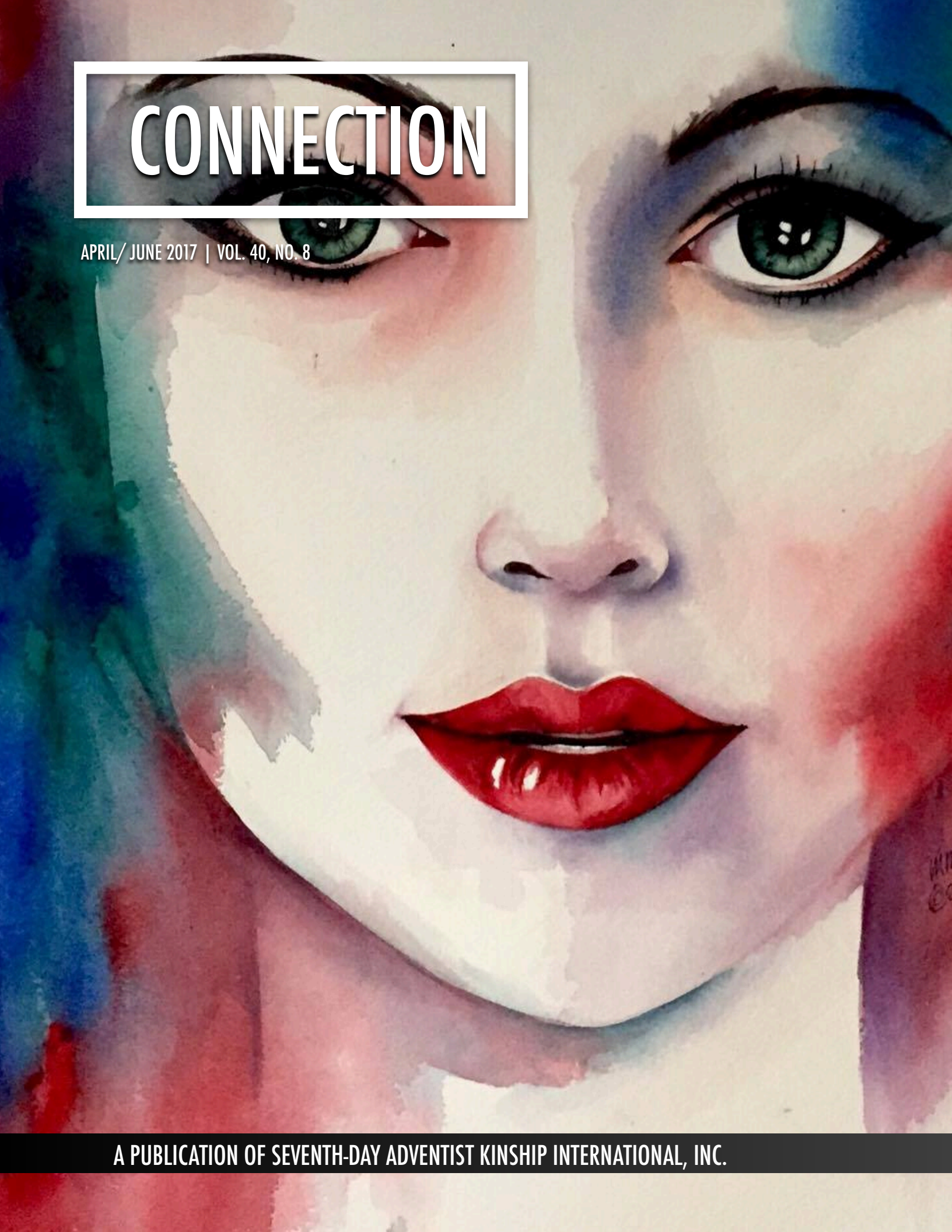


A watercolor portrait of a woman's face, focusing on her eyes and lips. The eyes are a vibrant green, and the lips are a rich red. The background is a soft blend of blue, green, and pink watercolor washes. The title 'CONNECTION' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font inside a white rectangular border in the upper left corner.

CONNECTION

APRIL/ JUNE 2017 | VOL. 40, NO. 8

A PUBLICATION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST KINSHIP INTERNATIONAL, INC.



Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a nonprofit 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 LGBTIQ 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. 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 43 countries.

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 LGBTIQ has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

Mailing Address

PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563 USA

Email

info@sdakinship.org

Online

www.sdakinship.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As an American, I've always felt that compassion was at the heart of the American people. What I've seen in national politics over the last year, particularly from the President's campaign, was a total opposite of compassion.

It seems to now be okay to act on the bigotry and hate that has been stirred up, and this makes me feel sad and angry because America is no place for hate and bigotry. The world is no place for hate and bigotry, either.

So I was excited to attend the Women's March on Washington (WMW) in January. The main message of the March was that women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights. Visit the website <https://goo.gl/1WAHgo> to learn how this powerful event came to be.

The values and principles written in this document are extremely empowering. Please take a few minutes to read them.

In that document, you'll learn about the grassroots women-led movement that became a truly historic event across the United States and around the world. Being part of it was truly an amazing experience and something that will stay with me forever. I was really moved to be in the middle of such an enormous number of people and to feel completely safe because the mood of the marchers was of optimism, joy, and happiness.

Young and old, men and women were there to support the rights of all.

A few times during the March, I heard a faint cheer going up from the far end of the Mall in Washington, D.C. That cheer got closer and closer and louder and louder until it seemed that everyone on the Mall was cheering at the same time. It was like a wave of sound, was thrilling to experience, and gave me goosebumps!

To have close to 750,000 people raising their voices together for justice and equal rights for all is something that may only happen once in my lifetime, and I was so glad to be a part of this historic moment.



Perhaps by the time you are reading this, the WMW will be a distant memory. But I'll never forget it. Being among all of those women, many of whom had their mothers, spouses, and children with them, made me wonder just how many LGBTIQ moms were in attendance, as well. Our families matter, too!

You will most likely read this newsletter very close to Mother's Day, so I want to take a moment to say just how much all of our Kinship moms mean to this organization! We wouldn't be here today without you. On behalf of the Kinship Board of Directors, I want to wish each of you a very happy and healthy Mother's Day!

Yolanda Elliott
President

SDA Kinship International

The cover photo in this edition of Connection Magazine features the work of watercolor artist Michal Madison.

Michal describes the painting this way: "You are a work of art. There's only one YOU in all of creation. Love yourself. Let your true colors shine."



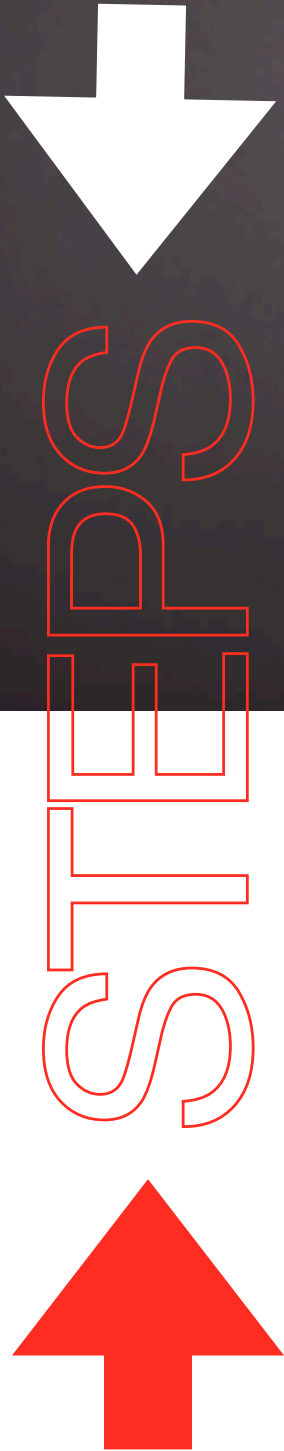
The paintings of watercolor artist Michal Madison are a vulnerable look into the depths of her soul. Transparent, raw, and passionate: these are often the same intense emotions which captivate the viewer.

Madison enjoys the vibrantly luminous hues and wildly spontaneous nature of watercolor. The brilliant whites in her paintings are untouched paper. "For me," she says, "the untouched paper is like the purity in each of us; no amount of white paint can create that kind of brilliance."

Madison never attended art school, though growing up around inspiring artists gave her a solid foundation for pursuing her art career in 2010. Madison donates 10% of every sale to *Childhelp* and *Make-a-Wish Foundation*.

"The more each person expresses themselves, the more wonder they pour into this magical world," she says. Michal Madison inspires others to live passionately, breathing deeply of all that life has to offer.

More of Michal's paintings can be found on her website michalmadisonart.net.



EDITORIAL

Since Kinship was founded, we have often found ourselves struggling to share our narrative, our stories, of what it means to be both gay and Adventist. Misinformation and confusion spread quickly, and the truth is often slower to be shared.

We strive to present the diversity of experiences, voices, and individuals within the LGBTIQ community as authentically as possible. Our mission, always, has been nothing more and nothing less than to affirm that diversity because of this important truth —**everyone is created in the image of God.**

Last quarter was quite busy. There have been a number of articles or videos released regarding LGBTIQ Adventists. Some embrace understanding and sharing God's love, some promote harmful stereotypes about the LGBTIQ community, and some are complicated.

The Pure Choices program on 3ABN's Dare to Dream Network released [three episodes discussing sexuality](#)—specifically same-sex attraction. The Coming Out Ministries founders shared their experiences.

These videos reinforce the ideology that gay individuals are part of a “homosexual lifestyle” from which they must be rescued.

They repeat the stereotype that severe familial dysfunction causes gender dysphoria and same-gender attraction.

An alternative Adventist news source recently reported that the Chico Adventist Church baptized a married lesbian woman and accepted her into membership in 2016. Ginger Harwood, an advocate for women's ordination, performed the baptism. The news source made a connection between women's ordination and “the oncoming homosexual tsunami.”

In response to the stir this article caused, the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD) [released a statement](#). The NAD affirmed that all are called into a lasting relationship with Christ and noted that “as imitators of Jesus we welcome all people, inviting them into our faith communities and sacrificially serving them.” It was also noted that the conference administrators had met with the local church pastor to “work through the situation.”

Additionally, SONset Friday Entertainment also released a [three-part video series on being gay in the Adventist Church](#). In the first video, founder and president Anthony Hackett sat down with Cameron Burrell to hear his story. Cameron vulnerably shared his struggle to come out, describing it as “feeling caged.” The follow-up videos explore balancing faith and sexuality. The intention was to offer another authentic narrative on life as a gay Christian man.

continued on next page

We were encouraged to see that our allies were not silent during February. Loma Linda University president Richard Hart made waves by offering his perspective on relating to the LGBTIQ community. We applaud him for calling health professionals to “understand, treat, and support everyone whom we encounter.” He acknowledged the progress of research in the scientific community regarding human sexuality and identity.

Pastor Todd Leonard spoke out concerning *Journey Interrupted*, a film by Coming Out Ministries. Troubled by the film’s role in perpetuating harmful stereotypes about the LGBTIQ community, he recommended that it not be presented to teens and young adults. Kinship president Yolanda Elliott sent Pastor Todd a letter thanking him for publicly sharing his review. She noted a serious concern: “Because the church administration only listens to the voices of the Coming Out Ministries folks, they never hear all the other voices that make up the majority of the Adventist LGBTIQ community. And it gets very old being talked about instead of talked with.”

Kinship remains committed to providing a safe spiritual and social community to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex current and former Seventh-day Adventists around the world. We share the value that the journeys of LGBTIQ Adventists matter in the wider narrative of what it means to be LGBTIQ and Adventist.

We are both heartened and challenged by the growing dialogue surrounding LGBTIQ Adventists. Rather than distance ourselves from the conversation, we encourage each one of us to lean in and engage. Our stories are powerful.

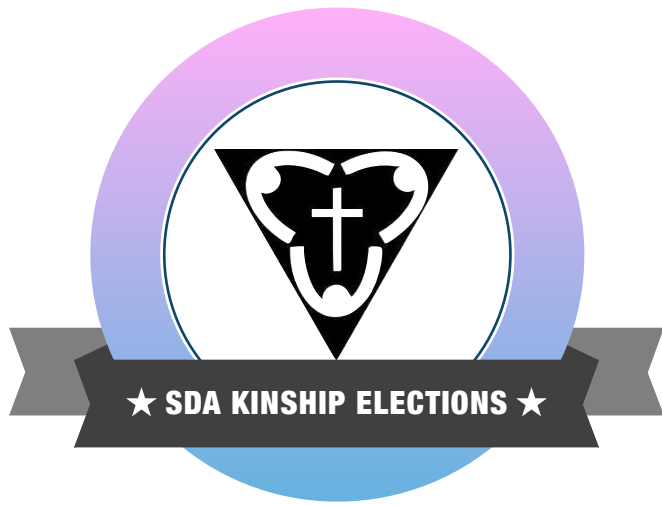
If you belong to this community, our pledge is to stand with you, no matter where you are in your journey, because we believe this truth: Your journey is important, your voice should be heard, and you should never be mistreated or discriminated against because of your sexual orientation or gender identity.

If ever you need someone to talk to, we are here to listen. We are on this journey with you.

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship, International, Inc.
info@sdakinship.org

Your journey is important, your voice should be heard, and you should never be mistreated.





Kinship holds elections every year during Kampmeeting.

This year the following positions are up for election.

If you are willing to run for any of the open positions, visit www.sdakinship.org.

President

Responsibilities:

- Serve as chief executive officer of the corporation
- Represent the corporation in dealing with other corporations and businesses, including the signing of contracts
- Sit in an ex officio capacity, without vote, on all committees except the nominating committee
- Coordinate and chair membership meetings, Board meetings, and executive committee meetings, when present
- Maintain communication with the Board between meetings

Vice President

Responsibilities:

- Assist the President in her or his duties
- Perform the functions of the President in the event of her/his absence, unavailability, or inability to perform the duties of the office
- Chair the Member Services Committee
- Perform other duties as designated by the President

Director of Church Relations

Responsibilities:

- Act as the chief liaison between Kinship and the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- Monitor or facilitate monitoring the affairs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and report regularly to the President and/or the Board and/or the organization's newsletter
- Assist the Kampmeeting Coordinator with the identification and procurement of clergy for Kampmeeting participation, and assist with their education and preparation
- Maintain a list of, and keep in contact with, clergy who have attended Kampmeeting and with other clergy and denominational employees who are supportive of Kinship
- Act as a conduit for communication with the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- Serve on the Kampmeeting Committee
- Chair the Advisory Council and facilitate communication between the Board and the Council.

Director of Women's Interests

Responsibilities:

- Serve as an advocate for women's issues and concerns within the organization
- Assist in the facilitation of networking and encourage and support participation among women members
- Organize, facilitate, or delegate activities to implement the above
- Advise and assist the Director of Communications in regard to outreach to women

MEET COLBERT

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF.

I am 50 years old. I was born in the beautiful city of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe and have been living in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, for the last 24 years. I was born and raised Seventh-day Adventist but became Catholic about 10 years ago.

HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY?

I am a gay man.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP AS A GAY PERSON?

I had a normal Adventist upbringing, singing in quartets, small groups, and youth choir, and being part of Pathfinders. I never considered myself gay and also hoped to have one of those glamorous weddings one day in church. However, I discovered my sexuality, that I was gay, when I left home and went to college where I met my first lover. So my upbringing was very normal mainstream Seventh-day Adventist.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR COMING-OUT EXPERIENCE.

When I came out as a gay man I was a young adult and faced direct conflict with friends and elders in the church and suffered rejection that eroded my faith in the Adventist Church as a personal choice for a church. Later, I got a job for a Catholic-related organization and eventually found acceptance and love from my colleagues and friends who believed in Ignatian spirituality for the Christian.

DO YOU CURRENTLY GO TO CHURCH?

Yes, I currently attend church.

IF YOU WERE TO TELL CHRISTIANS SOMETHING ABOUT THE LGBT COMMUNITY, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

In Zimbabwe, the LGBT community is marginalized and often stripped of the divinity and dignity we deserve as human beings. If Christians made an effort to share their lives with LGBT people, they would, in turn, understand the human and sacred side of the lives of LGBT people, as any person's life is sacred as ordained by God at creation.

Support the mission of SDA Kinship:

- Donate **Online**: sdakinship.org
- Donate by **Mail**: PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563 USA
- Donate by **Shopping**: smile.amazon.com

JOIN SDA KINSHIP

You can join Kinship's online community today!

Membership is free and all your information is kept confidential.

Visit sdakinship.org for details on connecting with people just like you, or send an email to Members Services at memberinfo@sdakinship.org for details on being a member of SDA Kinship.



YOUTH



My name is Matthew, and I am a grade 12 student at Kingsway College, a Seventh-day Adventist high school in Oshawa, Ontario. I am 18 years old.

To some, I have a strange and somewhat obsessive love of Narnia and all things medieval. I grew up in the Adventist Church and consider myself a faithful Christian. I am also gay. But, to me, that is only one of the many things that I am. Besides Narnia, I love Lord of the Rings and all that fantasy medieval stuff. My life goal is to have a castle of my own one day. I have plans for that.

I live about an hour east of Toronto, Ontario, in a city called Oshawa. It's a pretty notable place in the Adventist community in Ontario. The Ontario Conference is here and so is my high school, elementary school, and the church of 1000+ members. There are also many other Adventist churches in the area so there are a lot of Adventists nearby.

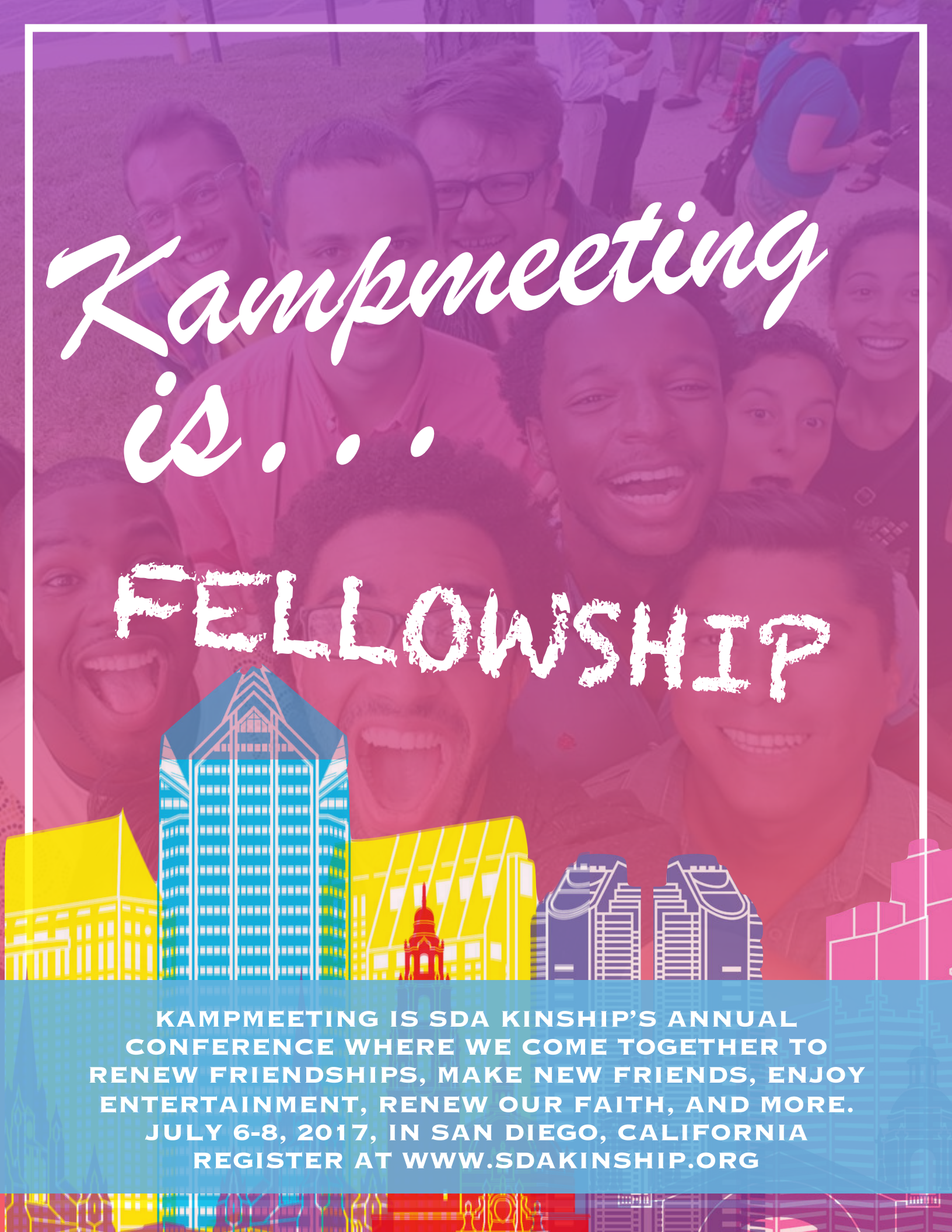
It is difficult to understand what people's attitudes are towards the subject. I know there are many supportive people. I've been fortunate enough to not have received any negative treatment by anyone. I think the majority of people are just ignorant and unaware of what life is like for an LGBT person. I feel that most people are genuinely loving and kind and that if more people would come out, the attitudes towards LGBT people would change for the better. That being said, I am still very cautious of who I tell.

One of the biggest things I've learned about my sexuality and God is that God is not petty. God cares about our health, happiness, and, above all, how we are making the world a better place around us. I've found that God is so much bigger than the concepts of gender, orientation, and sexuality; and to be denied access to heaven because of this issue completely contradicts His personality. I believe God loves me more than enough to be able to accept this aspect of my character. And since I was born this way, I don't see why there would be any issue at all.

I first heard about Kinship briefly from my school chaplain, who was the first person who I told and is very supportive. But I became a member after my chaplain put me in contact with Jaden Rajah, SDA Kinship's Director of Youth Interests, who counseled me and introduced me to the Kinship community.

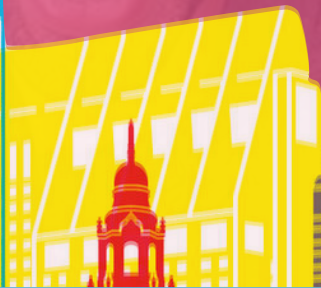
For me, it's been very eye-opening and comforting just knowing that there are other people of the same faith as me who have gone through the same struggles that I go through. Sometimes, since I am the only somewhat open person in my community that I know of, it can feel like I'm alone with this struggle. But Kinship youth and the support of my friends and family assures me that I'm not.

My friend and counselor, Jaden Rajah, has been a huge mentor to me. The two people who have helped me the most would definitely be my chaplain and Jaden. I was fortunate enough to meet with Jaden in October after my school visited Burman University (an Adventist university in Alberta, Canada, for College Days, an opportunity for high school students to visit Burman. Jaden has been a huge help by talking to me when I felt depressed and lonely, when I was struggling accepting myself for who I am, and for helping me reconcile my faith and my orientation. He has been a huge mentor and inspiration for me and I'm sure for many others. His bravery is something that I wish I could have as I continue my life in the Adventist and Kinship communities.



Kampmeeting
is...

FELLOWSHIP



**KAMPMEETING IS SDA KINSHIP'S ANNUAL
CONFERENCE WHERE WE COME TOGETHER TO
RENEW FRIENDSHIPS, MAKE NEW FRIENDS, ENJOY
ENTERTAINMENT, RENEW OUR FAITH, AND MORE.
JULY 6-8, 2017, IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
REGISTER AT WWW.SDAKINSHIP.ORG**

MEMBERSHIP

It is important for any organization to know and understand the needs of its members, and SDA Kinship's greatest asset is our members. To help gather current data, the Kinship Board created a survey that was sent out to all members with email addresses to find out what challenges our members are facing and what direction the Board needs to move the organization in.

The survey was sent in English, Spanish, Portuguese and German to 2586 members and we received about 260 responses. The following are some data from each question.

How long have you been a member? The highest percentage of respondents were in the 0- to 5-year range. Primary reason for joining? Looking for community, support for being LGBTQ and Adventist.

Satisfaction level for meeting those needs: Most responses fell between Neutral and Satisfied. Extremely satisfied was three times as great as Extremely dissatisfied.

Top three personal challenges: isolation; uncertainty about local politics and about the direction the church is heading; family acceptance; health.

Top three challenges for LGBTQ Adventists: Church acceptance and support; hostile political climate; isolation and difficulty finding a partner.

Factors influencing attendance at Kampmeeting and other Kinship meetings: Location - 58%; Speaker - 15%; Fellowship - 41%; Cost - 41%. Others included: fear of being outed, not interested, timing, I didn't enjoy the time I did attend.

What should be the primary function of SDA Kinship? Providing support and connecting members; educating church leaders; providing spiritual support for like believers

Kinship's effectiveness with the previously mentioned goals: Over 50% felt Kinship has been effective in meeting these goals

The survey results were reviewed at the recent Kinship Board Meeting and the commitment to move the organization to better meet the needs of the members was renewed. Organizational goals were prioritized and will be our main focus for the next year. We will work to better meet the needs of the majority of our members. The recurring theme was that members want to connect with each other and with other members who share similar interests. If you have suggestions on how this can be more effectively accomplished or if you'd like to join the member services team in achieving this goal, please let us know by dropping a note to info@sdakinship.org



PRIMARY MEANS OF ACCESSING INFO ABOUT KINSHIP.

Website - 15%, Facebook - 38%, eNewsletter - 30%, *Connection* Magazine - 9%, Other - 8%



EVENTS YOU HAVE ATTENDED

Kampmeeting 41%, Mini-Kampmeeting 14%, European Kinship Meeting - 3%, Local Kinship events- 39%, none- 42%

OUT SPOKEN

A new short documentary film series
from the producers of *Seventh-Gay Adventists*



#BeOutspoken

www.watchfirefilms.com/outspoken

KAMPMEETING 2017

SAN DIEGO

Celebrating Our Journey

SDA Kinship's annual Kampmeeting takes place Thursday, July 6, through Saturday, July 8, 2017, at the Courtyard Marriott Mission Valley.

Kampmeeting is Kinship's annual conference where we come together to renew friendships, make new friends, enjoy entertainment, renew our faith, and more! This year it takes place in beautiful San Diego, a city in California, United States, known for its beaches, parks, and warm climate.

This year Kampmeeting will be different in format from previous years and the registration fees do not include meals and hotel accommodations. We want to make sure that everyone who wants to attend can afford to do so. Visit www.sdakinship.org for info on special discounts and more.



Pricing and other Information

NOTE: PRICING DOES NOT INCLUDE FOOD OR LODGING

RATES	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	FULL KM	SALE ENDS
REGULAR	\$60	\$80	\$80	\$200	May 31, 2017
LAST MINUTE	\$66	\$88	\$88	\$220	Jun. 30, 2017
AT THE DOOR	\$66	\$88	\$88	\$220	-

Pricing does not include food and lodging, but we want to make sure that everyone who wants to attend SDA Kinship Kampmeeting can afford to do so. This page explains our ticket prices, discounts, and scholarships.

Sales end at 11:59 PM Pacific Time on listed dates unless otherwise specified. The cancellation fee is 10% until May 31, 2017, and nonrefundable after that date. If you must cancel, think of it as supporting an organization you love.

SPECIAL DISCOUNTS

- **First-Time Attendee Tickets** If this is your first time to Kinship Kampmeeting, you may register at the discounted rate of \$100.
- **Student Tickets** Student tickets at \$100 (full Kampmeeting only) are available to currently enrolled students (undergraduate or graduate level). Kinship reserves the right to require verification of enrollment in order to receive this rate.
- **Evening Tickets** For those who can only come to Kampmeeting after dinner, the price is \$40 per day. If you register before March 31, 2017, you can receive a 10% discount and only pay \$36 per day.
- **Scholarships** Each year, financial challenges prevent many people from attending SDA Kinship Kampmeeting and experiencing the incredible love of being with this community. For those individuals, we offer a limited number of scholarships to help make attending the conference more manageable and affordable.

This year, we will be providing a partial or full scholarship for the Kampmeeting ticket only. We are not able to provide for food, lodging, or transportation. Scholarship recipients may be required to volunteer for several hours during Kampmeeting.

We work hard to keep the cost as low as possible so everyone can attend. If you can afford to give more, please donate to the Kampmeeting Scholarship Fund at www.sdakinship.org or by mail to PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563-0244 USA, to make it possible for others to attend—they need your help!

FRIENDS & ALLIES

WHY AM I AN ALLY- Sue Gentry

I had never met a gay/lesbian/transgender/queer (I don't like that word) until I went to graduate school, even though I knew some men who might want to be in this kind of life. However, I never met a lesbian until I met K. and J. K. was in the same program as I was and J. was her partner. I went over to their home to go with them to a restaurant. It was then I saw K. kiss J. on the mouth.

I didn't think much of it until K. and I sat down in the booth and got settled in for our usual coffee and a snack. K. explained to me what was going on with her partner and that they were both lesbians. Since I was a curious person, she went on to explain what lesbian meant. I was from a very shielded background, but K. very graciously answered my questions. From that point on, we became friends. That was in 1980. We are still friends to this day.

That was part of my exposure to lesbianism as well as to the rest of homosexuality. Being a Seventh-day Adventist, I had an "attitude" of right vs. wrong; but I didn't bother to look at the big picture. Then I realized I am a human, and K. and J. are human as well. I got a lot of flack from other people in my church in North Carolina—you know, "the Bible Belt." I stopped engaging with people in that group that K. was in due to fanatical Adventists' peer pressure.

I met people that were Seventh-day Adventist and lesbian—again, no problem for me. Just a little confusing. I was in my late 20s-going-on-30. I moved to Columbia, Missouri, and my dear friend introduced me to her son who happened to be gay. I talked to her about his lifestyle and she replied, "He is my son, no matter what." That is when I realized what this dear woman taught me about unconditional love and acceptance. That is what Jesus would do, right? Why should I question someone's comfort zone? Does Jesus judge a person by their comfort zone?

Let me tell you a little about myself. I am 59 years old. I have two degrees—still going to the "School of Hard Knocks"—by now, I should have a PhD! I was born deaf and have some congenital abnormalities as well, with little or no knowledge about sexuality. Back in my day, it was unheard of to think that disabled people could be sexual beings.

I'm past that whole scheme of my life. I was told that I could not have a child due to my female syndromes. So I put myself in the "not interested" category. I am still a Seventh-day Adventist, but I am a person who loves people just as Jesus would. Who am I to say, "Hey, something's not right with you," when people for over 21 years have been telling me that there were a lot of things not right with me? I have not met anyone from SDA Kinship personally because my funding for travel is almost non-existent. I have complicated health issues, but God has blessed and enriched my life by allowing me to know and accept K. and her partner who are now married!

When I found out that it was legal to have a same-sex marriage, I was so happy for all involved! I was ecstatic for my friends in Kinship as well as others. Finally, someone (me) had the "horse sense" to look at the bigger picture in the circle of life!

Why am I an ally for Kinship even though I am in a "not interested" or rather "Who would even want me to be their partner?" person? My family of origin had drilled into my head those thoughts and questions for over 20 years. I just thought I was unlovable, but I have a huge heart for others. I will always treasure the friendship of others in this group. I wouldn't have it any other way!



By Regina Araujo

When I was seventeen, I felt mesmerized by physics. It was absolutely elegant, I thought. Electromagnetism was (and still is!) my favorite branch of physics. Then an opportunity to "preach" on a youth Sabbath came up and I jumped on it! It would be my first time and I knew exactly what my theme would be: Jesus' Magnetic Field! I knew what to do to illustrate and even brought my show-and-tell apparatus.

I guess that was the easy part for everyone. It was also easy to make the correlation with Jesus as John 12:32 popped right off my Bible: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself."

Cool! The cross is Jesus' magnetic field which envelopes all humanity, just like the earth's magnetic Van Allen belts around the globe. What a revelation! Yet, I concluded my talk that morning with a profound sense of dissatisfaction. Something was missing. And, in my heart, it was finding the cross of Christ attractive!

I could not bring myself to say, like Paul, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The cross was...not attractive at all to me. In fact, it was even gruesome!

During the following seventeen years, I went on teaching about the Bible, Daniel and Revelation, God's love for humanity, and even the sanctuary with all its interesting details. Yet, I continued to avoid the cross. To my dismay, deep inside, I found myself thinking about the gospel as unethical! The vicarious role of Jesus on the cross, the Passion as painted by art and literature, the theological

Jesus and Magnetic Fields

discourses
about justice
obtained on the
cross—nothing could find
my soteriology north in that
corner of the Good News!

I will be eternally indebted to John R.W. Stott for a life-changing insight of Jesus' cross. I was able to look at the Jesus' sacrifice not as the vicarious acting of a meek Christ by a harsh and punitive Father.... Instead, I was taught about a righteous, loving Father humbling Himself to become in His only Son flesh, sin, and curse for us in order to redeem us.

Jesus hanging on a tree was more than a Pauline echo of a Mosaic illustration. My eyes opened to the fact that Christ, the Son of God, did not die for me, but as me! All of a sudden, 2 Corinthians 5:14 made perfect sense: because we are convinced that One died for all and therefore all died. The magnitude of my need, richly underscored by the cultic language of the Law and the Prophets, was paid fully in corporate identity with Him! I kept repeating to myself on the dawn of my new discovery: "He died as me.... I died in Him at Golgotha...."

With a short phrase, Jesus forever changed my history when He died without death, as Alfred Erdersheim so powerfully affirms. Christ encountered death, not as conquered, but as the conqueror...and this argument agrees with the peculiar language of John, that He bowed His head and gave up the Spirit.

I had found the second part of my talk of seventeen years before.

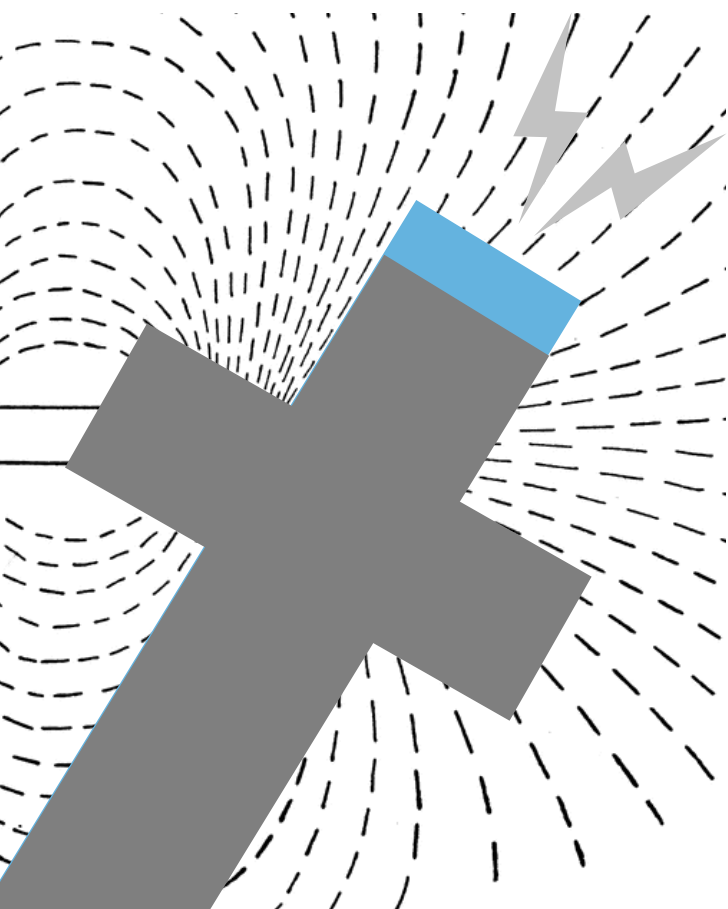
I found myself magnetized at the foot of the cross. Not by what Roman soldiers, cowardly priests, and angry mobs did with the Son of God. That was not the cross, by the way. That was the devil showing the nature and extension of his hatred toward God.

Redemption at and by the cross became my most precious theme of study.

Galatians has seven affirmations on the influence of the cross of Christ. I leave you with one, in chapter 6:14, the cross and boasting. Take your Bible and read it now.

Scholars assert that the Greek *kauchaomai*, translated in that passage as boast, does not have any equivalent in English. It means to boast in, glory in, trust in, rejoice in, revel in, and live for.

Do you boast in the cross of Christ? If not, if this subject is still not attractive to you, like it was not to me some time ago, let's have a Sabbath afternoon chat.... I'll be glad to share with you the little I know about the magnetic properties of the cross of Christ!





WHY I VOLUNTEER

MY TIME FOR

SDA KINSHIP

BY TANJA KOPPERS

People who know me and my history with the Adventist Church, or those who hear what is still going on in the local churches often ask me: Why are you involved with SDA Kinship? Why are you still a member of a church that is obviously not interested in YOU?

And to be honest, I wonder that as well from time to time. It does cost me time and often it costs my nerves. It costs patience and sometimes also money. Sometimes the work with Kinship can be very frustrating. At those times I need to remind myself:

I remember the first time I fell in love with a woman and my doubts regarding my beliefs regarding this. I remember feeling desperate about maybe no longer belonging to God and being not wanted by the church, which was also a part of my family. I remember searching for answers to get my doubts under control. The seemingly hopeless fight against my feelings which seemed to be "wrong" at the time.

I remember the joy I felt when I heard from a friend about the group HAD (Homosexuelle Adventists in Deutschland... an organization like SDA Kinship, which is now SDA Kinship Germany). I remember the joy when we first met other gay and lesbian Adventists and heard about other ways of looking at and interpreting the Bible verses that are typically used against homosexuals. We met people who are open and stand up for diversity in our congregations and who work to support us and to be our allies. The fellowship at the meetings and the exchange of stories was very helpful and helped me to come to terms with myself.

A lot has changed in the world today. Some things have changed in our churches, but a lot has stayed the same. The desperation, the questions, the doubts seem to be the same today as they were yesterday.

And when I think about that, I realize: I want to be a point of contact for those who are looking for it. I want that we, as LGBTI people, can find community and ways of sharing with each other. That those who seek can find pastoral help from supportive pastors. I want that as many congregations as possible will get information and have the opportunity to know us more fully.

For this, it is worth it for me to sacrifice my time, my nerves, my money. It is worth it to fight so that future generations of LGBTI Adventists will not need to fight anymore and will not need to leave the church because they don't feel welcome. Hopefully, future generations will not feel guilty and will not have doubts about themselves just because they are different.

I am grateful that I'm not alone in this work, even if it sometimes feels like I'm fighting all alone. For example, if no one responds to my questions or if my patience is put to a test because I am only getting responses after continual prodding, it can be frustrating for me. But then, out of the blue, there are suddenly offers and contributions—a real answer to prayer.

I really wish there would be more engagement from more members. Without participation, nothing can move forward: No meetings, no newsletters, no visits to congregations, no email responses, and no exchange of experiences.

I keep volunteering because I believe that it is necessary and that we need engagement.

SAN DIEGO

*Kampmeeting
is...*

FUN



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Why did Jesus ask Peter three times, "Do you love me?" It has been said that Peter denied Jesus three times; and, therefore, Jesus made Peter claim his love for Him three times. The three questions seem to be the same; however, in Greek, they are different.

Jesus calls him, "Simon, son of Jonah," his old name. Previously, Jesus had changed his name to Cephas, meaning "rock-man" in Aramaic; and in Greek, petro; in English, Peter. In these three questions Jesus uses his old name, "Simon, son of Jonah," reminding Peter that he had not acted as a "rock-man" when he had denied Jesus a couple of nights earlier. However, Jesus did not do this to embarrass Peter but to remind him of his weakness and need of the Lord to make him a "rock-man."

Then Jesus said, "Do you love me more than these?" referring to the disciples. Peter answers, "Lord, you know that I love you." The word that Jesus used for love was "agapaō." The Greek word for friendship is "phileō." But "agapaō" is the greatest form of love. It is the word that the Bible uses for God's love and the Christians' love for one another in the church. But Peter responded with the word "phileō" instead of "agapaō." He had said to Jesus, "You know that I love you as a friend."

I think he was still ashamed to have denied Jesus, so he uses a minor term, "I have affection for you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." Feed my baby sheep. This also applies to us. If we truly love Jesus, we would take care of the fragile, the baby sheep.

At the moment of initiating activities through Kinship, in the beautiful country of Colombia, we noticed many cases where the little sheep needed tender care from the other members of the group, such gestures as birthday wishes, phone calls or messages to find out how their day is going, and reunions that build camaraderie and fraternity, allowing them to feel special and loved by the flock.

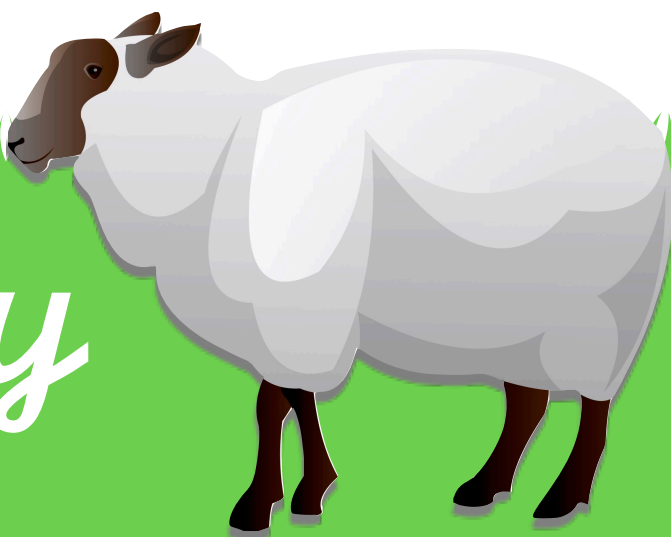
It is clear what Jesus meant. He had loved them. He had cared for them. Now Jesus asks him to do the same for others. Care for them, love them because I have loved you. During the last supper, Jesus told the disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). Our love is not only to be shown among Christians but to be shown to those that are not Christian or even to those who do not love us. Jesus said, "But love your enemies, do good...and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6:35).

If you love Jesus, then show that love to others, especially to those who are not part of the Kinship family. Love them, talk to them, spend time with them, take care of them. Feed my sheep!

The message is clear for our community, for our church, for our LGBTIQ baby sheep. Our love for each other should be unique and special just as the Savior loves us.

By Yohny Ochoa Martínez
Kinship Coordinator, Colombia

*Feed My
Sheep*



SAN DIEGO

*Kampmeeting
is...*

INSPIRING



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BISEXUALITY'S FLUIDITY

By Salomón Benítez

To highlight anything about bisexuality would be its incomprehension, including that of those in the sexually diverse community, even among bisexual persons. This is due to the lack of information and availability, as well as the bias that lingers about bisexuality such as, “A person declares himself bisexual when this person does not want to admit, or wants to hide, their own homosexuality.”

The issue regarding bisexuality is not about hiding an expression of sexuality; it is a sexuality of its own. The bisexual person could have started amorous relations with whichever gender, and have felt unfitting of neither of the major assumed sexual orientations, heterosexual or homosexual. This generates confusion, anxiety, uncertainty, and low self-esteem. When the bisexual person hunches that they could be bisexual, they start to comprehend and to value their orientation in spite of the difficulties this brings, such as being accused of being bisexual because it's “trendy” or for fear of being called gay or lesbian.

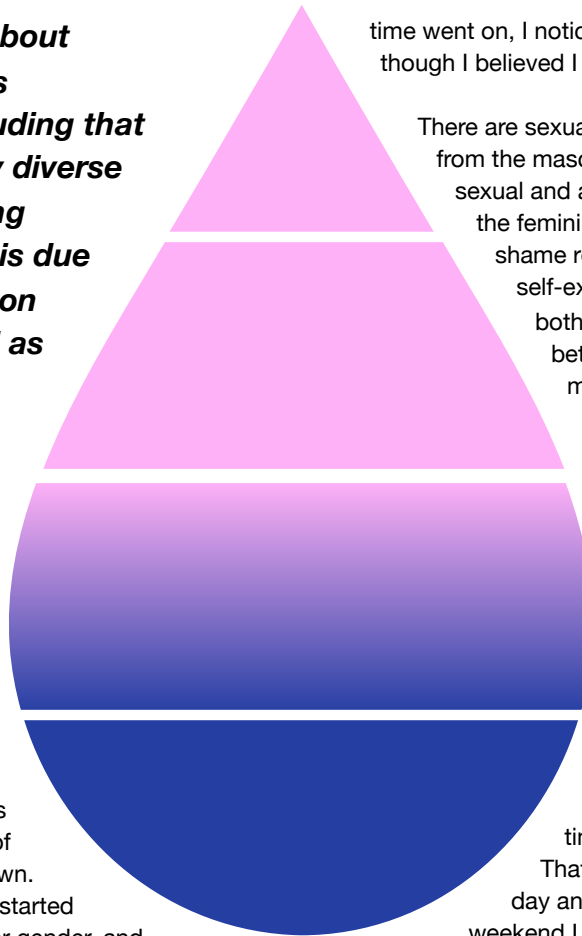
My personal experience carried me to overcome all these biases. A heterosexual person needs for the opposite gender to feel their love, sexual needs, and sharing life in order to reach personal satisfaction. Similarly, a homosexual person needs to relate to their own gender in order to supply these same needs. Someone bisexual would complement themselves with both genders, not one or the other separately. It so happens that, due to life's circumstances, one could start with one specific gender in sentimental or sexual relations—in my case, a man—and think that it would be so throughout life. Nevertheless, as

time went on, I noticed that I felt affinity for women, even though I believed I would never feel anything for them.

There are sexual and amorous needs that a person from the masculine gender can supply, then there are sexual and amorous needs that can be supplied by the feminine gender. It is not about hiding or shame regarding homosexuality, but about our self-expression of love and libido towards both genders, though not necessarily equal between both genders. Likewise, at the moment of selecting a partner, those of us that are bisexual are conscious that this person, independent of their gender or sexual expression, will not fulfill the role of the opposing gender. Therefore, relating with someone else, both in casual and monogamous relations, consists of an act of self-sincerity greater than that of a homosexual or heterosexual.

The challenge of bisexuality is to comprehend and live with its fluidity. At times, bisexuality is incomprehensible. That does not imply that I would get up one day and give flowers to a woman and later that weekend I would arrange a date with a male coworker, but I would enjoy and celebrate the beauty and love of both genders. There is not a defined line that separates the attractions for the feminine and masculine. This is why Kinsey proposed his scale, because the mind and the body recognize the needs that each supply. At the beginning, I thought I wanted women because of the topic of maternity or that I liked men because my first date was with one and so was my first kiss. I learned and accepted that each meets an important role in my life.

Sexual orientation is an inseparable aspect of personality; I can't think of me without it. In spite of the biases, mine and others, toward bisexuality, I celebrate fluidity, just as the waves of the ocean that come and go. Said fluidity is the beauty of it; and, at the moment of deciding who will be my partner for the rest of my life in sacred matrimony, whichever gender it may be, I will be happy with this person and monogamy won't be martyrdom. The enemies of bisexuality are not the homophobic or biphobic persons, but one's own incomprehension.



WE'RE LOOKING FOR

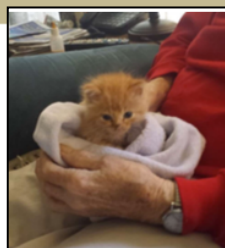
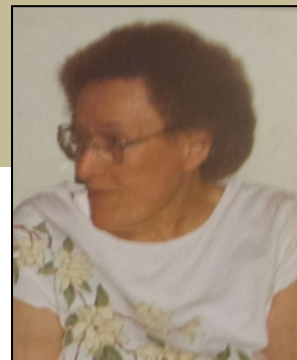
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TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN JOIN OUR
AMAZING TEAM OF VOLUNTEERS.



For Lois Walters 1925-2016



By Catherine Taylor

I am writing to let you know that my mom, Lois Roberta Magorian Walters, died peacefully on October 21, 2016. When she had surgery to remove a bleeding abdominal tumor, her body was not able to recover from the procedure. Her vital systems shut down. Her care at Little Company of Mary Hospital was extraordinary and compassionate. Should you ever be in Southern California and need a hospital, I recommend LCMH and the staff who serve there.

Mom's life did not begin in a hospital. She was born on September 26, 1925, at home on the ranch of her parents in McFarland, California. The attending doctor told the county clerk, who issued birth certificates, that Mom's birthday was September 25. My grandmother, Mary Ethel Helms Magorian and her sister-in-law Ella Magorian Paine, reported, "We were there. We know what date your mother was born!" They thought the doctor was absent-minded, at best. Throughout my life I have dealt with this discrepancy by celebrating both days as birth anniversaries. This tradition made my mother and Hallmark greeting cards happy.

As a WW II era teenager, Mom worked in the local library. Some nights she also had a paid shift at the McFarland telephone office to catch calls from area residents reporting suspicious airplane noises. Most of that activity was from pilots practicing night flights at the local air field. I've never found reports of McFarland being bombed by enemy aircraft. I am sure it was because of the diligent people who called the phone office at all hours.

After graduating from high school in 1943, Mom, with her sister Ethel, headed north to Sacramento. I hear they had only 100 dollars between them but still shared bus fare, found a place to live, and obtained jobs before starvation became imminent. Mom worked the swing shift making gyroscopes for the war effort. She went to college during the day. Mom would have Ethel be her alarm clock for a fifteen-minute nap so she could stay awake at work and still get her homework done.

In the middle of this schedule, Mom decided she wanted to train as a pilot and become part of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). On weekends, she and her friends would drive out to an area near Las Vegas and take flight lessons from Bernie Hodges, a local instructor she knew from McFarland. For the rest of her life, Mom was frustrated that her vertigo kept her from completing this dream.

Not done yet, at night, after her weekend flight lessons, Mom began to study Latin dance. The gorgeous black lace gown she wore to dances in the 1940s is in pristine shape and will be donated to Pioneer Village in Bakersfield, California.

Mom took courses at Sacramento State College and the University of California at Berkley. She eventually finished nursing school and joined the Army Nurse Corps. Her military uniform is also in pristine shape and is being donated to Pioneer Village.

During the Korean War, Mom served at Fort Sam Houston, treating soldiers with burns from "jelly bombs," the precursors to napalm. She hated cold weather and requested that her next transfer be to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Instead, the army sent Mom to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, in the middle of winter and a horrible hepatitis epidemic.

In the midst of that siege she became one of the hepatitis patients. Mom once told me that during her stay in the hospital she leaned over the bedrail to read her chart and said to herself, "Oh...this is really bad." For completely selfish reasons, I am glad she survived.

In the 1950s military women could not have children and stay on active duty. After my birth, she and I moved to Newport News, Virginia, where we lived with Ethel and mom's brother-in-law, Charlie Marple.

Over the years Mom worked as a nurse for Veteran's Administration hospitals in Hampton, Virginia, and in West Los Angeles. She also worked at local Kern County and Southern California hospitals in obstetrics, pediatrics, renal care, surgery, and cardiology. She went back to school and got her Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN). I remember, as a ten-year-old, sometimes going to class with her at Long Beach State. For some reason, the lectures about Konrad Lorenz's research on the instinctive behavior of jackdaws are what stuck in my mind.

Mom loved swimming pools and ocean beaches. Some of my favorite childhood memories are of packing up lunches and spending much of the day at one or the other. She kept a close eye on me. I remember that once I got quite irritated when she made me come out of the Pacific Ocean and stay on the warm sand with her until my lips and fingernails were no longer blue.

She gave me her rather eclectic taste in music. Each night I would go to sleep listening to vinyl records playing Beethoven, Xavier Cugat, the Bolero, or other varied vinyl selections. I remember we went to see a movie with Elvis Presley because she liked his singing style. To this day, I am impressed and grateful that she also shared my love for the Beatles.

Through all her life Mom remained connected to and very interested in her family. She enjoyed attending extended Magorian family reunions as well as entertaining our distant English cousin the time Michelle came to visit her in the States. Michelle, the whole lot of us got copies of your books as soon as they hit the American market. She was loyal.

When Mom's Aunt Ella asked her to assist in tracking our genealogy, Mom became her helper and then a primary researcher who ferreted out our various lines back to their origins. She was a meticulous historical investigator. In the last couple of months when I was trying to find a birthdate, I typed my great-grandmother's name into my web browser and found my mom's research annotated on Google. The Torrance Public Library gratefully accepted fifteen boxes of her genealogy research books for their section on that topic.



When her father (Henry Ward Magorian) died, Mom and her brother Bruce accepted the daunting task of being executors for the family ranch, town house in McFarland, and "ancestral trailer" in San Simeon. She would pack paint supplies, windows, and gardening tools into the back of her long-suffering Chevrolet Impala and cart them up to McFarland for family work days that maintained the property. When paint fumes would get to her brain, Mom was known to begin singing "The Wabash Cannon Ball."

Mom thought of herself as a "dog person." That said, she had a soft spot for most creatures—and this soft spot changed her

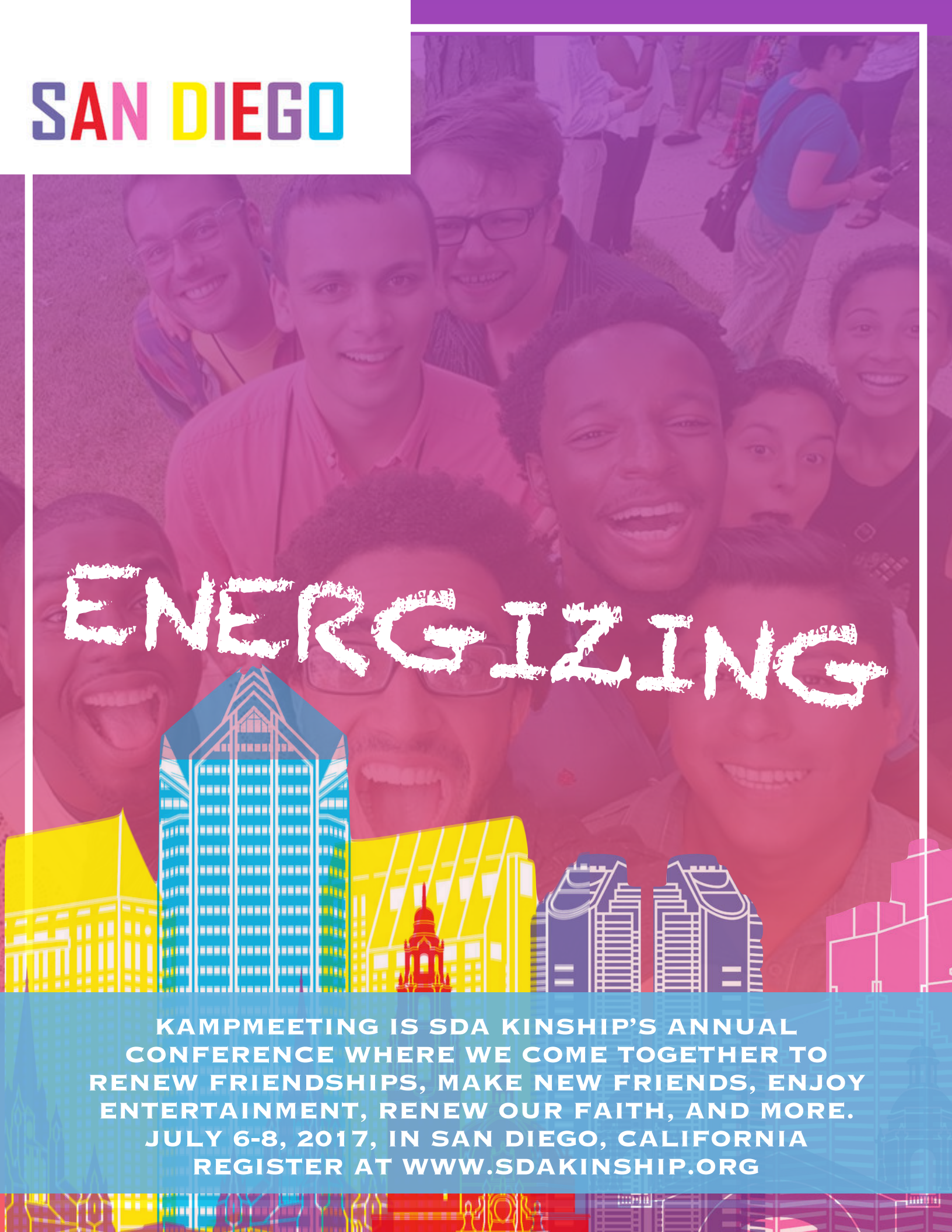
life. Thirty-five years ago, in the middle of a Southern California summer, she and my stepfather heard the sound of kittens mewling. They peeked over the fence and saw a mother cat with a litter that looked as if they were about to die of thirst. She had Pop go next door and hand the family to her from over the fence. Mama Grey and her babies (who grew up to become rather large) were the first of many feline families that found refuge on Mom's patio and in her backyard. She kept meticulous track of their veterinary services. I found records that indicate she was responsible for spaying, neutering, feeding, and caring for at least 85 semi-feral cats. Her care for them included not just feeding, watering, trapping, and neutering; it also meant that she spent much time bottle feeding little ones whose parents could not nurture them. Being with the creatures gave her great pleasure.

Over the decades an organization called the Peter Zippi Fund helped her pay for spaying, neutering, and getting shots. These last few months, two volunteers from the organization stepped up to help Mom and then Mom and me with the 16 cats that have been most recently dependent upon her. They cared for premature kittens, they trapped and transported all the adult cats to be fixed, and then, after Mom died, they researched an extraordinary cat sanctuary near Fresno and helped me transport the whole family north to safe care. If you are the type of person who would like to donate to a cause that is very important to someone who has died, I think she would have appreciated you helping her repay their amazing support by donating to:

The Peter Zippi Fund
1560 Pacific Coast Highway
Hermosa Beach, California 90254

Thank you for even considering this request.

I know you are not reading a normal death announcement. Those of you who are getting this missive are scattered all over the country and then some. You knew Lois Roberta Magorian Walters in a variety of ways. I think she was extraordinary and I wanted to take this time and opportunity to let you know her a little better.



SAN DIEGO

ENERGIZING



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OUR JOURNEYS MATTER TOO

For 40 years, Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International has provided a safe spiritual and social community to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex current and former Seventh-day Adventists around the world.

Our mission, always, has been nothing more and nothing less but to affirm that diversity because of this important truth—everyone is created in the image of God.

If you belong to this community, our pledge is to stand with you, no matter where you are in your journey, because we believe this truth: Your journey is important, too, your voice should be heard, and you should never be mistreated or discriminated against because of your sexual orientation or gender identity.

If ever you need someone to talk to, we are here to listen.



THE BATHROOM DEBATE?

By Randi Robertson

In an attempt to help bring understanding and compassion in the transgender bathroom debate, I will share two stories that shine a little light on the issue.

When I was returning home from a weekend trip, it was getting late in the afternoon, and I was in deep southern Georgia driving southbound on I-75. I needed two things: a restroom and some food. I exited the highway at the first exit that had a fast food restaurant I liked. I was hungry but in dire need of the restroom. I entered the restaurant and headed straight for the ladies' restroom.

When I opened the door, two preteen girls were exiting, being directed by a woman in her late twenties or early thirties. She directed them to wait in the area just outside the restroom entrance.

They departed then I entered. What I found was a room full of girls, ranging from age 7 to about 14, along with two women. The group looked like a cheerleading squad. The young women were directing traffic, and I got in line to wait my turn for a stall.

As I waited, one of the women apologized for the ongoing ruckus that six or eight young ladies can make. I replied that it wasn't a problem and asked if they were indeed a cheerleading squad. She confirmed they were, and that they were on their way home from a major competition where they had placed first, explaining the excitement of the group.

As I waited, a couple of the girls navigated around me to exit or move about in the room, and each politely

said, "Excuse me, ma'am." It was finally my turn, I entered the stall and did my business, exited the stall and proceeded to wash my hands, check my hair briefly, and head for the exit. As I was exiting the room, the girls were finishing up so only a few remained and one of the women had gone out to keep track of the group waiting outside. The woman still in the restroom apologized once again, I said, "No problem; hope you have a quiet drive home."

As I exited the restroom, the group of girls was now standing by the wall opposite the restroom entry, and they greeted me with a "Sorry, ma'am." I returned with a "Great job today!" I went on to eat; they, having already eaten, headed out to their van and on toward home. There was no scene, no concern by or for anyone, as the older grey-haired woman had done what everyone does: used the restroom.

Consider, however, the alternative. Had I used the men's restroom, as some now would have me do, I would have caused a scene. The girls who were already waiting when I arrived would have seen a grown woman enter the men's room; and, as I would have exited it, the even larger group would have seen me exit. Now that would have caused a scene and I am certain that I would have been the topic of a significant amount of conversation in the van of girls. Additionally, I would have put myself in a space that certainly enhances the chance of assault, not even considering the embarrassment that I and the men in the restroom I would have encountered. A second story is in order which, hopefully,

sheds light on that period of time known as "transition." In the course of my migration to my current female appearance, I had this rather humorous experience.



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I was "presenting" female most of the time; but, for this trip, I attempted to present in a rather gender-neutral to masculine way for personal reasons I choose to not discuss here. My intent was to limit my dysphoria but still not be perceived by others as female.

My spouse and I were visiting our son over the 4th of July weekend in a major city. We spent Sabbath enjoying the sights and history of this wonderful American city. Over the course of the day, I was gendered as both female and male, having had people address me as both "sir" and "ma'am" at various times throughout the day. As we sat at our table for dinner, my bladder finally was to its limit, so off to the restroom I headed. I had put it off all day as public restrooms are a place no trans person looks forward to; and, in my state of transition, they were particularly scary places. My problem was further compounded because I had been gendered as both female and male in the course of the day; so I knew that, regardless of the restroom I used, there could, likely would, be misperceptions.

The questions in my head were, "Which facility should I use? How quickly will I be able to get in and out? Can I avoid others, if at all possible?" This restaurant was large and crowded and the situation was further aggravated by the fact that non-patrons had access as well, and the area was crowded with 4th of July revelers. Since I was presenting "male" I chose the men's room. I managed to enter and complete my bathroom experience with no incident. As I exited there were people standing near the entrance. Two were 20-something women standing facing one another chatting about something. I would have to pass between them. As they saw me emerge from restroom, the looks on their faces said it all! "What in the world was that middle-aged woman doing in the men's room!" Granted, there was a line to get into the women's restroom; but, clearly, they were caught off-guard. But the story doesn't end here.



Arriving back at the table, my 20-something son, decided to go to the restroom; and here is where the story gets a bit amusing. Upon his return to our table he announced, "The weirdest thing happened in the restroom." I inquired what happened and he proceeded to explain. He entered the men's room and it was rather busy. He claimed the unoccupied urinal and prepared to do his business, when he heard two women talking. Hearing female voices, he looked around and caught a glimpse of them as they quickly washed their hands and exited the restroom. I inquired what they looked like. He said I didn't get a great look, but told us what he remembered: long hair, one blonde, mid-twenties, average build. I started to laugh and said, "Let me tell you the rest of the story." Apparently, seeing a middle-aged woman—me—come out of the men's room caused them to decide that, instead of joining the queue for the women's room that extended well up the corridor and would likely require a 10-minute wait or more, they'd brave the men's room.



I still chuckle when I think of the latter story, but the story doesn't always end well for transgender people. Public bathrooms are places none of us relish; but for transgender, genderqueer, tall big-framed women, and butch-appearing women, they are particularly hostile places. Even now, with several years since transition and confident that I "pass" well, I still find public restrooms challenging space.

Transgender children, teens, and young adults in the educational setting encounter a somewhat different challenge as the restroom and locker room is both a place to take care of biological functions and a social space. If a person transitions while school age and the policy others them by forcing them to use a remote gender-neutral restroom or locker room for the gender designated at birth, this others them in a way that paints a target on them as someone who is different, strange, troubled, and often to be avoided. It is so much healthier for everyone when good protocols are used to ensure that transgender children have equal access to facilities that correspond to their gender identity.



A VISIT TO BUILDING SAFE SPACES

FOR EVERYONE

By Tanja Koppers

On March 6-8, 2017, twenty-three European and Central/South American pastors, counselors, theologians, church administrators, and lay leaders met in Odenwald, Germany, for a Building Safe Places workshop.

For Thursday evening's session, Catherine* asked members from SDA Kinship Germany to join the group discussion so some issues could be discussed with us (as LGBTs) and not about us. Sure, Catherine is one of us; but it is always better to have more voices and answers to deepen understanding.

Like last year, Rene Tuchtenhagen (SDA Kinship member) and I responded to her invitation. In 2016, we were asked to tell our stories. This year the participants prepared three questions for us.

What was your first positive dialogue with an Adventist church member? How did it affect you?

What do you think about the Adventist Church's recommendation that gay men and lesbians practice celibacy?

How would you like to be treated if you visited or joined a church with your partner?

I will answer the last question first. Rene and I both responded quickly. We do not expect any special treatment. We only want that we and our partners will be welcomed as every other church member; nothing more, nothing less. Without question, we are a long way from our wish becoming reality.

That said, this is what we seek: normality, no hiding, no discussion, no disapproving glances or whispering. We want to be welcomed as human, as persons, whether heterosexual or homosexual.

The second question, as well, was not hard to answer but has different levels for me. First, it is simply that a celibate lifestyle should be a matter of choice and not everybody is called for it. Another way to phrase my thoughts is that not everybody has the gift of celibacy. If Paul admits that it is not for every man (or woman), why does our church leadership expect celibacy from all homosexuals? Are we more blessed with this gift than heterosexuals?

In addition, most relationships do not end at having conversations and holding hands. We, who fall in love with each other, also long for the physical part of our relationship.

Why should this level of intimacy be denied within a homosexual relationship? It is a natural part of our love.

Personally, I also wonder why the influence of the church should reach into my privacy. What right does the church have to stick its nose into my bed? This is a very intimate part of my life; and what happens in my bed should only matter to me and my partner. Are heterosexual partners asked what they are doing in their beds, if and how often they have sex? I do not think I want to allow the church to have a voice on this issue. I also assume that no heterosexual couple would like to give account of their sex life to the General Conference. They would refuse to tolerate this invasion by the church.

Catherine had another interesting point. Statistics show that people in committed romantic relationships live longer. With this data in mind, requesting that homosexuals be celibate can sound as if the church wants them to die sooner. I do not think that people in the General Conference thought about this data and concluded: *Celibacy is good; we will get rid of gays and lesbians sooner as they will die sooner.* But you never know.

The first question was a very personal one and it is difficult to repeat our answers here. For me, it was hard to answer because I have had a lot of great encounters and talks over the years with SDA Kinship/HAD members, which I still have in my memories.

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The evening ended, as such evenings always end, with lots of one-to-one talks and questions from the participants to Rene or me. Some questions seemed to be very odd, like the one about how falling in love feels for LGBTs. I paused briefly, and then I answered on behalf of LGBTs. The pastor was surprised to hear that it sounded exactly like falling in love for heterosexuals like himself. (Really? *LOL*) But he said it was important for him to understand that it is the same.

It was clear that the participants simply wanted to understand. Some had more problems than others and needed to find a way to approach the subject. Personal conversations seemed to have a big influence. Some participants emphasized that hearing LGBTs' stories and seeing the emotions which came with telling the stories changes views, because then they put faces with the topic and homosexuals become no longer an anonymous group of people.

I believe our stories are a helpful entrance. But we will not have any effect if the listener is not open to changing his/her mind, to rethink their position, and to let go of their fear. If only personal encounters mattered, many LGBTs would not have found such discouragement in their home churches. These brothers and sisters really did know us and nevertheless refused to accept us.

I am happy that, through the Building Safe Places event and through the empathy of the participants, insights into diversity are carried forward.

My personal wish would be that the sphere will be enlarged and participants from the rest of Germany and other European countries will join. We need for SDA Kinship members to find safe pastors to contact and safe churches over all of Europe.

=====
Tanja Koppers is the coordinator of SDA Kinship Germany and this year's European Kinship Meeting coordinator. She lives with her partner Bianka.

*Catherine Taylor planned and coordinated the Building Safe Places workshop designed for Adventist pastors, educators, counselors and therapists, administrators, family life leaders, youth directors, Pathfinder leaders, dorm advisors, and chaplains.



Shanghai, China, where Rey lives



Glendale City Church in California, United States where Rey was baptized.



Rey's Baptismal robe.

My name is Rey, and I am from China. Here it is difficult to become a Christian due to many reasons, both religious and local policy, especially for someone who's not from a Christian family.

Many years ago, my spiritual life accidentally started with my friend's invitation to attend a church which meets on Sabbath. I called it "Saturday church," and it was not until two years later I knew its full name of Seventh-day Adventist.

As a new member in my church, with zero absences, I attended every introductory course. This lasted almost a year and I gradually developed a strong love for and faith in God. It's amazing for someone who never believed in Jesus. Everything about my church life here was nice: the congregation reads the Bible, sings psalms, and prays together. But one day, the pastor's words in class sharply hurt my heart.

Pastors here openly and strongly condemn LGBTIQ people. You can never imagine how it felt for an innocent young man who was ready to come to the embrace of God's love to get told he's not welcome. Those who say they love you most hurt you most. It's just like someone gently opens the door with a smile telling you, "Please come in," and then shuts the door violently the moment you're ready to enter. After the whole series of introductory classes, they invited me to get baptized, and I clearly didn't accept—not here.

I've thought about quitting, changing to another denomination. But I just can't, because Sabbath is so important to me.

After a lot of effort online and with many warm-hearted internet pals' suggestions, I successfully found an LGBTIQ-welcoming Adventist church in California and flew all the way there for baptism last October. When I arrived, the pastor there told me it was their LGBTIQ month, and that week's sermon happened to be titled, "Affirming All." Praise to the Lord! He helped me, who had become a Christian, to find a way to get baptized.

Many have paid a high price to stay, and I have every reason to pay a higher price to join the church. It's easy to quit, but quitting helps nothing. When I think about many potential members like me who are struggling, I know I can't quit; those broken hearts need our help. We need to set a good example and speak out. When we reach out to them, God's never-ending love is revealed.

SDA Kinship shares the value that the journeys of LGBTIQ Adventists matter in the wider narrative of what it means to be LGBTIQ and Adventist. *Our Journeys* is a series of stories, highlighting the lives of LGBTIQ Adventists around the world, our experiences, triumphs, and failures, our low and high points.

OUR JOURNEYS



THE YEAR OF
BEFORE AND
AFTER, PART I

BY JERRY MCKAY

A MESSAGE FROM THE
AUTHOR

If you are reading my story for the first time and you feel you are missing some context, I suggest you start at the beginning with the May 2015 issue of *Connection* magazine. Why am I writing my story in such detail? In short, I am answering questions while hoping to educate. Over the years, I have been asked the same questions over and over by friends, family, and church members. The answers to those questions are found in different decades of my life. I'm grateful to *Connection Magazine* for giving me this space to share my story. Publishing as I write is a great motivator!

It was midnight when I finished reading the Ministry interview and headed home. The familiar residential streets of Tokyo seemed different that night. My trance-like walk home was broken once by a brief exchange with a passing policeman whom I knew. I remember this odd detail because his greeting jolted me back into the present.

Although my head was filled with the hope of healing from homosexuality, when I saw him I was once again aware of how attractive I found him. This left me feeling uneasy. Once home, hoping not to wake anyone, I slipped into bed and tried to sleep. That was impossible. It is said that just before you die your life passes before you. Mine passed before me many times that night. I replayed events from childhood and with male friendships in high school and college. I recounted my long "relationship" with Donna and my three prior years in Japan. I spent most of the night reassessing every event through a new lens—the cause and cure of homosexuality.

Among those events was a very recent, angst-ridden incident that occurred only weeks prior to discovering the interview. Once a year, we teachers gathered for a week of rest, spiritual renewal, and some honing of our teaching skills. To get to our rustic retreat on the island of Teshima in Japan's Island Sea, we had to travel by train and boat. At one stop, a man boarded our train and sat down in the section where Vikki, another teacher, and I were sitting. Although it was difficult, we were able to communicate. As was our custom, we gave him our business cards and encouraged him to study English with us in the hope he might one day study the Bible. Once he reached his stop, we went our separate ways.

I never thought about him again until I received a letter several weeks later stating that he wanted to get together. I thought it a bit strange that the letter contained two photos of him standing alone on a dimly lit dance floor. Nevertheless, I wrote back indicating a visit would be fine. Welcoming this complete stranger into my home was consistent with the original reason for giving him my business card. He only needed to understand that I would have to work his visit around my responsibilities at school. We were always looking for opportunities to share our faith. Several weeks passed before I heard from him the second time. His second letter announced the date of his visit. The letter also included another photo and two tiny dried flowers. Even though including flowers also seemed a little odd, it was not totally out of character for a culture where expressions of friendship between male friends is different from those in North America.

Despite being willing to receive this stranger into my home, I felt uncomfortable about his visit for several reasons. First, he spoke very little English, so I knew that would be a challenge. Second, he was the most nonconforming Japanese man I knew. In contrast to the typically well-groomed Japanese male, he had shoulder length curly hair and wore more "colorful" clothing than most men. Also, I did not know any Japanese guy who hung out at disco bars near the American navy base in Yokosuka—as I learned in his letter. On the day of his arrival, we had supper together at a restaurant and, as I had feared, struggled through some very labored chit-chat. To occupy the evening, we looked at pictures of my family and life in Canada—an easy way to fill time and overcome the language barrier.

When it was nearing time to retire, I set up a futon for my visitor on one side of our small living room. Because our visit was going to be short, and he would have to head off early the next morning, I decided to stay in the living room as well. This was not unusual for Japan. Because a room can be a living space by day and a bedroom by night, I had often been in similar situations when visiting friends. In addition, the portability of the futon made it easy for me to set up a second bed for myself on the other side of the living room. With the lights out, I was ready to sleep. It was then that his intention for the visit became apparent. I instantly understood what was happening when he moved across the floor in the dark and slid under my covers.



Even though I was capable of resisting, I lay as though in a paralyzed state of ambivalence. I did not protest; neither did I encourage nor reciprocate. We did not talk. There was no expression of affection between us. He did what he wanted to do and returned to his side of the room. Before he had reached his bed, I was overwhelmed by a wave of gut-wrenching anxiety, confusion, and shame. As I stared into the dark, I wished he would just leave.

The next morning, neither of us spoke about the night before. As soon as I knew he knew how to get to the train station, I sent him away. I couldn't get him away from me fast enough. I was emotionally numb when I walked into my 9 a.m. class. For the remainder of the day, I was totally consumed with those "why" questions and "what-is-wrong-with-me" accusations. My head ached while trying to teach a Bible class with this experience fresh in my memory. This was my fourth year of mission service, and nothing like this had ever happened before.

Japan was a sacred place for me, and now I felt as though I had defiled my entire mission experience in the worst possible way. For days, I tormented myself trying to figure out how I had created this situation. I replayed everything I had done leading up to that moment. What message had I given to suggest I was open to a homosexual advance? What was it about me that had tipped him off? Did it take one to know one, as they say? I could not help wondering if I had become the shadowy predator about whom *You & Your Health* warned.

In reality, this incident came about as a comedy of errors. His assumptions started the moment I gave him my business card. While I have no doubt that this man was seeking intimacy, I was just trying to be a good missionary! I am confident there were few, if any, unconscious motives behind my actions, because as shallow as it is of me to say, I did not find him attractive in any way. I had no spike of attraction to him when we first met. There was no desire on my part to "stare at him" as was often the case when in the presence of someone I found attractive. Although not attracted to him, I had communicated such by responding to his letters and welcoming him into my home. Although his actions could technically be considered non-consensual—viewed as an assault—which would have been cause enough for my distress, the event traumatized me for different reasons. My lack of protest haunted me, for one thing. While I longed for emotional and physical connection, had I been heterosexual and repulsed by his homosexual advances, the situation would never have gone as far as it had no matter how lonely or naive I may have been, and I knew it.

Even though I wanted him to leave, my feelings of complicity made it impossible to act accordingly. I dreaded the strong probability of having to explain to my roommates the sudden departure of my visitor so late at night. Any explanation would have been a lie and added to my distress. My greatest source of trauma and the real reason I wanted this guy out of my life—immediately—was because I saw myself in him. In this man, I was again confronted with the nature of my affections and it terrified me. In retrospect, I wish I had been in a different place emotionally and spiritually. I regret that my self-loathing erased any chance of treating him with dignity. Years of self-disdain about my orientation made it impossible for me to express compassion for this stranger. It would have been healing for me, in fact, to have talked with him, but I couldn't have tolerated that psychologically. Even if I had been in a good place emotionally, the language barrier would have made conversation impossible.

I couldn't get him away from me fast enough. I was emotionally numb when I walked into my 9 a.m. class. For the remainder of the day, I was totally consumed with those "why" questions and "what-is-wrong-with-me" accusations. My head ached while trying to teach a Bible class with this experience fresh in my memory

EUROPEAN

KINSHIP MEETING 2017 FRANCE

SEPTEMBER 1 - 4

SDAKINSHIP.ORG

European Kinship Meeting takes place at Liebfrauenberg Castle, located in Gœrsdorf at the heart of Alsace.

It is in the scenic Northern Vosges Nature Park, a UNESCO-listed Biosphere Reserve, near the larger city of Strasbourg.



CHURCH RELATIONS



During late January and the month of February, a number of events took place that provided opportunities for Kinship to be involved through the Director of Church Relations.

The Creating Change Conference in Philadelphia for the first time offered a room called “Many Paths” for those of various faiths to meet for spiritual support. Some Kinship members who were attending the conference came to the space. This included an opportunity for those who wished to share their concerns, prayers, and fears during the inauguration of the new President. There were many opportunities to interact with various LGBT support groups, including those from the Muslim and Jewish communities.

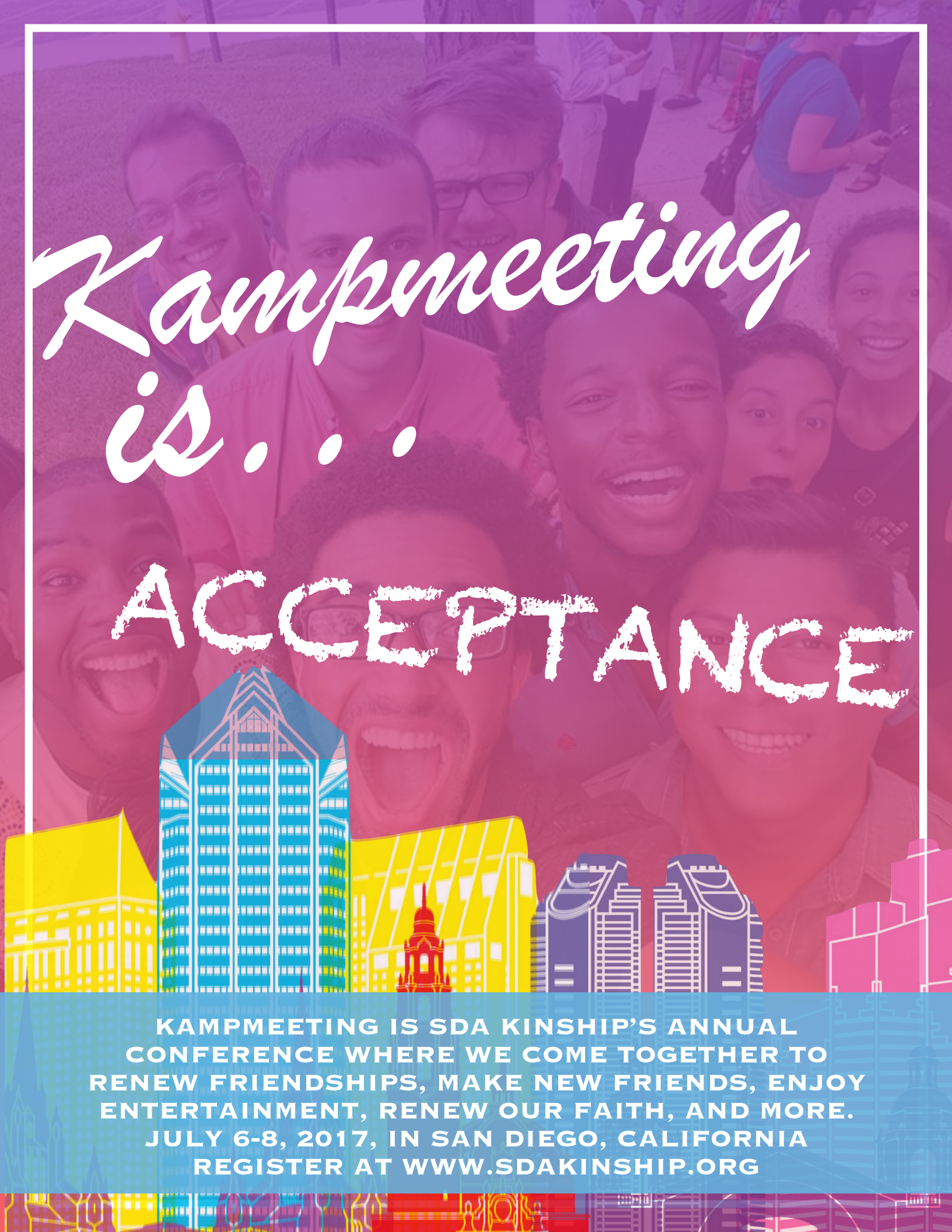
In early February, the members of the Kinship Advisory Council met for their annual face-to-face meeting. The Council is chaired by the Director of Church Relations with the President of Kinship and a member of the Board invited to attend each year. The other members of the Council are current or retired employees of the denomination or closely affiliated organizations.

This meeting begins with the members sharing ways in which they have been involved in supporting the LGBTIQ community during the year. It is always an inspiration. The discussions this year included: the work of the various gay and straight alliance groups on Adventist campuses, including the new group at Loma Linda University; the Safe Places program, creating ways for more congregations to become involved in providing both a safe place and integrating LGBTIQ members into congregations; and developing stronger ties between the Kinship Board and the Advisory Council. The Council also encouraged Kinship to develop a tagline and branding that would help the church to see Kinship as Christianity authentically practiced.

In late February, the Director of Church Relations attended the One Project and was invited to serve as a facilitator for one of the tables. About a dozen Kinship members and over three dozen of those who identify as Kinship allies were among those who attended this conference, including several of the presenters, who publicly mentioned the importance of the church ministering to members of the LGBTIQ community. Many wonderful conversations occurred during the conference. On Saturday night following the first day of the conference, a number of Kinship members and allies met for haystacks and an evening of conversation at Daneen and Stephen’s home.

Dave Ferguson
Director of Church Relations





Kampmeeting
is...

ACCEPTANCE



**KAMPMEETING IS SDA KINSHIP'S ANNUAL
CONFERENCE WHERE WE COME TOGETHER TO
RENEW FRIENDSHIPS, MAKE NEW FRIENDS, ENJOY
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RESOURCES RESOURCES RESOURCES

We understand what it is like to be an Adventist struggling with issues of sexual orientation and gender identity because we each had similar experiences.

And we also know that this struggle is often painful, frightening, and discouraging. Kinship is here to help and provide support.

If you are feeling lonely, depressed, or suicidal, or if you need a professional counselor who is supportive of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender concerns, chances are we know someone in your area who may help.

Be assured that we are sensitive to your need for confidentiality. If you wish, we can also refer you to an understanding Adventist pastor, teacher, or other professional we know who is sensitive and informed about sexual orientation and gender-identity issues.

Above all, please know that we care. We understand that you need to think through what your sexuality means, what to do about

it, what it may mean to your loved ones, and whether it is possible to be LGBTIQ and Seventh-day Adventist. We will not try to determine your conclusions if you reach out to us. We will endeavor to understand and help you while you make those important decisions about who you are and God's plan for your life.

We want to respond in the most helpful way. We are people of diverse ages and backgrounds, so please let us know the type of person to whom you feel most comfortable talking. For example, a woman rather than a man, someone who came out while being married, or someone with a similar background or profession. You may also be more comfortable talking to someone who speaks your native language.

If you are a pastor, teacher, counselor, or parent, please know that we welcome all inquiries and that we also respect and honor your need for confidentiality.



info@sdakinship.org



PO Box 244
Orinda, CA 94563-0244 USA



Scan the code for these resources, or visit www.sdakinship.org.

- Find an LGBTIQ-Friendly Church
- Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?
- Support Kinship—Make a Donation
- Previous *Connection* Issues and More

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