

connection

The Journal of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. February 2008 Vol. 32 No. 1



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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, OR 97141, or visit SDA Kinship's Web Site at: www.sdakinship.org.

Valentine's Day has turned from the celebration of a martyr to the celebration of relationships. The original meaning of the Greek word martyr was simply "witness." It came to connote one who suffers for the truth to which they are giving witness. Many members of the GLBTI community have known firsthand the difficult effects of living the truth of their own lives. Given both histories, this may be a particularly appropriate month to look at different facets of the community of relationships represented by Kinship. We're using this issue to add a "Relationship Appreciation" column to our "We'd like to introduce you to..." portion of the Connection. We are honoring a straight man whose passion for inclusion made him an ally who will be sorely missed. We've included a Michele O'Mara article that focuses on ways to protect our relationships. Larry Hallock wrote an update on the life and work of a man who brought stress and abuse instead of healthy relationships to vulnerable GLBTI Seventh-day Adventists. Ron Lawson sent us an open letter from Mennonites that can be an example of how conservative churches deal with the issue of non-judgmental inclusivity. And, of course, we have our usual community news and pictures. Based on several requests, we are making more space for photos. Let us know what you think.

Relationship Appreciations

Stefan and Joachim - Bremen, Germany



The thing I appreciate most about Joachim is that he is a counterweight in my life. He keeps me (more) well-balanced ;-). Because we are different in many ways, our life

together continues to be interesting and sometimes surprising, even after nearly nine years of relationship. His presence makes it easier for me to deal with the usual ups and downs of life.

Bev and Pauline – North Carolina, USA



Pauline and I are starting our fifteenth year together; it still isn't work! We definitely have to plan time together or it won't happen. Pauline is semi-retired. I have the heavy

work load of a Physician's Assistant in Geriatrics. She picks up the slack for me. Pauline runs errands, keeps

track of our finances, does the shopping, makes calls and multiple other things. She is truly wonderful. She makes me laugh and challenges my thinking. She's a Catholic who honors my faith. She'll tease me if I've "short-changed the edges of the Sabbath" or tell me I have "an ox in the ditch." We just were able to share two wonderful weeks together in Italy during October. We enjoy our sons and grandchildren. Life is good. God has so blessed us. If time lasts, we plan to grow old together.

Bruce for Eddie – New York, USA



We're now in our forty-eighth year. The best thing about Eddie is that he never wakes up Grumpy . . . in fact, he lets me sleep as long as I want!! (OK, it's an old joke, but you do have to have a good sense

of humor to keep things in perspective and to keep a relationship going.) The real thing I most appreciate is his concern for me and my knowing that I can always depend on him as a lover, lifetime partner and dearest friend. *Eddie for Bruce: Ditto :-)*



Pastor Mitchell F. Henson

Leif Lind

Pastor Mitchell F. Henson, a pastor of the Glendale City Church for twenty-three years, sixteen of them as senior pastor, passed away at 1 p.m., December 27, 2007, at the Glendale Adventist Medical Center, due to complications from surgery. He has the distinction of being the longest serving pastor in this church's history.

His pastoral counseling ministry touched those in the local church, in many parts of Southern California and around the world. His ministry brought about the creation of a church where all who come to worship are truly welcomed and valued. He often said of City Church, "If it's safe for me to worship here, it's safe for you to worship here."

In addition to his many programs and projects at the church, he promoted CERT Disaster-Response training at his church in conjunction with the Glendale Fire Department. He co-founded recently a media outreach for young adults called "Reel Life Media." Pastor Henson's greatest desire was to help young people make positive decisions for "doing life well."

Pastor Henson was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on February 13, 1943. Prior to his ministry in Glendale, he served pastorates across the nation, including Richmond, Danville, and New Market, Virginia; Beltsville, Maryland; and Riverside, California. Pastor Henson earned a Masters of Divinity from Andrews University, Doctor of Ministry from Wesley Theological Seminary, Masters in Marriage and Family Counseling from the California Family Studies Institute and was certified in Negotiation and Mediation from Pepperdine University.

He is survived by his wife of 41 years, Sue; their daughters, Jody and her husband Darin, Jeri and her husband Bryan; and six grandchildren, Klancy, Kyler, Kitrina, Siena, Keegan, and Kayla.

A memorial service was held at the Church on Sabbath afternoon, January 12, to overflow capacity.

Local pastors, conference leaders, family and personal friends shared their memories of this uniquely brave and compassionate man.

A bulletin of this service, together with a 5-minute video on Mitch Henson's life, is available for viewing from www.glendalecitysda.com or www.reellifemedia.org. Individuals wishing to contribute to his memory are encouraged to do so by sending their donation to the 501(c)(3) organization Reel Life Media, in care of the Glendale City Adventist Church, 610 East California Ave., Glendale, CA 91206.



Mitch Henson

Catherine Taylor

I remember meeting Mitch on the phone. My local congregation, where I had been a member for thirty years, was in the process of disfellowshipping me because they thought that being both spiritual and a lesbian would set a bad example for the people who came to the church. In a panic I called Floyd to see what options might be available for me. He gave me the number of Mitch's church. Mitch called me the next day. I told him I lived across the country from his congregation, I was being disciplined by my church, I desperately wanted to remain a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was wondering if his church would be willing to take me in. "Sure." "Mitch, I need to be clear with you. I am a lesbian and I am in a relationship." "So, when would you like for us to bring you into our fold?" "How about this Sabbath?" "Sure, that would be fine." He asked Dave Ferguson if Dave knew me and took Dave's response as a reference. That Sabbath I became a member of the Glendale City Church by profession of faith.

I remember meeting Mitch in person. When Mitch was visiting my "home church" during a Kinship event, I walked up to Mitch after the sermon and introduced myself. He took me into his arms and said "Welcome." People reading this journal may understand just how powerful those words and that hug were to me.

I remember seeing Mitch at a workshop. There he made a commitment to put his name, his words and his character into a book that would proclaim the ways that he and his Seventh-day Adventist congregation value GLBTI people as beloved members of a community where their Spirit-given gifts are utilized and honored.

When people ask me for lists of the people I want to meet by the Tree of Life, I always think I want to see my family and friends; and I think that everyone else who gathers at the river will be busy with their closest ones, too. But, as I type this, I realize that after everyone has said hello again, I'd like to find Mitch, somewhere near his wife and his Heavenly motorcycle, and thank him again for giving me a vision of what Heaven was really like.



We would like to introduce you to...

Pearl Pangkey was born in Indonesia and attended Bangkok Overseas Church School in Thailand, Pakistan; Adventist Seminary and College; Hong Kong Adventist College where she earned a BA in secondary education; Andrews University, where she received her master's degree in Educational Psychology; and DeAnza College in Cupertino, California, where she obtained her AA to be a Physical Therapy Assistant. She lives in Tennessee with her partner Brenda McColpin and works as a Physical Therapy Assistant. Pearl enjoys photography, biking, hiking and music. She begins our day at Kampmeeting with wonderful early morning walks. She begins our week there by taking our pictures for the Kampmeeting directory.



Floyd Poenitz was born in Seguin, Texas, USA, and grew up in the German-speaking community there. He began to learn English in the Seguin public schools. He attended Southwestern Adventist College in Keene, TX, and Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen in

Austria. His partner is Jeffrey Williams. Floyd works as a massage therapist. Many Kinship members know of his love for country western dancing. He is also interested in genealogy. Floyd is our US Region 5 contact. He facilitates KinNet and other electronic venues. Waking up next to Jeff and reading emails from friends bring him joy.

Continued on page 10...

Can We Stop Fighting?

Michele O'Mara

"You have got to be kidding, I can't remember the last time we actually had FUN!" is Kate's response to Kim's complaint (poorly disguised as a question), "Do we have to spend every spare minute we have doing something with friends? We have so much to do around the house." Kate, started again with **"YOU -"** and I interrupted her to ask them both, **"Do you ever get what you need from each other when you do this?"** Determined to finish her thought, Kate turned back to Kim, finishing her jab with, **"YOU** are such a stick in the mud. All you want to do is work and clean. You used to be fun." And then she turned to me, now willing to answer my question, she said, "Nothing works, that's why we're here." Kim shook her head in agreement.

When it comes to relationships and conflicts, it is best to STOP doing what isn't working, even if you have not yet replaced that behavior with a new and improved behavior. No amount of ineffective reactions, critical behaviors, and hurtful responses will ever add up to something good, or something that works. It is not really difficult to assess whether or not what we are doing is working. The answer is found in this question, "When I (fill in the blank), do I get what I want?" Sure, Kate may bully Kim into going golfing with friends all day, and Kim may even have fun, but Kate is not likely to win Kim's respect, or her trust by criticizing Kim to get her way. Or Kim might be able to talk Kate into staying home and working around the house, but Kate won't feel like her wants and needs matter if she's only staying home with Kim to avoid a fight.

After stewing on Kate's comments for a minute, Kim reacts to Kate's stick-in-the-mud criticism with a flash of sarcasm, saying, "That's right, Kim, you're on to me. I fell in love with you, stood up before our friends and family, and committed my life to you because I secretly had a plan to systematically rob you of all of your joy,



and because I couldn't wait to incite such anger and hostility from you because it feels SOOOOOO GOOD."

Like Kate with her criticism, and Kim with her sarcasm, many of us cling to our old ways of reacting because at some point in our life they worked. We develop coping responses very early in life - and these responses develop out of our need to survive (emotionally and sometimes physically) our childhoods. As a child we learn to

do what works - and unfortunately, as we grow, we continue to do what we've always done, even when these responses cease to be effective. Most of us don't stop to think about whether or not what we are doing is working. For some there is a deep-seeded belief that change is not possible, and for others there is an illusion of safety found in avoiding change. Perhaps you've heard your partner defend herself with, "I was like this when you met me," as if broadcasting her lack of personal growth during the time you've been together is somehow redeeming or acceptable; that who we are when we meet is all we are ever required to be in a relationship.

To grow in your relationship you must first stop doing what ISN'T working. If you typically give your partner the silent treatment or the cold shoulder when you are upset, hurt or angry, I'm guessing you don't get what you need by doing that. So stop it. If you typically yell at your partner, sometimes name-calling, or simply berating her, I'm guessing you don't get what you need by doing that, either. So stop it. If you sometimes find yourself laughing, sarcastically, at your partner when she shares her frustrations, I'm guessing that doesn't get you very far. So stop it. If you interrupt, talk over, silence her, or interrogate her with accusatory questions, that probably doesn't work either. So, that's right, stop it.

This may surprise you, but couples who fight are in a good place to change. When there is still enough passion and energy in your relationship to feel hurt, to get angry, to express frustrations, then there's still enough energy to make things work. If you are in constant battle with the most important person in your life, the first step for you is to **STOP DOING WHAT ISN'T WORKING**. Once you remove the ineffective behaviors, even if your partner does not (though it will be difficult for her to continue without your participation!) you will regain some self-respect and begin to channel your frustrations into solutions, rather than more problems.

Action Steps:

1. Identify one common behavior that you know is not effective, and in fact, is harmful to your relationship
2. Commit to ceasing that behavior entirely, and stopping it if you become aware after you've started in on this behavior
3. Be willing to apologize for bad behavior
4. Gain new relationship skills: read books, get therapy, attend my couple's weekends.



Kinship News

Australia - Noel Thorpe

Noel is spending some of February visiting the North and South Islands of New Zealand. He was in Auckland to be part of "The Big Gay Day Out" at Coyle Park. He also visited Point Chevalier, Queenstown and Christchurch. To keep up with the news from "down under" you can access www.sdakinshipaustralia.org/.

Europe – Ruud Kieboom

This is the perfect time to buy tickets to meet with us in The Haag over the weekend of May 3! We are planning to discuss ways to support Kinship members in various parts of Europe. We are also going to take a look at some of the new resources available to us: the book on homosexuality and Christianity; the pamphlet that Carrol, Floyd and Mike have designed; and some of the new movies about spirituality and homosexuality that are coming out now. We want to use those resources to educate pastors and church leaders in our area. We offer the added bonus of staging an extraordinary display of tulips for your pleasure.

European Kinship Meeting – Stefan and Joachim

It is never too early to plan your vacations and holidays. We, here in Bremen, Germany, are in the process of organizing both our EKM7 meetings and our wonderful holiday that will follow. This year we can offer a range of prices. You

can stay in a sleeping bag at our friendly church that is hosting our meetings. You can enjoy the comfort and ambiance that is offered by our very well-appointed youth hostel (for youth of all ages) or you can luxuriate at one of our local hotels. We are easily accessible by plane, train and cars.

The Connection – Catherine Taylor

Thanks to our remarkable production guru, Ted Compton, and our amazing print folk, you will now be able to access all issues from this one forward in color on the web. Print copies will continue to have some color pages for some months, depending on the budget. You can access the web issue at kinnet.org/Connection, or you will find a link to the site in our monthly e-news from your Kinship Board.

Kampmeeting!! – Naveen Jonathan

Happy New Year! We are gearing up for Kampmeeting 2008, which will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Reston, VA, July 13- 20, 2008. We are happy to announce that the rates for this year's event will be the same as last year's rates. They are as follows:

1 adult -	\$1150/week	\$175/day
2 adults -	\$750/week	\$125/day
3 adults -	\$650/week	\$90/day
4 adults -	\$575/week	\$60/day
Commuter Rate -		\$60/day

Children:

Age 0-4 - No Charge
 Age 5-9 - \$20/day
 Age 10-17 - \$35/day

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The Sad Lives of Colin Cook

A retrospective—*"Twenty years of thrashing around in the swamp"*

by Larry Hallock

On a certain level, anyone with a heart has to feel sorry for a tragic figure. What are we to think of Colin Cook? After being fired decades ago as an Adventist minister for his gay behaviors, Colin Cook made a commitment to turn straight and help others do the same. He co-founded Homosexuals Anonymous and opened Quest Learning Center in Reading, Pennsylvania. Young people from across the country pulled up stakes and moved to Reading for the long haul—years, not weeks—chasing Cook's promise that, with his and God's help, they could claim their God-given heterosexuality. (He was not a licensed therapist.) But Cook, who by then claimed to have been "healed" of homosexuality himself, molested some of the young males he was supposed to be rescuing (one of whom was allegedly under age); and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which paid his salary, dumped him. Exodus, the umbrella group for so-called "ex-gay ministries," wasn't pleased, either. Cook was giving them a bad name.

Cook reinvented himself and started up new counseling endeavors, only to be caught in improprieties again. His wife divorced him. He'd always showcased his marriage as evidence of his "deliverance" from

homosexuality. Today Cook has a little radio broadcast in Denver, yet again reincarnated as a healer of homosexuality. It seems the more things change, the more they stay the same. It's still about all that lust, often confused with sexual orientation. "We Christians often find our lust battling against our faith, and the experience brings us to a crisis," he says in his website autobiography. "Am I really converted? How can this be happening to me? That's certainly been my experience."

Therein lies the sadness. Colin Cook tells it like it was, a tragic lifetime of trying to be what he was not. "In my panic and fear over the years, I used every religious exercise in the book, agonizing prayer, Bible reading, fasting, avoiding this and that...." It didn't work. Nevertheless, he told his funding sources and his paying counselees that it did work. In his biography, Colin mentions losing his previous get-out-of-homosexuality ministries "through my own foolishness," and discusses the "immense pain and embarrassment."

"You can look my name up anywhere else on the web and you'll find a sorry story of defeat, of which I am not proud." A number of websites document his indiscretions over time. "It took twenty years of thrashing around

in the swamp," but Colin Cook claims to be redeemed again. All of his remarks about the past are in the context of his now having really found Christ this time—just as he thought he had in the 1980s.

Why does he feel it's finally working now, when it didn't all those years? Skeptics might suggest taming one's sexual urges at age 67 isn't all that difficult. Cook explains it as, well, see if you can make sense of it. "But I didn't understand how the Cross of Jesus Christ affects sexuality as faith allows sex and God to meet and produces something new." Apparently the trick is to understand that little twist of the phrase. Now he does, so now it works, he says. Decades of agonizing prayer, Bible reading, fasting, and claiming the promises—but apparently God isn't that easy. The gospel is much more cryptic than that; you just don't get it until you understand the nuance of "how the cross affects sexuality."

That's the way it's always been with Cook—the promises work, you just have to think about them right. It's like the old formula the alchemists used for creating gold. It always worked, so long as you didn't think of the little red-faced monkey while performing the last crucial step. Tricky. Not a lot of gold was created.

I know Colin Cook. I visited his Quest Learning Center. I interviewed him at length—five hours, on tape. I read his book. He, and fundamentalist and evangelical Christians like him, always manage to find just the right twist-of-a-phrase to explain why it's so hard to turn gays into straights. They ignore the obvious reason, which is direct and simple: what God perhaps can do is not necessarily what God chooses to do.

For these religious zealots, God's refusal to act couldn't possibly be that He just doesn't think it's as important as they do. It couldn't be that He just doesn't choose to, or that He thinks the whole notion of asking gays to be what they're not is offensive to His sense of decency. No, the reason it doesn't work is always the suppliant's fault—for not praying hard enough, not wanting it badly enough or, Cook's favorite, just not thinking about it right. See, you can't "die daily to sin," you have to "live daily in the resurrection." Oh. Sorry.

But I digress. What's sad about the lives of Colin Cook is how wasted they have been. In fantasy, imagine a Colin Cook who might have left the ministry at an early age and accepted himself simply for who he was. Imagine him living an authentic life, meeting a partner and having a blissful, loving home life while devoting all his energy to a real career. Imagine him not obsessing, day after day, month after month, year after year, over his sexuality. Imagine him without all the "panic and fear over the years" that he so painfully laments.

Imagine him not bringing so many others down with him. Yes, others. They are the ones who make the sad lives of Colin Cook plural. Tender young people and their anxious parents believed him. They fell for the lie, the promise of getting out of hell (as he in essence describes it). And they paid dearly in money, anxiety, prayers, tears and years. Person after person left the program more broken than before.

It would be one thing if the Colin Cooks of the world were content to just mess up their own lives, living them as inauthentically as they choose; in as blue a funk as they choose, believing God wants them to live lives of "dis-integration" instead of enjoying healthy lives with real integration of mind, body and soul. But no. They have a mission, and with a new crop of gay people born into the population every year to fear a developing sexual orientation they didn't anticipate, the market for exploitation is always replenished.

Imagine what an enormous service to humankind these religious fanatics could be if they helped all these people instead of hurting them, instead of derailing them from joyous, authentic living!

Colin Cook lived the social stigma from the start. If you read his book you will hear how he always hated himself as a gay man and assumed every other gay person did too. He never knew love, never had a single gay friendship. The only sexual activity he knew was in the backs of porno theaters. Although this is as foreign to gay people as it would be to heterosexuals, Cook defined

I remember meeting Jonathan, or so I'll call him, a young client of Cook's Quest Learning Center who had come half-way across the country on Cook's word that he could be "freed" of homosexuality. Jonathan was an exceptionally bright and sincere Baptist young man with intense blue eyes and an iron determination to succeed. And he did claim success. For a long time after leaving Quest, he helped operate a similar "change ministry." I corresponded with Jonathan for many years. He would gently tell me of his continued success. I would gently tell of my life of joy with my partner. One day a shocking letter came. Jonathan was throwing in the towel. It just didn't work, he said, never did work. All that time, he had been doing exactly what Cook had told him to do: claim your heterosexuality by faith! But he was never able to claim it in reality. Today Jonathan is in a wonderful relationship with a man who loves him more than all the fundamentalist preachers of the lie ever did—he's honest with Jonathan. I have visited in their home. But the ending isn't completely rosy. The scars of his ordeal, and of his wasted years, are nearly unbearable. The anger is palpable. So is mine. It's not just because I care for him, given all those years of correspondence, but because Jonathan's story is sadly the rule, not the exception for those who share Jonathan's time with change ministries.

Colin Cook...

homosexuality by his own pathological notions and behaviors. He told his counselees that to be healthy, they had to give up their entire sexuality itself—their homosexuality—and then if they tried hard enough and long enough, maybe they could attempt to regain some semblance of sexuality by learning to find eroticism in what naturally repulsed them.

In the days of Colin Cook's youth, little was understood about homosexuality in the public forum and few were around to show young gay people out of the darkness and into the light. Many floundered in the darkness, and some rode the religion train even deeper into darkness while attempting by faith to redefine that darkness as light. Decades have come and gone. Light came, and now it is everywhere—even as the latest version of Colin Cook chooses to sit in the shadows of his little recording room, once again trying to convince the newest crop of young people that if only they pray hard enough and think about it just right, God might eventually answer their prayers and their years and their counseling dollars with some small measure of "freedom from homosexuality." Presumably he means to wish them more of it than he got for himself.

Colin Cook did not respond to an offer to update any information prior to submission of this article. Larry Hallock can be contacted through his website where this and related topics, including previous Connection articles, can be found. Google this title within quote marks or visit ChicagoLarry.com.



We make a living by what we get, we
make a life by what we give.

—Winston Churchill

Introducing...

Ruben Lóopez was born in Riverside, California, and raised in nearby Ontario. He attended La Sierra University in Riverside and California State University Fullerton where he majored in psychology and



dabbled in human communication. Ruben is currently single and has been recently promoted to a support/HR supervisor position at a department store. His hobbies include knitting, crocheting, reading, collecting LPs and baking. As IMRU? representative to Kinship, Ruben makes sure he maintains an open relationship between the two groups, as well as processing new IMRU? members. Nothing brings him greater joy than the ability to sleep in and wake up naturally. Ruben, classically trained in procrastination, enjoys macramé and ... (he'll finish this later).



Jacquie Hegarty was born in Evansville, Indiana, and went to school at Loma Linda Academy and La Sierra University. She is married to Linda Wright and works as an Executive Assistant. She spends much of

her free time webmastering and supporting electronic communications. Jacquie is Kinship's Public Relations Coordinator and US Region 8 News and Views Editor. The mornings when she has a blood glucose reading within acceptable ranges for a diabetic bring her great joy.



Obed Vazquez was born in the great industrial city of Paterson, New Jersey. He attended Patterson Public Schools No. 11, 2, JK Kennedy High School, Andrews University, Newark

College of Engineering, and Brown University. To one of your possible questions Obed says, "Yes, we have numbers for schools in New Jersey." His pen name is Jorge Rivera Ortiz. To another of your possible questions he writes, "Yes, Jorge finally comes OUT." Obed is partnered with Marcos Muniz Apolonio whose pen name is Paulo Martinez. Obed is a college Professor of Sociology in California. When asked about hobbies and avocations, Obed replied, "I had these once; maybe I will pick them up in retirement ... reading, collecting pre-1960 USA pennies (what happened to that collection I wonder), gardening, travel, working out and bicycle riding." He is Kinship's Region 8 Coordinator and lives just east of the San Francisco Bay area. When the sun is out he says, "Let me get out of bed and have breakfast!" When the skies are gray, "Let me stay in bed, read my book, why rush...luxuriate."

Carrol Grady was born in Kokomo, Indiana. She attended Takoma Academy and La Sierra College. Those of you who know that these schools are across the country from each you will see them as a beginning of Carrol's



career in the "Great Advent Movement." She has lived in the Far East and in United States locations. She is married to Bob Grady who has been a minister. Carrol is a retired editor and secretary. She enjoys reading, quilting, playing the piano, and writing. Carrol's most current project is writing a family history. She is also the author of "My Son, Beloved Stranger." Kinship appreciates her work as our Family and Friend's Friends' Coordinator. You can find her web site at

www.someone-to-talk-to.net/. She says her greatest joys are her family and God's love.

Jeremy Todd Brown was born in Denver, Colorado, and attended Keene Adventist Elementary, La Sierra Elementary, La Sierra Academy, Chisholm Trail Academy, Southwestern Adventist



University, Universidad Adventista del Plata and Walla Walla University. "I'm a PK, what can I say!" He and his partner Tom Dalton live in Burlington, Vermont, where Jeremy is the director of Member Services for a local credit union. He enjoys racquetball, volleyball and hiking. He is Kinship's Vice President. The thing that most brings him joy in the morning is "hitting the snooze button and sleeping another eight minutes!"



John R. Edwards was born in Georgetown, Guyana, South America. He attended Atlantic Union College where he earned his Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. John went to

Walla Walla University where he completed his Master's Degree in Social work and Hunter College School of Social Work where he obtained a post-graduate certificate in individual therapy. John is single. He earns his living as a social worker and psychotherapist. As any of you who have been to Kampmeeting talent shows know, John's hobby and avocation is opera. Others might expand the description to include operatic costuming. He is Kinship's outreach coordinator to the black community. John enjoys those driving moments when there is no traffic.



GLBTI Community News

From time to time Connection readers send us resources that they think we might find interesting or helpful.

From Arlene Arthur

You might want to consider preordering *For the Bible Tells Me So* on DVD. The official release date for this title is February 19. First Run Features is offering 30% off your next order (of any titles) at www.firstrunfeatures.com. Just use coupon code BIBLE33 (all caps) at checkout, valid through 2/29/08. For those of you who have expressed interest in hosting a screening of the film, please keep in mind that this DVD is licensed for private home use only. If you would like to purchase public performance rights, please contact stsales@firstrunfeatures.com for more information.

From Ren Reynolds

Those of you who might someday be considering retirement communities might find this website on Gay and Lesbian Retirement Community options interesting: www.rainbowvisionprop.com/

From Ron Lawson

Mennonites are a conservative faith connected to the Amish. They have developed a "Welcoming Committee of the Mennonites" who has written a letter than is

being circulated among their congregations. I thought you might find it interesting to see what another conservative church is considering:

We, the undersigned, address this letter to persons in the Anabaptist-Mennonite family of churches, and to all others who are interested. It is about God's purpose of redemption, and how people, especially those identified with the church, may bear witness to how we see God acting in the world.

We hear the cry of pain of those daughters and sons of our churches who are lesbian or gay. We confess that for too long we have been silent. We believe we can no longer be silent and remain true to what we hear as God's message to us.

Our purpose is redemptive. We recognize that many who disagree with us are seeking to take their faith seriously when they maintain that lesbian and gay people are immoral or sick. We know lesbian and gay people of faith who are deeply moral and in good mental health. For us, to take our faith seriously is to tremble when we observe the exclusion by the church of our lesbian and gay sisters and brothers. This reminds us of the church's exclusion of other minority groups in recent history. Such actions seem to us to fall short of the all-encompassing

love to which Christ calls his followers.

We are a historic peace church trying to find our way amidst the swirl of emotions and accusations in the larger society. We believe God is calling all of our congregations to a thorough study of "homosexuality" and related issues of church discipline, reconciliation, and nonviolence. If in this process we disparage the faith and integrity of our lesbian and gay sisters and brothers, can we expect to have an authentic peace witness in other areas of life?

We do not deny that those who disagree with us have experienced the love of God in Jesus. However, we too have experienced this love, and believe that we need to engage in a study process that includes dialogue with, not about, our lesbian and gay sisters and brothers. We also believe that the evidence, illuminated by the Spirit, will lead us to become a church that welcomes people of all races, genders, and orientations as we pursue the vision of redemption. Thus we feel that failure to share our journeys and the following convictions with you would indicate that we cannot trust you to see us as we are.

1. We believe that affectional orientation is determined very early in an individual's life by a complex mix of biological and

environmental factors that are beyond his or her control. Since God has made and continues to make a significant minority of persons whose primary attraction is to persons of the same gender, we believe it is wrong to require anyone to undergo a miraculous change of sexual orientation before being deemed fit to belong to the community of believers. We believe that sexual orientation is natural and morally neutral, and that to describe it as sin contradicts not only science but central scriptural truths of morality, justice, and compassion as taught by Jesus.

2. We believe the church should bless monogamous relationships of same-sex couples and affirm covenant vows between persons who pledge mutual lifelong fidelity and support to one another. We consider such unions loving expressions of the natural gifts of sexuality bestowed upon persons by the Creator (hence in accord with nature), and that persons living in such unions should be included fully in the life of the church. We believe that pre-covenant counseling should be offered to same-sex couples just as pre-marital counseling is offered to opposite-sex couples. We believe that following their exchange of covenant vows they should receive the same kinds of sustaining support to assist them in maintaining those vows.

Along with others in the church, we do take seriously those biblical texts that some interpret as precluding covenanted same-gender relationships. After careful study, however, we have concluded that these texts do not address "homosexuality" as we understand it today. We respect those who have in good faith reached different conclusions and trust that they can in turn respect the integrity with which we have journeyed to reach our belief.

We see the "homosexuality question" in the context of wider issues of power, patriarchy, nonviolence and exclusion/inclusion in the church. We invite the church to consider whether exclusion of "homosexuals" is nonconformity to the world or actually conformity to those principalities and powers that so often tempt us to exclude those who differ from whatever the "mainstream" of the moment may be.

We invite the Anabaptist family of churches, starting with local congregations, to pray, study, and discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches about society's excluded minority of persons who are attracted to others of the same sex.

From Carl Williams

Carl found this on the internet and sent it along saying that it might be a perfect addition to an issue focused on our relationships with each other.

I believe - That just because two people argue, it doesn't mean they don't love each other. And just

because they don't argue, it doesn't mean they do.

I believe - That we don't have to change friends if we understand that friends change.

I believe - That no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while and you must forgive them for that.

I believe - That true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distance. Same goes for true love.

I believe - That you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.

I believe - That it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.

I believe - That you should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see them.

I believe - That you can keep going long after you think you can't.

I believe - That we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.

I believe - That either you control your attitude or it controls you.

I believe - That heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.

I believe - That money is a lousy way of keeping score.

I believe - That my best friend and I can do anything or nothing and have the best time.

I believe - That sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you're down will be the ones to help you get back up.

I believe - That sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.

I believe - That maturity has more to do with what types of experiences you've had and what you've learned from them and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated.

I believe - That it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes you have to learn to forgive yourself.

I believe - That no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief.

I believe - That our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

I believe - That you shouldn't be so eager to find out a secret. It could change your life forever.

I believe - That two people can look at the exact same thing and see something totally different.

I believe - That your life can be changed in a matter of hours by people who don't even know you.

I believe - That even when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you - you will find the strength to help.

I believe - That credentials on the wall do not make you a decent human being.

I believe - That the people you care about most in life are taken from you too soon.



Kinship News...

Please note that this year all attendees who register prior to May 1 will be entered into a raffle. The prize will be \$500 off your Kampmeeting expenses for Kampmeeting 2009. In addition we are asking all attendees to please register by May 31, 2008, due to requirements given to us by the hotel. Attendees who register after June 1 will NOT be guaranteed a room. Attendees that cancel after June 1 will be subject to a cancellation fee.

In addition, several of you have indicated that you would like to spend a few days in the Washington, DC area either before or after Kampmeeting 2008. The hotel has indicated to me that they have plenty of availability the week prior to Kampmeeting in case people would like to come early. The hotel, however, has very limited availability after our event. It is sold out as of July 21, 2008 for another event. All attendees must check out by Monday, July 21. If you are

planning on spending any days before or after our event, please note you will be responsible for taking care of these charges directly with the hotel.

In order to help with Kampmeeting expenses, why not take advantage of our Kampmeeting Klub program. This program will help you set money aside and pay for Kampmeeting over the next few months before Kampmeeting. For more information, please visit the following link on our website, www.sdakinship.org/kampmeeting_klub.htm or contact Kinship Treasurer, Karen Wetherell, at karenbwetherell@cs.com for more information.

For general information on Kampmeeting 2008, or if you would like to volunteer to help, please contact Naveen Jonathan, Kampmeeting Koordinator 2008, at kampmeeting@sdakinship.org. Hope to see many of you in Washington DC!





connection

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

Editor: Catherine Taylor
Circulation: Fred Casey
European Editor: Ruud Kieboom
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, OR 97141. 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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Some people succeed because
they are destined to, but most
people succeed because they are
determined to.

—Anonymous