, she has remained an unfailing source of encouragement and love.

My Mum is a fighter, in a quiet, optimistic way. In the last few years, she has endured heart bypass surgery, intermittent back pain, and a broken hip. In March this year, she was diagnosed with bowel cancer; and surgery followed almost immediately. She is now recovering from the operation in the same way that she has managed everything in life—with a gracious smile and a will to live. At 87 years of age, she is still there. ▽

David's mum, Raye, lives with her husband, Gordon, in an Adventist retirement village in Queensland, Australia. [CT]

Mom



Karen Bitz, Vancouver, BC

My mother's name was Ruby. She was born in 1922, the eleventh of twelve children, and raised on an eight-acre farm in North Vancouver, BC, Canada.

I always loved the stories she told about her childhood, the times in which they lived, what they valued as a family, their sense of community, and their willingness to help friends and neighbors.

I had a close relationship with my mother; I could talk to her about anything that was on my mind. We had a lot of the same interests: antique hunting, going to flea markets, and a love of horses that took us to the local race track numerous times over the years. It was like having a best friend and a mom all rolled up in one. I remember the day when I finally came out to her. She smiled and said, "I already know." Wow, what a relief! I was so scared of losing my closeness to her.

A big change happened a few years after my father passed away. My mother and I decided it would make more sense to share a place to live. Because we lived in daily proximity to each other my mother discovered that I had a major addiction to alcohol. My addiction put an incredible strain on our relationship for many years.

In 1999, I finally got so sick that the only choice for me was to either sober up or die. Even then the choice to become clean was difficult. God intervened. I got into treatment. Needless to say, my mother was relieved. She was my proud support system as I became sober, went back to school, got a degree in Environmental Studies, and became gainfully employed once again. When I met Judy in 2007, my mother was very happy that I finally had someone special in my life. Mom welcomed Judy into our household.

In 2009, when my mother was diagnosed with cancer in her forehead, July took her to doctor's appointments and to the hospital. We both shared the care of my mother for the next two years. On January 11, 2011, my mother passed away. She was eighty-nine.

While Mom was in the hospice, a friend of mine visited her and shared her knowledge of Jesus. Mom said she got to know Christ in a more intimate way. I miss her a lot but know we will see each other when Christ comes again. I'm grateful to be asked to share my story about my mother. She was a wonderfully kind and generous person. I think you would have liked her. ▽

Loving and Listening

Dave Ferguson

The greatest gift my mother gave me was unconditional love. We didn't always see eye-to-eye on some topics. We would agree to disagree, especially after I became more liberal in my political views. It wasn't always easy. I remember one time when we were talking and she made a comment about the "lifestyle" I had "chosen." This was after years of our discussions about homosexuality. I was so upset and hurt by that comment, I replied, "If that is the way you feel, then I guess we don't have anything else to talk about." And I hung up the phone. It is the only time in my life I have hung up on my mother. We had developed what I thought was a good relationship and talked nearly every day. But, after this conversation, I didn't call her. Two weeks went by and she finally called me and said, "Please forgive me. I know this is not something you have chosen. I will never say that again." Needless to say, we were both nearly in tears at that point and our bond was even closer. Even during the time between our conversations, I didn't doubt that she loved me. I just didn't feel like she had been listening to me. But, after she called back, I knew she both loved me and she was listening. ▽



The Motherhood of All of Us

Marcos Apolonio

How many mothers do you have? You may have your biological mother, the mother who raised you, the mothers you got along the way, people who sometimes or all the time play the mother role in your life. These are individuals who genuinely and altruistically care for you, worry about you, check with you on a regular basis, and hold a special place in your heart. They may be women and may be older than you. Sometimes they are your age. Sometimes they are younger. Sometimes they are men. Sometimes they are related by



blood. Many times they are purely and powerfully related by love. The most important quality to have in our life is people strengthening our support system who love us unconditionally, know who we really are, cheer us up, validate our uniqueness, believe in our potential, want to see our success, will always be there, don't give up on us, accept our imperfections, and focus on our strengths. They are ambassadors representing the Mother/Father Creator who put in both genders Her/His characteristics. These include the "mothering gene," to enrich the human individual and relational experience. This May, I am planning to thank many people who have been a mother to me: my mother, my partner, my "spare" mothers, my siblings, my special friends, and my God. It feels good to notice that someone cares. Happy Mother's Day. ▽



*Children need
your presence more
than your presents.
-Jesse Jackson*



What Being a Mother Has Taught Me

Carrol Grady

The old saying goes, "Being a mother means letting your heart go walking around outside your body forever."

A Mother Forever

Forever is a long time. Young mothers may look forward to the day when their children will be grown and they won't be so tied down. What they don't realize is that when that day comes, they will no longer have as much influence over their children, but they will continue to worry about them just the same. As their children venture confidently into adulthood, mothers will see pitfalls and problems ahead, but their children are not as likely to listen to their counsel. Then, more than ever, mothers are driven to their knees to seek divine help.

Perhaps there are some mothers who can look back and feel that they have done a good job of raising their children, but many more are painfully aware of their mistakes and the things they wish they had done differently. That is when mothers pray for God to cover their mistakes and make good where they failed.

Understanding God's Love

Being a mother (or father) is to better understand God's love for us, His broken and erring children. If we can feel such a fierce, protective love for our children, what must God feel for us?

If being a mother makes us willing to give up our sleep and waken through the night to feed our newborns, to wash messy diapers (well, I'm showing my age here; I guess few modern mothers wash out diapers!), clean up vomit from a shag rug, or rock a sick child all night, to ignore our revulsion for blood, and bandage scraped knees and elbows—all for the reward of a smile, a giggle, or a pair of tiny arms around our neck—then we can begin to have the faintest conception of how God cares for us.

When mothers are there to tell their children, "Don't worry; it's going to be okay," in times of stress or danger; when they want to make their children happy, but are willing to withhold something that isn't good for them; when they hold their breath and cross their fingers for a child who is striving to pass an important test or to accomplish an athletic feat; when their hearts ache for a child who doesn't feel accepted, who is teased and bullied by his peers; when they keep on loving during times of teenage alienation; when they can't sleep till they hear the door close after a late-returning child—then they understand just a little how God feels when we are hurting or rebelling.

The Gift of Creation

God has given parents the exciting opportunity to share in His creative power and to join in creating a tiny new life from their own bodies. And He has given mothers the special thrill of having this new creation grow inside them, of feeling it develop and move around, and finally, through pain, blood, sweat, and tears, to deliver this new little person into their waiting arms and a new life of marvelous potential.

I can remember repeated times, during the years my children were growing up, writing my mother and telling her how much more I could appreciate what she had gone through with me. Just as children grow up, have children of their own, and begin to appreciate their mothers more, so, as we mature, we grow in our appreciation of and love for our heavenly Parent. God gives us children to help us learn about His love.

Of course, most of this applies to fathers, too. Here is a poem I wrote many years ago:

The Father's Love

As a father loves his child,
Guides its faltering, baby steps,
When it falls, wipes tears away
And helps it try again,
Even so does God love me!
Through my child His love I see.

As a father sadly yearns
Over his rebelling child,
Welcomes back with open arms,
Gladly pardons all mistakes.
Even so God pardons me!
Through my child His love I see.

As a mother gently trains,
Helps her children to obey,
Nourishes a love for truth
And inspires to kindly deeds,
Even so does God help me!
Through my child His love I see.

As a mother stops to hear
Childish confidences sweet,
Listens to each plea for help,
And shares each happiness,
Even so does God hear me!
Through my child His love I see. ▽



Join Us on the Queen Mary Ocean Liner/Hotel!!

This year's pre-Kampmeeting event will take place July 17 and 18. We have booked 30 staterooms on the luxurious Queen Mary, docked in the Long Beach, California, harbor. A mere US \$ 150.00 per person guarantees you lovely accommodations, two complimentary breakfast buffets,

a chance to wander an historic ocean liner, transportation to Catalina Island, and a chance to meet or have a reunion with wonderful people. We are looking forward to seeing you! You can register at sdakinship.org (Events | Women & Children First) or you can send your registration check to our office at PO Box 69, Tillamook, Oregon 97141-0069. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact Karen, our Director of Women's Interests, at women@sdakinship.org. ▽

We would like to introduce you to...



Dahlia Holmes

I was conceived by the sea in East End, Grand Cayman Islands, and born 9 months later in Kingston, Jamaica, W.I. I was raised in all three of the Cayman Islands and all 14 parishes of Jamaica. Such is the life of a Seventh-day Adventist pastor's daughter.

My primary school education was at Willowdene Preparatory school (Seventh-day

Adventist). My high schools included St. Catherine High (Catholic), Knox College High (Presbyterian), and West Indies College High (Seventh-day Adventist). I had a "religious" education like no other. I have two associate degrees, one bachelor's degree, and a ton of experience in unrelated fields. I can fix my own car, build my own computer, and build a house from scratch, doing everything except the electrical work. I landscape hillside property and vet my animals. I am a gentle country girl with more gentleman than lady built in. I am marrying a beautiful city girl who is a difficult woman and who thinks I am an arrogant bastard (a la "The Notebook").

I work at anything I am being paid to do at the time, but am trained as a computer technician and an artist. My hobbies include, but are not limited to, sleeping, sleeping, sleeping, waking up, taking the kids to school, feeding the kids, preventing them from killing each other, praying I don't kill them, and then going back to sleep. In between that, when I find the time, I write, sing, create art, give counsel, mediate disputes, cook and entertain my friends, sing and minister in my church, read, watch Netflix, take photos, update my websites and Facebook, keep Andrea focused on finishing her work, and, when she is in town, take very good care of her (wink).

My favorite color is white (always a good starting place for an artist and poet ☺). I haven't met a music genre that didn't contain least one

song or piece I loved. I love movies, but the ones I have spent the most time on are "Fried Green Tomatoes" and "What Dreams May Come."

My favorite books include The Bible, *Oh the Places We Can Go* by Dr. Seuss, *There Is No Such Place as Far Away*, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach, *The Little Prince* by Antoine St. Exupery, *If I Found a Wistful Unicorn: A Gift of Love* by Ann Ashford, *Little Spotty Thing* by Mick Inkpen, *A Rumor of Angels: Quotations for Living, Dying, and Letting Go* by Gail Perry Johnston and Jill Perry Rabideau, and *The Xenogenesis Series* by Octavia Butler, to name a few. My favorite foods are anything I cook ☺.

I learned about Kinship from my cousin who introduced me to the guys from Walla Walla one Sabbath in Seattle. This organization has been extremely helpful to me. Kinship gives me a place where I can talk to people who understand how I see the world and my life.

I have two teenage sons (whew), one "adopted" 20-something daughter, five best friends, no job, and a fiancé all the way in Jersey City, NJ. I am getting ready to move to rectify that last part. The move will hopefully change the no-job part of the picture, too.

The most important part of my spiritual journey is that no matter how far my church and others try to put God from me, God always spans the distance.

Beside me I saw me put a wall up between us
As I felt myself crying for you.
Because it seemed safer not to see the reason I was crying
In hopes that not seeing me you would go away
...But, you stayed.
I kept the wall I put up between us
For though it was drab and boring
It was a predictable part of that side of my life
That had been unpredictable and vulnerable for so long
And I feared that if I moved it I'd find you still there
...And, you were. And every once in a while my memories
Bounce off the wall I built to keep you out,
Memories of your face, your smile, your friendship -- our life
And I'd miss you and curse the distance that now holds us apart
Wishing you would reach for me—
...As you are doing now.
Finally in a fit of frustration at myself for my self imposed loneliness
I take a hammer to my wall
And in a fit of insanity calculated to overrule my fear of the unpredictable,
I tear down the wall of my "safe" existence praying that I will find you there where I left you
But bracing myself for DIS - appointment.
I slowly open my eyes and see you where you have always been ...still right beside me.

DH

Stephanie Spencer

Before I start, let me say that the Lord has been with me through thick and thin, seeing me through some very hard and dark times. I have seen “outcomes” that I did not wish for at the time but that turned out better than I could have ever planned.

I was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest into a fifth generation (on my mother’s side) Seventh-day Adventist family. We were the “typical Adventist family.” My mom stayed home with us while we attended Adventist schools. Everything revolved around the church. I attended Auburn camp meetings from the time I was 6 months old. They were the highlight of our summers. I was fortunate to be educated in many areas besides the church. Music was a big part of our family. We attended concerts and films with various world flavors. During my school years I took flute, piano, organ, and percussion lessons. We were a family that could discuss anything, even in the moral realms, except for the gay and lesbian issues. Leave it to me to introduce that subject to my family as well.

Even as a child I would give my teachers back rubs at school. They all told me I should go into massage. I had no interest in massage until my senior year at Auburn Academy. That I year I was so stressed by taking thirteen different classes, including music lessons, and band/wind ensemble, that I just plain stressed out. I had never had a massage, but at the suggestion of my best friend I decided to give it a whirl. That led me into enrolling in massage school the September after my high school graduation. I worked in several offices until the economy bogged down.

I had known, deep down, that I was a lesbian from the age of seven. I wouldn’t admit it to anyone, including God. I didn’t know what to do or who to turn to. I thought that I was the only soul on the earth who was a lesbian and an Adventist. I prayed and prayed to be spared this “awful” situation. I thought that God could/would make me all better, if only I had a strong enough faith in Him. I fasted and prayed and got increasingly overwhelmed with the subject. I was so terrified by the thought that I could lose my family, friends, and everything I had known in my life by uttering three words (nope, not “I love you”), “I’m a lesbian.”

Later that year I joined internet chat groups that dealt with depression and my sexuality. I happened upon this really cool character. Munkie’s real name was Joy. She later became my wife. At the time I had no idea she was a closeted lesbian. I did know she was highly supportive of me.

A year later as I was talking with Joy online she mentioned someone in her life that needed safe touch. The topic of conversation drifted from the other person to Joy. I told her it was too bad she



couldn’t come in for a massage. I knew she had been through difficult times over the past several years. We had never discussed our locations or any details other than my sexuality. I just assumed this Joy person lived somewhere half way around the world. I was really surprised to find out that we both lived in Seattle, forty-five minutes away from each other! I believe the Holy Spirit impressed me that she needed to come in for a massage. I tell her now it was an incredible pick-up line. I dropped my normal fees down to \$5. Joy recently told me it was the last \$5 she had in her wallet—all the money she had for food for that month. Boy, did that make me feel bad.

I was not attracted to her, or so I thought. I was in professional massage mode. I took a previously scheduled month-long trip to Australia as a pilgrimage to reconcile my sexuality with my spirituality. The journey ended up convincing me that I could not live without Joy. I ended the trip by sending her a very vague message that asked her to marry me. When I called her that night I asked if she had gotten the e-card. She told me she was trying to figure out what I was asking. We got married two years later in June.

As part of my process, I gradually came out to friends and family. I got some excited responses and some that were just the opposite. Some people responded in a way I knew they would. Some people showed me I did not know them so well. I was cut off from some families with children. I was horrified to think their parents thought I would have done some sort of harm to them sexually. How odd that in their minds I was now different because I loved my wife and not a husband.

I thought Joy and I were the only Christian lesbian couple in the world. I found it increasingly difficult to attend church. When Joy found the LGBTI support group for Mormons, Affirmation, I searched the internet and found Kinship. I praise God for that connection everyday! I have been so richly blessed. We began attending an open and affirming United Church of Christ in our town. It was a bit strange for me to go to church on Sunday, but we kept Saturday Sabbath at home together.

I decided to go back to school and become a Re-

gistered Nurse. God had other plans. During finals week in the classes that are prerequisites for nursing school I was struck down by a car while crossing the street. I heard the voice of the Holy Spirit say *turn right!* seconds before I was hit. If I had not responded to that prompt I would not be here today writing to you. I had a closed head injury, a scrape on my knee, and lots of bruises. I am working on accepting that the damage done by the head injury will not improve from here. I was able to finish my associates degree, with honors, six months later. The hard work helped reroute my brain pathways. The rerouting helps me even more today.

In the five years of healing since the accident, God has connected me with a lot of loving people. I have been ashamed of who I am at times since my

accident. This was not my plan. But it is not all bad. A lot of people can't or won't understand what is really going on. They can't understand why I can't just get over it, and move on.

I have started to teach myself many tech/electronic skills, photography/videography, and website design. It may take me months to learn something, but I can do a lot of things, despite my injuries. It has become apparent that I cannot work. I am now on disability. I have been able to do some volunteer things, like being Region 7 Coordinator, since summer 2009. The Lord continues to use me with people who have had a head injury and those who have not. We never know if the only Jesus people will see is us. Blessings to you all. ▽

Health Tips of the Month

To shave as much as 1½ inches from your waist, just stand up more. In a study of middle-aged adults, those who broke up their sedentary hours the most—by frequently getting out of their chairs for a bit—had waists that were more than an inch smaller than their sit-for-longer peers. Waist size is a rough indicator of how healthy you are. A big waist means you're more likely to have bad stuff going on inside your body—such as inflammation, high blood pressure, insulin resistance, high blood sugar, and unhealthy fat deposits around vital organs. All of which bump up your risk for conditions like diabetes and heart disease. But taking frequent breaks from sitting could melt fat around your middle—and they don't even have to be long breaks. In the study, people had to stand for only one minute for it to count as a break. So the breaks you take don't have to be long. But they do have to be frequent to have an impact. Use a reminder system that will provide regular prompts whenever you're sedentary—whether it's a watch that beeps, a timer that ticks, or a computer program that gives you a pop-up reminder. Sound like too much? Then consider this: related studies suggest that people with highly sedentary habits live shorter lives and have a greater risk of heart

disease—even if they exercise regularly. So make it a point to separate your derriere from your chair throughout the day.

Whether you're getting takeout or stir-frying at home tonight, having your sautéed veggies over brown rice instead of white may help you skirt blood sugar problems. Here's why. Research suggests that a diet high in white rice can ratchet up blood sugar, and in turn, the risk of type 2 diabetes. That's exactly what happened in a five-year Japanese study. The women in the study who ate several bowls of white rice a day were almost 1.5 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes compared with the women who ate much less of this refined grain. It's not a stretch to imagine that white rice, which has a high glycemic index and is lacking the blood-sugar-friendly soluble fiber, vitamins, and minerals of brown rice, might cause blood sugar spikes. But it's pretty scary stuff to see the straight-line connection to diabetes risk in the study. Interestingly, the men in the study who ate lots of white rice didn't have the same risk for diabetes as the white-rice-loving women. But the researchers think that exercise may be the key variable, and that the men's activity levels probably accounted for the difference. In fact, exercise is one way both men and women can help counter the impact that refined foods have on blood sugar. In the study, extra helpings of white rice didn't seem to increase diabetes risk nearly as much in women who exercised about one hour a day.

Next time the blues settle in for a visit, put on a pot of lentil soup. Lentils are rich in folate. According to Roberta Lee, nutrition expert and author of *The SuperStress Solution*, this mood-boosting B vitamin can help balance brain chemicals in a way that keeps depression at arm's length. Al-



though more research is needed to confirm exactly how folate chases away blue moods, Lee notes that the vitamin has a reputation for supporting nerve function and helps the body metabolize several feelhappy brain chemicals, such as dopamine, serotonin, and noradrenaline. In fact, folate's mood-enhancing benefit was recently borne out in a Harvard study that revealed a significant percentage of depressed folks may be deficient in this critical B vitamin. Cooked lentils provide about 180 micrograms of folate per half cup. But if you're not a lentil lover, a folic acid supplement can also help you get the proper amount. For maximum, you want about 700 micrograms per day from food and supplements combined. For good-mood measure, be sure to get your fill of other B vitamins as well, like B6 and B12. Magnesium, zinc, and vitamin C are important to emotional health and well-being, too.

Something as little as this daily seven-minute ritual might help you get skinny. In a study, dieters who spent about seven minutes meditating each day experienced far fewer food cravings than their non-meditating peers. And the meditators were far more likely to resist their cravings. Here's how it all worked: Over a seven-week period, a group of study participants was taught "mindfulness meditation." With this method, they practiced recognizing, accepting, and experiencing their cravings rather than trying to ignore or suppress them. As a result of this meditative practice, people did a better job of holding those cravings off. Researchers think the mindfulness meditation worked better than relying on sheer willpower because the practice helped minimize the frustration and obsessive preoccupation with food triggered by trying, often unsuccessfully, to suppress food cravings. Mindfulness meditation may not work for everyone. The key is to know what works for you. Maybe losing yourself in a gripping novel helps you resist cravings. Or taking a brisk walk. Or cooking. Or washing dishes. Just keep your chosen tricks handy. And if distraction, avoidance, and willpower fail you, consider giving meditation a try. ▽



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PARIS 2011

Liberté ♥ *Egalité* ♥ *Kinship*

Réunion Européenne de Kinship | Septembre 9-12 | European Kinship Meeting

Guest speaker Luca Marulli is a second-generation Adventist born in central Italy. Baptized at the age of fourteen, he felt a strong call to ministry. Luca studied at The Adventist University of Theology in Florence Italy, Collonges-sous-Salève in Haute-Savoie, and Andrews University.

In 2003 he began to pastor the Toronto, Ontario, Canada Italian Company. Since September 2009, Luca has taught New Testament in the Adventist University of Theology in Collonges-sous-Salève. He is currently finishing his doctoral degree in New Testament studies at the Protestant University of Theology in Strasbourg, France.

At EKM 2011 Luca will focus on "The Welcoming Heart and Body of Jesus: Is There a Place for Me Too?" He is on the Ethics Committee for French Adventists and knows that the issue of homosexuality will come up and needs to be addressed by the church in France.

Bienvenue

PARIS 2011

Vacance ♥ *Kinship Europe* ♥ *Holiday*

For our EKM holiday week, which is following our meeting, we have found a stunning place in the countryside about 45 km from Paris. This lovely place has a beautiful view, a wonderful garden with a little swimming pool, and is nicely decorated. Only for the happy few who register in time! Price for the week approx. € 175 (room only).



European Kinship Meeting 2011 will be located in a self-catering cottage, located in Auvers-sur-Oise! We have eight bedrooms with four beds and a bathroom each. The meeting room is a place where we can have our meals and discussions. A terrace lies outside, next to the kitchen. Everything is on the ground floor. We have access to a private parking area. The train station is only a ten-minute walk from our cottage. We are planning to enjoy the trails along the river, horseback riding, and a connection to the village and to the city of Paris.

Auvers-sur-Oise is a community 27.2 km (16.9 miles) from the center of Paris. During the 19th century, a number of painters lived and worked in Auvers-sur-Oise, including Paul Cézanne, Charles-François Daubigny, Camille Pissarro, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, and, of course, Vincent van Gogh. Daubigny's house is now a museum where you can see paintings by the artist, his family, and friends. As you walk along the river from Auvers toward Pontoise, you can see a number of views which figured in the paintings of Pissarro.

You can register on www.sdakinship.org

Welcome

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