

connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 38, No. 1, January 2014

Dead Silent

p12 the story of an
adult intersex person



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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) non-profit 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 2,500 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.

REGIONS AND GROUPS WORLDWIDE

www.sdakinship.org/regions-groups

CHAPLAIN

Marcos Apolonio, chaplain@sdakinship.org

CONTACT/INFORMATION

info@sdakinship.org

SUPPORT KINSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)



PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA

or visit Kinship's website www.sdakinship.org/resources for information about

- Find a Gay Friendly Church
- *Homosexuality, Can We Talk About It?*
- *Living Eden's Gifts*
- Previous *Connection* issues
- ... and more.

RESOURCES

www.someone-to-talk-to.net
www.buildingsafeplaces.org
www.itgetsbetterforadventists.org
www.sgamovie.com
www.facebook.com/sdakinship
... and more

From the Editor

I am typing to you on Christmas morning. By the time our first issue of 2014 arrives in your postal mail or email box, I imagine this particular holiday will seem eons away. What has been great fun for me over the last several hours is getting Facebook and email greetings from so many of you. There you are, Marge, with your beautiful bald head, grinning at us while you battle cancer. Betty, thanks for sending cyber snow from Massachusetts. Debbie cyber coughed her way in from Edmonton. I hope she doesn't have pertussis. David's email gleefully popped over from Australia, Roy sent us holiday photos from England, and Rena gifted us with her wide, open smile from Kenya. Candare wished us merriness from Maryland. Naveen was reveling in the warmth of his family in India. Ashish was missing his. What an amazing community. What a gift for the entire year that we have Kinship members who have made our Facebook, Twitter, and other media contacts possible. As you well know, one of our foci here at the *Connection* is to provide opportunities for us to get to know each other and the issues we face. This month we're introducing you to Dan from the Czech Republic. We're also introducing you to Carolyn Parsons telling what it is like to live as an intersex person. We've included four reports from our Kinship Board gathering in November so you can have a bit of "behind-the-scenes" understanding about what our leadership does. We hope you are enjoying meeting people. In this new year take good care of yourself...for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine



Poems by Carol Grady

New Year's Reflections

The sun quickly traces, east to west,
its arc, low in the southern sky.

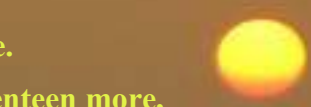
And yet, even as a new year dawns,
this ancient earth turns again
toward longer and higher arcs
and the distant promise
of warmth and renewed life.

Three-score years plus seventeen more,
like grass in the oven,
flaring bright, then gone.
Yet still I hope to see another spring,
another year.

Life is hard, full of sorrow –
but oh, so sweet.
I would not now
say happily, "Farewell."

But should sweet spring,
swelling summer,
bright fall, peaceful winter
no more return,

I'll gently sleep
with father, mother,
in hope of that great
"Gettin' Up" morning!



Time

Time begins to crumble,
As I near the end.

Weeks slide over each other.
Months are gone before

I know they're here.

I'm headed at a brick wall

Going 90 miles an hour,
Seeing life pass in a blur!

Slow. Down.

Enjoy each shining moment,

As pearl-drops of time

Splash into the nearly brimming
Bowl of Life.





By David Coltheart

We say it repeatedly at this season. The greeting makes a change from the usual "Good morning, how are you?" that we normally mumble when we meet people. Strangely, we stop saying "Happy New Year" by about the end of the first week of January. It is as if our happiness evaporated with the Christmas cheer. Maybe, by then, reality has set in, New Year's resolutions have faded, and we have returned to our mundane routine. The new year, for all its promise, is just as unhappy as the old year that's just gone.

What is the secret for a "happy" new year that lasts a whole twelve months? A new house? A perfect body? A developing relationship? Researchers have discovered that external changes to a person's life do not make for long-term happiness. The old adage is true: *Money can't buy happiness*. Even losing that extra weight or falling in love provides only a temporary bounce of bliss that fades fast. How then do we find lasting happiness?

Happiness means different things to different people. For most of us, happiness is expressed through emotions such as love and courage. Feelings of independence and security provide stability and satisfaction with life. For some people, just being

healthy or having control over their lives is enough to provide deep peace and joy. Others find happiness in giving away their money, giving up their time, or using their talents to help others less fortunate than themselves. All are recognized factors in promoting happiness.

The Bible frequently reminds us to be happy. "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Romans 12:12). And the Beatitudes that introduce Jesus' Sermon on the Mount repeatedly refer to those who are "blessed" and even lists factors that bring happiness: poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, mercy, purity, peacemaking, or just hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:1-12).

Dr. Dan Baker, author of the book, *What Happy People Know*, has concluded that enduring satisfaction in life comes from a mindset that makes you walk on the bright side, no matter what's thrown at you. In other words, optimistic people tend to be happy people, no matter what may be going on around them.

The good news is that you can

choose to be happy, even when surrounded by life's problems, difficulties, and struggles. Psychologists who study happiness believe that we increase our happiness by thwarting negative emotions such as pessimism, resentment, and anger, and fostering positive emotions such as empathy, serenity, and especially gratitude.

Happiness doesn't occur by chance—it takes positive effort and determination. Since happiness has so many life-giving rewards and even health benefits, finding happiness should be our top priority. We can program our beliefs and values in ways that will enhance our personal well-being and polish our self-image. For example, we can learn self-management techniques, practice good interpersonal skills, and develop career-oriented goals. We can look for opportunities to be happy. We can choose to be in environments that increase our likelihood of being happy and associate with people who are positive and upbeat most of the time.

Happiness, for me, comes from a sense of identity in being who I am. Although I am no longer young or handsome, I am content. I have always had a healthy self-image and still believe that God has given me abilities and talents. I believe God created me

just the way I am and that I don't need to change a thing. I don't need a new hairdo—grey and balding is just fine. I don't need powerful muscles or bulging abs—skinny is great. I don't need to change my hazel-coloured eyes for piercing blue ones, or change from being right-handed to left-handed. I don't want to wake up straight—I am perfectly happy being gay. I am quite happy to be the man I am, a son of God.

And therein lies perhaps the greatest secret of happiness. Don't try and be someone you are not. Wearing a mask and pretending to be anything less than the genuine "you" leads to endless failure and unhappiness. Instead, accept who you are and rejoice in God's handiwork. You are totally unique—there is not another person on the planet like you, nor has there ever been in the history of the world.



You are not the result of an accident, however you were conceived, but rather you are part of a divine plan and purpose for this world and the next. You are infinitely valuable in God's eyes. You are made in God's image. More than that, He loves you so much that He sent His Son to live and die just for you. If He puts that much value on you, the least you can do is accept that value, believe His word, and live happily ever after. ▼

David Coltheart and his partner John Plank live at Buderim, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. The photo of David was taken while he and John were on vacation in Venice in September 2013.

Bible, Gender, Sexuality:

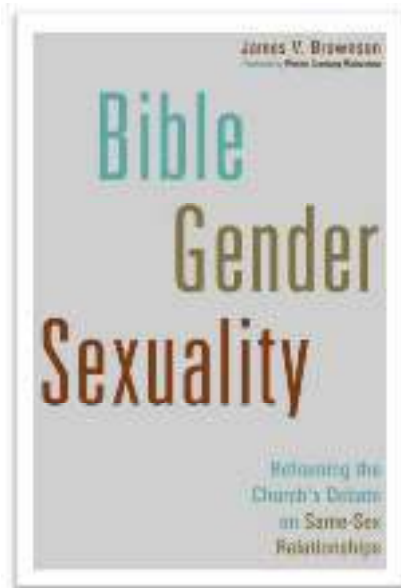
Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships

by James Brownson

A book review by Andrew Dykstra

I am so amazed at this book. I learned so much; and that is significant, because I have been reading about this subject for many years. This book, a major contribution, examines honestly and fairly the strengths and weaknesses of both sides of the debate. Many excellent books have been written on this subject and some of those focus tightly on the seven so-called "clobber texts"—those texts with which well-meaning Christians assault their LGBTIQI friends and family. Little do they know the harm they have done because of their well-intentioned assaults. But this author has gone well beyond those texts; he has also examined the larger trajectory/arc of Scripture. That is not only pertinent but much harder to do. I have waited for years to read what I found in this book—such as learning the over-arching principle of the Levitical prohibitions. I sensed right away that this author had nailed it, though it was new to me. The author explains in what way the arc of the New Testament is different from that of the Hebrew Scriptures (aka Old Testament) and even how that in the Hebrew Scriptures the arc was already hinting of change. For instance, while the Levitical rules prohibited eunuchs from entering the temple, the prophet Isaiah already proclaims to the eunuchs that God has not forsaken them. That is what gives such great poignancy to the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in the New Testament. While the Hebrew Scriptures tended to look backwards to creation, focused on purity and the separateness of Israel, Jesus and, by extension, the New Testament focused more on the Second Coming, shifted away from traditional views of purity, and, instead of separateness, was more mission-focused and confident in outreach. Our sovereign God is indeed leading His people, and in every generation He has some present truth, very pertinent to the time, that His children must learn. In the 19th century, it was slavery. In the New Testament times, the first Jewish Christians were led to include Gentiles into full fellowship. Who knows how God may be leading today and how God may be using this book to move us all forward?

It was Brownson's comments on Leviticus that I found most enlightening. I hope you will enjoy that portion as much as I did. Even though he does not mention our denomination, I learned something interesting about Adventism that I had never considered before. It has to do with how we use the creation story. He also finds it important to explain the concept of "one flesh," what is essential to the idea and what is less so. On the whole, while I was in a bigger hurry than this author, I really appreciated very much what he had to say. *Bible, Gender, Sexuality* is available in paperback and Kindle edition (ebook) from Amazon.com. ▼



Dan (Bohdan) Pajonk

I am a third-generation Adventist, born in Bruntal, Selisia, in the eastern part of the Czech Republic. I had a happy childhood and was baptized in the United States during a 2008 literature evangelism campaign. These days I don't go to church because the people in my congregation do not accept my homosexuality. I don't want to live a lie; I want to be honest with myself and with my God.

I realized I was gay when I was 13 or 14 years old and decided to hide it. For the sake of my parents, friends, and people in the church, I tried to become heterosexual. I prayed and cried for this change almost every day. I did not change.

One day I had enough of hiding my true self, moved away from my home, and began to live in Prague where I could be true to myself.

In Prague I went to a meeting for the young people of the church. I felt weird; it seemed to me that I did not belong there any more. I still consider myself a Seventh-day Adventist. I was raised in the church and it is a large part of who I am. It is difficult for me not to feel like an Adventist! These days I feel okay being both gay and Adventist. I don't care what people think of my sexual orientation; it is their problem, and I let them deal with it for themselves.

Once my father spoke to me about a text he found in the Bible about men having left their natural behavior with women and having sex with men. He explained to me that they were not homosexuals so what is said there doesn't apply to homosexuals like me. It is not right to refer to those texts to condemn gay and lesbian people. Being a homosexual not by choice but by nature is a natural way to live, and to act accordingly has nothing to do with that passage in the Bible. On the contrary! I was living an unnatural life when I tried to live according to expectations of the church and not be who I am. If I would act like a heterosexual I would be like those the text is talking about; I would be living a life not according to my natural state.



A friend of mine told me about a group called "Homosexual Adventists in Germany." I looked for them on the internet and started a conversation with the webmaster of the site, Roy Raetzer. He brought



me into contact with Mike Lewis who was organizing a Kinship meeting in England. Mike invited me to come to the meeting and offered a scholarship so I was able to attend. There I met a lot of very nice and kind people that were like me! I had a great time and was able to attend the next meetings in France and in The Netherlands. I now consider my Kinship friends part of my

family. I feel happy to be around with them. Unfortunately I haven't been able to come to the last two meetings. Maybe next year...

I know of some other gay Seventh-day Adventist people in Czech Republic. I spoke with them about Kinship and invited them to come to the meetings. They haven't yet decided to attend, and I am not someone who can pressure others. I would love to see more people from Czech Republic coming to Kinship meetings. Maybe one day, when we have a meeting in Prague, they will come, meet us, and experience what I have experienced when I am with Kinship.

Since the end of communism, the environment for Czech gays and lesbians has improved drastically. We are no longer put into prison if we want to live in a relationship. We cannot always be openly affectionate in public, but I think that is not only a Czech problem. It takes time for society to change. I find it is helpful that lots of celebrities have come out openly. Their openness makes our life more acceptable for the people in my country.

I have looked for a partner ever since I came out. Finally, this year, I met someone with whom I would like to share my life. Surprisingly, it was on a dating site. Often these sites are filled with people who just want sex, not a real and loving relationship. The first time Lukas and I talked, we chatted from the middle of the night until five in the morning. We couldn't stop; we wanted to know more about each other. I felt really good, just talking to him. I was very nervous the night we met in person. I was working at the desk of a party that, as it turned out, he was also attending. When Lukas arrived I just couldn't work anymore and had to ask my colleague



ward website. I used a pseudonym. The youth pastor refused to support even the discussion. He said, "The opinion of the church is clear in this matter; we do not need to talk about it." I was so disappointed in him! He chose to not respond to the needs of young people he had been directed to serve. I say to the church, *Be honest! Talk openly about the existence of Kinship, even if you don't agree with Kinship's mission. Show sympathy. At least give young people an opportunity to find support.* ▼ [RK]

Dan (left) and Lukas



to take over.

We have a lot in common. Last October I moved to his place where he is taking care of his grandmother. Already, I cannot imagine a life without him. He is a blessing for me, an answer to my prayers. Life is wonderful now. We share so much fun and love. We have to hug at least once every half hour; sometimes people get annoyed by us. ☺ I want our affection to stay like this for a very long time.

I ask the Seventh-day Adventist church to not deny the problems and anguish gay and lesbian people experience. I understand that many pastors in Czech Republic know about Kinship; they just don't want to talk about the issue of same-sex relationships. They hide behind the rules of the church, even when they think differently in private. Their behavior is unfair and hurtful. I understand that these pastors are partly afraid and partly want to be loyal to the church. However, people like me are suffering and often think that God doesn't love us anymore. We don't know where to go; the church doesn't reach out a hand to us. Finally, we have no other choice but to live a lie or to leave the church. It is a shame that nobody dares to speak up on behalf of lesbian and gay Seventh-day Adventists.

When I was 19, I talked about my homosexuality with the Czech conference youth leader who was leading a three-year program called *Pay It Forward*. This program was designed to teach pastoral and social work to young people. When I told the youth director I was gay, his response was that I should pray to change. This was not helpful so I started a discussion about homosexuality on the *Pay it For-*



Life
is not measured
by the breaths we take,
but by the *moments*
that take our
breath away.

Documentary on Gay and Lesbian Seventh-day Adventists Released in DVD

Adapted from Adventist Today News Team, November 21, 2013

The award-winning, feature-length documentary film entitled *Seventh-Gay Adventists* has been released for private purchase after more than 70 showings across North America with nearly 14,000 in attendance. It has generated much discussion and some debate.

The film simply tells the stories of three gay and lesbian Seventh-day Adventists who wrestle with how to reconcile their faith, identity, and sexuality. One young man spent five years in “ex-gay” therapy trying to become straight. Another was an Adventist pastor in Brazil who was fired for being gay. The third is a lesbian mom from the Midwest who wants her daughters to grow up with her beliefs, even though she knows her church might not accept their family.

“These are Adventists whom we followed for two years,” said Deneen Akers and Stephen Eyer, the couple who produced the movie. “They all desire a way to reconcile their faith and sexual identity. Their voices, especially combined with the verité style of filmmaking, add a not-often-heard perspective to the conversation about this topic.”

Growing up Adventist means knowing you belong. And being Adventist is about much more than a set of beliefs—it’s a close-knit community not easily left.

Discovering you are gay in this community often means loss and exile from all that has been home. The film follows the raw and moving journeys of these three as they wrestle with deep questions and struggle to find a place where they can integrate identity, love, and belief.

David loves Jesus, but he might not go to heaven. At least, that’s his deepest fear. For the last five years, his “ex-gay” therapist has tried to help David become straight, but his heart’s desire is still to be with a man. As a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with family members in prominent leadership positions, David knows that being gay is not okay according to the church policy. Gays are promiscuous, hedonistic, and decidedly un-Christian—or at least that’s what he’s always believed.

“Whatever one’s position regarding homosexuals and the church may be, this film is worth seeing because it candidly probes issues with real human faces and stories,” stated Dr. Roy

Gane, author and seminary professor. “The movie, which simply tells stories rather than taking an advocacy stance, is powerful. It can, I believe, do much to make Adventists more compassionate in this controversial area,” stated Dr. William Johnsson, retired editor of the *Adventist Review*.

This is “a must-see documentary film about the crossroads between faith and sexual identity. Thank you for being gracious and generous and for putting a spotlight on grace,” said Pastor Ray Dabrowski, who served as communication director for the General Conference from 1994 to 2010. “The film is superb, a poignant and profound experience beyond any I’ve seen on the subject,” stated Chris Blake, author and professor of English at Union College.

The film is available in digital format for immediate download, and DVDs and Blu-ray format are now being shipped. Orders can be placed at the website <http://buy.sgamovie.com>. ▼



Editor's Note:

At the *Connection* we appreciate the time and effort Kinship members take to share with us resources they have found helpful or interesting. We are a diverse community from many cultures around the world, and it is with our various perspectives that we can break down the isolation so many feel and perhaps provide insights and help to each other.

Fascinated and filled with gratitude, I am reading "Gays in the Family" by Eliel Cruz (*Connection*, Vol. 37, No. 5, May 2013). In it he writes, "This narrative of 'we need to heal the homosexuals' is toxic, has been proven to be damaging, and does not contain an ounce of love. Its spiritual and psychological malpractice does real damage in my life, a family member's life, and the life of other LGBT people." Eliel goes on to say, "We need to change our approach." I am touched by the honest, vital, and open way Eliel speaks his truth.

As I read, I think about the ways the Seventh-day Adventist Church was my home, my family, and my everyday community for almost 22 years. I was a third-generation member of the denomination. When I came out I became an outsider to my own family, to my church, and therefore to my community. I lost something that was very important to me. We need to know that we are not alone. We need to know there are people who will support us as we experience emotional distress and harassment. Sometimes we need to find professional help.

For myself, I found a vibrant independent therapy organization in the United Kingdom. It is run by founder Dominic Davies and will celebrate its 15th anniversary next April. Pink Therapy provides support, psychotherapy, and training. Its associates have a wide range of knowledge about our experiences and our lives. Of course, it is not the same as SDA Kinship. It has a different function though both groups aim to respect, accept, and help people who are having difficulties with their families, societies, and commu-



by Andrea Roth

nities. Both groups have helped me. I am writing about Pink Therapy in case it might be useful for you or someone you know.

Here is how Pink Therapy describes itself on their website.

"We are the UK's largest independent therapy organisation working with gender and sexual diversity clients. As an organisation we aim to promote high quality therapy and training services for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and others who identify as being gender or sexual diversities. These include, but are not restricted to people who identify as asexual, celibate, polyamorous, non-monogamous (or swingers), and those involved in BDSM or Kink lifestyles or practices, anyone on the gender spectrum from cross dressers/transvestites, gender queer, intersex, and those living with variations in sex development, androgynes, third sex/two spirit, to those living full time as transgenderists, transsexuals (transmen and transwomen).

"We comprise a team of 14 Associate Therapists who all positively identify as holding a gender or sexual minority lived-experience, and our website hosts the UK's first online Directory of Pink Therapists which lists other qualified therapists around the UK who adopt a sexuality-affirmative

stance and do not see sexual or gender variation as a sickness. These other therapists are all qualified professionals, with varying degrees of experience and training in working with sexual and gender diversity clients. We cannot, however, ensure that their experience or work are equal to those of our Associate Therapists.

"We have a policy of being open with clients about the provision of therapy services and the training and experience we have. We are committed to offering training, clinical supervision and consultation to other therapists (and therapy training organisations) who are working with sexual diversity clients to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of the services available. We also want to promote self-help resources to enable gender and sexual diversity clients to work on themselves as well as providing information about low-cost and free counselling and support for people on limited incomes."

Dominic Davies has been in practice as a psychotherapist and sex therapist for over 30 years. He was the principal author and co-editor (with Charles Neal) of the first British textbooks to promote counseling and therapy with sexual diversity clients: *Pink Therapy*, from which this organization takes its name. For more information, you can access the group at pinktherapy.com. ▼

NEVER be AFRAID to trust an UNKNOWN FUTURE to a known God

SDA Kinship International Board Reports

Development — Keisha McKenzie

I work with both resource development and communication aspects of Kinship.

As part of resource development this year, I updated our Guidestar (www.guidestar.org) profile. I will add this year's tax documents when received. Kinship did not participate in the 2013 top-ranking non-profit list; the board might consider participating again next fall. Reviews gathered by GreatNonprofits* automatically appear on our Guidestar page, so the 15 reviews I secured last year are a part of our public Guidestar profile. I checked in with the coordinators of Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, and Kenya as part of an international needs assessment. Argentina's coordinator told me his greatest need was for supportive print materials in Spanish. We need to raise more funds to make this possible. I signed Kinship up for Giving Tuesday (givingtuesday.org/partner/sdakinship/) to launch the 2013 end-of-year fundraising campaign. Our Razoo page (<http://bit.ly/1eoRjFv>) will be the center of activity again, particularly while the website is in flux. I participated in a fundraising webinar from Care2 and Razoo on the end-of-year cycle during November.

*) <http://www.greatnonprofits.org/>

As this new year begins, we want to give you an overview of what some of your Kinship leaders have been doing. We don't always see the consistent and often difficult work that goes on "behind the scenes" of this community.



I am very interested in increasing the ways Kinship communicates, both within and outside our community. I moderate the international Kinship Facebook page (facebook.com/sdakinship) and also manage our SDA Kinship Twitter (twitter.com/SDAKinship) account. On Twitter we presently average 3-4 new interactions (not including follows) in two-week bursts. I updated our profile icon to celebrate GLAAD's anti-bullying Spirit Day. Our follower count increased from 176 in March 2013 to 239 by November. Our followers include individual friends and allies, both Adventist and non-Adventist. Tweets continue to include any informative and "safely provocative" articles, blogs, news items, or thoughts relevant to the Adventist LGBT community.

KinWomen — Debbie Hawthorne-Toop and Betty O'Leary

We made two major changes this year. When Linda Wright and Jacquie Hegarty graciously offered to organize our Women and Children First weekend, they rented a house instead of hotel rooms. Everyone participated in meal preparation and clean up. We had a great time socializing in large and small groups. A big thank you to Linda and Jacquie! This year, also for the first time, we elected two co-directors, Betty O'Leary and Debbie Hawthorne-Toop. They have already divided up responsibilities in order to better serve the women of Kinship. They have already found a holiday house for "Women and Children First 2014"! It is in a beautiful location outside Atlanta with hotel accommodations nearby if we have "overflow."

Member Services — Naveen Jonathan

We are working to establish small cell Kinship groups in various parts of the United States. They will be less formal than the chapters or regions. Their leaders or coordinators will organize dinners or social events. We are piloting this idea in Atlanta, Chicago,

and Kansas City. The first Atlanta meeting, hosted by Sandy Carmen, was held on October 5. We now have a Pacific Union College Chapter. Kevin Johnson has become our leader of the Chattanooga Chapter. Edgar Umana has agreed to lead out in our Chicago Chapter.

Communications — Ashish David

We are very excited about the development and launching of our memes project, which has been launched this year with Carrol Grady as our first “meme star.” She was followed by Maury Jackson, with more to be released on a semi-monthly basis. We are looking to contact a diverse group of both allies and LGBT individuals who are current or former Adventists, to serve as future “meme stars.” We believe this will allow SDA Kinship to be more relatable to the average Adventist.

Our team produces two print publications. The *Connection* has ten hard copy issues per year. Additionally, in 2014 it plans to produce two electronic issues in addition to the ten hard copies. *Living Eden's Gifts* was updated and reprinted.

Regular electronic publications include the *Kinship eNews* and local regional newsletters. We work with all aspects of social media including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

We continue to engage with members of the Advisory group on how to best work towards building a constructive relationship with the Church. We are working with Ronoldo and the youth team to build relationships with the IAGC (Intercollegiate Adventist Gay/Straight Alliance Coalition) on Adventist campuses. We would like to develop mentorship and scholarship programs, as funding allows. We are developing a series of four videos on the latest gender and sexuality science, change ministries, religious liberty, and civil rights as it relates to the Adventist church and Kinship. ▼

European Kinship Meeting 2014



Next year's European Kinship Meeting (EKM2014) will be held in St Mark's College, Saffron Walden, England, from Thursday, August 28 to Monday, September 1. This is a beautiful old *Hogwarts-like* complex with a reputation for wonderful food and comfortable, small-dormitory accommodation in the heart of the southern English countryside. It is easily accessible from London Stansted airport. Our speaker for the weekend is the Reverend Cecilia Eggleston, and she will be developing a Biblically-based theme of Prayer, in a stimulating mix of presentations and activities. There will be a trip to a local site of interest as

well as time for fun, fellowship, and worship. Costs and booking form should be available in early February. We are also planning the usual EKM holiday week, this year to be held in the Derbyshire Dales, from September 1 to 8. Watch for details!

Cecilia Eggleston recalls watching a priest conduct mass as a child and thinking, “I could do that!” Growing up she realized that she was a lesbian and that she had a calling to be ordained. Following a degree in geology, she entered the teaching profession and worked in the community services. She was involved in increasingly high-profile campaigns for lesbian and gay rights issues during the 1980s. Rev. Eggleston is an ordained clergy person in the Metropolitan Community Church, an inclusive worldwide Christian denomination that was first established in 1968 in Los Angeles. In 1989, when the AIDS crisis led to a widespread atmosphere of homophobia in the popular

➤
Rev. Cecilia
Eggleston



press, she co-founded a new congregation in Bath within the MCC. Having served in many areas of ministry within the denomination, she was elected to serve the MCC congregations in Europe and, as Regional Elder, also served MCCs in Africa. Since 2007, she has been pastor of MCC Newcastle, a vibrant congregation in the northeast corner of England. She is currently also studying part-time at Durham University for a graduate diploma in Theology and Religion. Cecilia has recently been featured in a photography exhibition at the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle, “Inspirational Women of the North East” (www.iwne.org), featuring women past and present who have dared to be different. ▼

Dead Silent

By Carolyn Parsons

The first time I heard the term “intersex” was in 2000 while I was watching the Discovery Channel. The documentary, called “Is it a Girl or a Boy?” was playing. I was drawn to the story of an adult intersex person talking about her experience. It was vaguely familiar.

Growing up on a Seventh-day Adventist mission in Angola, Africa, I was a “tomboy,” a girl interested in soccer, bicycle mechanics, building, playing doctor, and climbing trees. My sisters and I lived in a place that gave us immense freedom of movement and self-expression. When my body began to change at age 11, everything changed. I began to look more male, to act more male, and my genitals started to look more like a boy’s. When my sister told Mom and Dad that I looked like a boy when we were bathing, I was taken to my grandfather’s office.

Grandpa and Grandma went to Angola in January of 1931 to develop a medical mission. My dad was born there a year after they arrived. My parents met at La Sierra College when Dad was studying to be a lab technician. My mom, who was born in the United States, was at La Sierra to get a degree in education. My parents married right after graduation and my older sister was born when my dad was doing his clinical training at the White Memorial hospital in Los Angeles. My younger sister and I were born on the mission in Angola.

In early 1974, I was sitting in my Grandpa’s examination room. It was dead silent except for the sounds of the afternoon soccer game coming from the frosted glass window behind me. After examining me, grandpa washed his hands in the sink across from me and went in to his office to talk to my parents. The next thing I remember is driving to South Africa. I was taken to the Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital in the Western Cape Province, at the foothills of Table Mountain. While at the hospital, I was examined by several doctors. Each had me take off my underwear and lay on a table where they would touch my genitals,

pulling, tugging, making notes, or photographing.

They took x-rays, blood, and urine samples, and swabs from the inside of my mouth. No one spoke to me about why I was at the hospital and what they were going to do. Instead I figured out for myself that there was something terribly wrong with me. It was so terrible that it had to be kept a secret. I kept it, holding it tightly inside. I kept it inside for years; I was good at it, so good that I kept it even from myself. On the day of surgery I was given something to drink that would make me drowsy. I took a bath and was taken away on a gurney. The surgical suite was cold and filled with shiny equipment. It was not at all like the operating room that Grandpa worked in with a simple tray of tools, a bucket for the bloody sponges, and a single bright light. The operating room at the mission hospital had natural light coming through the windows that were frosted at the bottom and clear on top. I sometimes went to the prep room and stood on my tiptoes looking in through the windows of the double-swing doors, watching Grandpa operate. This operating room where I had my surgery had no windows but instead had cold florescent lights. When I woke up after surgery my

groin area was numb.

After surgery and being released from the hospital we went back home. I don’t remember much about that time, but within a few months civil war was starting to spread. My parents could see that things were going downhill fast, so my sisters and I were sent to South Africa to Helderberg College. During the next few months the situation at home deteriorated. My mom and another missionary family drove to South Africa to meet us. Then we waited for Dad to fly out. We went to the airport in Cape Town once, twice, and he was not on the daily flight. We then went to the home of family friends. There we were able to get in contact with my uncle on the ham radio. He said that Dad was coming. The next day, he arrived on the flight. He had been bumped from previous flights by people paying extra under the table to get on the plane. Fortunately, he was able to get in touch with his boyhood friend who worked for the airline and was able to board the plane.

When we were all together we flew to the United States. Dad got a job at the White Memorial Hospital in the lab. Mom got a job as an office manager in the radiology department. My sisters and I were



enrolled in San Gabriel Academy. After the school year, we moved to a more rural area of Southern California where my Dad worked in the lab and my mom worked as a transcriptionist. She then got a job teaching elementary school.

Those years since surgery and leaving the only home I knew were traumatic. I became numb to life, going with the flow. I finished high school and went to community college. I threw myself into art and pottery, excelling at working with my hands, and withdrew from life. I later attended Walla Walla University. I did not finish a degree, but instead I began working in the printing industry.

Watching the Discovery Channel documentary, I began thinking about my experience. I was scared but compelled to continue. I searched the internet and found information about various syndromes and congenital diseases; none quite fit what I remembered. Then I found information about Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS). It seemed most like what I thought my case was like. It wasn't spot on, but close enough. I was never told whether I had two X chromosomes or XY pattern on the sex-determining 46th chromosome. After I did more research I was confident that AIS best described my condition, specifically the partial form or PAIS. In Partial Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, a 46XY person with partial defect in the androgen receptor gene is partially masculinized. The diagnosis of PAIS, I learned, is a variable diagnosis involving not only androgen receptors but also testosterone and dihydrotestosterone synthesis. In the complete form, CAIS, the androgen receptor gene is completely inactive and the 46XY person develops like a female but without internal reproductive organs.

Soon after learning about the AIS support group, I talked to my parents about what I had learned. It was difficult to talk about it because of the burden of shame that we shared. My mom was especially hard hit because of the implications from the doctors who handled my case that she did something during her pregnancy that could have caused my condition. After I told them, my mom went to the office and came out with a two-page record summary from the hospital. For the first time, I learned that I had a 46XY karyotype. I got in touch with the Androgen Insensitivity Support Group and learned of the annual meeting a couple months away. I signed up and flew to the meeting. My first evening there I was contacted by a couple of other attendees and a small group of us got together to talk into the night. The women I was talking to identified as lesbians. It was the first time I had ever told my story to anyone, including how I tried urinating standing up and how I fantasized about being muscular, strong, and fast. I told them that in spite of the confusion and shame I felt about my body, I also felt good being in it during that time. The teasing from my playmates and my trip to the hospital changed all that. I no longer felt good to be in my body; I felt ashamed and that I was not acceptable the way I was. I internalized that message until I was completely convinced.

At the meeting we had a couple of presentations from physicians and researchers and I learned about a condition called 5α Reductase Deficiency. This deficiency means that testosterone is not converted to the more physiologically active dihydrotestosterone. Without dihydrotestosterone, masculinization is incomplete but there is usually enough activity so that the body masculinizes some at puberty. This condition is better known in the Dominican Republic,

Turkey, and Pakistan where there are populations that are closely related marrying and having children. The condition is autosomal recessive, meaning that both parents need to have a copy of the recessive gene and it shows no symptoms in the carriers. I spoke with the physician that presented at the meeting and showed him my brief hospital record; he agreed with me that I probably had 5α Reductase Deficiency.

The next year I spent processing what I had experienced. I began to understand that I was attracted to women. I was overwhelmed by everything I had unearthed. I began to peel away layers that I had covered myself in. It was distressing emotionally, and I began to experience increased depression and anxiety. I found an LGBT-supportive therapist and began four years of intensive therapy and psychiatric care to deal better with depression, anxiety, and insomnia. I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder related to two traumas that occurred within the same year: having surgery and leaving the only home I had known.

Dealing with emotional scars I hadn't visited for almost 30 years was not easy. I had heard about a group called Seventh-day Adventist Kinship, and in early 2002 I joined SDA Kinship online. After I joined, there was a regional meeting in my area. I offered my extra bedroom for anyone that was coming from out of town. I got an email from a woman asking about staying the night. We began to correspond by email. On the day of the meeting, I got an email that she wasn't coming because her pickup broke down. Even so, we continued to correspond; and three months later I went to visit her. We fell in love, even before we met. I came out to my family because I wanted to have her in my life. My family was a bit distressed to begin with but very

soon began to welcome my wife as another daughter, sister, and aunt.

We have been together for ten years now. We got married in Canada a couple of years ago and now enjoy legal marriage in our home state—a legal marriage that the Seventh-day Adventist Church publicly opposes. After corresponding with the Religious Liberty director for the Adventist church in our area, I learned that not only had the church opposed the law in the first place, but that it was considering helping to gather signatures to get the marriage rights law on the ballot as a referendum.

My wife and I have been through a lot. Not only do we deal with social stigma that LGBT people deal with almost daily, but for many years we did without the medical and other benefits opposite gender couples enjoy. My wife works for the federal government, and the so-called “Defense of Marriage Act” (DOMA) made it illegal for me to be on her insurance. When I was working at a company that had domestic partner benefits, I paid tax on her medical benefits because of DOMA. The last four years, my wife has supported me physically, financially, and emotionally while I received a Bachelor of Science degree in animal science from Washington State University.

The first Seventh-day Adventist person I reached out to was Carrol Grady. I knew about her because she attended the same church my cousins and my sister attended. Having a safe ally to confide in was a real gift that I will never forget. In an email, Carrol asked me a question that has informed my view of my own identity since. She asked me if, since I was intersex and genetically male, I identified as straight and not lesbian. I thought about it a bit and replied that I identified as lesbian. The important thing about identifying as I do is that I don’t feel that my

sexual orientation is any different than other person’s. I knew that my orientation towards people of the same gender isn’t different from that of any other LGBT person just because of my particular genes, hormones, experiences, or identity. Since then I have learned even more about the diversity of love, attraction, identity, and social factors that are included in a world such as lesbian. I am even more comfortable with being a part of the LGBT community.

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship has, for several years, made it part of their mission to support intersex people and educate allies in the church about the issues of intersexuality. In Kinship, there is an “I” at the end LGBT to signify the inclusion of intersex people in the sexuality and gender spectrum. This is not a universal inclusion but it is common in areas where Kinship is active, such as in much of Africa where the LGBTI movement is active. I stand united with my siblings in, among other countries, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana.

In Kinship I have been able to continue growing and find fertile ground for discussing the limitations of the boxes that we are put in. For example, I don’t identify as fully male or female. I am neither and I am both. My gender expression is not either male or female. More and more LGBTI people are opening up to the idea that gender identity and expression are on a spectrum and that many, even some non-LGBTI people, don’t fit neatly into these categories. When some of us fill out a form with demographic information we experience anxiety at not having categories that apply to us. Whether intersex, trans* or anyone else for whom sex and gender are not binary categories, the experience can be maddening.

My wife and I attended a Seventh-day Adventist church for the first four years we were together. During that time I began paying close attention to the church’s official positions on LGBT relationships and marriage. During this time the church began to publicly advocate against LGBT marriage rights. The church I grew up in and loved was abandoning its own tradition of full support for separation of church and state and beginning to become politically active against her LGBT members, families, and allies. At a time of a sea-change in public acceptance of LGBT relationships, I saw my church going the opposite direction. I tried to engage with Seventh-day Adventist leaders on the issue but I have not experienced being respected as a fellow human being in these interactions. I have been assumed to be sexually permissive, irresponsible, immature, or any number of other inaccurate and hurtful stereotypes of the “homosexual lifestyle.” This political engagement has been one of the most painful parts of my relationship with the church—the church that my grandparents and parents gave their lives to and that I, to a lesser extent, did as well.

As a member of an LGBT community chorus I sang a song called “A Life Uncommon.” In that song are the words, “Never give yourself to that which you wish to be free from.” These words put into focus for me that giving any support at all to the Seventh-day Adventist church implies agreement with the stance of the church. After discussing these issues, my wife and I stopped attending church. This was a new beginning for me, not an end. Since then I have rejected the dogma, theology, and belief of my youth. On my new path, I am learning what it means to be a whole person, with integrity and honesty. ▼



▶▶▶ Carolyn Parsons is an animal scientist living in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. She and her wife enjoy making art, baking, and watching documentary films. Carolyn is an avid photographer, a science nerd, and a creative writer. She enjoys singing in choruses and choirs, which she has been doing since she was a child. Carolyn has returned to Angola to visit, and hopes one day to return and develop a dairy that will help provide meaningful employment and milk products to help fight malnutrition in her native land.

“The Author of Love- Understanding a Misunderstood God”



The Second Edition of this 365-day devotional will introduce you, your family, and friends to a God, who has been frequently mischaracterized over the centuries. This 2014 Second Edition will acquaint you with a God who is, contrary to what many would teach, non-judgmental, a God whose very essence is that of love. Each page has been revised and boldly highlighted to underscore how much God loves you, a love that is unconditional and without reservation.

At the end of the book, there is a test to measure, not your I.Q., but rather your L.Q., your love quotient. You will find these questions to be both challenging and provocative. Over the course of our lives, each of us will confront many or most of the circumstances that the L.Q. test reveals---just not in one sitting or one day. What follows is a sample question:

19. You know that your friend is having an affair. However, his wife does not know. Everyone in the community knows of the affair. You feel an obligation to:

A.) Say nothing. It's none of your business. B.) Tell him if he doesn't confess to her, you will tell her. C.) Send your friend's wife a signed note, telling her of the affair. D.) Tell her of the affair.

If this book of devotionals has a central theme, it is that God's love for you is not based on any single culture, upbringing, experience, or even religion. God loves you...period. However, His love for you will be incomplete until you reciprocate.

To obtain either a hardback or paperback copy of “The Author of Love”, go to my website: www.docjocanderson.com. You may also obtain a copy from the publisher, West Bow Press, or through Amazon.com. Remember, always “Do everything in love.” I Cor. 16:14



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Memories from Vermont Mini Kampmeeting 2013



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