

connection

The Journal of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. May-June 2007 Vol. 31 No. 5



We Gather Together...

These last few weeks have been filled with multinational Kinship Mini Kampmeetings, conferences, social weekends and events. In the next few weeks we can look forward to the US Kampmeeting, the European Kinship Meeting and the Australian Kampmeeting. This issue of the Connection will be dedicated to showing you a little of what has gone by and giving you more information about what you can still attend.

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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, transgendered, and intersex individuals, their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is an organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people.

Founded in 1976, the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the US. Kinship has a board of up to 15 officers and 13 regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes several thousand people in 43 countries.

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

Support Kinship

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

SDA Kinship, PO Box 69, Tillamook, Oregon 97141, call toll-free in the U.S. 866-732-5677 or toll from outside the U.S. 01 (941) 371-7606, or visit SDA Kinship's Web Site at: www.sdakinship.org.

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April 20-22

Mini Kampmeeting

Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, USA

Forty five of us came from at least seven US states to enjoy the beach, the food, the company, the learning and the time to regenerate. We welcomed the Sabbath on Friday evening with a reading about the gifts of the Holy Day and got a chance to meet each other. Sabbath morning we had a great discussion about the Bible and archeology before getting to carefully cogitate on Mitch's sermon. Sabbath afternoon vespers was a sacred open mike concert. Saturday night was our annual dinner out. ▼



The Dream is Alive

Mitch Tyner

Have you ever experienced cognitive dissonance; conflicting messages from two or more authorities? Sure, we all have. I could have started with the time when, after your parents had assured you that Santa Claus was real, the older kids at school told you that he was really your father.

It's possible to have fun creating cognitive dissonance and even to use it to bring about positive results. Recently I was one of two Kinship representatives, along with clergy from a wide spectrum of religious groups, on Capital Hill to lobby for passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2007. This Act will make sexual orientation a protected category along with race, religion, gender, age and national origin. It was interesting to watch the rather startled expressions of other clergy when they discovered that I was an Adventist, someone they clearly expected to oppose the bill. Hopefully, their view of us is now a bit wider and clearer.

For me, running into cognitive dissonance has often been a good thing. I arrived at Union College, in Nebraska, as a loyal son of the south and a defender of racial segregation. That's what I had been taught; it was unquestioned where I grew up. While at Union I encountered a bright young theology teacher named Mervyn Maxwell, who had a long discussion with me about Peter's Joppa vision of the animals on the sheet. It then became very clear to me that this was not about food but about people, and about my relationship with the people who had been placed in my life. My struggle with the cognitive dissonance I encountered during those conversations changed my life in a good way.

There are times when such struggles with dissonance cause pain. Those struggles often involve religious belief and practice. That day on Capitol Hill we visited most of the Maryland congressional delegation, with positive results. One outcome, however, was totally unexpected. After our last visit, another member of the group stopped me and said, in a tone exuding hostility, "So you're an Adventist? I was an Adventist for forty years. I graduated from Oakwood College. I left because of sexism and racism in the church" She had experienced cognitive dissonance between the ideals she was taught and what she saw in practice. I could say nothing but to assure her that we are not all alike, and that a return visit might surprise her.

How do we deal with cognitive dissonance? We investigate whether or not the facts presented are really facts. We probe the reliability of the presumptions with which we approach the facts. We reassess the conflicts and their sources. We use those same tools when the dissonance involves faith. Many seminary students must deal with this. They find, for instance, that the Bible can be read to say that the world has four corners, which we now know is not so. How do we relate to that statement? Seminarians find that the gospels sometimes present conflicting sequences of events. They discover that evidence for the Noachian Flood is less convincing than they may have thought. They ask how a whale, a salt water creature, could swallow Jonah and then travel far up the Tigris River, in fresh water, to spit him out in Ninevah? We eventually either turn our backs on the evidence or come to a more nuanced view of inspiration and of its result: scripture. It can be a difficult and stressful task, but a necessary one.

Those dissonances involve conflict between belief and apparent fact. There is an even more difficult level of dissonance: What if the cognitive dissonance comes from your church. What if your church says that you must change, that you must believe something you cannot accept as true, or that you must be something or someone that you are not and never will be? How do you deal with that? Many of you have had difficult, painful experience with exactly that conflict. Judging from your stories, it must be one of the most painful conflicts imaginable.

A recent issue of Biblical Archeology Review contained an article that illustrates different outcomes of such conflicts. In it, four noted scholars of religion were asked, "How has your scholarship affected your faith?" The answers are instructive. All four of these men are serious, respected scholars. All came to their field with religious faith. Two lost it. Only one kept it unchanged.

Hear the testimony of scholar No.1: "I lost my fundamentalist faith because of my scholarship. I had a very high view of scripture as inerrant: no mistakes of any kind: geographical, scientific or historical. There could be no contradictions. Yet I found that these views were wrong. I found discrepancies and contradictions. I found that the very basis of my faith was problematic. So I left

fundamentalism and became a mainline Protestant. I ended up losing my faith altogether while trying to deal with theodicy - the problem of human suffering. If God is all powerful and loving, how can there be so much suffering in the world? I found that I could no longer believe in a God who intervenes in human affairs. When I looked around, I didn't see a God who intervenes." His faith was grounded in historical claims that he found to be unsupported by the evidence. He is now an atheist.

Scholar No. 2 says: "My father was a fire breathing fundamentalist preacher. I was ordained at 17, worked my way through college and seminary, then Harvard for a PhD. There I met the typical Protestant conundrum: It's all true or none of it is true. My scholarship destroyed my faith." He went to Israel, and says "Seeing all three monotheistic religions up close, I became cynical." He became a reform Jew, and now considers himself an agnostic. But it wasn't all conflicts of fact for him. The last straw was the death of his son. He, too, couldn't see God intervening. He, too, foundered on the problem of theodicy.

Scholar No. 3 is Jewish. He says: "Inerrancy and literalism are not part of the Jewish tradition. Faith is not a rational thing we arrive at, not an argument we can win. Belief is based on our experience, a form of existentialism. That doesn't mean that Biblical events are not historical, but that they are not taken literally. What's important to me is not the literality of the seven days of creation but that I have experienced God as creator." The Exodus? "Somehow or other, it happened." The problem of evil and suffering - theodicy? "We can't explain it. Judaism doesn't claim that the individual will get all the answers to everything." He stresses that faith is a lifelong quest, and that we are commanded to believe. "Believing is a challenge. Otherwise, the command to believe would not be necessary."

Scholar No. 4 grew up in East Texas, where as he says, you either believed the Bible literally or not at all. There was no middle ground. As he studied, he found that he could no longer believe that way. He now rejects inerrancy, but is still a Baptist minister. He found that his faith was based on 'propositional truth,' something testable. He had reasoned, "If it can't be tested, then it can't be falsified and cannot be known as truth," with ideas like God intervenes in our lives. Suffering tends to discredit that idea. His faith is now based not on propositional truth but on experience. As to the historic claims of the bible, he says simply, "I don't worry about it. The Christian tradition made a mistake in intellectualizing so much that Christian experience got submerged. That left theology bereft of experience."

Significantly, this man also experienced the death of a child. At that time, he says, he "got mad at God, and told him so." But he didn't abandon his faith.

What can we learn from their experiences? Several things.

- That fundamentalism and Biblical literalism are hazardous to faith when confronted with hard facts. Thankfully, as Seventh-day Adventists we believe in thought inspiration, not verbal dictation.
- That the problem of theodicy, God's intervention or lack thereof, must be faced, although it is ultimately beyond total human comprehension, this side of the kingdom. The Great Controversy, at the core of Adventism, suggests an answer. We believe that God has intentionally withdrawn a degree of His control from this world so that evil and its results may be seen for what they are. Our planet and the entire universe need to see the results of the rebellion of evil. For that to happen, God's intervention will not be in evidence as we would expect from the loving God we are assured that He is.
- That looking to religion as a source of all the answers will fail us, as will using it as a crutch, a source of self-importance, a way to avoid life's hard questions. Our religion is, of course, a source of answers, but it is better seen as a source of ideals. As such it will also always be a source of questions as we seek to apply those ideals. We must often remember the words of Martin Luther, who compared faith to walking through a doorway into total darkness, not with knowledge of what awaits us but with absolute assurance that the arms of God are there to catch us if we fall.
- That faith, fact and reason must inter-react; we cannot ultimately separate them. Certainly the Biblical text is sure, but we must just as surely think to understand it. To help clarify this area, see Alden Thompson's especially helpful book, *Inspiration*.
- That scholar No.4 is right: ultimately we believe based on our own experience, not demonstrable facts. If faith were fact based, it wouldn't be faith.

Of these four scholars, one did not experience cognitive dissonance but reminds us that the command to believe is there because it sometimes takes effort. Of the three who did experience cognitive dissonance, two lost faith, and the third kept faith only by a rather vague avoidance of issues. Thankfully, there is a better way. The Bible gives us an example of that better way in the life and words of Paul.

Paul doesn't just hint. He tells us repeatedly that

he has high ideals and aspirations, but that he does not profess to have all the answers. In I Corinthians 13:12 he wisely observes that at least for now, we see through a glass, darkly and incompletely. In Philippians 3:11-14 he observes that he is not perfect, but that he continues to 'press toward the mark.' Paul was a Harvard graduate of his day, a product of a rigorous education. He wrote these passages when he was no longer young and he knew that he still didn't have all the answers. His faith was not built on black and white, on knowledge of facts, but rather on his own experience - his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Was Paul ever faced with problems that seemed to have no solution, with questions that seem to have no answers? Most certainly, he was. How did he face those situations? He acted on principle, not on theoretical or supposedly factual absolutes. He reminded himself (and us) that the world contains more questions than answers. He faced - indeed, he embraced - the sometimes uncomfortable truth that change is inevitable, and often desirable. He showed us the locus and source of real confidence and security. Paul describes his journey throughout Romans 8. In verse 1, Paul concludes a long discussion of righteousness by faith by stating categorically that "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." He continues to develop this thought through verse 31, where he concludes, "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? In verse 35 he begins what has been called the 'cascade of confidence:' "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus!" Ultimately it doesn't matter whether Jonah was swallowed by a sea faring fish or when the Exodus took place. Regardless of any conflict, apparent or real, that life can present to us, nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God. That is our security, real, solid, permanent, unshakable.

Many of us share a dream; a dream of a church where cognitive dissonance is not fatal to faith, a community of faith that accepts human realities, one that ministers to cognitive dissonance rather than denying it, a church that follows the admonition of the ancient prophets to "Let justice roll down like a river" (Amos 6:24), to "Do justice, love mercy and

walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

I think of that dream when visiting one of my favorite places in Washington, the Air and Space Museum. One of the great movies regularly shown there depicts the daring, imaginative, and often oddball things people have done in pursuit of the dream of flight. It includes the Challenger disaster, making the point that things do not always go as planned. It shows that we have not yet attained all of which those pioneers dreamed. It concludes with the striking phrase that is also its title: The Dream is Alive.

I dream of a church that loves justice and mercy and walks humbly with God. I dream of a church that values people far more highly than supposed facts and theory. We are not there yet but we are making progress. I don't know if this dream will be realized in this world but as long as you and I share it and live it and build toward it with each other, that dream is alive. ▼



27-30 April

Den Haag, The Netherlands

Eight of us gathered for several excursions throughout the weekend. We visited the glorious Keukenhof Exhibition of tulips. Karen and Ivan took about 1300 photos between them. On Sabbath we met at the home of Gerard and Annelies. We hung over the deck to see the baby ducks, we ate great food, we discussed philosophy and spirituality, we toured the canals and the concerts of Amersfoort. Sunday we went to Delft to see the remarkable pottery and art there. Sunday evening we gathered our sense of adventure and forayed into Den Haag center for Indonesian food and some of the celebrations of Queen's Day. It was a mix between Mardi Gras and Independence Days. I apologize to many of our readers. The Queen in this case is female. We walked on the beach, we planned EKM6. We researched houses for our holiday. We flew home with bags of chocolate. ▼



2 June

Brisbane, Australia

Noel Thorpe

Our meeting was blessed with a cool and rainy late autumn day. This was particularly wonderful because Brisbane has been experiencing a drought with water restrictions. The temperature was around 20 Celsius. The change sounds like "Showers of Blessing" from one of our old hymnals. We had not had a Kinship get together in Brisbane for more than four years and chose of mix of social and spiritual activities for this one. We wanted to have people get to know each other in a comfortable way. We particularly wanted to make sure that everyone at our meeting felt accepted. Wendell was our host for the weekend. Even though he is in the middle of renovations and had to pull a tarpaulin over his roof during the storm, he made all of us feel welcomed and at home.

Three new Kinship members joined us. We discussed our September Kampmeeting in Sydney, talked about activities in the United States and shared what Scot is doing from Perth in his role as Kinship's Board Member in charge of Public Relations. David Coltheart was our speaker. He is a former evangelist pastor who was the editor of a bi-monthly magazine called Archaeological Diggings. His message focused on Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Like most Seventh Day Adventist gatherings, we had a great spread of food afterwards, even leftovers. Like most Kinship gathering s we had a great discussion during the afternoon. We're already planning our next meeting in early August. ▼



16-20 May
Bremen, Germany
Ruud Kieboom

Kinship News

We would like to offer condolences to Dave Ferguson on the death of his mother. If you would like to make a contribution in her memory, Dave has said she would have liked one sent to: Gospel Outreach, 712 N.E. College Place, WA 99324

Ex-gay ministry information:

Peterson Toscano has launched a new web site as a resource for survivors of the ex-gay movement. For more information you can contact him through:
www.petersontoscano.com

Kinship's Older Adults - Ren Reynolds

You might want to take a look at Sherwin Nuland's new book *The Art of Aging*. In it he discusses death, longevity and health.

US Region 1 - Catherine Taylor

Bruce and Eddie have invited us to join them at the 38th annual New York Pride festival. They can be found on 8th Avenue between 14th and 23rd streets in Chelsea. There will be a women's dance at Pier 54 on 13th Street at the Hudson River in Hudson Park from 6-11PM

US Region 2 - Yolanda Elliott

June 8th we rented our truck and at least eight of us were part of the Washington D.C. Pride parade. Memorial Day weekend we had our beginning of the summer season pool party with fifteen people. July 13 we invite any of you in the area to our vesper's services.

On Sabbath of Pentacost weekend Kees and I visited Joachim and Stefan in their kind and welcoming Seventh Day Adventist Church of Bremen Findorff. As in our last visit, people welcomed us warmly. Some even remembered us and our relationship through Kinship with Joachim and Stefan. This is rare in Germany. It is even different than the other local Adventist church where members are more formal and sometimes judgemental. The preacher at this church has spoken at a German Kinship (HAD) meeting. He has a nice and open way of preaching and is very aimable. As part of the service people stay in the sanctuary and meditate to music and slides or join the pastor for a discussion of his sermon. Members of all ages participated in the service. I love the German hymns. We were invited to the Sabbath Dinner that is prepared each week by Joachim and other members of the church. We had a chance to get acquainted with the most chronologically gifted but youthful couple in the congregation. We enjoyed both their thoughts and their spirit.

The church building was once a business. There are many big and small rooms. One was converted to being the sanctuary. Some are now Sabbath School rooms. Some are conference rooms. And, there is an exhibition room for a variety of events to share with the public. What a nice way to promote your congregation! There are still some empty rooms. They will be turned into low cost sleeping areas for EKM7. Nearby is a comfortable, modern youth hostel close to the Weser River and an Ibis hotel. Both places are with-in walking distance of the church. Next year we will have a kitchen to cook our own meals, have wonderful meeting rooms and dine in a room with a veranda!

Joachim and Stephan gave us a tour of the city centre and showed us the port of Bremerhaven. We listened to a organ concert in the breathtaking cathedral. We enjoyed delicious dinners in beautiful restaurants. We wandered through an exhibition at the museum of modern art. We walked the Weser boulevard and basked in the lovely weather. We appreciated the gracious hospitality of Joachim and Stefan in their cozy apartment. We are already looking forward to visiting here again in September of 2008 with the rest of you who will join Kinship Europe! We cannot wait for you to experience the hospitality and kindness of this congregation and the beauty of Bremen at the Weser.



US Region 6 - Erin Stenhouse

On April 28 we hosted our first organized event as the new Region 6 Coordinators. We enjoyed welcoming Kinship to our home in Littleton, Colorado, getting treated to some delicious authentic enchiladas, and getting a chance to know more of our community. We're glad that many of you in our geographically VERY LARGE

(Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, South Dakota and Utah) region enjoyed getting the invitations. We're already planning an end-of-the-summer BBQ at our home in Littleton. We're working with our membership to facilitate events in other parts of the region. If you are interested in hosting an event in your area, please let us know and we'll be happy to help. ▼

You are invited to European Kinship Meeting 6!!!

The theme of our gathering will be "Behind the Scene". We chose this to look at some of the issues lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersex people face. Sometimes we use a mask to protect ourselves. Masks can keep us from harm. There are times when we use a mask because we are not comfortable with our gender or our orientation. Our problems arise when there is too great a difference between our internal and external selves. As we become more comfortable we can take off the mask and show ourselves; be ourselves. This weekend, we want to take a look at when and why we wear our masks. We also want to look at the process that helps us take them off. We want to look at the purpose for our masks. We want to explore the wisdom in choosing to wear a mask for a while. We will talk about our rights to wear that mask. Wearing a mask can be like a prison. If we wear it too long, we can become one with the mask and find it difficult to take it off. We might not even know we are wearing it. Our purpose in life is to be strong enough and daring enough to make the journey toward wholeness. God helps His children learn to accept and care for ourselves. He allows us the time we need. Even the crises that happen in our lives can help us to the next step. Being whole helps us with our relationship with God.

Meeting our Speaker

Lex van Dijk was born in the northern part of the Netherlands to a family that included his father, mother and two sisters. He says his father was a job hopper who found different employment every few years and seemed to be happy in whatever he did. The way that Lex tells his story is that "this ability my father had to enjoy wherever he worked was a great example to me. My mother was a stay-at-home wife and parent. She took care of us but it seemed like she was a needy person herself and one that could never really let us get emotionally close to her. Without knowing how it happened I felt responsible for her happiness. Years later, in my professional life, I felt responsible to fix the problems of the people who came to see me. By



2000 this sense of responsibility was leading to me feeling work related burn-out.

"When I was twelve my parents sent me to the Dutch Adventist Academy. They never explained why they sent me there. For a long time I believed they didn't want me anymore; that I had somehow disappointed them. Even with this concern I had a marvelous time at the boarding school. It was an eventful and happy time in my life. As an adult in therapy I learned their real intent.

"I am now fifty two years old. My wife Brigitte and I have a twenty-four year old daughter Lotte, fraternal twenty one year old twins, Hayo and Rosemarije, and three dogs. Our entire family fell in love with Slovakia a couple of years ago. We visit as often as we can. We also enjoy spending time in nature.

"I studied theology at Newbold College in England. After two years of being a minister I began to study psychology at the Free University in Amsterdam. I love the church even though every now and again I also hate it. Faith and religion play a very important part in my life. The older I get the more I realize how incurably spiritual I am. I am aware that God is always near. I don't believe in dogma but I do believe in the love of God. I believe we all have to find our way through life, that God will be with us, that every created being is unique and special and that God loves variety.

"As a minister I discovered that I liked to coach people with emotional and psychological issues. I learned that one of my gifts was to be helpful in dealing with these kinds of problems. In my role as a pastor I was often asked to help people who didn't want to admit they had a problem. I realized I would prefer to work with people who wanted help to change. During my graduate studies I focused on clinical psychology for children, adolescents and adults. I want to help people learn to understand and to accept themselves. Many of us put a lot of energy into trying to be someone else. I think it's like "coming home" when we gradually and finally dare to be who we are. I think this is the basic task of every human being. I like to help people decide what is useful and helpful to their life. I think it is important to be a skillful fellow traveler with them. I treat everyone with respect.

"Years ago a lesbian couple who belonged to a non Adventist Protestant denomination came to my practice to ask for help. At the time I thought I was quite comfortable with lesbian and gay people.

With this couple I learned that I was living the luxury that comes when we don't have to be out in the open. They helped me out of my "comfortable" position in life. I may have helped them to build their communication skills but they helped me understand more about life.

"A few years ago Gerard and Annelies Frenk told me about SDA Kinship. I knew Ruud Kieboom was involved. From the enthusiasm of these people I got a very positive impression of the organization. I have heard that once you attend a Kinship Meeting or Kampmeeting you get hooked on the organization. I am looking forward to this experience. I hope I can be a blessing for the people who will be there. I am already convinced that this will be a blessing for me. I am looking forward to meeting you all!"

And then you are invited...

...to our third annual European Kinship holiday. We have rented a lovely home on a cliff overlooking the beach in Brittany. The road from Paris leads near the Bayou Tapestry, the gardens of the Impressionists, Mont St. Michel and of course the remarkable coast of Bretagne (Brittany). For more information on the location you can access this web site:

<http://www.ownersdirect.co.uk/france/FR296.htm>

To register for EKM 6 or for EKM6 and the holiday you can access the European part of our Kinship web site at:

<http://sdakinship.org/uk/ekm6.htm>.

We are looking forward to seeing you!! ▼

A Story from the Apocryphal LGBTI Gospel

Mike Lewis - Perthshire, Scotland

There was once a man who had two sons: The older son was heterosexual, the younger one was homosexual. The older said of the younger: "My brother is filth. He is no better than a Moabite pig". He said to his brother: "Get thee hence, for I and my father detest thee and thy filthy ways". And he drove his brother out from the home where they had grown up together. Because the brother was driven out in haste he had no opportunity to take his inheritance, neither did he bid farewell to his father.

The younger brother arrived in distant country, where he fell into a life of gay sleaze and dissolute living. He became totally spent, and when a severe famine fell upon that country he began to be in need. He went and attached himself to one of the local pimps, who sent him on to work in a gay brothel. He would have been glad to fill his belly with the junk food that the clients were eating, but no one gave him anything. Then he came to his senses: "How many of my father's hired servants have more food than they can eat," he said, "and here am I, starving to death! I will go at once to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you; but in the brothel I remembered that you once loved me and I never said goodbye to you. Let me see your face once more before I die. I am no longer fit to be called your son."

He set out for his father's house. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and his heart went out to him; he ran to meet him, flung his arms round him, and kissed him. The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Fetch a robe, the best we have, and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast. For this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And the festivities began.

Now the elder son had been out on the farm; and on his way back, as he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what it meant. The servant told him, "Your queer brother has come home with his boyfriend, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has him back safe and sound." The elder son was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and pleaded with him; but he retorted, "You know how I have slaved for you all these years; I never once disobeyed your orders; yet you never gave me so much as a kid, to celebrate with my friends. But now that this son of yours turns up with his boyfriend, after living a dissolute life in a Moabite gay village, you kill the fatted calf for him."

"My boy," said the father, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. How could we fail to celebrate this happy day? Your brothers here were dead, but they have come back to life; they were lost and have been found."



US Kampmeeting Countdown!

Naveen Jonathan

The Kampmeeting

Committee is now counting the weeks, days, and hours until Kampmeeting 2007 begins in the beautiful "City by the Bay"--San Francisco, California! We hope you will visit the Kinship website (sdakinship.org) frequently as more and more new information is added.

If you have already registered you will receive a welcome letter from the Kampmeeting Committee, giving you the meeting code number you will need to make your United Airlines reservations with our Kampmeeting group discount, as well as full details and directions on how to get to the Sheraton Gateway Hotel from the San Francisco Airport.

Announcing Our Guests



Greg and Shasta Nelson lead a nontraditional spiritual community in San Francisco called Second Wind. It is designed to reach postmodern urban dwellers who are skeptical of religious institutions but seeking spiritual experience.

They use their extraordinary gifts of speaking, teaching, writing, and music as ways to connect meaningfully with people. Greg and Shasta will be with us for the Friday night communion service and will present the Sabbath morning worship service.



Jason Warner and deMarco DeCiccio performed last year in Orlando. Their passionate and hopeful lyrics exemplify a spirit that is reflected in both their lives and music. They create instant fans wherever they go. Their concert will be Sabbath evening.

Chris Glaser, renowned author and gay Christian activist, will be speaking during the week. Many of us have been blessed for years with Chris' deeply spiritual devotionals and articles in a wide variety of publications. Don't miss this chance to hear, meet, and talk to Chris in person! More information about all three of the above can be found on the SDA Kinship website. There are many other speakers and workshop presenters, of course, but these

are the only ones whom we are at liberty to promote publicly at this time.

Family Day

Don't forget to invite your supportive family members and friends to join you on Sabbath, July 28, for the entire day, including meals, at no charge. You can find pre-designed invitations to print out and send to them, and they can register online at the URL below: https://cod.secure-host.com/sdakinship/km2007familyday_regformstart.php.

If you have friends or family members that would like to participate in the music for the Sabbath morning services, please include this information on the Family Day Registration Form (above).

Women's Weekend

Women and children attending July 20-22 will also be staying at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel at the San Francisco International Airport. For those who arrive early enough, there may be opportunity for some activities Friday afternoon. On Friday evening we will meet in the lobby at 6:00 p.m. and go out together for dinner.

On Saturday, plans include a San Francisco Bay Cruise, a visit to Golden Gate Park, and other activities if time permits. Reservations for an unforgettable dinner will be made at Green's Restaurant. Get complete information online at http://sdakinship.org/KM2007Women_Children_First.htm.

Packing Tips

While you are packing, keep these thoughts in mind. San

Francisco summers can be sunny but cool. Come prepared. Bring a light jacket or sweater for outdoor activities, especially in the evenings. If you are planning to travel to the East Bay or South Bay on Wednesday, the field trip day, you'll probably be shedding that wrap early in the day.

Don't forget your swim wear and exercise gear in case you'd like to take advantage of the hotel's 24-hour fitness center and whirlpool and indoor heated pool, and that scenic walking/jogging path overlooking SF Bay.

Bring something tropical and exotic to wear on Sunday evening for our Opening Night Luau. You'll be greeted with a colorful lei and a warm Kinship welcome and will enjoy great Hawaiian food and authentic native music. Of course, for the "1967: Summer of Love" Talent Show night--even if you aren't performing--bring your 60's retro outfits to wear just for fun. Please contact Ruben Lopez, Talent Show Coordinator/Master of Ceremonies, at talentshow@sdakinship.org if you have any questions about participating in the Talent Show and just to let him know that you want to participate. If you know what you want to do for the talent show, that would be even better!

Register Online Today! For details about all aspects of Kinship Kampmeeting and Women & Children First Weekend, and to register online if you have not yet done so, please visit the SDA Kinship website at sdakinship.org/kampmeeting2007.htm. We're all looking forward to seeing YOU and spending some time together in just a few weeks. Have a safe and pleasant trip to San Francisco--see you there! ▼

The Painful Reality!

Thor Montgomery

We have all felt pain. Some of us experience it when injured or after surgery. Some of us live with it chronically, each day of our lives. Most of us hate it. Pain serves a useful purpose. I don't like hearing those words but without pain reflexes we wouldn't know if we were stepping on a nice soft lawn or on a bed of nails. Hansen Disease, once known as leprosy, is a disease where the body loses all sensation of pain. When a person with H.D. scratches their ear, they may continue scratching until an open sore is created. Without pain our bodies' neural pathways wouldn't warn us of danger.

This warning comes in various forms: burning, sharp, intermittent, tingling, stabbing, throbbing and cramping pain. Each variety is tailored to let our body know a more exact nature of our problem. Pain specialists give their patients a screening checklist at every visit to pin-point the type, severity, and location of the pain.

One of the difficulties with over-the-counter pain medications is that when we take a medication designed to cut-off or alleviate the body's warning system we can end up needing increasing doses of the same medication. This process is called building tolerance. To combat the effects of building tolerance we need to do something to make our lives more tolerable. Fortunately there are many therapies; some drug-based, some based on other modalities.

Under a doctor's supervision, pain can be managed through small devices that deliver a mild shock to a specific nerve. We can also use anti-inflammatory

medications like aspirin, Motrin (ibuprofen), Aleve (naproxen sodium) and Tylenol (acetaminophen). This last is not in the same drug class as an anti-inflammatory. When the pain is not responding to these forms of treatment, injectable steroids (cortisone) and acupuncture can also be tried. There even herbs, such as Cat's Claw, that not only help boost the immune system, but have almost no side-effects or drug interactions. They are easily obtainable through legal sources. When other means have been exhausted, our doctors may prescribe the milder narcotic medications, such as Vicoden or Tylenol with codeine. When the pain is moderate to severe, your primary care physician may treat you with stronger narcotics, such as Dilaudid, morphine, oxycontin, and Fentanyl for a short time. Most doctors do not feel comfortable prescribing narcotic medications for long-term use unless you have been evaluated by a pain specialist.

You have a RIGHT to treatment to help alleviate the pain. If you are having surgery or another procedure and your pain is not being acceptably managed, insist on adequate pain management. If necessary, contact the Patient Advocate or a similar representative found in all medical facilities. You are not alone. The organizations at the end of this article have an assortment of support networks available: buddies, chat-rooms and bulletin boards. I have appreciated knowing there are real flesh and blood people going through experiences

Continued on page 15...

Tears of Joy

Elena Davis-Stenhouse

One of my favorite family rituals is our after-dinner walk around the neighborhood; a time of gentle calm that makes for some wonderful conversations about all sorts of topics. We leash our three dogs, pop Chloe into her stroller, and set off on the paved paths that loop through the greenways by our house. We pass several ponds, patches of woods, lush green landscape and all sorts of wildlife. Last week, as we strolled our route, Erin voiced an idea that brought tears to our eyes: "Maybe we could have Chloe dedicated when we go to Kampmeeting next month." The tears that welled up were a mix of our love for our daughter and the desire to embrace God's blessings upon our family in a tangible, symbolic way.

Our daughter is seventeen months old. We struggle with the fact that we have not yet found a local church to call our home. We do not have a strong spiritual community for her. We want to raise Chloe to know she is a child of God. We want her to live Christ's values. As gay Christians, being able to dedicate our baby girl in front of a loving congregation means the world to us. This will be her first year at Kampmeeting. We are thrilled for her to finally meet our extended Kinship family and to receive the toddler version of the spiritual nourishment that fills our hearts each year we attend. To know that on Sabbath morning we will be able to have Chloe dedicated brings more tears of joy to our eyes. It is our chance to publicly pledge our



devotion to raising Chloe in our faith, to acknowledge publicly that Chloe is a precious gift from God whom we are blessed to have in our lives, and to receive the amazing love and support of our Kinship community.



One more look...



Painful Reality...

similar to my own. We share our peer knowledge with those who are new to the pain management "system".

I suggest that you research the medication, herb, or any other treatment for its contraindications or adverse reactions with other drugs. When you attack pain, remember that pain is the body's protective layer between invasion and injury. Pain hurts, but being powerless to do anything about it is worse than the pain itself. Become empowered. When someone says, "Gee, how are you today," it is alright to say, "I am in pain today." Without exposure, there isn't education, without education there is no enlightenment, and without enlightenment, unmet pain will continue to go poorly or completely diagnosed and untreated.

Here are some domestic and international organizations you might find helpful.

AMERICAN PAIN
FOUNDATION:
<http://www.painfoundation.org>

American Chronic Pain
Foundation:
<http://www.theacpa.org>
Penny Cowan
Phone: (800) 533-3231

International Association for the
Study of Pain:
<http://www.iasp-pain.org>

Pain.com-International
Data-Base of Pain Clinics, etc.
<http://www.pain.com>



connection ▽

The Journal of the Seventh-Day Adventist Kinship International, Inc.

Editor: Catherine Taylor
Circulation: Fred Casey
European Editor: Ruud Kielboom
Photography: Karen Wetherell
Production: Ted Compton
Printing: Doolittle's PrintServe

The Connection is published by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Principal office: Box 69, Tillamook, Oregon 97141, 886-732-5677. Submissions are welcome and may be directed to the editor at connectioneditor@sdakinship.org or mailed to the principle office address above. Include your name as you want it published, address and telephone number. If an item is to be acknowledged or returned please include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Some Connection contributors have chosen to remain anonymous or use pseudonyms.

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Letter to the Editor

I want to especially thank Jerry McKay on his article "Journey" in the April issue. It gave me much to consider about my own personal history. I was particularly struck by his observation about the theology of "intent"--what is God's intention for the world and for us individually?

Upon reflection on this, I concluded that both the concept and the language are largely those of Ellen G. White. In her writings she often "spoke for God" through language constructions such as "God expects" and "God requires." Coming from a source that the Church considers authoritative interpretations of Scripture (not to mention additions to Scripture), it is hard for a "true believer" to argue with such authoritative language. A central part of the Adventist world view is articulated in White's magnum opus, *The Great Controversy*, in which the author relates a comprehensive review of these "intentions." One of them is the notion that the "Adam and Eve" model of family life and sexual relations is the only one acceptable to God. This view leaves no room for Adam and Steve or Eve and Ginger. For me, coming out of the sexual closet required also coming out of the theological closet and moving beyond these constructions of God. Thanks again, Jerry. Great article.

Sincerely, Harvey Brenneise





6th European Kinship Meeting

Centre CPCV

Paris – France

7 – September'07 – 11



At times we wear a mask to protect ourselves from the outer world. Some of us always wear a mask because we can't or dare not to be open about ourselves.

Who are we behind the mask and why do we wear one?
Is it really possible to live without one?

Discover your mask and try to free yourself from it. Enjoy the fellowship and European hospitality at our sixth European Kinship Meeting in Paris.

Register at www.sdakinship.org ☞ events