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Connection

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

Together Again

Kinship reflects on the 2022
Kampmeeting

Come, Let Your Soul Breathe!

A Swiss church embraces the
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When It Feels Like Everyone's Talking About You

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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 LGBTQIA+ 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 a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. There are regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes more than 5,000 people in over 90 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 LGBTQIA+ is rooted in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

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Each Story Is Important

No matter whether they are LGBTQIA+, family members, or supportive allies, our members are the biggest asset to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship. In years past, it was my privilege to create chat rooms, discussion forums, and other channels for connecting members with each other online. These connections are still very important, both in knowing that we aren't alone as well as sharing our stories and finding commonalities with others.

SDA Kinship members don't neatly fit into one box or category. We are all genders, all orientations, all ages; maybe we were born into the Adventist faith, we converted, we are still active in our local Adventist church, we have left the Adventist Church, or we have left Christianity altogether; perhaps we still aren't sure where we fit in the LGBTQIA+ community, we always knew we were "gay," or we didn't realize our sexual orientation until we were much older; we are single and happy or looking, or we have been in a relationship for many decades; maybe we aren't sure if God accepts us as we are, or we know that God's love is unconditional—and the list goes on and on. Ultimately, we're each a valuable part of the beautiful SDA Kinship community!

This is the story of how the **Kinship Connects podcast** was created. For a long time now, I have thought it would be a good idea to interview people

and hear their stories. I heard about podcasts, but didn't know how to get started. I didn't have any experience interviewing people. Because I know so many Kinship members and am in touch with them, I realized that I was in a good position to do these types of interviews, or at least to take the lead.

I was inspired by the podcasts from Spectrum and Adventist Today. Jo and Daniel, Kinship members in Australia, had a regular podcast called Enough Room. Peter Dixon in Australia was doing SDAQ&A, a live event via social media. These are just a few of the ones I've subscribed to. I started listening to several to get a feel of what worked for me and what could be good for both our Kinship members as well as those outside of the organization who could benefit from hearing our stories and getting to know us better.

I didn't have a lot of broadcast equipment, but I did have a laptop with a built-in camera and access to Zoom. So I made a mental list of some interesting people to interview and hear their stories and went from there.

I want our stories to reflect the wonderful diversity of the SDA Kinship community. I want to give an opportunity to members who aren't always in the limelight to share their story. So I jumped in and



A purple banner featuring a central microphone icon and several smaller audio waveform and speaker icons arranged in rows above and below the main text.

Kinship Connects podcast

Listen in at sdakinship.org/en/kinship-connects

scheduled a Zoom meeting with Yolanda Elliott, the most recent president and a longtime active member. She was my "guinea pig" in this trial run. She did a great job and I got my feet wet. Thus, the **Kinship Connects podcast** was born.

For me, it's important to have a video recording along with the audio, so that you can watch the person being interviewed. With video, we can make closed captioning available and offer multiple languages too. The video podcasts are available on our Facebook page as well as on our YouTube channel. The audio podcasts are available on any of the platforms that host podcasts. The benefit of the podcast audio format is that you can listen on-the-go, whether you're working out, walking, or driving.

If you're interested in sharing your story, I would love to interview you. Please contact me and let me know so I can schedule you. **Each story is important.** It doesn't have to be a life-changing, dramatic story in your eyes. Join in and share with me.

If you haven't yet listened to Kinship Connects, I'd like to invite you to do so. The lengths of the podcasts vary. Also, if I can ask one more thing, please share the podcast with others so they too can benefit from and be blessed by our collective stories!

Watch and listen to the Kinship Connects podcast on YouTube at **bit.ly/KinshipConnectsYouTube**.

*Floyd Poenitz, president
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Together Again

Reflecting on Kinship Kampmeeting 2022

In July, we enjoyed being “Together Again” with many of our Kinship members, “rainbow” families, and leaders at the 2022 Kinship Kampmeeting in Orlando, Florida. Yes, it was warm—really muggy and daily rain with noisy lightning strikes. But inside a safe and comfortable hotel, we gave and received many hugs and high fives and heard warm welcomes and hellos. That’s what a meaningful, in-person Kampmeeting is!

Thursday evening started with an energetic opening presentation by Kumar Dixit, our Kinship chaplain. He movingly shared his family’s life journey—the challenges, decisions, and successes. After a few minutes to catch our breaths, an uplifting presentation by Rev. Dr. Raymond Anderson, a minister from Baltimore, Maryland, closed our opening night.

On Friday, Randi Robertson, Kinship’s transgender coordinator, led a valuable discussion about the transgender journey. She shared part of her story that evening as well.

Rev. Dr. Anderson talked more about his experience as a teacher, minister, author, performing artist, father, and grandfather. He also shared about his own intersectionality as a Black gay cisgender man—his traumatic past of abuse and his healing life journey. His life’s mission is right in step with Kinship’s goals and mission: to live, move, and be an A.C.T.I.V.E.* member of society who serves to educate, elucidate, and emancipate people and communities to awaken and empower themselves. (*Authentic, Compassionate, Transparent, Inspired, Vibrant, Empowered.) Friday





evening was enriched by a unique communion led by Stephen Chavez, director of church relations.

Sabbath morning was warmly energized with folks from the Orlando Adventist Whole Life Church. Associate pastor Jeff Cinquenmani offered the sermon. He is a licensed mental health counselor and has taken part in creating new visions for the community and worthwhile missions for the church for the past 30 years.

We enjoyed the best attendance—approaching 100 members, guests, and “rainbow” families. Lunch was delicious haystacks. Then, many of us gathered to share various parts of our personal lives in small groups. Carolyn and I facilitated a small gathering of local families, a counselor, and a pastor from another Adventist church.

It was our first in-person Kampmeeting after the beginning of the COVID pandemic, and Reggie Garcon, Brian Durham, and several other dedicated folks volunteered their creative talents in planning, organizing, and accomplishing this event.

Every presentation and every chat in person with our guests and in small groups with old and new friends was and is very worthwhile as we all learn more, understand more, and have our personal emotional batteries recharged.

*John and Carolyn Wilt, directors of Families & Friends
family-friends@sdakinship.org*



Come and Learn!

We need people to help us spread our message of acceptance, affirmation, and belonging for LGBTQIA+ people in Adventist spaces and beyond. Kinship is entirely volunteer-led and needs help from its members to successfully complete its mission.

Here are a few opportunities where you can invest your time and talent to support the mission.

Communications Team

Volunteer to support Kinship communications to our diverse membership around the world on any of the following teams:

- Social media
- Video production
- Writing articles for the *Connection* magazine and blog
- Translating content for our worldwide audience
- Web and app development
- Captioning videos to make them more accessible
- Organizing external content and resources to share with our members

Member Services Team

Volunteer to support specific member groups and communities within Kinship on any of the following teams:

- **Regional Coordination:** Host Zoom meetings to get to know other members in your area, demographic, or shared interest group.
- **Hospitality Team:** Send welcome emails to new members as they join Kinship.
- **Church Outreach:** Join an advocacy team to reach out to local Adventist churches and communities to encourage dialogue and create more inclusive spaces.
- **Community Outreach:** Connect with local organizations to find local volunteer opportunities.

For more information, visit sdakinship.org/volunteer.

Come, Let Your Soul Breathe!

European Kinship Meeting in Switzerland

The 2022 European Kinship Meeting was held in Spiez, Switzerland, with a record number of attendees. To the delight of European Kinship leaders, Adventists from a local church were instrumental in planning and facilitating this year's meetings. Vice president Catherine Taylor describes the experience.

I have never breathed in or been surrounded by such hospitable love from an entire Adventist congregation to a gathering of "Rainbow Alphabet" Adventists. They didn't just offer their church space; they hugged us as we gathered. They didn't preach a sermon at us; they shared with us their journey by wrapping their arms and their hearts around us. They didn't just join us for lunch; they prepared it and served all 100 of us at picnic tables in the barn on a rainy Swiss Sabbath.

They didn't discuss and finally allow one of us to be baptized; they invited the baptism. They installed a hot

tub on the farm to be used as a baptismal, and they acted as surrogate embracing family. They didn't just wish us well; they carved and engraved a cheese board for every single one of us and wrapped it with a Swiss chocolate and ribbon. They didn't wait for us to arrive in their space; they helped organize EKM (European Kinship Meeting), facilitated our translation devices, and listened to our journeys.

My eyes are dripping as I write this. What a gift!

Catherine Taylor, vice president





About five years ago, an Adventist church in Switzerland called Treff 21 began studying what the Bible says about sexual orientation. The results of their study led them to SDA Kinship.

In January 2021, the Adventist church, Treff 21, in Heimberg became a partner of the Christian LGBTQ organization, SDA Kinship. How does a small free-church congregation come out as queer-affirming? Our congregation chose to walk this path together. But we all have our individual learning stories behind us and remain learners.

About five years ago, the younger generation of our parish expressed their desire to reflect more closely about "Homosexuality and Christian Faith." As we studied more deeply, three central circles of questions opened up before me. I wanted to know:

1. How do people from the LGBT spectrum experience their lives?
2. What is known about homosexuality today?
3. What statements are there about it in the Bible?

I remember several open encounters with queer people that made me doubt my previous notions. The book *Nicht Mehr Schweigen* (in English: *No More Silence or Silent No More*) by Timo Platte became a landmark on my learning path. Queer Christians describe their inner and outer struggle on the way to an authentic life. That moved me deeply. Then I wanted to understand more fully what is known today about homosexuality, from the history of research and the long history of therapy.

The more I read, heard, and saw, the clearer the picture became. Homosexuality and same-sex love are a natural disposition and part of the colorful diversity of life. And, what can be found about this in the Bible, which I understand as God's word to all people? I began to read more closely all the passages that are repeatedly quoted in connection with homosexuality.

In doing so, it became clear how crucial it is to interpret these texts and read them against the background of their time.

And there I realized the entire Bible—completely in the sense of the ancient state of knowledge—does not say a word about the phenomenon of same-sex orientation and love, which has only been recognized in more recent times. I began to realize that these texts had long been forced to make statements of principle that they do not contain at all.

Today, I hope that in and through our Christian churches the light of a loving God who loves healthy life development and diversity can be passed on. God has shown us in Christ a quality of charity and social justice that continues to challenge us today. He charges us to pass the word that all people are invited to His grand wedding feast. This includes embodying and exemplifying with one another what we sang at the entrance: "He does not ask about race, origin, or gender. Every person may come; God pronounces him righteous."

"Come, let your soul breathe, you shall live!"

Christian Alt, EKM organizer





When It Feels Like Everyone's Talking About You

My father was the last person I came out to. At 17 years old, I had decided that the weight of my sexual orientation and its intersection with the faith tradition that I had been raised in was simply too much for me to carry. At 10 years old, I had realized I wasn't straight. I knew I had a crush on my best friend, but I didn't have the words to describe the feeling. I knew it wasn't "normal," so I pushed it to the side—something to be dealt with on a different day, at a different time, when the pressures of fourth grade weren't so overbearing. I found the words at 13.

By 14, I was sitting in my freshman religion class fighting off an anxiety attack as my teacher excitedly introduced the discussion of the day: homosexuality. You know what it feels like when you've walked into a room, and it feels like everyone was right in the middle of talking about you? That's what it feels like to be queer and closeted in a religious institution. It's the anxiety, the paranoia, the helplessness all compounded. It's the feeling of wanting to fight back—wanting to defend yourself—but not wanting to expose

yourself. I sat through the discussion in a paranoid silence, so as not to get caught.

In my sophomore religion class, someone voiced a prayer request for his friend who had "decided" to be gay. The prayer was long, the lecture afterwards longer. The teacher told us about his friend who had once had "homosexual inclinations" but prayed so much that God sent him a wife. I didn't have the heart to tell the teacher that his friend was either bisexual or in a marriage that could ultimately go up in flames—I didn't know which one was worse.

As occurrences like this became more and more frequent, I became less afraid and more angry. I arranged an observance of Day of Silence at my school, but I was told I couldn't pass out cards explaining what Day of Silence is—a day spent in silence to protest anti-LGBTQ bullying—because they didn't want us passing around LGBTQ-affirming literature. I sat through class discussion after class discussion in which my teachers and peers discussed the morality of my existence. But



even through the anger, I was silent. I didn't want to be found out. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was ashamed. I was the boogeyman sitting in broad daylight—wildly out of place and struggling to fit in.

But at 17, it all became too much. Our school chaplain took the stage and talked about how not long ago, homosexuality was considered a treatable mental illness. For one hour, I sat while a man pelted Bible verses at me and advocated for conversion therapy. The years of emotional callouses I had formed broke down as I was told that my queerness was comparable to being a rapist and a murderer.

The principal called me into her office following the sermon to ask me what happened. I couldn't get the words out as the anxiety attack that I had spent the better part of an hour fighting off came to a head. She called my dad. He picked me up and as I tried to describe just how *hurtful* it all was, the words "I'm queer" tumbled out of my mouth before I could stop them. The truth is, there was no way for me to accurately encapsulate just how scared and alone and hurt I was without acknowledging my queerness. They were all tied up together. I couldn't heal from the years of paranoia and anxiety and hurt and anger without acknowledging *why* I felt all of that.

A 2012 study by Nasrudin Subhi, Ph.D. and David Geelan, Ph.D., found that 11 out of 16 religious LGBT participants in their study had been diagnosed with depression and were experiencing depressive symptoms every day. Participants in the study all reported that they experienced immense distress about their relationship between Christianity and their sexual orientation (Subhi & Geelan, 2012). J. J. Gibbs and Jeremy Goldbach's 2015 study on suicidal behaviors amongst religious LGBT young adults found that 33 percent of religious LGBT young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 had experienced suicidal thoughts within the last month, with 3 percent

of those individuals having already made a suicide attempt (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2015). Exposure to homonegativity can result in maladaptive coping mechanisms such as self-harm, eating disorders, and substance abuse (Kubicek, 2009). Religious LGBT individuals who do not subscribe to or have not been exposed to queer-affirming theology are at a higher risk of suffering from mental health issues. Teaching non-affirming theology can affect the cognitive and emotional well-being of LGBT people and lead to distrust or resentment towards God, as well as feelings of doubt and anguish that they are not loved by God (Ream & Williams, 2005). Homophobia is harmful. Homophobia kills. Religiously endorsed homophobia is harmful. Religiously endorsed homophobia kills.

Teaching LGBTQ-affirming theology is a matter of public health and safety. It is a suicide-prevention tactic, it is a substance abuse deterrent, it fights against eating disorders and self-harm, and it is lifesaving. The simple act of teaching that God truly loves unconditionally saves lives.

Ora Battle, contributor

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The Bible & LGBTQ Adventists by Alicia Johnston

The Bible and LGBTQ Adventists is a conversation about same-sex marriage, gender, and identity. It challenges the prevailing Adventist beliefs.

Written specifically for Seventh-day Adventists, this book is a theological exploration. How does the denomination explain its theology? What are the reasons for questioning that theology from an affirming perspective?

Does the Bible have anything to say to us about all of this? As an Adventist community, we turn first to Scripture for wisdom and guidance. But maybe you've heard the standard answers and you still have questions. As was true of me for many years, maybe you are unsettled in the back of your mind, and you intend to get around to sorting it out, but years go by and you still haven't.

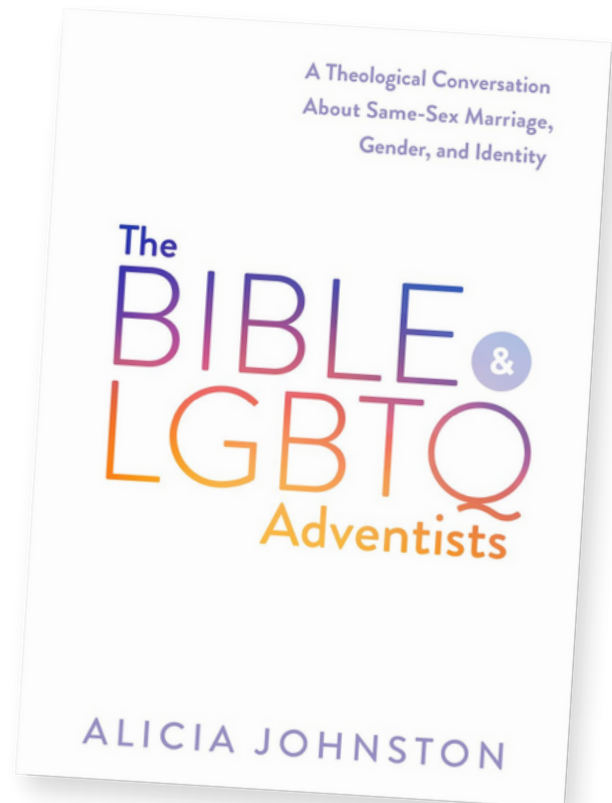
Maybe you, like me, are not satisfied with the institutional church's approach to this question. Maybe you, like me, long for a better conversation. We don't want to fall prey to the pressure to avoid the conversation, but we also don't want an all-out brawl. Many of us recognize that the institution of the church is struggling with this conversation.

The Bible and LGBTQ Adventists is now available for purchase. Go to aliciajohnston.com to learn more.

Example Topics:

Biblical Inclusion

It's often been said that LGBTQ people can be accepted even if their behavior is not. Is this true? Are there times when rejection of a behavior amounts to rejection of a person? This chapter explores a biblical example in which the answer was 'yes.'



God-Given Gender

Didn't God create gender "male and female"? Aren't we playing with fire when we seek to redefine ourselves according to our own impulses? This chapter looks at the meaning of gender in the Bible, especially in Genesis 1. It also helps us learn more about who intersex and transgender people are.

"Homosexuals" in the Bible

Twice Paul says explicitly that "homosexual practice" is a sin, so shouldn't Christians oppose it? The word "homosexual" didn't appear in any Bible until 1946. This chapter explores why that is. What are the translation issues behind these two texts?

Why I Joined Kinship and What Kinship Could Become



A few months ago, Kinship reached out to tell me about their organization. Before this, I had heard whispers about them from other queer Adventists but hadn't given them much thought because I already had a support system at my university. But after graduating and moving to New York from Washington State, I decided to seriously explore getting involved with them. Since I had previously worked for my university's student newspaper, the communications team seemed like a natural fit.

Moving to a new city where you don't know anyone can be really challenging, because making friends takes time. Kinship became a way for me to make friends without starting from ground zero. Since joining, Kinship has been nothing but loving and accepting, and I'm very excited to work with them.

A lot of Adventists have the idea that someone who is LGBTQ+ has rejected the tenants of Adventism and the Bible. This couldn't be further from the truth, and many queer Adventists are still tightly aligned with most of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's teachings.

I remember one of my professors talking about a counselor friend of his who regularly spoke with both

ex-Jews and ex-Adventists. The difference between the two groups, my professor said, was that ex-Adventists were much more resentful of their time in the Church, whereas ex-Jews still felt a bond of community. With Adventists, you are in or out—gay or straight.

As more Adventists come out as LGBTQ+, SDA Kinship will continue to be a safe space for people to explore their sexuality and spirituality while maintaining a connection with the Church. The Church has been remiss to not explore LGBTQ+ topics, and organizations like Kinship will be crucial partners in navigating these difficult conversations.

Even though the Church, in theory, rejects the fundamentalist view of inspiration and revelation, many Adventists still apply this mode of interpretation when it's expedient to support their viewpoint. While the Church is still recovering from its copulation with fundamentalism during the mid-1900s, Kinship could be the organization that guides the Church back on course to a consistent interpretation of the Bible and normalizing the idea that you can be gay and Seventh-day Adventist.

Joshua Beaudoin, contributor

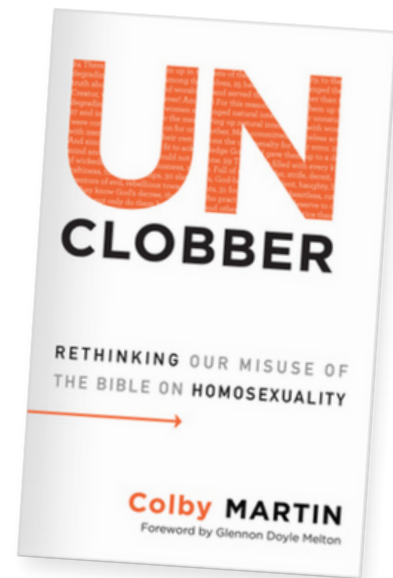
Thoughts on *UnClobber*

As an ally, having grown up in a small town and an even smaller church, I didn't get much exposure to the "clobber" verses. However, since then I've come to see them used very consistently in support of discrimination against my LGBTQIA+ siblings in Christ (siblings henceforth).

Prior to reading *UnClobber*, I had only picked up bits and pieces across various articles, cohesive and singular arguments against certain clobber texts. The first thing *UnClobber* does well is bring each of the primary clobber texts together in a cohesive discussion. The book flows naturally as Colby Martin intertwines his own journey to full affirming theology. Like Martin, the convictions of my heart were far ahead of the convictions of my mind, i.e., my theology. The moment I recognized this years ago was when I was confronted with the dissonance of our Adventist theology: that I was supposed to withhold love from some of my siblings.

With that in mind, I approached *UnClobber* with the hope that my theology could be expanded, deconstructed, corrected. To make my motives clearer, even if Martin had left me with more questions than when I started, or with less certainty in the theological grounding of a fully affirming position toward my siblings, nothing would have changed in my heart. I would have continued believing God places incomprehensible value on all my siblings, as they are. I was open-minded, and I wasn't let down.

I can easily say *UnClobber* is a great starting place for any individual, whether an ally, someone within the LGBTQIA+ community, or one unsure of whether they can be affirming according to the Bible. This is partly because the clobber texts have certainly earned their title for how LGBTQIA+ folx* have been beaten down



with them for centuries, and also because Martin uses language I believe is accessible for many Christians. I suspect most laypeople will not need a theology degree to understand the entirety of the book. In my experience, this kind of accessible writing is necessary for people to begin their journey toward affirmation. And weaving in Martin's personal story is a clever—while possibly unintentional—way to keep the reader's attention. After all, for Christians, this could be a reality-altering book, and starting out too dense is a sure way to lose the audience.

For those who are already well into their heart journey and theological exploration toward full affirmation, this book may be of less interest. The only exception I would say is Martin's discussion on the Romans clobber texts, as they seem to still have many different scholarly interpretations. I believe the more of these we can read, the more nuanced our understanding can become. However, as a caveat to my caveat, I suspect at least some of those in the LGBTQIA+ community will not want to read this book.

This book is written by a straight, cisgender, White man. I will give him credit for acknowledging his privilege and positionality in this, but it is absolutely valid for those with less privilege and less advantageous positionality to, frankly, be disinterested in reading through his lens. As a friend recently and emphatically said to me—and I'm paraphrasing here—"I'm sorry, I just don't want to listen to sermons from straight people right now." And that's fair, very fair.

In a way, I suppose that can be taken as a content warning for my siblings. If such a lens will not work for someone in their current place, this information can be gleaned other ways. Otherwise, I recommend this book to just about everyone.

Travis Sandidge, contributor

** Folx definition from Merriam-Webster: "Folks—used especially to explicitly signal the inclusion of groups commonly marginalized."*

We will provide the book *UnClobber* FREE of charge for current Kinship members, their families, local congregations, and others in the community. Our aim is to educate members and leaders in Adventist communities, promote dialogue within Adventist spaces about LGBTQIA+ issues, and hopefully change some hearts and minds within local churches. We also want members and families who have LGBTQIA+ loved ones to get this book, so that they can learn how to read and interpret the Bible in a more affirming and loving way.

How you can support the UnClobber Outreach project:

- Pray that people will allow the Holy Spirit to open their hearts and minds and that it will result in more loving actions, within the local churches, schools, and communities, toward the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Send a free book to people in your family or pastors and teachers in your community who you think would receive value from reading the book.
- Order a free book for yourself.
- Books can be ordered at **www.sdakinship.org/UnClobber**
- Connect to our online Facebook group to share your thoughts and ask questions (bit.ly/unclobberfacebook).

Learn more about the project at www.sdakinship.org/unclobber

Loving the Marginalized

Miguel attended an Adventist church in a large metropolitan area. A wide smile almost always decorated his face, advertising his outgoing, gregarious personality. The time was the early 1980s, and HIV/AIDS was just beginning to create panic among America's population in general, and among gay men in particular. Miguel was gay, and he kept his sexual orientation a secret for obvious reasons.

The pastor of that particular Adventist church had a midweek prayer meeting on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 for people who felt more comfortable attending services during the day rather than coming out after dark. Most of those who attended were older women—and Miguel.

After months of fellowshiping and studying the Bible together, Miguel made an announcement: he was gay, and he had AIDS. He made his announcement with trepidation. How would other members of the group react? He didn't have to wait long to find out.

Almost immediately one of the women stood, approached Miguel, and wrapped him in a hug. One by one the other women came forward to embrace him. Eventually word of his condition spread throughout the congregation. In the course of time, Miguel had to be hospitalized. He confided to the pastor, "So many of my friends have died alone."

"You will not die alone," promised the pastor. Throughout his hospital stay, Miguel was never alone. Members of the church took turns sitting with him, offering comfort and support during the final days of his life.

One day the unit nurse approached the pastor. "Who are you people?" she asked. She led him to a nearby room and said, "This patient has been here for nine days, and no one has been here to visit him." She indicated another room. "This patient has been here 19 days; no visitors."

The pastor replied, "We are Seventh-day Adventists. We believe in a God who loves us unconditionally." Not only did members of the church continue to visit Miguel, they also began a ministry to the other patients who were dying of AIDS. Their ministry to LGBTQIA+ individuals continues to this day.

The Church is most like Christ's body when it reflects His character of love, grace, mercy, and inclusion. The apostle John wrote: "Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

1 John 4:11-12, Berean Study Bible

While it's easy to love those who are like us, our challenge is to love those who are unlike us, those who are marginalized. Only the Spirit of Christ can help us do that.

Stephen Chavez, director of church relations
ChurchRelations@sdakinship.org



Enriching Family Connections

Families traveling the rainbow journey (one or more family members is LGBTQIA+) can encounter many new and impacting situations. The families we are sharing about include *all* members—parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts, and cousins. These impacts include:

- deep feelings and emotions
- conflicts with faith beliefs and ordinances
- illnesses both physiological and mental
- personal beliefs
- confusion with accurate information and understandings
- and many others.

It is a complex journey which can end well or painfully sadly.

Through our own 40-year journey with our family and many other families, we have gained valuable information and support through personal connections. In serious situations, professional counseling may be helpful, but personal connections

with other families stumbling, walking, or running along their rainbow family roadway can also be very beneficial and successful.

We know our Bible is a key source for living our lives, but it is not a textbook. We are unaware of any passages containing modern physical and mental health information, especially regarding sexual orientations and behaviors. Yes, there are some texts many faiths believe focus on that, but today they reflect the results of many translations. Several Bibles translated in the 400s in different languages do not state the same thing. Instead of the passage “Man shall not sleep with another man,” they state “**Man shall not sleep with child,**” which was a common situation in early Greek days.

Another factual discovery in our Bibles is the use of “homosexual” in various passages. That word didn’t even exist in Greek and Roman days. It was created by a German author in the mid-1800s and was first



published in German Bibles in 1946. It is a new word, not a translation of existing early transcripts.

If you and your family are traveling the rainbow road and would enjoy connecting with other families, you are invited and welcome to connect with SDA Kinship Families & Friends. Your entire family is welcome! We meet monthly at our Zoom Families & Friends Round Table (<https://bit.ly/KinshipFamilyMeeting>) where we share and connect with each other. We also will have occasional speakers who want to share valuable and accurate information for your consideration and use. That event happens every 3rd Sunday of each month.

You are also welcome to connect with the Families & Friends leaders—that's us, John and Carolyn Wilt. You can watch our short invitational clip on the SDA Kinship website plus read our many articles and recommended resources.

Rainbow families are more common than our faith tradition leaders care to believe. We feel comfortable saying that over half of our faith families have a rainbow member. It's unfortunate that our faith ignores their negative impact on those families—especially faith employees who have to hide their rainbow situation, which can cause physical and mental health issues.

Our motto is: **Jesus never looked the other way and neither should we!**

Please connect with Families & Friends—your rainbow journey can be enriched and enabled. We look forward to meeting and connecting with you.

*John and Carolyn Wilt, directors of Families & Friends
family-friends@sdakinship.org*

Journey by Jerry McKay

Kinship member Jerry McKay has been sharing pieces of his memoir with us for the past few years. If you're a new reader, you can catch up on past chapters at sdakinship.org/en/blog/authors/2081-jerry. Chapter 29 "Homosexuals Anonymous—the Toronto Chapter" is now online.

Most of what characterizes my life today—work, family, and faith—looks little like what I thought it would when I graduated from college in 1980.

Naturally, people want to know when and how I first became aware of my orientation. Others are interested in my spiritual experience and how my faith and my orientation intersect and perhaps collide. Many questions revolve around my reparative therapy journey and how that impacted my belief in God and my relationship to the church.

I am often asked about the pivotal moment I decided

to stop trying to change my orientation and the events that led up to that moment. Related to that decision is the question of short- and long-term consequences.

I've been asked about where I see God in the whole journey—before counseling, during counseling, and since accepting my orientation.

And, finally, others want to know about my relationship, how it has evolved over the years, and the impact it has had on my life.

This is my story.

Connect with Kinship

SDA Kinship continues to work to connect our members in communities where they feel most comfortable. In this time of quarantine and staying home, we continue to invest in various ways to stay connected. Here are a few options:

WhatsApp Groups

- Kinship Spiritual
- Kinship en Español
- Kinship Women
- Kinship Brasil
- Kinship France
- Kinship Russia
- & more!



Facebook Groups

- Kinship Main International Group
- Kinship Family and Friends
- Kinship Men
- Kinship Women
- Kinship Young Adults
- Kinship Seniors
- Local and Regional Groups
- & more!



Zoom Video Chats

Kinship asks members to use their knowledge and experience to engage, encourage, and enhance our community.

Email us to lead a webinar, discussion, or group chat for Kinship members. We can help you find a time and advertise it to our members.



If you would like sign up to lead a Zoom meeting or join our private Facebook or WhatsApp groups, please email info@sdakinship.org.

Find more information about the various Kinship groups and communities you can join at **sdakinship.org/community**.

Ellen's Bookshelf

Hi! I'm Ellen, a 30-something bisexual who loves to read. My favorite genre is queer YA (young adult fiction), but I dabble in other genres as well. I'm excited to keep sharing book recommendations with you. Even if reading isn't for you, tell your friends about these great books.

Have a comment about a book you read or want to suggest a book to review? I'd love to hear it!

Email connectioneditor@sdakinship.org.

Can that First Love Be Found Again?

Book Rec #5: *What If It's Us* and *Here's to Us* by Becky Albertalli and Adam Silvera

You may recognize these authors because of their previous novels, such as Albertalli's *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* and Silvera's *They Both Die at the End*. (Both of which may end up here on Ellen's Bookshelf in the future!) This collaboration is bound to make you smile, laugh, and cry. All the emotions of that first love and the what-ifs of the future.

When Arthur and Ben run into each other at a post office in New York City, Arthur is certain that the universe is behind it. Ben's not so sure, but he can't stop thinking about the cute boy in the hot-dog tie. *What If It's Us* follows these two as they stumble through a summer romance that they can't quite get right, but *what if* it's still meant to be?

Book 2, *Here's to Us*, finds Arthur and Ben two years later, in college and trying to find their way through life—still friends, but each moving on in his own way. Until Arthur lands an internship in New York City for the summer and maybe the universe is pulling them back together—but just as friends, right? Life goes on...but... *what if*?

The audiobooks are excellent, by the way!

Warnings: Sexual content. Mature language.





Just a Touch of Bisexual Drama

Book Rec #6: *Perfect on Paper* by Sophie Gonzales

Darcy is kind of a hot mess, but she hides it really well. No one knows she's in love with her best friend, Brooke—or that she's the anonymous person who answers her fellow students' questions about love and life. Her advice gets rave reviews and earns her a fair bit of spending money. But this doesn't make up for the fact that Brooke seems to be interested in the other queer girls at school but not Darcy.

When a hot but aloof jock finds out and blackmails her into writing letters to his ex-girlfriend for him, Darcy has her work cut out for her. She has to get his ex to take him back. That may be complicated, but not too hard, right?

I think *Perfect on Paper* does a great job weaving an interesting story about the importance of being truthful and the value of being comfortable with your sexuality. This book addresses internalized and social biphobia in a way that I found affirming as a bisexual myself and that I think will help others better understand the bi experience.

Warnings: Use of the word "queer" (not as a slur). Mature language.

A "Nontraditional" Romeo

Book Rec #7: *Between Perfect and Real* by Ray Stoeve

Between Perfect and Real follows Dean as he braves coming out for the second time in his life—first as a lesbian and now as a trans guy. What does this mean for his relationship with his girlfriend, his parents, or his other friends? What will people think when he plays Romeo in the school play?

This book offers an inside look at some of the struggles trans kids can have in high school. Dean faces his fears as he meets other trans people in real life and finds a new community, while trying to hold onto his existing relationships. And how can he handle the new bullying he experiences at school?

I really appreciated Dean's voice in this book. While the high school drama can be a bit tiresome, this novel is still valuable for those of us who don't understand all of what trans people, especially trans teens, deal with.

Warnings: Bullying, slurs. Mature language.



Volunteer with Kinship

We need people to help us spread our message of acceptance, affirmation, and belonging for LGBTQIA+ people in Adventist spaces and beyond. Kinship is entirely volunteer-led and needs help from its members to successfully complete its mission.

Here are a few opportunities where you can invest your time and talent to support the mission.

Communications Team

Volunteer to support Kinship communications to our diverse membership around the world on any of the following teams:

- Social media
- Video production
- Writing articles for the *Connection* magazine and blog
- Translating content for our worldwide audience
- Web and app development
- Captioning videos to make them more accessible
- Organizing external content and resources to share with our members

Member Services Team

Volunteer to support specific member groups and communities within Kinship on any of the following teams:

- **Regional Coordination:** Host Zoom meetings to get to know other members in your area, demographic, or shared interest group.
- **Hospitality Team:** Send welcome emails to new members as they join Kinship.
- **Church Outreach:** Join an advocacy team to reach out to local Adventist churches and communities to encourage dialogue and create more inclusive spaces.
- **Community Outreach:** Connect with local organizations to find local volunteer opportunities.

For more information, visit sdakinship.org/volunteer.



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