



European Kinship Meeting Ten Years of Kinship Europe



FIRST
SDA KINSHIP MEETING
IN AFRICA!

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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



As I write this to you, clouds are sailing in from the North Sea, darkening the Dutch football (soccer in the United States) field six stories below me. European Kinship Meeting (EKM) and attendant holiday just ended. *Book and the Beach* is next week. Six hours ago, Rena sent her report on the very first Kinship Kampmeeting in Kenya. I have been surrounded by the sounds of Dutch, German, Danish, Swedish, Swahili, Lua, French, Portuguese, Finnish, and, oh yes, thankfully for me, English. EKM Kinship members brought with them the roots, memories, and influence of five continents. When Kinship first had the vision or audacity to add "International" to our name, I thought it was the epitome of hubris. Now, the love and hope and energy and vision of many people, working together, sometimes thousands of miles apart, has made this name appropriate. The conversations I heard over the last two weeks were sometimes passionate and sometimes philosophical: ways to work with the church, plans to support those dealing with bullying, training for pastors, building new meetings, encouraging hope, and seeing a loving God. Sometimes our talks were ridiculous: should fresh whole grain bread be toasted? How long to the next coffee break in the middle of town? Sometimes we shared heart-wrenching national histories, the *stumble stones* in German towns, colonialism in Kenya, crossing the Iron Curtains and fences to see family, the role of the Dutch in Indonesia, treatment of Native Americans in the United States. Sometimes we talked about the meaning of locks on French bridges. Sometimes we kissed our newest Kinship baby, Matteo. We swam together. Went for hikes. Toured (yet more) castles. In Kenya, people heated bath water over an open fire. All of this is nothing but a description of the building of a community. You are also that community. When we read the *Connection* and hear our stories, our ideas, our hopes, and our plans, we expand our community and break down what I consider life-threatening isolation. I am grateful for each one of you that I meet: in person, on the phone, in computer e-mails, and/or on paper. We are going to send out electronic notes asking for your ideas and your stories. Think about sharing them. I am not sure you believe it yet, but hearing your story affects and helps people all over the world. Meanwhile, as you are considering this, take good care of yourself. I know you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine

First SDA Kinship Meeting in Africa!



Held in Migori, Kenya, September 7-9

We have finally had our first Kampmeeting Kenya! Twenty-five people from all over Kenya attended. Preparing was not easy because some people who promised to attend sent apologies at the last minute and some people just didn't show up. However, what God has planned must come to pass. He blessed us and made the weekend a success. We are hoping that next year we will have more women and men from Kenya, and that more Kinship members can come from other countries.

Our meeting began by the campfire on Friday evening. Homemade chapatis were delicious. Some members did not arrive until 11:30 pm and we stayed up late talking to each other. We are very glad everyone arrived safely.

The next day all participants attended the nearest Seventh-day Adventist church service. One observer told me later, "Thanks for bringing us guests. I was watching them from the pulpit and they all knew the songs." One of our members gave a special music at the end of service. When church was over people sang choruses as they greeted each other. Two of our members led in the singing.

This was the kind of Kampmeeting where our meals were cooked over the open fire and we also heated water for baths over a wood fire. Most of the participants do not have access to internet, but all the new members were encouraged to register with the Kinship International website and invited to join us again next year.

We want to thank all those who attended and our officials who helped organize everything: Rena Otieno, Kennedy Abbott, and Simon Otieno. (RO) ▽

By Hans Gerhardt, speaker at EKM

Most of the problems experienced by the people I have met as a pastor and as a counselor do not have theological bases, but social ones. What we love most is what we fear most. When we talk about religion, God, and eternal life, what we love most is what we fear most. This is quite the double bind. A newly baptized young man came into my office saying, "I think it was a mistake for me to join the Adventist Church. Nothing has changed. In Philippians it says if anyone is in Christ they are a new creature. This change lasted three weeks and now my old desires are back. Should I leave the church?" A fifty-year-old in our family committed suicide because she believed she had committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. She would say, "What has happened in my brain? I am an Adventist and a Christian." This cognitive distortion would not leave her. She thought her issue was as a spiritual issue, not a medical or psychological one. Finally she took her life because she could not live with her fear of God.

I want to take the good gospel of righteousness by faith out of the hands of pseudo-theologians who say, "You have to love more, work more, sacrifice more, and pray more." I want to take God's people out of pharisaical hands and look at the double bind from another perspective. I want to put this issue back into the hands of Jesus, and away from the hands of pastors. Only then will believers be able to think differently. We know our own anxieties and fears. We do not need any pastor to tell us about them. We need a clear look at ourselves without fear and a positive look towards others without judgment. We need to answer the question, "If I am honest with myself, do I have a real chance with God? Is there hope? Is there an accepting God?" If there is, then what do we really believe, our anxieties and our shortcomings or the message of God? Do we believe Him or ourselves?

So, I am back to what we love most is what we fear. We need to ponder this word *fear*. If we have never been afraid of God, we have never realized His holiness. But, if we are staying in fear of God, we have not realized His mercy. I believe it is important to end the games we play to please Him. They annoy God, because they show we do not trust Him.

The Lord desires to fulfill the desires of all who fear him. This is not about wishes. They are more superficial than the desires which are rooted deeply in us. Fear is the psychosomatic response to a feeling of threat. It is not the reality of threat. It can just be the feeling of being threatened: by mice, spiders, heights, depths, people, crowds, and loneliness. We know what it means to be afraid. There are responses of the mind and there are the responses of the body. They are often called panic reactions. Some threats are totally irrational. Some of them are real. Either way our body has somatic reactions—digestion is slowed down, adrenaline is released. Blood sugar is poured into our system so we can fight or flee. Our blood pressure goes up. After a threat goes away, we begin to relax.

If fear becomes constant anxiety, our blood pressure stays at a higher level. Digestive problems develop. Cardiac problems begin. If we constantly feel a threat before us, we will adapt—but it is not a good adaptation. Constant anxious stresses often lead to heart attacks, strokes, and even death. If we, as Christians,

think of God as a constant threat, if we live in fear of the end of the world, we will develop the psychosomatic symptoms listed above.

What are our desires? What are our fears? How do they interact with each other? A model I have found helpful is taken from the cosmology of our planet. Our earth is in equilibrium because of conflicting forces. Let's take this model and think about ourselves. Each individual is not always in balance but we have these forces that hold us together. One of the earth's forces is rotation; the planet turns around every twenty-four hours. There is revolution. The earth revolves around the sun every 365.25 days. The third is gravity. Everything falls down. The fourth is centrifugality. These are forces that expand out.

Let's say that desires and fears are in each of these forces.

Rotation is represented by the **I**, the desire to become one's own self. "Self realization" is my deep desire. This desire to be ourselves makes us independent. We can desire. We can choose. We can be responsible. We can be self-reliant. I stand out from the mass of all the others. I am somebody. I am an individual. I am unique. I do not want to be manipulated. I wonder if there might be a hidden fear in my desire to be an individual. Perhaps I am afraid to lose my identity. Am I afraid of losing myself to the church, to my marriage, to

Living Without Fear



a group of people? Sometimes I am surprised by my feelings and my instant reaction. I think sometimes I am overprotecting myself. I can be seen as aloof. Can I still like the people whose taste is different than mine? It is good to be self-dependent and self-reliant. I believe in unity but not uniformity. But at the same time there is a fear. I have to think and learn to give more of my feelings to my wife, to my children, and to be more genuine. To not be so aloof. I need to realize my anxiety and fear and deal with it.

Revolving involves the **we**, the desire to revolve around a greater center. Some parents have their center as their family and children. Some church leaders revolve around the spiritual work. Some people revolve around their secular work. The desire for service, the desire to give oneself to a great cause creates an atmosphere of acceptance. These people make us feel at ease. These people often have difficulty saying "no." They desire the **we**, the togetherness. They do everything for the **we**. Could there be a hidden fear behind this nice, loving, sacrificing attitude? Is it a fear of not being loved anymore? A fear that if I say no, they will turn away from me? *If you criticize me I may have the feeling I will not be liked anymore and I will be alone. It*

becomes difficult to make individual decisions. The job here is to take up responsibility for ourselves. We do everything to avoid taking responsibility for ourselves. We are afraid to stand alone. We hide behind the family, the church, the rules. Then we sacrifice ourselves to the point where we get sick, burned-out, and depressed. No one can blame us when we get sick. We are not guilty. We have no responsibility to say "no."

Gravity represents the desire for **security**, insurance. Security lies in the past. We have survived. We are still here. We are safe. Looking back to the past is a way to fulfill the deep desire to be secure. What is in the past? Traditions are in the past. If people want to be safe, and the desire is very, very deep, traditions give us a deep security. But traditions become forms we do even if we don't know why we do them. To be relevant, traditions and rituals have to be examined. Their meaning needs to be clear again. Another way we try to become secure is to be the master of planning ahead. I have a friend who plans ahead when we travel. He tries to safeguard himself against all eventualities. Behind this desire to be secure there is a fear of being out-of-control, of not being the master of the situation. That is why some people always want the same songs and the same worship service. They stick to the rules. They have books and manuals. We sacrifice people and situations and opportunities for the sake of safety. You are totally safe when you lie in the graveyard. It is very peaceful there. When we tell people they are fighting for the old Adventist way because they are afraid, they say, "No! We are fighting to protect the church from the youth." At the end of Ted Wilson's sermon at the General Conference session, I heard people say, "He put us right *back* on the track." Behind the desire to be secure, if it is too strong, there is the fear of chaos.



Centrifugal force represents **driving out**, the desire for freedom, curiosity, leaping the fence. Where would we be today without inventors, researchers, curious people who trod in places where they had never been before? Where would we be today without curiosity, the desire for freedom? What do the Arabic countries risk in the name of freedom? Martin Luther King was shot in the name of freedom. There is a desire to know more, to want more than we have, to be discontented with the *status quo*. It is great to have new thinking; but in this deep desire for freedom, there might be a deep fear of the routine. "Routine is death." If we take

up responsibility for one thing, we lose the other options. The caution is to be always on-our-way and never reaching anything. This curiosity to pass all the obstacles, could it be motivated by a fear of taking up responsibility? Responsibility is one facet of God. God made us free and responsible. I think the spirit of the antichrist is the one that takes away people's opportunity and choice.



We have fear *and* desire. We cannot have just one. We are two sides of the coin. We need to hear people's stories to understand where each quality comes from. It is not a question of what is right or wrong, but it is a biographical story that we need to understand. We need to come close to those with whom we disagree before we start fighting. If we fight, we are lost.



Now, I want to come closer to God and to religion. How do we deal with God's omnipotence? I would fear omnipotent people. They could do what they want with no restraint. They would be an all-powerful version of the Roman emperor, thumbs up, thumbs down. We believe in a God that is omnipresent. But I need my privacy. I want a room into which You cannot enter. But this God is always at my side. I cannot get rid of Him. That is not always a nice thought. God is omniscient. He knows everything: the miracles and mysteries of the cosmos and everything about me, my past, and my future. He knows more about me than my therapist: my hidden motives, why I go to church, and where I give my money. I tend to hide things from others but I cannot hide anything from this God who knows everything about me.

God is also the Judge. There is no excuse. This God remembers everything: every word, every missed opportunity. In history, whenever this God appeared, people trembled. "There is this terrible God, Moses. Speak

to Him for us." Even in the fields when the angels came and there was this marvelous singing, the shepherds were afraid. The result is sometimes shame. Isaiah said, "Woe unto me. I am a person of unclean lips." What can we do when we are afraid?

When we look at the archetypal stories, we find the origins of fear: Adam and Eve *feeling* naked. This is not the physical nakedness but spiritual and psychological. But then there is God, looking for us. *Wherever I go, there You are* (Psalm 138). What do we hear? Adam showed one of the original defenses: projection. "Well, this wife *You* gave me, she made me do it." God is declared guilty by the mortals He created.

Denial is another defense mechanism. *I was not there. It could not be me.* We also try to appease God by sacrifice: money, time, gifts, talents, the family, ourselves—all to appease God. Sometimes I ask a person, "Why are you doing what you do?"

We play games to get along with fear and guilt and shame. We sometimes try to bring God down to our level: beard, smile, cane; we diminish and belittle Him. We make Him small in order not to fear Him. Sometimes we "grow up" to Him. We are perfect, sinless. Once we are "sinless" there is no need to be afraid of a sinless God. There is no need to be afraid. We deny ourselves to be more perfect, more holy. In the Bible we are not holy because we are a saint or sinless, but because we live in the presence of a holy God. The members of the church in Corinth— what a bunch of people, but they were called saints. When we try to work around God we all are playing games. These are games of utter despair. They are silly games we play before God. He is omniscient, omnipresent. So what do we do?

As with David when confronted with Nathan about his assault of Bathseba and his murder of her husband Uriah, the final game is to throw ourselves onto God for His mercy and for his judgment. I believe this is why David was a man after God's own heart. It was not all the victories but the moment when he threw himself upon God. *This is me.* Game over. There was no Edenic row of accusations. This was one who did not want to be out of the presence of his God.



In Luke 5, I find the radical answer to this question of our response to God's character and qualities, to God's omniscience, omnipresence, and benevolence.

When Simon Peter saw the miracle of benevolence and goodness of Jesus, he fell down at Jesus knees and said, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man. I am different from you. I see the difference. I see the lacking. Depart from me. I cannot stand in your presence. Your presence will always remind me of my shortcomings." Jesus did not say, "Well, it's a pity; just work on yourself. Pull yourself up." He did not say, "Well, have you ever killed anyone? You are not so bad." He did not say "Well, come back in a year." In this translation there are four words that change the life of Peter completely. "Do not be afraid."

Therapists, psychologists, and counselors know about the power of this phrase, "Fear not." These words tell a completely different story. They tell a story of total acceptance. From childhood we have the story of conditional acceptance: if... then... "If you are smart, pretty, well-behaved. If you give me what I want. If... then..." We live with our hurts, anger, and fears. We live a split life with this conditional life. We bring it even to God: If I pay my tithe... If I do not smoke... If I go to church... If I... then maybe God will not punish me. Maybe I will make it to the New Earth. Look at how our people strive and strive and strive to be good, because of this lack of total acceptance. Then Jesus said, "From now on I will make you fishers of mortals." Was Peter completely different? No he was still arrogant, self-sufficient. The difference was, he had met the unconditional acceptance of God. This is the radical answer to the final question. Either there is a great and Holy God who accepts me without any condition, or I am lost forever in these silly games. I live in despair. Nothing can help.

On the Titanic, nothing mattered: not wealth, not power, not strength. The only thing that mattered was the lifeboat. I have to trust the lifeboat. Paul, in Romans 6, gives us more assurance. "What shall we say then? Shall I continue in sin? Certainly not. We have died to sin; how can we go on living in it? Surely you know that when we were baptized *into* Christ, we were buried with him into death. *If* we have been united with him into death we shall be raised to live with him. So you also *must* consider yourself dead to sin and alive to Christ."

For Paul baptism is a tie with Christ that bridges the gap of time and existence. Has Christ died? Yes! Do I have to feel it? No! Has He been resurrected? Yes! Do I have to feel it? Yes! Have I died? Yes. Do I have to feel

it? No! Sometimes I feel bad, distressed, and guilty because I did something again, like Peter. So whom do I believe? My feelings? No. Baptism is a signal much greater than me and my feelings. Baptism is this union between Christ and me. Nothing can separate me! God has reconciled the world to Himself. The sign of reconciliation is not Sinai. It is Golgotha with its cross. This is peace with God, unconditionally.

In Romans 8:31, Paul writes, "What then shall we say? If God is for us, who can be against us?" *God is for us!* Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? The church board? The church president? Some people against us? It is God who justifies. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? My deeds, my shortcomings, my future, tribulations, distress, persecution, famine, sword? No! In all these things we are more than conquerors. I am sure that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor powers, neither the present, nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God." Listen to what He says. This is the radical answer of the gospel. We can give up these silly games we play. We have this great God. We have this abundant mercy. We fall seven times in our lives, even more. We take from the grace of God, every day. We will never say, "I have made it. The final question and the ultimate answer. We can always trust God. We can never overcome all our shortcomings. We will not get rid of anxieties and fears, even before God. It is important to trust God's Word more than our feelings. God is greater than our heart. If our heart condemns us, He is greater. Thanks to God. The ultimate question, the final answer, the gracious God. Amen. ▽



Talking to EKM attendees...

Elodie (with Nathalie)



Life is changing in a very gentle way. I think the pregnancy made me less nervous and more relaxed. Since Matteo's birth I get more nervous, but I still feel much better. I wanted a child for a long time; making the decision to actually have one was difficult. However, once we made the decision, going through the rest of the work has been easy. Before the baby we thought our life was so busy we had no extra time. But now, with Matteo, we realize we really did have that extra time. Nathalie says our weekends are exhausting but it is beautiful to see him grow.

Our priorities have changed. It is very good to have a family. I had a family with my parents and my sisters. Nathalie was another family, but our relationship was only the beginning of a complete family. Now we are that complete family, and I think it is really great. Things have changed for our parents also. They had known that Nat and I were happy together. But now the four grandparents want to see him always, and they say to us, "When will you come by and see us?"

A child is my life. A child brings out the best in us. Some things that used to make me angry are easier for me to let go. It is easier to sort out what is important and needs to be addressed, and what is not. I have let things go in my relationship with my mother. I am less angry with her. I just want to spend good time with her so she can enjoy her time with our son. With my dad it has always been easy. He doesn't talk a lot. My dad just wants his children to feel well. That is enough

for him.

At work no one had known about my homosexuality. I thought it was not necessary to talk about it. Then I became pregnant. I didn't consciously make the decision to come out. But, when I told everyone one at work that Nathalie and I were having a baby, I changed the word *partner* to use the feminine form of the word. I asked myself, "Why did you do this?" Then when Matteo arrived I became able to tell who I am with no problem. If I have a problem with my orientation and Matteo now, what will happen when he goes to school? My priority is my family. I have to simply say how things are. We have not yet had difficult reactions to him having two mothers. The only person we have met outside of our family and friends has been our nanny. We didn't really explain to her, but she saw the three of us. We said to her, "I am the mom and Nathalie is ma'i." I am in the process of asking our legal system to make us legal partners in parenting Matteo. There is only one legal precedent in France but we are relying on it.



We share parenting in a practical way. Nathalie drops Matteo off at daycare. I pick him up. When he arrives home he beams at the sight of her. We alternate who is the one to wake up at night with him. Who takes primary care of him in the evenings depends on who is most tired and likely to get upset the easiest. This is a good system. We do not want both parents tired and exhausted. We find energy. I don't know where. We didn't know we had this energy but we find it. We

can spend the day up and it is okay. It is not easy, but it is doable.

Kinship is an important part of my life. I am glad that you can meet Matteo. I am a proud mama. I think this is the main reason. I wanted him to meet this community. I am whole and complete with Nathalie and Matteo. I am strong with them. I am so glad my entire family (Nathalie and Matteo) was able to be at EKM this year.



Nathalie was not sure she wanted a child. She was not sure she would be able to care for him correctly. When I see her with our son, she is so wonderful that I am filled with happiness. When Nathalie had to be in the hospital because she was sick, he got so he only wanted me to put him to bed. When she came home we decided we would go back to each of us putting him to bed. It took five days for Matteo to adjust; then he was fine with her again.

Because of our legal system, Nathalie could not even get his birth certificate. In the legal eyes of France, she does not exist as a member of his family. We could pick it up off the internet but she could not pick it up in person, even with a note from me. If anything happens to me at this point in time, my parents could go to court to get custody and win. This is why we want the legal decision to give Nathalie parental authority. Perhaps in a few years, if it becomes legal for us to marry, we will also do so for Matteo. It is part of strengthening our family.

Ita, European coordinator Younger Adults

I am from São Paulo, Brazil. I have a degree in marketing from a university in São Paulo and a master's degree in business innovation from The Netherlands. Right now I have my own company. I work as a marketing consultant with a Brazilian restaurant and a language institute that teaches Brazilian Portuguese in Holland and also helps people who want to immigrate to Brazil.

My family is Seventh-day Adventist because I brought Adventism to them. About twelve years ago, I introduced the church to my younger sister and to my parents. I had found the church through a friend of mine who brought me to church one Sabbath. I liked it very much. It was the first time I had really felt at home. I was so excited



that I wanted to share it with my family. Their journey went really, really fast. I took Bible studies and within six months I was baptized. Within a year my parents and my sister were also baptized. The church has meant God's love to me. It has given me guidance. I was looking for the meaning of life. I was looking for a place where I could feel safe, where I could share this faith with other people. The kindness of the people in the church when I first met

them was wonderful for me. People opened their arms and made me feel part of their community. I liked the lifestyle of the Adventist church: eating healthy food and not smoking or using drugs or other things that would hurt their bodies. I loved the music in the church. In Brazil, the music is very rich. There are lots of singing groups and bands and singers. Sometimes I would go to church services just for the mu-

sic. After I took the Biblical studies I felt that God was talking to me and telling me that this was the right choice and that I was in the right place.

The years went on and I became more mature. As I went to university and traveled abroad I became more open-minded and more of a critical thinker. I have always been curious. I do not take everything in the church for granted anymore, either what people say to me or what the pastor preaches. I want to draw my own conclusions based on my own Biblical knowledge or research, not on what people are saying. This became especially true when I came out to myself.



Ingrid & Frieder, coordinators EKM2012

Ingrid

Every so many years something new comes up in my life: pastor's wife, children's Sabbath school, signing for the deaf. Now it is time for a new opportunity with a new group of people. This is how my life goes. First we have an interest and then that interest fills our life and we stop the other activities. Since Frieder's retirement, we have somewhat lost the church family and we have won the Kinship family. Church is no longer important to us, but Kinship and the people in this community are.

Our relations with Kinship slowly started with HAD (the first German group for LGBTI Adventists) in 1994. A Kinship member who was

deaf asked me to sign for him. This was the bridge for me. We met more and more gay and lesbian people in Germany. Then we heard about Kinship. Our margin went wider and wider. Then it was not just Germany or Europe; it was the United States and beyond. Getting to know the people made us more aware of the needs of the group.

Slowly, I am beginning to comprehend the stressors you, as LGBTI people, have experienced in your lives: struggling with yourselves, your families, your church, God, and your sense of self. It took me a while to understand what a burden is on each one of you until you find peace with yourself, peace with your family, peace with your God, and maybe, peace with the church. While I am beginning to understand this, I am feeling the urge to tell others about you. I want to kind of like shake them so they will wake

up and realize there are brothers and sisters who have a sincere spiritual life and who want to be in the church and who ask for nothing but acceptance. I have the strong conviction that we, as the church, have to stop hurting people. We have to stop discriminating against our people. We have to show love and acceptance. We need to tear down borders. The church has been putting lesbian and gay people into one pot with pedophiles, thieves, and murderers. This prejudice has to stop. This has become a matter of heart. So, beside my family and my job, this is where I want to put my

Frieder

Kinship has made me happier. You have also made me more aware of the deficiencies in my church. Both are true. Friendships are making me happier. The awareness of the deficiencies is also awareness of a mission of the church. The church has not yet realized this mission. It does not do anything constructive (or not much) about ministering to LGBTI people. It does do a few things. It does disinvite people with whom it disagrees. It does hurt people. It is destructive. I would like the mission to be on the constructive side, of course.

I told Mike the other day that Kinship meetings to me are kind of spiritual gas stations where I can re-fuel my spiritual gas tank. They keep me going spiritually for a

energies.

The thought of having EKM in Germany was pleasant for us. When we agreed to plan it, I already knew where we were going to have it. I had already worked with the Seminar Hotel. I was sure everyone would be pleased. I am so glad I did not have to look for everything from scratch. Then I thought I wanted to make these days as pleasant for you as possible and I wanted to share part of our culture. I was not sure you would enjoy this. But I thought, we will take the risk. We had a plan A, and a Plan B in case Plan A didn't work. When I plan for

while. The spirituality at those meetings, the content, the faith of people who, if I were them, wouldn't be as spiritually minded as they are. I would not be as faithful as you are in terms of your membership and your holding on to the organization of the church. I would not defend it, as you do all the time. I am realizing there are always opportunities in defeat—like Carrol being disinvited at the Nashville conference. Another thing I am learning from you is to not take too seriously every word of our church president and everything our church decides or doesn't decide. The lens through which you look is much more personal than all the administrative functions I had before. You are down-to-earth.

a group, it does not pay to be too spontaneous. Plan well and then the spontaneity will come. You have to plan well. When the organizer is lost, then that is bad. We greatly enjoyed it. For me it was something like being pregnant with EKM for at least three-quarters of the year. I had even more ideas but Frieder stopped me and said, "That is enough. We have enough." It helps to know the group. I think the next meeting will be easier to organize, because now we know the group better. It was very nice to plan EKM and to see everyone smile.

Organizing EKM was easy. I enjoyed it. I hoped it would be worth it and it was. The only problem was that my operation and recuperation interrupted our plans and made things a bit more stressful. Your reactions make it worthwhile. What you tell us make it worthwhile. My observations tell me that you all enjoy it. Hans, Reinder, Luca, and Mike are all spiritual highlights in my walk as a Christian. The devotionals by Catherine, by Mike, by so many of you are food for thought and part of my spiritual journey. I cherish all of them. I don't see a façade in the speakers I mentioned, and I don't see a façade in any of you.

Absolom

Kinship has changed my life and my perspective. I have had engagement with fellow Christians. I have had a diverse view on Christianity and as a human being. Because we are spiritual beings, knowing Kinship has been of great importance in my spiritual journey. I have been able to look at both sides of the argument about my sexuality. I have been able to learn, through reading lots of books about the origin of Christianity, that human beings are spiritual beings with whom we need to share the world, this same space. Kinship has led me into deep searching about who I am and why

I am living as a social being. Kinship has led me to take time to get to know people and to understand them and not to judge anyone at any time. I have learned to take everyone as an individual being. It has led me to deep searching about what it means to give each and every individual a fair chance in life, regardless of who the person is. I think before Kinship my spirituality was very narrow. I am grateful for encountering Kinship because this made me search for why are we



here on this earth. This has led me to purpose in life. ▽



God and the Eschaton

By Hans Gerhardt, speaker at EKM

Adventists specialize in eschatology. Sometimes it seems like we know more about the end time than we know about God and Jesus. Despite being an Adventist teacher, I don't think Daniel 2 is a class in history. I think it is all about God. Daniel revealed, by the grace of God, all that would happen. In Daniel 2:44 we read, "In the time of those rulers, the God of Heaven will establish a kingdom that will never end." In Genesis, God is at the beginning of time. In Daniel, God is at the end. We are not ending up in chaos. God is at the climax of history. When we turn to the last book of the Bible, we turn to John and to the apocalypse. He is filled with emotion. "I saw a new Heaven and a new earth." God brings a city. (I would have thought He would have brought a new garden. But God consented to bring Jerusalem.) John says, "He will

wipe every tear from our eyes." No more death and grief. He will wipe off our tears. Daniel sets the frame. John fills the picture with emotion, so we will feel at home.

When does the *time of the end* begin? 1844? The Bible makes it clear that the *time of the end* began with ascension of Jesus to Heaven because from that time people have been waiting for him to come back. It is now 2,000 years, the eschaton. That is a very long time. Some important stories of people in the Bible show us ways we can learn to live with comfort and safety in this "meantime."

Matthew writes, "Immediately after the tribulation the sun will grow dark, the moon will not give her light, the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of space

will be driven from their course.... The great trumpet will sound and He will send His angels to the four corners of the earth to gather His chosen ones" (Matthew 24:30). The powers of the cosmos are loosed and creation is going backward to chaos. He also says, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or 'There He is!' *do not* be afraid." All the problems of this world are not the signs of the end. They are signs of *the not end*. Jesus himself says, "They are not signs of the end." They can just make you afraid.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour no one knows.... As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day Noah entered the ark. They knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and carried them away." This is not a story of chaos. It is a totally different picture: ordinary life going on. Dear people, life will not always be easy. In some places and times it will be awful. But please, please stay cool. Don't get agitated. *I am with you, every single day until the end of time. You never walk alone. Do not be afraid.*

On the other hand, Jesus says, "When you say He is tarrying and you beat your neighbor and your slave, be warned, I am coming. Keep your hope, keep your trust. Don't lose faith; do not act as if I will not respond to evil." It is difficult to hold this tension.

In Matthew's story of the ten virgins, God praises these five skeptical young ladies. They are not skeptical about the bridegroom or about the feast; they are skeptical about *their own* timetable. They take some extra oil just to be prepared. I think Jesus is telling us, "Don't make your own timetable." Don't say, "I will make my own plan about the timetable. Wait for the bridegroom's timetable."



In the story of the talents (or bags of gold) Jesus says, "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the

one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.

"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

"Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 'So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has, will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matthew 25:14-30).

Here it is again, the story of being accountable and of the people who are afraid of making mistakes. Jesus says to us, "You can be courageous. You must be courageous. Don't be afraid of making mistakes. Trust the God who gave you the mission. It is better to stand before Christ with dirty hands than with empty hands."

In the last picture we will talk about from Matthew, Jesus says, "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'" This part of Matthew's description of the eschaton is about an everyday life that does not count the good deeds. It is a description of living a personal life in the presence of God.

Paul also has some things to say about living on earth while waiting for Jesus. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new child with Christ..." (2 Corinthians

5:16). This is our calling to a ministry of reconciliation. We are to be building bridges, not bunkers. If the enemy is behind us we build bunkers not bridges. Bridges take courage. The ministry of reconciliation. What does our world need? More courage, more bridges, more reconciliations.

In his letter to the Colossians Paul said, "Abound in thanksgiving. Let no one pass judgment on you in question of food or drink." These are only a shadow. The substance belongs to Christ. Don't let anyone disqualify you. If you have died with Christ, why do you live as if you still belong to the world?" What a word from Paul about how to live our lives. We are freed from the elements so that we can live in trust. This issue was already a problem in first-century Colossae. It is still a problem for us.

When he wrote to the Philippians, Paul reminded them to rejoice *in* the Lord, not *about* the Lord. When we think about God, our deficiencies come up. In the face of this, Paul says, "I command you to rejoice!" Joy is inner serenity, relaxation, security. Have joy *in* the Lord. Paul is telling us that whatever happens, you belong to God and to His family. Don't forget that truth, even in the tribulations of your life. Do not forget that you belong to God. Be happy and rejoice. He goes on to say, "Let all know your benevolence and your goodness. God calls us to exuberant benevolence. The Lord is at hand. Represent God to all people." We tend to think selfishly, but Paul says the Lord is at hand; be nice and be good to all people. Why? Because people are only converted when they discover the goodness of God. And they are most likely to see the goodness of God most clearly in the life you live in front of them. This is the last message. This is the final message we are to discover and to share with others. God loves you infinitely. That is the most important message. It was the first message. It is the last.

Because of this truth, Paul tells us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6). Don't worry. There is Someone with whom you can talk. Don't worry; Someone will listen. This is how we are to live in this waiting-for-Jesus time of the world: fearlessly, with thanksgiving and with prayer. God is offering us peace. It is not what we



would define as peace; it is His definition, His gift, His peace. God is peace.

We like to experience peace in our hearts. However, sometimes when we wake up we are troubled. We can easily act to defend ourselves but we cannot make peace with weapons. The most we can hope for is to prevent war. The peace of God passes all understanding: despite the world, despite the problems, despite my fears, despite all things. It is suprarational. This peace will keep our hearts and our minds in Jesus Christ. How do you live in the eschaton? Listen to Daniel, John, Jesus. They do not promise an easy life but Jesus promises the fulfillment of life. *I come that you may have life in abundance*; not easy, but in abundance. Live life responsibly and without fear. Be good to people. This is the last message. You have a ministry and it is about reconciliation. This world needs exactly this. Stay cool. Don't be agitated. Don't give up. Take a deep breath. Have endurance. ▽

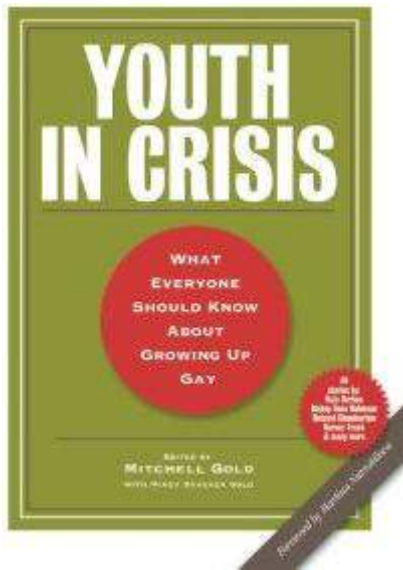


The Official Hans Gerhardt

Johann Gerhardt obtained his Doctor of Ministry degree from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A., in 1986; his doctoral thesis was on church leadership and supervision. After heading the Theological Seminary in Darmstadt, Germany, he has been teaching practical theology at the Friedensau Adventist University since 1992. In 2004, he was appointed Professor of Pastoral Theology. He is also currently the Dean of the University Theology Department. His field of research mainly focuses on the "drop-out" syndrome as relating to pastors who suddenly withdraw from the religious office as well as the causes and forms of religious anxiety.

How Hans Describes himself

I am always concerned about the aspect where theology meets real people. I deal with young people and bereaved people and I try to discover the gospel for them. I believe that the true gospel is a changing power. I enjoy thinking, reading, music, mountain biking, being with my friends and my family, and sometimes being alone.



Youth in Crisis: What Everyone Should Know About Growing Up Gay

edited by Mitchell Gold with Mindy Drucker Gold. New York, Magnus Books, paperback edition, 2008. 369 pages.
Reviewed by Dave Ferguson.

Learning the background stories of well-known personalities, acquaintances, strangers, and friends was fascinating for me. It was impossible to find one story to highlight for this review; each was unique and powerful. Because I know the strength of stories to change lives and situations, I was not surprised to find myself moved to laughter and to tears. I am grateful to each of the forty individuals who were willing to share the struggles they encountered due to their sexual orientation.

The time Mitchell Gold spent with each author and his personal introductions to each chapter show the depth of his involvement with the book project and his concern for those growing up gay and lesbian in our society. Despite the stubborn persistence many religious people show, as they cling to the belief that that lesbian and gay people choose their orientation, I find it difficult to imagine anyone reading all these stories could still insist sane humans choose to experience the pain I read in these pages.

I believe *Youth in Crisis: What Everyone Should Know about Growing up Gay* is a must-read for every teenager in America, whether they are coming to terms with their own sexual orientation or that of a family member, friend, classmate, or fellow congregant. I encourage those in gay-straight alliances to include it in discussions.

This book could be used as a tool for parents to understand the struggle of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex teens. It could also be helpful for parents to find they are not alone in learning how to best love their LGBTI child. I think it could be helpful for teens to share the book with their parents, after they have read it themselves.

The book's sections can be read sequentially or in any order that meets a teen's current circumstances. The various sections reflect the areas of greatest challenge: Religious Discrimination; Family and Community Rejection; School and Social Discrimination; In the

Workplace; What I Know Now: On Losing a Child; The Sin Question; and an Exposé on the Silent Epidemic of Depression, Isolation, and Fear.

The book is a gold mine of resources: explanations of biblical texts, sources for school statistics, supportive organizations, research on the myth of reparative therapy, and organizations to avoid. The Exposé provides rich resources and ideas for teachers, principals, school administrators, parents, politicians, the media, pastors, rabbis, priests, and imams.

Because *Youth in Crisis* provides stories about and suggestions of how to move from crisis to a life filled with joy and fulfillment, this book makes a wonderful gift to youth going through difficult times. I hope that books like this and organizations of support will help make constitutional guarantees of equality for all a reality for these teens who are currently bullied in school and denied housing, workplace security, and a partner because of their orientation. ▼

California State Assembly Passes Landmark Bill to Protect Youth From Dangerous Psychological Abuse

SACRAMENTO (August 28, 2012)—The California Assembly today voted 52-21 in favor of a bill that will protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth from dangerous and abusive treatments by mental health practitioners who falsely claim to be able to change their sexual orientation or gender expression. Authored by Senator Ted Lieu, Senate Bill 1172 is co-sponsored by Equality California, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Gaylesta, Mental Health America of Northern

California, Lambda Legal, and the Courage Campaign. The bill will return to the Senate for a vote to concur in amendments made in the Assembly before proceeding to Governor Jerry Brown's desk.

This bill prohibits state-licensed mental health practitioners from engaging in abusive treatments that fraudulently claim to stop a young person from being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Sometimes referred to misleadingly as "reparative therapy" or "conversion therapy," some of the techniques used by these practitioners include the use of shame, verbal abuse, pornography, and even aversion training. These practices are not only ineffective but extremely dangerous, and can lead to anxiety, depression, feelings of worthlessness, and even suicide. They have no scientific basis and have been rejected as ineffective and potentially harmful by medical, mental health, and child welfare organizations. ▼

<http://www.eqca.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=kuLRJ9MRKrH&b=4990109&ct=12152351>

Ten Years of Kinship Europe

This year we celebrate Kinship Europe's 10th anniversary. In 2002 the first European Kinship Meeting was held at the home of Reino Korhonen and Ingemar Fägerlind in Östra-Tunhem near Falköping, in the countryside of Västgötaland in central-south Sweden. Eight people attended, including Bob Bouchard, who was Kinship International's president at the time. Over the years, attendance at EKM has increased. This year we had our highest numbers with 33 people attending from a number of European countries as well as the United States, Costa Rica, and Brazil. I am appreciative of our hosts, Ingrid and Frieder Schmid, who gave much of their time and energy to make this an unforgettable meeting for all attendees and who scheduled a special meeting on Sabbath afternoon for those who are German-speaking. The Seminar Hotel in Hassentrotz-in-Odenwald was a great place to gather, with a very friendly staff and an excellent cook (which, of course, is the most important condition when looking for a meeting place. ☺ The environment was great for long walks in the woods and in the lovely green and hilly countryside.

I enjoyed seeing old friends again and meeting new members. There is always a lot to tell to each other and the schedule allowed us to take time for that. One of the goals we have in Europe is to reconnect with each other and to share our views, experiences, and faith. We had an excellent speaker in Hans Gerhardt, retired minister and former president of Friedensau Adventist University. His presentation on "Living Without Fear" is excerpted in this issue. It was a blessing to learn from his experience and his journey in his spiritual life.

Everybody was thrilled to see the film *Seventh-Gay Adventists* on Saturday night. It was the European premier of the documentary! It was followed by an hour-long discussion.

EKM is traditionally followed by a Kinship holiday. This year we chose the Waldhubenhof, an animal-friendly farm near Erbach, also in the Odenwald area. The ten of us who were able to come and set up "home" in three adjoining bungalows have shopped and dined, visited several little picturesque towns, wandered a neighborhood, visited a castle, swam in the nearby lake, walked through cow fields and woodlands, and bought our cow's and goat's milk, yogurt, cheese, and quark from an organic dairy on the premises. We toured the dairy and got an explanation of how their products are produced—from the cow to the table. At least that is what I think we learned. Though I speak and understand German well, the guide talked rapidly in a German dialect that was even difficult for native German speakers to follow. He was handsome though, so I am not really complaining.

In August/September of 2013 we are planning to have our next EKM in or near Prague. At the moment, we are looking for a good location. For future meetings, we are discussing venues such as Great Britain, the west coast of Portugal, France, The Netherlands, and Germany again. We look forward to having more of you join us as we experience the fun, laughter, messages of great guest speakers, and blessings of being together that are the European Kinship Meeting. (RK) ▼

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Impressions from EKM and Kinship Europe Holiday 2012

