

connection

2012

Blessings

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Visions
2013

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WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a non-profit support organization. We minister to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-day Adventists who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is a global organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people worldwide.

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

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

SUPPORT KINSHIP

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



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

From the Editor



Welcome to the holidays! Since not one single article that came in for this issue talks about the holidays, I thought I should at least mention them here ☺. I hope that you will have at least one person who is dear to you and safe for you with whom you can share an enjoyable meal or activity this month. Remember to eat at least some healthy foods and get a little extra sleep. Take a walk along the water, in a park, or through the woods. Wear clothes that are warm enough for those of us in the mountains or the northern hemisphere or cool enough for those whose daily temperatures could bring on a sweat. Rom is back with her column! Elvys is joining us with a new monthly addition. We're bringing you some articles about events, activities, and church decisions. Many appreciations to those of you who write to us. As you plan for the new year, don't give up your hope or your visions. I continue to eschew New Year's resolutions, but I think it is absolutely necessary to have goals and possibilities. I am one of those primitively spiritual people who lays their plans before God and continues to be amazed that the answers are better than I expected (or a great learning opportunity). Let us know what you are up to. We enjoy hearing about your journeys and sharing the parts you are willing to have in print. Most importantly, take particularly good care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine



Kampmeeting 2013 Save the Date!

The U.S. Kinship Kampmeeting 2013 is scheduled for July 2-7, 2013, at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, California. You won't want to miss the opportunity to vacation and fellowship on the beautiful Pacific Coast, so start planning now by blocking this week off on your 2013 calendar.

Kampmeeting is a time for Kinship members to celebrate and embrace other members from a broad range of spiritual and social experiences. If you *haven't* yet attended a Kampmeeting, 2013 will be a good year to discover Kinship through our biggest annual event. If you *have* been to a Kampmeeting in the past, you already know what a diverse and fulfilling experience Kampmeeting can be—music, friends, family, networking, sharing, absorbing, laughter, fun, learning, growing, celebrating, and oh, did I mention music! —it's all found at Kampmeeting!

Watch for pricing and travel information. And remember, *Women and Children First* weekend will precede Kampmeeting.

Fred Casey and Twid Widmer, Co-coordinators



A String Too Short To Save

By Rom Wilder

Sometimes it's better not to follow directions—like when your GPS sends you on a route different from one you've discovered to be better. But the inspiration for this short string was Ellen's second attempt to fix Worthington/Loma Linda vegetarian food from a can—following the directions on the label. We've both blotted out most of the memory of her first attempt, including what it actually was. What we do remember was (a) it was about as close to inedible as food can get, (b) I couldn't eat it and she, who doesn't like to waste things, ate it with painfully disparaging comments and a slight amount of choking, and (c) I couldn't stop laughing.

Her aforementioned inability to waste food has caused her to open cans of food I brought with me after closing down my apartment in the DC area. Green beans and peas and even corn were all pretty self-explanatory. No directions needed. Hard to ruin and easy to spiff up. But canned vegetarian "stuff" is another deal.

One day last week I was working in the other room and Ellen was in the kitchen humming and fixing dinner. It smelled delicious as it was cooking. Aromas of garlic and other flavors wafted through the house as I was finishing up my work day. I could hardly wait to see what wonderful vegan dinner she'd made. She decided we would eat vegan for Lent after she saw the movie "Forks Over Knives" on Netflix, and some-

how the Lenten food style has continued.

After signing off work and closing my laptop, I went into the kitchen; and there, in a large pan, were large clumps of something. Glancing at the can on the counter I saw it was Worthington Vegetable Steaks. Oh, dear. I'd always cut them up and fried them so the small, crunchy bits of fake meat were tasty and fun to eat. She had left them as they came from the can which meant some were huge. And they weren't fried or crunchy.

"I just followed the directions on the can," she said as my chin hit the counter in horror. I reminded her of her last attempt at fixing canned vegetarian "stuff" by following the directions, and she said she remembered nothing except the fact that the results were nearly inedible. This looked different in the can; so she followed the directions and added wine, Worcestershire sauce, and slices of garlic. She thought that would help.

She was wrong. Well, maybe not wrong. I'm sure those things helped, but not enough. Not being a fan of horseradish, I graciously (at least I hope I was gracious) declined when she offered me some to put on the brown lumps. When the horseradish was gone she reached for the ketchup. "I've never seen you put ketchup on anything!" I exclaimed. Her response, "I've never needed ketchup before," started my laughter. Her conclu-

sion: ketchup covers up flavors better than horseradish.

She tried to liken it to steak, like it said on the can, but there was no gristle. Then she said it was more like liver, except there were no veins. Neither of those descriptions helped it taste better in my book.

As I put away the leftovers (and trust me, there were leftover Vegetable Steaks that night), I cut the lumps into nice quarter inch thick slices, hoping they'd each soak up the flavors in the Worcestershire sauce concoction, because it was clear I would be the one eating these particular leftovers. Indeed, at lunchtime the next day, said slices were pretty tasty.

I wonder how many other things in life have inadequate directions attached. How many times have the accepted and correct ways been unacceptable to us or even wrong? Most of us found out the directions society attached to us at birth—the directions and expectations for living a heterosexual life—were not acceptable, not correct, and quite wrong.

That's one reason for community. As a community we can share caring, understanding, and yes, recipes. I've found the correct recipe for a life partner and she's not only a great spouse, but is also (usually) a good cook. Recipes and directions for cooking Worthington Vegetable Steaks are welcome, as are congratulations for finding a good and right way to live our lives to the fullest! ▽





The Perks of Gayness

Hello! My name is Elvys, I'm a nineteen-year-old Brazilian writer, graphic artist, web designer, photographer, and assistant librarian. This isn't as busy as it sounds. I was thinking of writing a column about the intricacies of being a religious (or not) gay boy, but thought not. I decided to pick up a trending topic: sexology. No, I'm just joking. Then I came up with the idea of writing about the perks of being gay. It sounds great, doesn't it?

It begins with a whisper: what if we all were born gay? The world would be homogeneous, not homosexual. If there was no bigotry we would have the important things to address—finding, flirting with, and marrying a spouse, and dealing with paying bills and the mortgage. It looks like we, as non-heterosexual people (whatever letter of the alphabet describes us), have been born with a heavier burden than straight people. (I don't like to use this word; it makes me feel crooked.) Even with that burden, look how many great things there are about so many non-heterosexual people. We are strong, vivid, and alive. We can make the most of life and enjoy the perks of gayness. That's what I want to talk to you about in this little column! I'd love to hear from you about these perks and how we can make good use of them.

I want us to be in touch and make this section of the Connection a place where we can laugh a little, release the weight off our backs, and rejoice. To make things faster, write to me directly at elvyspereira@aol.com. What makes you proud about being non-heterosexual? Tell me. See you next month! ▼

Ambassador and Advocate

By Ryan Bell

The first thing you notice about Crystal Cheatham is her effusive energy and contagious optimism. She's on a mission. Already, at the age of 27, she is making an impact on the world through her music and her activism. Crystal is a singer/songwriter, a committed Christian, a lesbian, and a passionate advocate for LGBTQ inclusion and equality on college campuses—especially, though not exclusively, Christian campuses. It's a combination of characteristics—Christian and gay—that often makes for a difficult life, but she is positively ebullient. When I asked her about her almost naïve optimism about the willingness of the Christian establishment to hear and receive her message she said, "I sometimes feel stupid and silly, but I'm a hopeful person. My hopefulness with this cause comes from having already been to the bottom."



She doesn't want other young people to have to endure what she endured. Like many, she struggled to come to terms with her sexual orientation in a religious and cultural context that did not affirm her basic identity. She calls her experience a second puberty. Her first puberty happened when it does for every other young person: somewhere around 11-14 years of age. But, she says, she had to go through it all over again as an adult, when she gradually came out to select friends and family members shortly after finishing college. Though her mother always accepted her—"she was always my biggest advocate," she says—she was rejected by many of her friends, and expelled from the church of her childhood. For a while she stayed away from the church. She wanted to explore what it meant to be a gay person and that conversation was not possible in the church she was familiar with. What she found outside the church, however, was just as disheartening. She recalls with dismay those early days exploring the queer world in Philadelphia. "What I found there was so hyper-sexualized...it was disgusting. I couldn't find my foundation in the queer world in the way I had in the faith world." So she made her way back to the church with the resolve to make it a more hospitable environment for herself and others on the margins.

But for her it's about more than sexuality and gay rights. It's about identity formation. She and her team have developed what they call "The Identity Kit," comprised of a short book and a card game, all designed to help people grapple with the complexities of their identity. The message of "The Identity Kit," she told me, is to help people internalize the truth that God, by whatever name, loves them. "The

second message of the kit and the project," she says, "is that all your identities need to be affirmed."



It is this recognition of the complexity of every young person's journey toward identity that makes "The Identity Kit" stand out. Many people struggle with their relationships well into adulthood because they have never come to terms with their own identity as a human being deeply loved by someone or something larger than themselves. The kit covers race and nationality, religion, language, immigration status, physical abilities, and more.

She spent a week traveling in California, talking to college students about their identity formation and how to carve out a safe space on conservative Christian campuses for queer students to learn, grow, and be themselves. In addition to meetings at Azusa Pacific University, La Sierra University, and Biola University, Crystal spoke and played music at the Hollywood Adventist Church. She also shared alongside an impressive group of artists from organizations including Soul Force, Queer People of Color, and UC Riverside's LGBT Resource Center, at an event called *Slam Hate*, at the Barn in Riverside.

How well her message connected in the context of conservative Christian colleges and universities was hard to predict. The Riverside's *Press-Enterprise* reported that La Sierra University continues to deny official status to Prism, an LGBT club on campus, because they feel Prism violates Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. But whether Prism is an official club or not, the conversation is happening as evidenced by the school's support for the recent screening of a new documentary called, *Seventh-Gay Adventists: a film about faith on the margins*.

"The ice is breaking. I'm a firm believer," she tells me. I can hear her smile across our Skype connection. "And when it does, no one is going to want to be in the dark." ▽

RELIGION

La Sierra rejects gay, lesbian club

By David Olson, Staff Writer



Rebecca Kern in front of the La Sierra University sign on Thursday, November 15, 2012. Rebecca Kern is president of a gay and lesbian club, Prism, that can't get La Sierra University official recognition because of Adventist teaching on sexuality.

A group of gay and lesbian students at La Sierra University is trying again to gain official recognition for their club, six months after the university denied it because of Seventh-day Adventist Church teachings on homosexuality.

The club, Prism, reapplied for recognition last month, hoping that attitudes of members of the 2,400-student Adventist university's Student Life Committee have changed, said Prism president Rebecca Kern.

"It's also a way for us to say out loud that we're not going away," said Kern, 23, a fourth-year student who is lesbian and Adventist.

Prism members are holding their first public event Saturday, November 17, but the mix of workshops and entertainment is taking place at UC Riverside because La Sierra doesn't permit non-sanctioned clubs to hold events on campus.

Non-approved clubs cannot promote their events on campus with leaflets or postings in university buildings, and they cannot reserve campus meeting rooms.

La Sierra spokesman Larry Becker said organizations viewed as violating Adventist beliefs cannot gain recognition.

"The committee felt that while the university values all students and is against harassment in all forms, this group's mission does not align with Seventh-day Adventist beliefs on sexuality," he said. "La Sierra is a Seventh-day Adventist university, so we support the values of the [Seventh-day Adventist] Church. That is why they were turned down."

The Adventist Church teaches that same-gender sexual activity is a sin, but same-gender sexual orientation is not.

Kern said Prism does not conflict with those beliefs. It's not a dating club.

"This club is about conversation," Kern said. "That's why we're absolutely perplexed that this club hasn't been approved."

The club, formed about a year ago, has about 50 students, faculty, and staff who are involved, Kern said. Members are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and supportive straight people, she said. Some, like Kern, are Adventist. Others are not.

Participants discuss ways to reconcile their faith with their sexuality, learn about LGBT history, and address topics such as anti-gay bullying and homophobia, she said.

Only official clubs can reserve campus space, so Prism's faculty sponsor, psychology Professor Paul Mallery, said he looks for empty classrooms for meetings.

The club is the latest effort by LGBT students at La Sierra to organize themselves. Zack Jagers said a 2011 attempt by him and others to establish a LGBT lecture series on campus through a social-justice group was rejected.

Instead, lectures were held by professors as part of their classes. Becker said the lectures were academic in nature and didn't violate university rules.

The university doesn't object to discussion of LGBT issues, although, Becker said, "all our conversation is informed by our faith and our doctrine."

La Sierra approved the scheduled December 1 screening of the film *Seventh-Gay Adventists*, about the intersection of faith, identity, and sexuality among LGBT Adventists, at the campus' La Sierra University Church.

La Sierra's approach illustrates its attempt to balance open discussions that are part of academic institutions with its mission of adhering to Adventist beliefs.

La Sierra is one of five of the 13 Adventist universities in North America that has an LGBT club, none of them officially recognized, said Eliel Cruz, president of an organization that represents the groups. Cruz, who

attends Andrews University in Michigan, said he's not aware of a club at Loma Linda University.

"We're not trying to change theology," Cruz said. "We are here to ensure all our students feel safe and have a safe place to talk."

Other universities affiliated with faiths that have teachings similar to Adventist beliefs on sexuality have differing approaches to gay and lesbian clubs. Some, especially evangelical institutions, also ban such clubs. Some allow them.

The Roman Catholic Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles established an LGBT Student Services office.

The office is not in conflict with Catholic Church teaching against same-gender sexual activity or same-sex marriage, said the Rev. Robert Caro, the university's vice president for mission and ministry.

"It's a support center," Caro said. "We see it as part of our pastoral outreach to the gay and lesbian community. It is not a center that is advocating any gay causes or gay marriage. It's a center that recognizes the reality that we have gay, lesbian, and transgendered students, and we want to respect their dignity and counter any attempt to marginalize them and counter any homophobic tendencies."

La Sierra's rejection of the LGBT club comes amid a years-long controversy over how the university should teach both the Adventist view that the world was created in six days, and the scientific consensus that evolution occurred over millions of years.

Last year, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, which accredits universities, expressed concern that faculty members' academic freedom and La Sierra's institutional autonomy were being threatened amid pressure by church traditionalists to infuse more religious teaching into the curriculum. ▽

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<http://www.pe.com/local-news/riverside-county/riverside/riverside-headlines-index/20121115-religion-la-sierra-rejects-gay-lesbian-club.ece>

News from The Netherlands

Dear Kinship friends,

Yesterday was the final day of the union session meetings in The Netherlands. One of the delegates submitted a motion regarding how we treat LGBTIs in the churches. This was changed and amended in the session, and I think a very positive result was carried by a vast majority. I will include the motion in Dutch and English:

Veilige kerk voor iedereen

De afgevaardigden, in vergadering bijeen, dragen het Algemeen Kerkbestuur op om in de komende bestuursperiode, naar het voorbeeld van het project 'een veilige kerk', aandacht te besteden aan de pro-

blematiek van en rond personen met een niet-heteroseksuele geaardheid, opdat zij zich veilig mogen weten in de kerk.

Safe church for everyone

Following the example of the "Safe Church" initiative, the delegates gathered together in committee and charged the Executive Board in the coming administrative period to consider the problems of, and concerning, people with a non-heterosexual nature, so that they can feel safe in the church.

While this might not go as far as we would like, I think that this is a very positive step forward for the church. What speaks to me is that it

includes all the LGBTI (and other letters) by talking of non-heterosexual. It also does not link the discussion to Biblical ideals or "normal relationships." I think this is very liberating.

The "Safe Church" initiative is a nationwide Dutch initiative that discusses physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse (mainly of children and women) and attempts to avoid abuse and to bring it out of the taboo. In this initiative union representatives and psychologists come to educate all the elders, deacons, and pastors in each church on this topic. This might be a way to discuss LGBTI issues in the churches. ▽

Blessings and Visions

We asked Kinship members to share a blessing of the year or a dream and vision and goal you have for yourself for next year....



I have been lucky this year. I have walked into a job which works regularly; and, most of the time, I am meeting a few different people in a nice place where locals are pretty friendly people.

—Elias



This year, thanks to my church's bigotry, I finally accepted that I was gay. I wasted the first 18 years of my life trying to deny myself, and the Seventh-day Adventist church simply made it bold. Well, it was a relief to me; now I have found the real me, even though I have left church and communion. I came out to my sister and to a couple of friends; and they are all accepting and happy for me, and support me whenever I need it. Thinking about 2013, I think I want to get it right. I want to restart my life. I want to find someone I really enjoy and start a relationship. I want to be myself, more than ever, and I want full equality for all of us. This sounded more like a letter to Santa Claus, but it's okay; I think this is all we guys want, all right? I hope we all have the best year of our lives in 2013!

—Elvys Periera



I have many blessings, but I often forget because of the issues of transitioning and going through a divorce. My greatest blessing is my BFF who took me in when my spouse and sister threw me out of their houses. She has taken care of me and loved me like a sister. I tell her and everyone that she is my angel of mercy and that without her intervention I would surely be living on the streets now. Not only has she been a blessing, but her whole family has virtually adopted me. Her three children have treated me as a member of the household and they have shown me genuine love and affection which is so healing for me, especially since I haven't been able to see my own children for three months now. I have gone through some very dark times, like others, but my hope for the future is to re-establish a connection with my three sons and to also reconnect with my Seventh-day Adventist roots.

—Kristi

Kinship news kinship

Region 8

To start off the new year, we will be meeting the third Saturday, January 19, at Peter's house in San Francisco. Place that on your calendar so we can catch up after the holidays.

Also, think about how you would like to get more involved in Region 8 or what you would like to see Kinship do in our region. **We are looking for new ideas and new leaders.** Do keep in mind that the organization can be a platform for many things, including making new friends and launching all sorts of projects on behalf of LGBTI Adventists.

For more information, or for directions to Peter's house, please contact me at region8@sdakinship.org.

Obed Vazquez, Region 8 Coordinator

Only one thing has to change for us to know happiness in our lives: where we focus our attention.

—Greg Anderson



My blessings from the past year have been to most deeply and soulfully feel the precious nature of connections between myself and God. There were two women: one, your editor and the second, a woman at my job, who also introduced me to accept the Bible as a source of divinity. It was a surprising light in my life through a year when much of the support in my everyday world and family were lost. My divine pillar of support is both inspiring and delightful, giving me the strength and purpose to begin again with a light heart, a harp, and a set of copper pots. I have also learned to appreciate the blessings in my life.

My goal, next year, is to study healthy cooking and nutrition in order to nourish myself and others, to trust God's plan for my life, to adopt a little girl kitten for my slowly expanding family after we move, and to move to a new home, trusting that God will lead me to the perfect and safe home, with gentle and inspiring people and pets.

—Crystal



I have decided to turn my finances over to God this year. I believe He will help me use them well.

—Jeremiah Kegera

*The secret of unity
is found
in the equality
of believers in Christ.*

—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*

One of my biggest blessings this year is finding a very dear friend. We lost each other through a series of life's idiosyncrasies for almost two decades, and we found each other through Kinship. For this I am supremely grateful and exquisitely blessed.

—Myt Page



My dream for the New Year would be that human beings of all races, creeds, and orientations will learn to recognize that essentially we are all *one* and so our race is the human race and our creeds should be more along the lines of kindness, compassion, and honoring one another and the uniqueness of each person. Religious dogma has always set people against one another, but recognizing our common Heavenly Father / Mother God brings us together in love and acceptance. Let's all help to make this a reality in 2013 and every year thereafter.

—Tom Durst, Spokane, WA



a memory of 2012

Women's Weekend



Josh Tuburan's Smile Wins Distinguished Award

Inland Empire, CA, Wednesday, 21 November 2012 –

Smile, a new children's album by pianist, arranger, and Region 9 member Josh Tuburan, has earned a *Parents' Choice Award*.

The *Parents' Choice Awards* is the nation's oldest and most respected non-profit program created to recognize quality children's media and toys. Designed to help parents and caregivers make informed decisions about which new products are right for their children, the *Parents' Choice Awards* program has established the benchmarks of achievement in the industry and its seals are a distinguishing mark of quality. "This award is such an incredible honor. The driving force behind writing, arranging, and producing songs for *Smile* was a genuine desire to inspire the smiles of children and families through music," says Josh. "I truly appreciate those involved with the *Parents' Choice Awards* for recognizing my efforts."

The following is the official *Parents' Choice Awards* review of *Smile* by Lynne Heffley, a freelance writer, editor, and former staff writer for 25 years at the *Los Angeles Times*: "A serene and graceful quiet time album from pianist Josh Tuburan, featuring his arrangements of classical pieces by Schumann, Mozart and Brahms as well as songs from *Seussical*, *Toy Story 2* and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Mostly instrumental, with piano, strings, oboe, clarinet, bass, drums, and guitar, the album also includes a piercingly sweet performance of Charlie Chaplin's *Smile* and Tuburan's lilting *Jane's Waltz*."

This is the second professional accolade for *Smile*. In June 2012, the album earned a "CD of the Year" Award from *Creative Child Magazine*. *Smile* is currently available on iTunes, Amazon, and CD Baby. *Smile* (Limited Edition) [was] exclusively available at www.joshtuburan.com on Monday, November 26. This special version features original artwork by Boston-based and internationally recognized artist Bren Bataclan. A portion of the album sales will benefit the National Bullying Prevention Center.

Contact Info: Josh Tuburan | info@joshtuburan.com | (518) 882-8726 | www.joshtuburan.com



From the Filmmakers



Dear SGA Film Community,

Life on the road with film screenings has not been dull. From an armed robbery in Benton Harbor of one of the film subjects and her parents, to trying to get to a screening around the annual Santa Claus parade in Toronto, we've had a lot of adventures this month. Seven screenings in five states (one international) has left us a bit breathless but also very grateful.

Five of those screenings were completely full with long wait lists, and each audience continues to surprise us with how warmly they respond to the film, from Texas to Toronto, even if there are people there still wrestling mightily with this topic. It's been absolutely our biggest blessing to get to witness audiences respond to the film's stories.

I'm going to just share seven highlights we're grateful for:

1. Students! We've had four screenings on this trip near major Adventist colleges / universities, and the student energy is just awesome to behold. Students not only laugh heartily at all of the great Adventist (and other) humor in the film, which gives everyone else permission to guffaw too, but they are beyond eager to engage in this topic. After our screening in Chattanooga, several Southern students and professors wrote saying that pretty much all their classes had wanted to do the next day was talk about the film. Every screening with students leaves us so encouraged for the future of the church—if only all of you stick around to actually make your voices heard!

2. The older gentleman in Atlanta whose profound comment after the film brought tears to many, many eyes. He said, "I wish I could just reach into the film and hug every person in it to say that God loves you. And I wish I could tell every gay and lesbian person who has been hurt by the church, 'I'm sorry.'"

3. Texas! I haven't been to Texas except driving through on our way east since I was a kid, and several people told us versions of, "This is as red as red gets around here, and I just don't know what's going to happen." Well, you absolutely have a special place forever in our hearts, Keene/Burleson! It was a smaller screening (around 90), but the discussion after was one of the most beautiful experiences I've witnessed. It started with a woman sharing that she hadn't been to an Adventist church in 30 years since she came to terms with being a lesbian. She started to cry, and the moderator—a retired Adventist physicist from the area—invited her to his Sabbath School anytime. And then he embraced her. Then a pastor from a local church spoke up to say that she was welcome at their church anytime, and he and most everyone else would protect her from the few who might not be thrilled about that idea. And someone else spoke up to say that while their church really wasn't an option yet, they personally would love to fellowship with her. Turns out they live on the same street! Another woman broke down

talking about how she only found out after her best friend committed suicide that he was gay. He hadn't thought she'd be a safe person to share that with. She just wanted him back so she could tell him how much she loved him. Stephen and I noted later that the audience hardly needed us there to talk—they talked to each other. And that was completely what needed to happen. The film and that space were clearly the first time this topic had been broached publicly for many, and the sharing, connecting, forgiving, connecting was grace in action.

4. For the seminarian who tracked me down between screenings at Benton Harbor to share how much the film had impacted him. He said he felt one of the highest duties of a Christian is to learn to grow in love, and his heart had expanded greatly in love that night.

5. The Babcocks' calm heads and loving hearts—even with a gun in Dr. B's back. Our Andrews area screenings happened at a local theater in Benton Harbor (Celebration Cinemas). The theater was great (wonderful management), and the turnout was exceptional. We'd added a second, late-night screening because the demand was just so high—and the screenings and discussions were wonderful. Sherri (featured in our film) and her parents, Dr. George and Fern Babcock, who are lifelong church educators and administrators, all came to be part of the evening's discussion. That was a great treat for the audiences.

The only big problem was that Benton Harbor isn't very safe late at night, and it was almost 1:00 a.m. before everyone was done talking. As the Babcocks (Sherri and her parents) pulled out of the parking lot, a young man ran to their car. They assumed he was an Andrews student who had just been at the screening and wanted to talk. Instead he asked for a ride to the nearby Motel 6 as it was a very cold night. They let him in, and when they got a little ways, he said to stop. *Then he pulled out a gun, put it in Dr. Babcock's back, and demanded money.* He started getting agitated when they told him to calm down, and when he realized

they didn't have as much money as he wanted. Fern started praying for him. Only true saints like this family (who have been missionaries in Pakistan and other places that require genuine hearts and calm nerves) would pray for their mugger! He started crying and apologizing—but still took their money. I am so grateful that they are all okay! This could have ended very badly. They went to their motel and read Psalm 91 together and say a prayer of gratitude (and another for the mugger). And they actually feel truly grateful that the mugger chose them instead of us (we left the theater last with some students who had helped run the evening). Students and faculty had contributed over \$900 in cash to help with the extra expenses of the night and with future screenings, which was very generous. I had all of it just in a popcorn bucket and would have made an easy target. (They also feel the mugger might have been more aggressive with a younger driver like Stephen instead of someone like Dr. B, who is in his mid-70s.) All I know is that I'm grateful nobody was seriously injured and that the larger theme of the night was love, grace, compassion, and a listening space.

I think it would be great to say thanks to the Babcocks for coming all the way from Columbus and Chicago if we all made a small (or large) donation to the Worthy Student Fund at Hinsdale Adventist Academy [<http://www.haa.org/HAA2011/Home1.html>] where Dr. Babcock is currently the principal—and Fern is the librarian—in their retirement. We just made a contribution. Please do consider making one as well. (Just use the PayPal link on the front page and add a note saying it's a contribution to their Worthy Student Fund to help make up for their loss in the mugging after the SGA screening in Benton Harbor.)

6. For a beautiful venue in Toronto and an extremely warm discussion. I'll especially remember the feeling in the room after an older pastor shared his thoughts. He started his comment by saying, "This afternoon and seeing this film has been an eye-opening experience that has really shifted my perspective." He went on to talk about how he felt that he needed to be more open to people that he has often made assumptions about. After all, who did Jesus hang out with?

7. For all of you. Last year at this time we'd only had two small screenings (the first being for the benefit of the people in the film), and we still had final color and sound to finish. I remember sitting down to write a newsletter update about the next phase. It suddenly dawned on me that making the film had only been half of the job. The other half was screening the film and getting the conversation started. When I realized that we'd want to do the first screenings ourselves, I suddenly felt overwhelmed and exhausted! It seemed like such an enormous task. And how would we ever have enough money to make all of the screenings happen? At that point, we were set to run out of funds in January of 2012. And yet, somehow it happened! Witnessing audiences respond to the film, engaging in conversations, hearing your stories, attending film festivals, feeling people commit to change the status quo regardless of

theological differences—that's been a huge, huge blessing this year. Thank you! (I do think the Divine kind of likes to keep us on our toes and wondering if and how it will all work out until the last minute, as regularly happens, just so we don't forget we need to send our thanks upward!)

La Sierra and New York in December

We're extremely grateful we had another screening at the La Sierra University Church on Sabbath afternoon on December 1. You can read more about why the church board and pastors decided to plan a screening [<http://lsuchurch.org/filmscreening>—it's a beautiful articulation of why we are called to the sacred act of listening.

And we'll be in New York City for a Take 2 screening on December 15! There are even more screenings planned for early next year already, so do check out our screenings page as we announce details. [<http://www.sgamovie.com/screenings>]

We are also working hard on a plan to have many of you host your own community screenings and discussions. I'll have specifics soon, but let me know if you'd like to be help lead out in a screening and discussion in your community, church, or school. (And we are planning to start work on the DVD in the new year once our travel allows it.)

A very happy Thanksgiving to you and yours!

With gratitude,

Daneen and Stephen





Written by David Coltheart
from notes supplied by the participants

The Australian Kinship Kampmeeting was a one-day event that had nothing to do with camping but a lot to do with kinship. Held at Morisset (New South Wales) on October 20, 2012, the day was a feast of community and food (haystacks included) for the twenty people who attended.

The program consisted of three presentations. The first talk was given by Phil Smith and Stuart Rye who are hosts of an inclusive home Bible study group. They smashed stereotypes as they spoke about relationships, in general, and their 21-year monogamous relationship in particular.

Dr. Ross Cole, senior lecturer in Old Testament at Avondale College, spoke about the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 as an example of the radical inclusion of gender-diverse persons. In fulfillment of Isaiah 56:3-6, Jesus, a metaphorical eunuch himself, tore down the barriers of discrimination over gender and sexuality just as he

tore down the wall between Jews and Gentiles (compare Deuteronomy 23).

The last speaker was Dr. Stuart Edser, a clinical psychologist in private practice, who is the author of the ground-breaking book, *Being Gay, Being Christian: You Can Be Both*.^{*} He spoke of the power of shame in our lives and of how homophobia and heterosexism derive their power to shame rainbow people through misogyny and through the assumption of the inferiority of the feminine. Dr. Edser's message was that Christ liberates us from shame. Dr. Edser's own story of coming out as a gay man was a

powerful embodiment of the principles he enunciated.

All three talks were excellent, but the discussions and interaction they stimulated were even better.

Special thanks to Ben Reuter of Avondale College and Ross Cole for organising the event, Dr. Wendi Timms and her team for lunch preparation, and Sarah Worden, a musician of great skill and a beautiful voice, for the music.

^{*} Stuart Edser, *Being Gay, Being Christian: You Can Be Both* (Wollombi, NSW: Exisle Publishing, 2012), is available from <http://www.exislepublishing.com.au/Being-Gay-Being-Christian.html>.



Vermont Mini Kampmeeting



I just had to follow up on the inspirational evening we shared last night with the Kinship group in Ludlow, VT. (David and I are still so excited to have found such a group meeting just 25 minutes from our home!) The film was an engaging and masterful documentary which poignantly illustrated some of the real-life effects of legalism within religion. The three stories were interwoven effectively and served to bring this issue past theological rhetoric by exposing the reality of committed people seeking God within a community that has vilified, censored, and marginalized so many.

Beyond the strength of the movie, there was real inspiration in the conversation that followed. The determination of the Kinship group to live out the foundational principles of mercy and forgiveness in the face of such systematic injustice was humbling. It is so easy for

us to feel that the taint of legalism that pervades Adventism is just toxic to social justice and Jesus' theme of love of the disenfranchised. Meeting those at Kinship yesterday helped to renew some of our own faith in the ability of Adventism to progress towards an open fellowship for all.

Whenever either of you are in Vermont, please remember that you have a standing invitation to take advantage of our invitation to stay with us (as we truly do have *three* guest rooms with private bathrooms now that all of our kids have flown the nest!)

Again, thank you for restoring some of our faith in the Adventist church! You are truly Adventist pioneers of the 21st century!

*With warmest regards,
Debra Gardner-Baasch*



**Don't wait for your ship to come in. Row out to meet it.
Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat.**

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

Leviticus

On her radio show, Dr. Laura said that, as an observant Orthodox Jew, she believes homosexuality is an abomination according to Leviticus 18:22, and cannot be condoned under any circumstance. The following response is an open letter to Dr. Schlesinger:

Dear Dr. Laura,

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your show, and I try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination. End of debate. I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some other elements of God's Laws and how to follow them.

1. Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?
2. I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?
3. I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness (Lev. 15:19-24). The problem is, how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.
4. When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord (Lev. 1:9). The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?
5. I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should I ask the police to do it?
6. A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination (Lev. 11:10), it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this? Are there "degrees" of abomination?
7. Lev. 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle room here?
8. Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19:27. How should they die?
9. I know from Lev. 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?
10. My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev. 19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them (Lev. 24:10-16)? Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair, like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws (Lev. 20:14)?

I know you have studied these things extensively and thus enjoy considerable expertise in such matters, so I'm confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

Your adoring fan

connection

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Impressions from The Book and The Beach Weekend



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