

The Christmas **connection**

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 34 No. 10 – December 2010



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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.)



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



FROM THE EDITOR

Ruud told me to make this December issue almost exclusively focused on the holiday season. I told him we didn't have enough copy. He cyber-smiled at me from across the Atlantic. I knew exactly how much copy connected (no pun intended, at the time) to any holiday we had. *None*. Cyber-smile or no, I knew his request was just not possible. So I planned on including end-of-the-year reports, introductions, and board meeting conversations. On a whim I asked Linda, our rather remarkable webmaster, to e-blast the Kinship members and ask for stories about celebrations of and recipes for celebrating the various December holidays. Despite being tired from the above-mentioned Board meeting, she sent one out. I didn't get a single response. Not one, from anywhere. *Told you so, Ruud*. I mentioned this to the Board on our discussion site. No one on the board had gotten the e-blast either. Linda scrambled and got another blitz out. And, well, Kinship members and Kinship friends replied. I got an article from someone who didn't even know my dilemma. This month we have articles from Egypt, Australia, The Netherlands, Germany, the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. They all arrived within two days. I get teased about my belief in personal, everyday miracles. And I imagine I will get teased about this lapse on my principles. Then Ruud's schedule dictated that he had to do the layout for what you are reading the first weekend in December. I had two days to edit the copy and get it to the proofreaders who request two days just to proof. I had no time to edit. I took a night off from tai chi and wrote the proof team to see if by some miracle they would be willing to proof accurately at warp speed. Thirty seconds later, Jacquie writes back – *you get it here by 8 PM on the California coast and I will look at it*. It is done on my end. I know it will be done by the proofreaders, and I know that Ruud will make these words beautiful with his work. That's our December 2 miracle. If God can do this for a little newsletter, think about what Heaven is just waiting to do for you. And if Heaven is waiting to fill your life with miracles, it is important for you to take care of yourself, this month and always, for you are infinitely valuable.



Erratum

In the November Connection we used a no longer existing link in the announcement about the leaflet *Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?* The correct address is shown in the announcement below. We apologize for any inconvenience.

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

Memories from Kampmeeting 2010, Atlanta



“The Women’s Walkabout”



Got Room?

Keisha McKenzie

At my English primary school, the sign of the season was a December nativity play. A class of small children would sit cross-legged around a cardboard stable, some in togas, several as sheep, one wearing donkey ears, and Mary and Joseph stage-forward facing a moody innkeeper. The innkeeper's line was the one that everyone listened out for because it helped to turn the story: "I'm sorry; we have no room in the inn. You can't stay here." At that, Mary and Joseph would shuffle away alone into a cold Bethlehem stable to bring the world the baby Jesus.

This is how thousands of children retell the Christmas story at schools and churches around the world: "No room in the inn." Why does this part of the story resonate with us so much? Is it simply that we've all experienced the feeling of being left out in the cold? Of not having a safe space?

This week I heard three modern "no-room" stories, each unfolding in different parts of the country. A teenager came out to her mother and was booted from the family home. A couple was told to curb their church ministry. A daughter spent a holiday wishing for her family's unconditional embrace. Perhaps you could tell some "no-room" stories of your own. I could.

So it's a bit challenging for me to study the Christmas tale afresh and see that the story might be a little different than I've always read it. I'll grant that there's much we don't know about it. Thanks to Leviticus, we can know that there was more going on than limited space. According to the Levitical code, the baby-delivering Mary would be "unclean" for a full week after Jesus' birth, just as she was during her regular menstrual period (Lev 12:2). She would be in purity limbo for an additional 33 days, unable to worship in the Temple with other Jews; and wherever she sat or slept during those 40 days would also be unclean. Only after 40 days could she resume normal social worship (Luke 2:21-22).

Any home full of houseguests would have been a poor place to host Mary because other guests would become ritually unclean with her and be subject to the same isolation that she was. Under the Levitical rules, the best way to prevent the spread of Mary's uncleanness was to keep her away from the main house. And so she was kept away. Rather than staying in a Bethlehem *guest room* as would have been customary, she delivered Jesus away from the clan. Perhaps she and Joseph weren't with the cows and donkeys as the nativity plays suggest, but they certainly were away from the main house and away from the warmth of "clean" society.

Because of their community's code, Mary and Joseph were viewed as unclean for a time; but they weren't abandoned by a wider network of friends they didn't know they had.



The neighborhood association didn't rally round, but outcast shepherds did. Relatives didn't offer a post-birth party as our friends and families might, but foreign dignitaries brought gifts and honored them. Mary and Joseph were working class newlyweds from the boonies of Judea having a baby under questionable circumstances, "unclean" people whom none of the "clean" believers took the risk of helping. Despite the rules, despite their isolation, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus had their needs met.

Sometimes, and especially during holidays, things can be hard for us; but we're never far from support. People we already know might not be able to provide it; and, if not, that's okay: there's a wider network of friends waiting to help. If this season finds you being treated as unclean, know that there are shepherds and foreigners willing to embrace you outside the main house. Will you receive their love when you've been isolated? Will you seek out those who've been isolated and need you? Any room in your inn? ▼

Faith in America Applauds DOD for rejecting religious belief as justification for discrimination

Faith In America today applauded the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) position that religious teaching or belief should not be used to justify denying gay Americans the human dignity of serving openly in the military.

In a report issued today on how U.S. service members would respond to serving alongside openly gay and lesbian colleagues, the Department of Defense endorsed the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell and rejected the view that religion-based objections to homosexuality are a legitimate basis for discrimination.

While the overwhelming majority of service members surveyed did not oppose lifting the ban, thirty percent voiced concerns, including some who expressed religious and moral objections to homosexuality. The report noted that a "large number of military chaplains (and their followers) believe that homosexuality is a sin and an abomination, and that they are required by God to condemn it as such."

In its official recommendations, the authors of the report conclude that religious beliefs are not a legitimate justification for discrimination against gay and lesbian service members. "Service members will not be required to change their personal views and religious beliefs; they must, however, continue to respect and serve with others who hold different views and beliefs," state the authors of the report.

"We applaud the Department of Defense for addressing religion-based hostility toward gay service members with great courage and integrity," said Mitchell Gold, founder of Faith in America. "Today's report marks the first time that a federal agency has made such a clear and forthright statement that religion-based objections to gay people cannot justify government discrimination in a democracy.

"The Department of Defense deserves enormous credit for its principled stand, which sets a powerful example for our whole country. Religious beliefs that condemn gay people are not a legitimate basis for discrimination." ▼

Picture: British Military Magazine

Faith in America is a North Carolina-based 501 (3)(c) nonprofit organization founded in 2005 with a mission to educate Americans about the harm caused to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people by religion-based bigotry.

Visit www.faithinamerica.org and www.crisisbook.org for more information.





Oh, How Can It Be?

Llewellyn Edwards

In Egypt, Karin and I walk about 5 kilometres twice a week to our Arabic classes. On the way, apart from one Christian church with a large sign of Mary and the baby Jesus, there is nothing to indicate that the first advent of Jesus has anything to do with life on this part of the planet or its meaning for us. No decorations, no tinsel, no decorated trees, no jingles, no Christmas sales signs—except for one thing—and it strikes us with huge force each time we see it.

We hadn't been going to Arabic classes for some weeks. Two weeks ago as we resumed our walk to the school, concentrating on avoiding holes and protruding signs, occasionally shouting at each other over the blaring of car horns and the drone of motors, we were suddenly stopped by a sight that lay between two trees on the footpath. There was a young woman loosely wrapped and asleep in a dirty blanket lying on the pavement; her hair was matted and her skin was dark with dirt. We see folks like her now and then, so this wouldn't have troubled us too much. However, the sight of her with her less-than-one-year-old baby lying in her arms, also asleep, shocked us.

We had nothing to give her that day. The next time we woke her and gave her some money. Today she was sitting up and recognised us as we came toward her. We greeted her in the Arabic words we have learned and she returned the good morning greeting. This time we had some biscuits and more money for her. The baby was awake and sitting up. He was grubby and she kept shooing flies off him.

As we walked away we wondered if the conditions when Jesus came to us as a baby were much different. Is it possible that He would love us *that* much!

There is no tinsel, no sales, no Santas—but we are awed into adoration by the reminder that in that “lowly (flea-ridden, smelly, dirty, dusty) manger” was God (!) with us. Oh, how can it be...? ▼

Picture: Street child in Cairo (<http://g8.no>)

The inn was too crowded, and Mary gave birth in a crude stable

Seasonal Thoughts From...



CANADA

– Winnipeg Will

Thank you for not pushing the traditional December X thing. I appreciate the more delicate and welcoming winter holiday references which consider that this is not an easy time of year for many.

To me this time of year is about embracing the darkness rather than the light. Almost two decades in Canada's far northern Yukon Territory made me appreciate the shadowy time of year when one had permission go into a hibernation mode with the rest of nature. I like to turn the lights down low and sit in the darkness much as our ancestors likely did before the invention of electric lights and 24/7 distractions.

Although I have relocated down south to Winnipeg on the windswept Canadian prairies, winter solstice is still my favourite time of year, one that makes those long hot days of summer worth the journey, knowing that the cold and the dark can never be fully appreciated unless there is the experience of the opposite.

Winter has offered me much wisdom over the years. I particularly remember the pathway through the forest that I walked to work every school day for 17 years. There was always something about the first blanket of snow that pulled something from deep inside, silently prompting me to take a closer look at the path I was walking through life. I was

always the first one to walk that familiar path on those dark Yukon mornings. Although the first faint hints of gray barely teased from the southern horizon, and the new snowfall was often deep, I knew every step, every nuance of that path below. I had walked it barefoot many times on those first warm

days of spring when the earth, still cool and moist, cried out to feel once again its union with human skin. I had skipped along it midst the blazing golds and blues of many a brilliant fall afternoon. Yes, I knew it in every season and could have journeyed every step of the way with my eyes closed. But on those dark, freshly coated winter mornings I also realized that I had the ability to set a different course and that those who followed behind me would likely not even question the pathway but would tread along my own uniquely carved way through the bush.

As a poet, I conclude with this poem and then shut down this

electronic screen and take time to drink deeply of the darkness and the silent stillness of winter's mystery that stirs deep within me as I share this reflection this evening of the first day of December. As your own winter reflections bring you more deeply into a sense of the precious uniqueness of your own being, peace.

To the Snowflake with a Missing Arm

Six points
Arms, legs, heads?
What names give we these, your
tender spokes?
And yet one seems stubbed
Reaching not to full symmetry.
Broken?
Or do you prove perfection
In the Mystery
That ordains
No two the same?
∞

AUSTRALIA

– David Coltheart

Christmas in Australia falls in the first month of summer. Forget about snow, holly, or merry log fires! The only time they appear is on the millions of Christmas cards sent by friends and family from the end of November onwards. For weeks in advance, Santa Claus sits in every shopping centre and department store, and occasionally will wander up and down the beaches,



sweltering in his red, fur-lined suit.

Australia is one of the most multi-cultural countries on earth, and so our Christmas customs have come from all over the world. We have Christmas trees and nativity scenes; we sing "Jingle Bells" and "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" and give gifts of clothing, computer games, and toys. ➤

Most of our Christmas customs originate from Europe or America; but because of the climate, Christmas could be spent at a picnic on the beach or a barbeque in the backyard. Christmas coincides with our long summer holidays; and so many families will be away from home for several weeks, either in a caravan (trailer) or tent at the beach, or travelling to be with family or friends in another state. But that doesn't stop people wearing fur-lined red hats as they stroll along eating ice cream cones.

The big events of the Christmas season are the "Carols by Candlelight." These began in Melbourne in 1937 and are outside concerts in the warm summer evenings where people sit on blankets, light candles, and join together to sing Christmas carols. Most towns have a concert, often sponsored by churches or schools and utilising the talents of local choirs, bands, amateur singers, and performers. The two largest events are televised across Australia from Sydney and Melbourne. In addition to the usual religious carols, Australians have a few carols of their own, like "The Six White Boomers", or kangaroos, that substitute for the reindeer on Santa's rounds.

Many houses are decorated with lights, animated Santas, reindeer, and other seasonal paraphernalia. Since the nights are warm, many people drive around town, windows down, looking at all the displays. The best displays are often listed in the newspaper, and many of them raise money for charity.

After all the rush of shopping, office parties, phone calls, and gift wrapping in the weeks leading up to the big day, Christmas Eve is usually quiet, with a few people going to midnight mass. Children will hang a stocking (or more commonly a pillow-case!) at the end of their beds (fireplaces are rare in Australia) and hope for the best. Mum and Dad then wait up until everyone is asleep before stuffing the stockings with small toys, chocolates, and fruit, knowing full well that whatever is put in the stocking must keep the kids quiet for a few hours on Christmas morning so that they can sleep in.

Christmas for me has always meant spending time with my family, both my immediate family as well as extended family members. That usually means travelling long distances to see my brother, sister, mother and step-father, or the in-laws—it usually varies year by year. For many families, it is not uncommon to spend Christmas morning with one branch of the family and the afternoon or evening with another branch.

We open our presents on Christmas morning, and then sit around the decorated tree (usually artificial) and share the presents we bought for each other. Most Christian churches hold services on Christmas morning, but Adventists have usually frowned on this practice. This year Christmas is on Sabbath, so we will be at church this time. But for many Adventist

families, Christmas celebrations will be postponed until Sunday.

Christmas dinner for the average Australian may consist of roast turkey, roast potatoes, pumpkin, and other hot vegetables, as well as lots of salad dishes, cold ham, cold chicken, prawns, and lobster. For vegetarians, like me, just substitute the meat and fish with gluten steaks or nutmeat roast.

Increasingly, though, Australians are moving away from the traditional English hot dinner for more cold food, eaten outdoors. Dessert may consist of trifle or Pavlova—a dessert made of baked egg whites and sugar, coated with cream, strawberries, peaches, mangoes, and passion fruit. Our English tradition might run to fruit or plum pudding, served hot with custard or ice cream, followed by mince (dried fruit) pies, and lollies (sweets), while nuts and chocolates decorate the table.

The afternoon is usually hot; temperatures in some parts of the country can be over 100 degrees F.; so most people just spend the time sitting around, talking with friends and family, playing with the gifts, putting batteries in toys, and feeling quite lethargic after a huge meal. The energetic will play cricket in the backyard or swim in the pool. The evening meal consists of leftovers from lunch. There is nothing on television—everyone is on holidays, including the TV stations, it seems; and the programs are usually re-runs, foreign imports, or the return of previous failed series.

There are many native Australian plants in flower over the Christmas season. A number of these have become known as Christmas plants in various parts of the country, including Christmas bells, Christmas Bush, and the Christmas orchid. Christmas Bush is a dense, evergreen shrub that flowers in late spring and early summer with pale flowers that turn red around Christmas time.

The Christmas break is an opportunity for sports fans to enjoy two major sporting events. The 26 December is the opening day of the "Boxing Day Test" between the Australian cricket team and an international touring side at the *Melbourne Cricket Ground*. This has been well attended since the first match in 1950, and watched by many others on television. The game lasts for four or five days. In Sydney one of the world's most prestigious ocean races, the *Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race*, starts on Boxing Day from Sydney Harbour. Boxing Day is when many people leave on their summer vacation, and the roads out of all major cities are busy with traffic heading for the holiday apartments and campgrounds by the beach. Offices and small shops may be closed for several weeks. Nothing returns to normal until after Australia Day, 26 January, when school resumes.

AUSTRALIAN RECIPE

- David Coltheart

Pavlova

4 large (120 grams) egg whites
1 cup (200 grams) superfine (castor) sugar
1 teaspoon white vinegar
½ tablespoon cornstarch (corn flour)

Topping:

1 cup (240 ml) heavy whipping cream,
1 ½ tablespoons (20 grams) granulated white sugar
½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract.

Fresh fruit: kiwi, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, passion fruit, peaches, pineapple, or other fruit of your choice.

Preheat oven to 250 degrees F (130 degrees C) and place rack in center of oven. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and draw a 7 inch (18 cm) circle on the paper.

In the bowl of your electric mixer, with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites on medium-high speed until they hold soft peaks. Start adding the sugar, a tablespoon at a time, and continue to beat until the meringue holds very stiff peaks. (Test to see if the sugar is fully dissolved by rubbing a little of the meringue between your thumb and index finger. The meringue should feel smooth, not gritty. If it feels gritty the sugar has not fully dissolved so keep beating until it feels smooth between your fingers). Sprinkle the vinegar and cornstarch over the top of the meringue and, with a rubber spatula, fold in.

Gently spread the meringue inside the circle drawn on the parchment paper, smoothing the edges, making sure the edges of the meringue are slightly higher than the center. (You want a slight well in the center of the meringue to place the whipped cream and fruit.)



Bake for 1 hour 15 minutes or until the outside is dry and takes on a very pale cream color. Turn the oven off, leave the door slightly ajar, and let the meringue cool completely in the oven. (The outside of the meringue will feel firm to the touch, if gently pressed, but as it cools you will get a little cracking and you will see that the inside is soft and marshmallowy.)

The cooled meringue can be made and stored in a cool dry place, in an airtight container, for a few days.

Just before serving gently place the meringue onto a serving plate. Whip the cream in your electric mixer, with the whisk attachment, until soft peaks form. Sweeten with the sugar and vanilla and then mound the softly whipped cream into the center of the meringue. Arrange the fruit randomly, or in a decorative pattern, on top of the cream. Serve immediately as this dessert does not hold for more than a few hours. (Serves 6 to 8.)



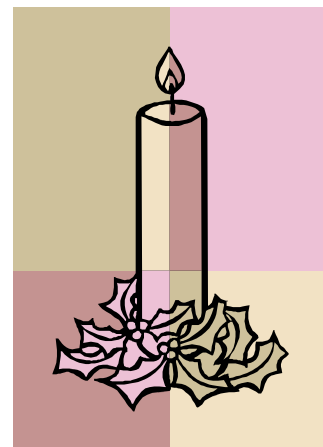
BELGIUM

- Karel Denteneer

As a pastor, those last days of the year are very dear to me. I am always organizing a special Christmas worship in my several churches, with as many Christmas carols as possible. On Christmas Eve we invite a special friend who is lonely, to have dinner with us. On the menu, I prefer the old fashioned traditional: turkey with cranberries and a delicious

Christmas mocha ice cream *stronk*.

I wish all the Kinship readers a blessed Christmas time and a happy birthday to our Lord Jesus.



THE NETHERLANDS

- Ruud Kieboom and Kees Meiling

In the fifth of December we have the big children's holiday "Sinterklaas." Three weeks earlier he has arrived on a boat from Spain with his helpers, "Zwarte Pieten" (Black Peters). Between his arrival and the fifth of December children are allowed to put a shoe before the fire place (or central heating!) before they go to bed. Black Peter will put something sweet in the shoes at night. Traditionally he is entering the house through the chimney when everyone is asleep (even when houses have no chimney!). Adults usually celebrate "Sinterklaasavond" (The Night of Santa Claus) by giving each other a present, wrapped in something funny or beautiful they made themselves. This can be anything from a doll made out of old clothes to a little house made out of wood, accompanied with a poem. In the poem you put all the bad and good qualities of the person the present is for, but in a way that is not hurtful. It takes a lot of time and energy to make the lines rhyme and still having a good rhythm. But it is an opportunity to do something very special for someone you love.

On December 24 we usually start Christmas by



watching (and listening to) the Christmas concert of King's College Choir from Cambridge. On December 24 and 25 we usually have friends for dinner or visit them, and have a cozy time chatting and eating. We seldom go to a Christmas church service. I really don't know why we don't; maybe because it wasn't done in Adventist circles in the past.

On New Year's Eve we come together with a circle of friends in someone's home. We have a kind of potluck and enjoy playing games and watching cabaret on television. At midnight we watch the fireworks bursting all over our city from our fourth-floor apartment. In all of our travels, we have never seen anything that compares with the Den Haag display. It takes about an hour and the sky is lit with the most beautiful colors and figures of fire. This is a great way to begin the New Year. It is also a tradition to eat "oliebollen" (oil balls) and "appelflappen" (kind of apple pies) baked in oil on New Year's Eve. But you have to be careful; you put on much weight if you eat too much!

Happy Christmas to all of you and all the best for the New Year!



Dutch Oliebollen



GERMANY

- Ingrid Schmid

In Germany we celebrate Christmas Eve. We like to be together as a family and meet in the late afternoon, when it gets dark. We choose the early time because our grandchildren are early school and kindergarten age. The Christmas tree has been nicely decorated by the children and we love the atmosphere of shining candlelight. We usually sing songs and have the children tell the story of Bethlehem. It is nice to hear them tell it in their own words.

We then have an early supper: Potato salad (one bowl German style, one bowl Czech style) and hot dogs, fruit salad, and homemade Christmas cookies for desert. As a beverage (a must in our family) I make a big pot of "Punsch," which is a base of fruit-and-peppermint tea with spices (stick cinnamon, cloves etc.) and sliced up lemon mixed with red juices (grape, raspberry, blackberry etc.). It is served

hot, and not too sweet.

We finally open presents, enjoying one at a time, allowing plenty of time to play, trying out, trying on, chatting, laughing, and sharing. Before we know it, it's time for the kids to go to bed and for the bedtime rituals, which we all take part in.

We sometimes visit the local Lutheran church for a midnight Christmas service, which is very nice. Some Seventh-day Adventist churches offer a service in the late afternoon.

December 25 and 26 are both holidays in Germany. Usually we have grandparents and great grandparents visiting. We enjoy their company. We go out for a walk, visit friends, play games together, and have good food. "Raclette" is one of our favorite dishes. The kids love to watch the cheese melt.

Because our youngest grandson Armin was born

on December 27, we celebrate his birthday on the 26th. On his real birthday either his dad has to work in the hospital or the grandparents have to leave again. This year our great grandma (my mother-in-law) will have her 90th birthday on December 29. We are planning a big party and family reunion for her.

So we will be celebrating without end.

Right now we have snow and freezing temperatures, and it looks like we will have a white Christmas this year.

Take care and God bless.



GERMAN RECIPE

– Ingrid Schmid

Raclette

For 4 persons

- 8 small/medium potatoes
- 700g raclette cheese
- 1 jar pickled gherkin cucumbers (cornichons)
- 4 small onions (or shallots)
- freshly ground pepper

Other optional ingredients: tomatoes, pineapple, capsicum, fresh or dried herbs, avocado, onions, marinated chicken/beef, mushrooms, celery, asparagus, olives, crusty bread, or salads.

Method

1. Brush potatoes under running water and place in microwave-proof bowl half-filled with lukewarm water and cook on high for 6 mins in their skins. Alternatively, you can boil the potatoes on the stovetop for approximately 18 mins on high in a pot filled with water.
2. Remove the rind (outer surface) from the cheese. You will need a sharp knife to remove the rind. Once the rind is removed slice 2mm thick slices (thinner if preferred) from the block using a knife or wire cheese slicer. Place on a serving dish, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until required.
3. Arrange gherkins, onions, and salami/ham on a platter and set aside until required.
4. When ready to serve, set table and place raclette grill in the centre of your table and placed cooked potatoes on top of raclette grill in metal bowl or saucepan with lid to keep warm; and place gherkins, onions and cheese on table.
5. Turn raclette grill on to begin to heat up (takes only a minute or two). Each guest takes a slice of cheese, places it in their pan and slides it under the raclette grill to melt. It takes approximately 2 mins to melt to a creamy consistency and 3 mins for a crispier top. In the meantime, take a potato, place onto your plate, and cut it into a few pieces and take out the pan from under the grill once it's reached its preferred consistency and hold the pan onto its side to scrape the cheese out using your wooden



6. Season to taste with freshly ground pepper.

Hints

- The rind of raclette cheese may be hard to cut through with conventional cheese wire cutters. As you hack away at the rind with your sharp knife be careful to remove just a little of the outer surface of the cheese. It can be quite tricky. We didn't say that there won't be any work involved! The vegetable peeler is handy to remove the curved edge side of the cheese block.
- Accompanying ingredients (gherkins, onions, herbs, spices, etc.) can also be heated under the grill together with the cheese at the same time.
- In Australia the most common potato variety is Sebago which comes brushed (unwashed) or washed (sometimes called "new"), but why not try other potato varieties which are even tastier, like:
 - Kipfler: cigar shaped, yellow skin, meaty flesh.
 - Nicola: oblong-long shaped, rich yellow skin, yellow flesh.
 - Bintje: oblong - long shape, cream-coloured skin, light yellow flesh
 - Desire: round, pink skin, pale yellow flesh.
- Try baking potatoes wrapped in foil. Bake for 40 mins at 250°C. For a chewier skin, bake without foil.

S

UNITED STATES

– Virginia (Ren) Reynolds

I have a painting of my parents trudging from the stile toward the ranch house with scarves blowing in the Rocky Mountain breeze. A present is falling toward the nearly knee deep snow as they made their way toward the hundred-year-old log cabin. A hint of warmth comes from smoke dispersing across the sky. Once Kinship held a Sabbath board meeting in that very place. We were cozy with the warmth of a pot belly stove on that November day.

– Tasha Maxwell

My favorite way to spend Christmas Eve is with close friends and family listening to Handel's *Messiah*.

– Ron Gainey –

Something happened in the airport, and it made me think, *Uh-oh*. If everyone tried to turn the tables on straights at least in one situation in the New Year, it might start something. There was an empty seat, William, me, and another empty seat. A man came and sat beside William, and just a little later a woman appeared and the man directed her to a seat opposite from us. William said I should move down, and we did. Then when she came over, sat down, and thanked us, I promptly said, "We try to be heterosexually supportive whenever we can."

– Betty O'Leary

I don't really have a favorite holiday recipe. My favorite way to spend Christmas is just hanging out and enjoying a good meal with family and friends.

– Mervin

Every year the Christmas holidays happen to be a time where lasting memories are made with family and friends. In my family, Christmas has always been a special pastime of presents and good food for many generations. Most holiday seasons have been spent at my grandparents home called "Mengim", but since moving to America we've cele-

brated Christmas with my aunts, uncles and all my cousins in Tennessee. Christmas is such a happy time of the year because it always brings a house full of people who are filled with love and holiday cheer. There are many things I enjoy about Christmas, but I'd have to say my favorite part about the Christmas holiday would have to be decorating the Christmas tree. I think the reason why I find putting up the Christmas tree so exciting, is that as soon as the tree is up then Christmas time has officially begun. As



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we get presents wrapped, we start putting them under the tree. Eventually, by the time Christmas morning arrives, there is a mountain of presents so big that it's almost like torture waiting for the BIG family breakfast to be over. After breakfast we all gather around the tree, and one of the uncles with a beard has to do Santa's job of handing out presents. It's always quite a busy time with big "thank you"s flying across the room and big bear hugs going hand-in-hand with all the presents being handed out. Then as lunch time arrives, everyone begins to relocate to the dining room where a huge feast has been prepared by all the ladies in the house. Dessert is always the best part. It can be a variety of holiday dishes, like fruit cake with custard, and one of my mom's specialties called trifle. After all the time spent with family I always think it was a day well spent.



ENGLAND – KM

My mother used to bake a brown sugar apple or fruit crumble using the fruit we had growing in the back garden. Over the winter holidays she would serve it with a little full fresh cream that had been whipped with brandy or vanilla ice cream for those that wanted it.

2 Granny Smith apples, cored and diced
2 tbsp brown sugar
½ tsp ground cinnamon (I much prefer grating a cinnamon stick with a Microplane® to get the most potent fragrance)
2 tbsp / 30g / 1 oz. cold butter, cut into cubes

Topping:

½ cup oats
½ cup flour
¼ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup brown sugar
¼ cup walnuts, chopped
5 tbsp / 75g / 2.65 oz. cold butter, cut into cubes

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C.
2. In a bowl, toss together apple, brown sugar, and cinnamon, until well coated.
3. Grease an ovenproof dish with butter and transfer the apples to it. Dot with cold butter. Set aside.
4. In another bowl mix together the ingredients for the topping. Cut the butter into the mixture with a pastry cutter. Refrigerate this for about 10 minutes if you've got the time.
5. Spread chunks of the topping mixture over the apples and bake for 35-40 minutes until the apples are done.
6. If the apples are rather juicy, you might have to drain off the excess juices halfway through baking.
7. Sneak in a few bites while it's still in the oven, under the pretext of making sure there isn't too much liquid in there.
8. Serve the apple crumble with vanilla ice cream with caramel sauce or, even better, dulce de leche.



KINSHIP RECIPES

This is the best fruit cake I have ever eaten. I like it much better than the traditional ones. Hope you enjoy it, too.

Christmas Fruit Cake - Ron

2 lbs whole pecans (8 cups)
1 ½ lbs pitted dates (optional)
1 lb glazed pineapple chunks
1 lb glazed cherries
2 cups flour
2 tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
4 eggs, well-beaten
1 cup white sugar

Sift flour, baking powder, and salt over fruit and nuts; mix well. Add eggs and sugar well-beaten together. Pour into small bread pans lined with wax paper. Bake about 1 hour and 35 minutes at 275 degrees. Makes about 5 small loaves.

I like a slice of this plain or with some butter/margarine spread on and enjoy!



Bread Pudding – Algeria M.

For the holidays, one of the desserts I make (and people love) is bread pudding. I mix 4 eggs, ½ cup sugar, 2 cups milk, 2 cups bread cubes (bread cut in ½-inch cubes) 1 tsp. vanilla, 1 tsp ground cinnamon. Mix well and bake for 45 minutes at 350 degrees. Enjoy!

Have a wonderful Christmas! ▼



The Skills of Positive Aging

Mary and Ken Gergen

It is common to view the first two decades of life as the critical phase of development—when we learn the basic skills of speaking, relating, and self-control, and all the secondary skills that formal education provides. The so-called middle years are those in which one uses these skills and sharpens those particularly relevant to one's life pursuits. Then, as the story goes, people just retire and grow older. No new skills are required; and, in fact, few demands are made on those they have acquired. Slowly they slip away.

This is not only a depressing picture of aging, it is wholly misleading. Older life is a major period of development, and its rewards may eclipse any previous period of life. If aging is to be a positive period of growth, new and important skills are required.

At the outset, it is useful to make a rough distinction between two general kinds of skills, those which expand the potentials of living and those which enable us to live with loss. In terms of expansion, think here of the child's learning to walk, ride a bicycle, read, or save money. Each of these skills opens new vistas of possibility; life is enriched. In the case of loss, consider the way in which children must learn to give up their mother's breast, the freedom of defecating at will, emotional outbursts, or the leisure of those years before school.

So it is with the elder years. Although rarely in the limelight, there are skills that can open new spaces of meaningful engage-



ment, and those essential in confronting that which must be left to the past. In this issue we focus briefly on a skill of expansion. Especially relevant to those living with a long-term spouse or partner is the skill of rediscovery. We recently spoke with an acquaintance who was complaining that his wife had become a boring and indifferent woman. Why, he wondered, must he spend the rest of his life with someone who was not at all like the girl to whom he made his vows some decades earlier? Such complaints bode a gloomy future, and suggest why the divorce rates of people over 60 have been increasing of late. Obviously his spouse is not the same person, nor is he, nor are their children or friends, nor are many other things the same as the day they were married. Particularly in families with a strong division of labor or with two careers, spouses or partners may scarcely notice changes in each other until retirement. With no one else around and time to be together, suddenly one may confront a seeming stranger. The challenge then is rediscovery. What are the possibly hidden po-

tentials of the other, the self, and the relational dance that can now blossom? There is no easy answer to this question; but, promisingly, there may be many possible answers. Here are a few that have emerged from our conversations with each other and our friends:

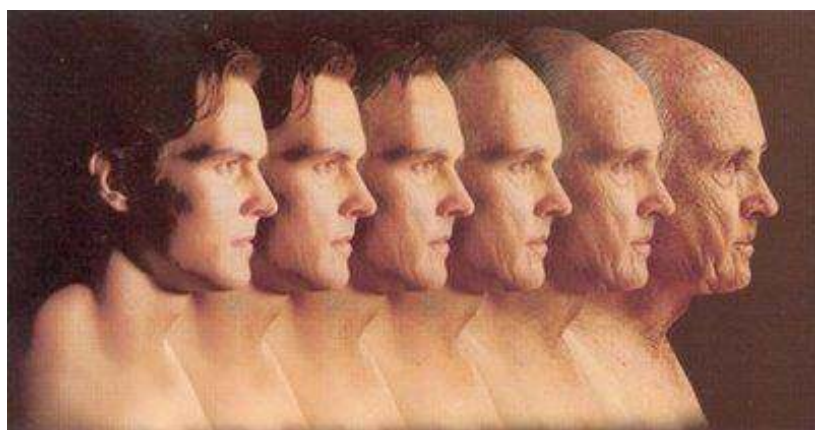
- Seek out new contexts of relating: travel, sports, hiking, and theater
- Explore new relational activities: massage, cooking, and gardening
- Expand personal hobbies to include the other: golf, bridge, and fishing
- Re-explore the past together, with particular sensitivity to possible re-ignitions of old feelings of joy and togetherness
- Explore the activities you once liked to do together, but which were abandoned for lack of time
- Allow one's partner time and space for individual development and exploration, the results of which can later be shared
- Be on the lookout for contexts in which you can pleasantly surprise the other.
- If readers would like to share

their own skills of re-discovery we would be happy to pass them on in future issues of the newsletter.

Care for Nature: Care for Self

A 20-year long study of over 6,000 Americans asked the question: How does working as a volunteer on environmental issues affect one's health, physical activity, and feelings of well-being? In 1974 these middle-aged participants described their involvement in volunteer activities such as participating in ecological restoration projects, environmental stewardship programs, and environmental policy-making activities. Twenty years later, they were evaluated as to their levels of physical activity, self-reported health, and depressive symptoms. After controlling for a number of factors, the researchers found that people who were involved in these volunteer activities were more active, healthier, and more upbeat than those who were not.

Nature benefited, and so did the volunteers. Researchers speculated that in addition to the oft-demonstrated advantages of volunteer work, there is a special advantage to working in nature. It is physically engaging and simultaneously restful. Related research supports this idea by showing that being in nature reduces stress and enhances feelings of well-being. Other research compared volunteers for environmental work with those volunteering for other kinds of activities (e.g. hospitals, churches, shelters). Volunteers in general were almost 2 times more likely to meet the Centers for Disease Control guidelines for physical activity, than non-volunteers. However, environmental volunteers were 2.6 times more likely to do so. Other researchers across the globe have also found that various health-related benefits accrue to people of all ages who are exposed to nature. So clearly, it's good for your health to get away from the computer, the cell phone, and the fax, and go take a walk. Even better, find ways of contributing to environmental care. ▽



From: *Environmental Volunteering and Health Outcomes Over a 20-Year Period* by Karl Pillemer, Thomas E. Fuller-Rowell, M.C. Reid, and Nancy M. Wells, *The Gerontologist*, 50, 594-60, November 30, 2010

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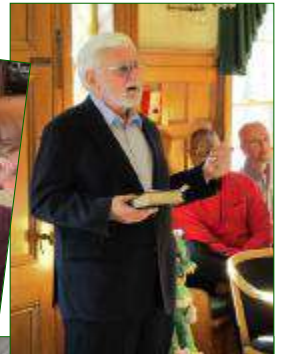
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*2010 Vermont
Mini Kampmeeting*

