

connection

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Bearing Gifts

Kenneth D. James - Maryland, USA

"... bearing gifts, we traverse afar..."

I imagine that many members of the Kinship Community experience some mix of memories or feelings at the sound of these words.

I remember running through the snow from house to house. I remember being afraid that the little blue can with the funny Aladdin-looking-lamp symbol on the side would slip out of my thick mitten. I remember seeing the sheaf of gospel-to-the-world papers, getting crushed by the other mitten. I can feel the frozen cheeks, the immovable jaw, the numb lips. I tried to blurt out to some astonished, balding, beer-belly, peeking out of a cracked-open door, the reasons why we were collecting money, "ingathering," "carolling," for the "poor and needy" of the world. I can still hear, in my background, the never-ending loop of Voice of Prophecy quartet voices with "We Three Kings, from Orient are, bearing gifts, we traverse afar . . ." I still wonder how the precariously balanced speakers didn't fall off the roof of the car.

I was the peri-pubescent 13 year old standing in a bathrobe; head draped in a towel. A stringy piece of rope attempted to hold the entire costume together. The horizontal side of a refrigerator carton transformed a box into the silhouette of a camel. Christmas Concert parents crammed into the darkened church-school basement hall, gawking with admiration at their precious little performing royalties. My one-third of the travelling kings was over-whelmed with panic; my throat had a spasm heading for paralysis. My solo of the king was so low it didn't even exist. I was incapable of bearing a gift. Be it gold. Be it frankincense. Be it myrrh. Or be it an emerging mystery deep within my very being.

I hold the memories of "... over the river and through the woods, to Grandmother's house we go ..." I can sense the near insanity of bearing the gifts of commerce; big toys, puppy dog tails. There were gifts to warm the body. Sometimes there were gifts to warm the soul. Almost always there were

gifts to tickle the sweet tooth and weigh on the hips. Gifts were gaily wrapped with impeccable precision by the Marthas of the world. Gifts were haphazardly encased with the bulging paper and sticky tape of the gift-wrapping-challenged yet spiritually astute Mary's of the world. I hold the memory of a gift that was slowly becoming unwrapped.

I bear the memories of a massive sanctuary, combined choirs, stressed soloists and the brilliance of the Casavant pipe organ. I can still hear the thunderous dynamics of "Wonderful." "Counsellor," "Prince of Peace," "Hallelujah," "Like Sheep," "Gone Astray," "Trumpets raging," and an antiphonal chorus of "Hallelujah Amen." My synapses can still feel the vibrations of the sounds of the gifts, the glory, the inspiration, the orgasmic power of the gift of "The Messiah". The memories bear through my ears a gift to humanity. They bear though my soul the gift to a college student that was terrible to hold.

Like the little child, angry with Santa Clause, because the expected gift did not make it down the chimney, we recipients of another special gift can be angry, frustrated, hurt, exasperated, bitter. We can deny our gift, stomp on it, bury it, hide it, curse it, shame it, damn it, jam it into the family closet like some crazy aunt. Our gift can become brilliantly invisible. It can become impossible to bear.

For me, with time, the brilliantly invisible became brilliant. My spiritual journey moved on. My gift became bearable. I can see the value now. Not gold. Not frankincense. Not myrrh. I can acknowledge that I was chosen by the Soul-Maker to be the fiduciary of a rare and special gift indeed. Now I can pray the words – "Thank You, for selecting me as a custodian of this precious gift."

And I can hark with the angels and herald to the world. "I am gay."

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Room At the Inn

November 3-5, Vermont Mini Kampmeeting

Catherine Taylor – Vermont, USA

I really do think Yolanda asked me. But she says that Eric thought it would be a good idea. I didn't think I wanted to do it. But then, I don't like to refuse Yolanda...even if ...nah...

However the idea to have a Region 1 Mini Kampmeeting arrived, I thought I could hand my criteria about my participation in the process to the Heavenly Ones. Silly me. I have read about Gideon and Jonah. Even so, when I prayed about this adventure I told God I would like a location within twenty minutes drive from my house. I wanted a place that would cushion and nourish anyone from our Kinship community who could make the journey. I wanted this place to be open to and willing to enjoy a spiritual Christian group that was also a mix of GLBTI folk and our allies. They had to be able to negotiate our usual mix of quirky diets. And and and...the price had to be in a range that our budget and our treasurer would approve. I had



no worries. I know my area. This was a mix of requests impossible to honour. Silly me.

During a conversation with one of my staff people, she suggested I check out the Juniper Hill Inn on top of a hill in Windsor. "Why?" "I don't know. I just thought you might like to have dinner there or something". I researched them and decided to at least give them a call.

I said I was looking for a retreat centre with the above criteria. Robert laughed softly and said that he and his partner Ari had a dream to focus on both GLBTI groups and those who were involved in education or spirituality. Diet? Well, they're part of the Mrs Smith's Pie Company but they like to focus on local foods, whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables. (Mrs. Smith had a life long female companion by the way).

Robert is a gay interior decorator turned loose in a Georgian Revival house listed in the US National Registry. We could do worse; we have done worse. I met with them to talk about the weekend and the cost. I took the numbers back to Karen. She said "Cut the price in half". I thought I wasn't going to have to have this weekend. Robert cut the price in half.

The miracles never really ceased. At the January workshop I felt impressed to ask Sherri Babcock if she would speak. Sure. Free that weekend? Yes. I asked Ted if he would be willing to do a flier in exchange for chocolates. Yes. Bless you. I knew we had to fill this place and had no idea how we would do it. But, as Reino has said about something completely different, "If God has made this happen, it's up to Him to take care of things." We handed out our first fliers in April at the





Rehoboth Beach Mini Kampmeeting. We began to get reservations. No Seventh Day Adventist Gay group gets reservations that far in advance. Every time someone cancelled, someone else would call up and say "Is there room for me?". We could always say "yes". Amazing.

We thought we had our schedule full. It changed in a major way, three weeks before the event. I was learning to just wait to see what surprises God had in store. That's how we got our wonderful full moon magical mystery tour and wagon ride. One speaker cancelled ten days before the weekend. That's how we made room to have a leisurely Thanksgiving banquet, two workshops, and still time to change clothes to go outside. We just could not, could not, could not find a sign language interpreter for Denise. Karen was doing some very interesting negotiating. Five days before the event we found one. The difficulty was, she was travelling and needed a place to spend the night. Someone cancelled. There was room at the Inn. Because of this, Denise got an unusual amount of time to converse with Lesley. Turns out (by now we should have known

not to be surprised) that she used to be an Adventist but had left the church because there wasn't room "for people like me". As she saw who we were, she began to say "Maybe there is room for me." We gave her the contact information for sanctuary churches. One of our beloved members from another part of the country began to talk about hope and worship in the same voice. As Sherri was walking toward her sermon, she said, maybe we should have a discussion about it afterwards. After her sermon the whole group talked for thirty minutes, full of heart and tears and ...Three straight members of my local congregation joined us. The Juniper Hill staff said they have never had a group that was so easy to work with and so noticeably able to fill a room with joy and power. I don't have room to tell you everything that happened. This truly was a time and a place where you had to be there. I can say, that as we were leaving, people began to ask if they could reserve their rooms for next year. So here we are; a community often known for



reserving at the last minute, with ten of the sixteen rooms already chosen with deposits. Go figure. A year in advance.

I am floored by the miracles that led into, filled up, and led out of this weekend. I never considered the possibility that we could be filled to overflowing. Even so, after this year, I can tell you with certainty; if the Spirit moves you to make the journey to join us next year; God will make sure there is room for you at the Inn.



Claiming Christ's Body

Sabbath Sermon at the Vermont Mini Kampmeeting, November 6, 2006

Sherri Babcock – Ohio, USA

According to Webster, “queer” primarily means “deviating from the expected or normal.” Although many of the young people in our community have embraced this adjective to describe themselves, it is one I resisted for several years. However, while I was trying to write this sermon, I discovered that the adjective “queer” actually is more inclusive and a whole lot easier to say than GLBTI plus whatever other initials we decide we need to append as we come to a deeper understanding of our diversity. So, if you, like me are uncomfortable with the term, let's try to get over it! It only means we're different than the normal, which, we are!

Jesus had been dead only a few hours before Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin and secret disciple of Jesus, prevailed against the religious vindictive hatred of his colleagues and obtained Roman permission to remove and inter the body of Jesus in a prestigious burial location. This was a highly unusual exception to normal practices surrounding crucifixion. Throughout the Roman Empire, crucified men were usually left to hang and to be torn apart by vultures. This was the ultimate warning to any who would dare to defy Caesar's authority. However, in Jewish provinces, where people considered dead bodies to be ritually unclean and went to great lengths to protect the Sabbath from contamination by the things of daily life, the Romans agreed to remove the crucified before Sabbath began and dispose of the bodies, or the maimed who were not quite dead, in a mass grave designated for the purpose. No self-respecting Jew would ritually contaminate themselves or risk public association with someone who had been sentenced to death in this manner. The personal risk of receiving the same label as the condemned was far too high.

We don't know exactly how Joseph obtained this unusual burial dispensation. Perhaps, Pilot, overcome with guilt for the role he played in acquiescing to the Jewish leaders, saw this as a way of assuaging his conscience. We also don't know what the future implications of Joseph's action were. Was he shunned by his colleagues? Did he lose his seat on the council? Did he lose a significant amount of business and have a reversal of fortunes as a result? Nothing is conveyed to us about the outcome of these personal risks, and the boldness of his action is downplayed against his overwhelming

desire to claim and care for the broken body of the Jesus he knew and loved.

What about us? Are we some of the “secret disciples” of Jesus? How far are we willing to go out on a limb to claim and care for the body that Jesus has left to us? Paul called it the “Body of Christ”. Some call it the “Fellowship of Believers”. In his typical fashion, Jesus stretched beyond believers, and called it “The Least of These.” To be blunt, how much are we willing to risk for a broken church body that is often attempting to amputate us?

To help us ponder that question, let's turn to 1 Corinthians 12. While it is obvious that this chapter was originally penned by Paul in an attempt to answer specific questions regarding the hierarchy and importance of various spiritual gifts, it also gives us a broader insight into Paul's vision for how the body of Christ, the followers of Jesus, should function in the world. Paul's vision of a highly diverse and fully functional body of believers performing the work of Christ and modelling the principle of unconditional love in the world is so pervasive that parallel passages to 1 Corinthians 12 appear in almost all of Paul's letters.

Let's start with how we become a part of the body. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “for we were all baptized with one Spirit into one body.” In Galatians 3:26 Paul says “You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.” In the Great Commission, Jesus said, “Go and make disciples, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” So, if you have felt the conviction of the Spirit and accepted the salvation which God provided in Jesus (faith), you have been baptized, and you are learning to obey the teachings of Jesus, you ARE part of the body of Christ.

This level of belonging is so basic that there are no other propositions to which credence must be given. To paraphrase Romans 8:39, “Neither the 27 Fundamental Beliefs nor the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So, belonging is a reality, and it lives at an incredibly deep spiritual level. As C.S. Lewis says in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, “It is the deep magic.”

So now, let's come up to the community level, the world in which we live our daily lives. In 1 Corinthians 12:12, Paul talks about how the body has many parts with completely different functions.

These functions are so radically different that it is sometimes easy to forget how tightly the parts of the body are bound together. He acknowledges that sometimes individual parts get so wrapped up in their own roles or perceived level of importance that they lose sight of the whole body. Then, he specifically addresses two types of conflict within the body of Christ. As queer Christians, we have intimate experience with both conflict types.

The first type of conflict is initiated by a part of the body claiming not to belong to the body. In verse 15, the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body." Do you get angry with God for making you the way you are? Do you ask God why he made you a queer person instead of a straight person? Do you wonder if only straight people, or celibate people, belong in the body of Christ? Have you decided that the community of believers is not a good fit for you and left, only to find a different kind of discomfort apart from the body? Have you ever felt like the Holy Spirit is a pit bull that just won't let you go? ...Can you tell these questions reflect my own experience?

I imagine many of you can totally relate to these questions. It is only natural. They are the questions that many of us process as we deal with our internalised fears of being different; our own feelings of inadequacy, of not being enough, of not being "normal" as the world around us defines it. Paul's raw response to us is, "Trust God, and stop trying to amputate yourself!" Saying "I don't belong" does not cause you to cease being a part of the body. "In fact God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." (v.18)

The second type of conflict is initiated by one part of the body declaring another part of the body to be unnecessary. Verse 21 counsels, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you'". Have you sat through self-righteous public condemnations of your personhood? Have you been forced out of a congregation? Have you had to leave a job or your entire profession? Has your family turned their backs on you? This is how many of us have experienced our deepest pain. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the modern Christian community in general, often make it difficult for us to have a sense of belonging. Many people, calling themselves Christians, spend large amounts of energy trying to emphasize our differences and choose to distance themselves from us. All the while, they ignore the huge base that we hold in common and the ways in which they directly benefit from our talents, time and energy. It's often enough to make us feel like going back to the first type of conflict, separating ourselves. But this time we're talking about leaving out of

righteous anger instead of self-condemnation!

Paul's summary response to this behaviour reads, in verse 25, "There should be no division in the body, but...its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." In other words, "Stop trying to amputate others. You are hurting yourself!"

Now let's move to the level of how this gets applied at the individual level. How can we as queer Christians make a meaningful contribution to the well-being of this body? I believe that we have a special role to play in two areas. Dr. H. Darrell Lance, Professor Emeritus of Colgate Rochester Divinity School, has written "Potentially the most profound gift from gay theology to the church as a whole will be nothing less than the recovery of the gospel itself, the good news." He goes on to talk about how queer Christians are proclaiming their trust in that Good News, thereby becoming living examples of justification by faith. Those of us who were blessed enough to be at the January Workshop felt the moving of the Spirit and the power of grace that weekend. Many attendees were basking in the honest dialog and talking about how this Spirit of being One in Christ could be spread through the Adventist church at large. It is clear that queer Christians have a special role to play in refocusing the church on the good news of the gospel. Dr. Lance discusses how the church has often twisted the concept of sanctification from "How can I become a loving disciple of Jesus Christ" to "What is the correct behaviour or ritual that will make me morally superior to my neighbour?" This theological twist results in separation between members of the body, a false sense of self-righteousness, and ultimately to a denial of our salvation through Christ. I believe queer Christians have a role to play in demonstrating how the unconditional love of Jesus Christ can have a healing effect in our own lives and through us, to the lives of those around us.

In moving these two roles forward in the church, it will be helpful for us to keep a few things in mind. First, we need to remember that it's not all about us. In fact, most of what we experience during our interactions with others has far more to do with what is going on in their own lives and than it has to do with us. My pastor, Loren Seibold, once went back to visit his alma mater, the San Francisco School of Divinity, which is renown for the high percentage of queer graduates. While making small talk with a former professor, he asked, "Are you having good success at getting your seminarians placed into congregations?" The professor responded, "You know, Loren, we really

are doing pretty well. Our only struggle is that I have never had a pastoral search committee contact me and say, "Could you please send us an angry lesbian minister?" Are we surprised or insulted because congregations are looking for a minister that is more interested in the lives of their parishioners than they are in a minister that is still operating from a base of anger over past injustice? Not that the anger isn't fully justified. But unless that anger is focused to constructively build up the body of Christ, we are not ready for ministry to others. Keeping this concept in mind is not easy to do. Most of us have a history of past abuse, theological struggle, and epiphany breakthroughs. We are angry about injustice, and we are excited about insights we have been given about what the world could be like. But the humbling fact is that our personal experience cannot be transferred to another person. It is only the ideas that resonate with the existing experience of others that can be effectively shared. Even then, the fruit that those ideas produce in the life of the listener may look nothing like the results that those same ideas produced in our own life. So we need to focus on being with people where they are at far more than we try to relate our life lessons to their lives. Dale Carnegie gives us the following advice, "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."

We need to remember how we are perceived by others. Regardless of what role we are really suited to play in the body of Christ, society generally sees queer folk as a symbol of the sexual parts of the body. Since sexuality is not openly discussed in polite company, they often consciously or unconsciously try to cover us up in an attempt at modesty. Paul talks specifically about this in verse 22. And, while he acknowledges that some parts of the body do need special treatment, he emphatically affirms that all the parts are indispensable. What I am trying to say, is that we need to be sensitive to the discomfort of others. It may take them time to get used to us and to become comfortable discussing topics that are not normally discussed. If that means that we play a backseat role within the church, then that is what we need to do until they are more comfortable. I am not saying that we should try to remove the discomfort of others by being invisible. Discomfort is an essential motivator for change. What I am saying is that we need to be sensitive. Sensitive to those who may have qualms about us leading out in children's programs. Sensitive to those who need time to get to know us before they feel comfortable with us taking a leadership role that showcases our individual gifts and abilities.

This sensitivity should never be a barrier to serving the body of Christ. There are always plenty of tasks to be accomplished within the church that no one wants to do. For the first several years at the Worthington church, I simply attended church and Sabbath school with my family and served as a junior member of a hospitality team where I brought food, washed dishes and vacuumed the floor. No one ever said, "You are a lesbian, you can't wash the dishes!" Once they got to know me and my abilities, I was asked to chair the facilities committee. True, it's still a behind-the-stage leadership role, but it definitely uses some of the abilities I've developed throughout the years. Now a few people are cautiously asking if I might be interested in playing rhythm guitar for the praise team on a fill-in basis. We'll see if that leads anywhere. Frankly, for the present, I am quite content at not playing the role of a lightning rod. The higher in leadership and the more visible our roles become in the church, the more we need to be prepared for some sparks to fly. I believe that we SHOULD move into those positions as the Spirit leads others to ask us, but to take the lightning rod analogy further, before stepping into those positions, we need to be well grounded in our relationship with Jesus. Then, when the sparks fly, we can let all that negative energy flow directly through us and dissipate in the ground of our being.

If we can avoid storing up that negative energy, it will allow us to be sensitive about when it is time to weather the storm and when it is time to withdraw from a particular congregation. That decision depends on whether the pain is creating a constructive force for growth in the church or whether it is simply causing general destruction to the church or to your own relationship with Jesus. If you find yourself in the position of having to separate from a church, it is helpful to remember that while we may grieve losing that relationship, Christ's body is bigger than a single church family or even a single denomination. Jesus reminded his disciples of this in John 10:16 when he said, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen."

We need to remember that if we desire to be honored parts of the body, like Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:26, we need to behave honorably. Behaving honorably can mean many things on many different levels. As queer people, we usually do not have a lot of healthy dating and relationship role models to follow and we often find ourselves coming out later in life and the process of terminating unhealthy relationships and finding the right soul mate can be a messy one. What we need to encourage in one another is to act with the most honesty and integrity available in our individual situations.

I want you to remember:

1. If you believe in Jesus, are baptized and are learning to follow the teachings of Jesus, you are part of the body of Christ. In John 6:35-40 –Jesus declared, ‘whoever comes to me I will never drive away... For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life.
2. Once you are joined to the body of Christ, you have not been given permission to separate yourself from the body, and no one else has been authorized to separate you from the body.
3. As queer Christians, we have two distinct roles to play within the body of Christ. Helping the church recover the Good News of justification through Christ, and reclaiming the true meaning of sanctification, “becoming a loving disciple of Christ.”
4. Three tips for us to remember while playing these two roles, include:
It’s not about us
Be sensitive to the needs of others
Behave honorably

I pray that as we claim our place in the body of Christ, rejoice in the fact that we have been reconciled to God through Jesus, and learn to become spiritual disciples of Jesus that we will be able to say with Paul, in 1 Cor 15:10, “By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect.” May it be so.



21st century? Here We Come!!

Scott Tetley – London, England

As an organization, we are about to ‘change’ our face and the way we operate. No, I’m not talking about plastic surgery. The Internet has dramatically changed the landscape in which we live and operate. It defies national borders, time zones and languages – connecting the world together at a fraction of a second. While the internet, as we know it, only began gaining popularity in the early 90’s, its current use and penetration is over 70% in many of the industrialised countries. For those without access, libraries and internet cafes have sprung up to meet the need in even the more remote spots of the world.

Traditionally the use of the Internet was limited to viewing static web pages and emailing. However now many of us book holidays, undertake research, listen to music/ radio stations, watch TV and movies, shop for gifts and groceries, complete our banking, pay bills and chat to family or friends, etc.

We want SDA Kinship International to utilize this resource to its fullest. In the last 3 years, our community has experienced dramatic growth as a result of our current website. However Internet technology has grown past what we currently use. Because we are a volunteer organization, as we have reached people locally, regionally and internationally, our resources have become stretched. All the current technology uses have a purpose but we are using outdated, cumbersome systems that are not user-friendly. This has led to a reduction in usage. Because we use different systems with different login details, Kinship needs to manually move information around the different systems. This takes time that then can’t be spent effectively connecting with you, our members. We want to make sure that member needs will be filled.

Here is a breakdown of a shift we are making.

Kinship Technology use:

Current Technology Use	New Technology Direction
www.sdakinship.org	
Kinnet	One combined site,
KOL	www.sdakinship.org
Yahoo groups for IMRU and Board	
Email	

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21st Century...

The new direction is about bringing all the technology onto one website, utilizing one login/password with a more user-friendly interface. Here's a break down.

1. The public site (any area of the website that non members can view) redesigned and updated to reflect our mission, regions, activities etc.
2. The member site – Login and password system which includes regional specific pages, calendar and resources, chat room and message board facilities.
3. The admin site – Regional coordinators, group leaders, board member will be able to change specific pages, update calendars and communicate with their group with ease.

I estimate that the new system will cut down our administrative time by about 80%. It will give members more control over what information they get from Kinship, what information they allow to be shown to other members etc. Members will also be able to search, post messages and chat to members more easily without going to different sites.

The implementation program approved by the October Board meeting will see our new Public website going live in March and our new member site in July. With the one "address" different sections will be password protected. Members will only have to remember one login and password. Our mission is about maintaining a safe community. Your personal details are very important. Confidentiality and security of the new website will remain our number one priority.

More specific details will follow.

For those without access to the Internet, you will still get The Connection and be able to call or write to us to update your membership details using traditional methods of communication such as mail or telephone. I want to make sure that our web strategy meets the majority of our member's needs. If you have any suggestions or comments please email me at pr@sdakinship.org before January 15th 2007.

Kinship News

Board Meeting

The SDA Kinship International board met over the weekend of October 30th to finish up their strategic planning project (which will be covered in more detail next month), plan for next year's Kampmeeting in San Francisco, develop ways to advertise and market the book *Homosexuality and Christianity: Seventh Day Adventist Perspectives*, plan ways to support regional coordinators in the US and internationally, develop ways to strengthen our financial base, and consider ways to support other projects such as the Pastoral Retraining Initiative.

Vision Building – Karen Wetherell

As you consider your donations for tax exempt purposes at the end of this year, here are some of the projects Kinship is working to support:

1. Each month the Connection goes to more than 1,200 homes, Adventist school libraries, and other GLBTI organizations around the world.

2. Kinship would like to mail a copy of the book mentioned above to Seventh Day Adventist thought leaders all over the world.
3. We would like to continue to build our Kampmeeting scholarship fund so that everyone who wishes can attend our annual gathering each year.
4. We would also like to build the scholarship funds for international Kinship meetings so that members in individual areas can get the support and nurturing found in those gatherings.
5. As you read in Scott's article, we are working to make our internet capacities more user friendly and accessible.
6. We are working to support our volunteer office coordinator so that membership services can be even more efficient and accessible.

All donations postmarked by December 31, 2006 will be included in year end donations. If you would like to make a donation for this year by credit card, please feel free to call me by December 26th at 802 885-6050 so I can have it processed by December 31. You can mail your donations to Kinship -90 Putnam Road, Springfield, Vermont 05156.

Kinship as a Resource

Kinship has been added to the list of organizations on the home page of Straight Into Gay America.
www.straightintogayamerica.com

Research

Recent studies reported by the American Academy of Pediatrics showed that children raised by same-sex parents are just as happy, well-adjusted socially, developmentally, and

psychologically as children raised by heterosexual parents. (Pediatrics, 2002;109:341-344). Both groups however, fared better than children raised by a single parent.

IMRU? – Suzy Wise

The weekend of November 3-5 was spent fellowshipping at the Juniper Hill Inn in Windsor, Vermont for the Region 1 Mini-Kampmeeting. Unlike most Mini-KM gatherings I've attended, this group was represented by 5 regions, including 6 IM RU? members and many str8 allies! Few can resist autumn in New England and we even had a little snow! We were royally pampered by the owners and staff. We were treated to wonderful historical tales of the inn, scrumptious food and fun activities like Catherine's magical mystery tour. I enjoyed seeing old friends, meeting new ones, seeing new places and being spiritually renewed. I can't wait to go back next year!

For more information about the IMRU? young adult forum, please contact us at IMRUGroup@gmail.com.

Vice President Jeremy Brown

I am working on giving Kinship greater visibility within the Adventist church. I will be contacting our international regional coordinators to talk about ways I can give them more support.

Australia – Noel Thorpe

September 29-October 1: SDA Kinship Australia's first Kampmeeting Entitled "Health and Well Being," was held. It started with a getting to know you on the Friday evening at the Metropolitan Community Church in Petersham. A number of Adventist Pastors and counsellors came to listen to the meeting, provide information to

the attendees, and to learn from us. Not everyone had such negative experiences to share, but the few who did found support from the Kampmeeting attendees. The Saturday sessions, were held at a Golf Course Conference Centre at West Ryde. In Sydney it is a privilege to be able to get such nice bushland type surroundings. One of our Pastoral guests spoke on "Living Waters: Good News for Thirsty Souls." This was on the woman at the well. We showed the Open Heart, Open Hand DVD. Dr Wendell Rosevear talked about Acceptance and Self Esteem. There was also a day-trip to Canberra to see the Annual Floriade display and the New Parliament House.

November 27: Adelaide's Feast GLBTI picnic in the park on Sunday was a success for Kinship. We had a very good response to the display marquee. The day was hot and most people were able to get into the shade or by the pond that is in Rymill Park.

Brazil – Marcos Apolonio

Kinship members are going to begin having meetings each Sabbath at 9AM in the Metropolitan Community Church of downtown Sao Paulo. The Kinship website has being translated to Portuguese. Our goal is to have it completely in Portuguese soon.



Europe – Ruud Kieboom

We have picked our conference centre for EMK6 near Paris! We would like to have you take a look at it so you can begin to make your plans to join us for the weekend of 7-10 September. In the next few Connection issues we will be giving you more information about our programme, speakers and our now traditional holiday/vacation time that follows.

<http://www.cpcvidf.asso.fr/>

US Region 1 – Catherine Taylor

We attended the PFLAG presentation on Homosexuality and the Bible at the Old Arlington Street Church with it's Tiffany stained glass windows. The Boston Gay Men's Chorus was wonderful. We think you might find the speaker's book interesting: The Children are Free, Miner and Connoley.

December 16th – Potluck supper at Samuel, Andrew and Warren Pang's home followed by the Boston Gay Men's Chorus holiday concert.

We would like to invite anyone from any region to join us for the 5PM seating at Christiana Campbells in Colonial Williamsburg on December 31. Let Catherine know quickly if you are interested because reservations are necessary.

We would also like to invite any of you to join us for our January 13 Regional Meeting in NYC. We will gather at St. Mary's on 126th for worship, share a lunch, have some time to talk about Kinship plans and adventures and then share an afternoon activity. Kevin, we would love to see you ?!

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Kinship News...

US Region 2 – Yolanda Elliott
December 16th. – We will have our annual Christmas party at Stacy and Greg's home.

In November many regional members brought an average of 100.00 per person worth of non perishable comestibles for the food closet of the Presbyterian Church that lets us use their sanctuary for vespers. They use this food to feed the homeless over the holidays.

Denise – On November 18 Region 2 had a surprise party to celebrate Yolanda's 50th birthday. She thought she was coming to Stacy and Greg's home for a Kinship meeting. We all hid our cars on another street. Joyce fooled her by saying she needed to shop at Costco for something before coming to the meeting. Yolanda said she needed her pulse to be checked because she was so shocked and surprised.



Region 5 – Floyd Poentz

Brrrrr. It's cold here in Texas! This year is packed full of things, so I wasn't able to plan a holiday party. Patch (my dog) being old and now blind and deaf, he stays downstairs in the den. It just isn't conducive to have a party. We did have a gathering for Halloween weekend.

US Region 9 – Dave Fergusson

Sabbath December 30 there will be an annual Luncheon for Kinship members and other gay supportive friends at the home of Dave and Peter in Glendale, following the church service at Glendale City. The basic items for the lunch will be provided, but everyone is welcome to bring a favourite holiday dish to share. This is about the 8th year that we have had this luncheon and each year more supportive members of the congregation and pastoral staff join us for fellowship.



Kinship Weddings

Germany - Alex and I got married on October 21st. We had a super nice Protestant Pastor perform the ceremony in a cute little Chapel in Bodenheim, Germany. It was really wonderful. *Tanja*



USA - October 14th, 2006. Our commitment ceremony was held at the 17th century Quaker Meeting House of Bristol, Pennsylvania. As I stood at the altar waiting for Victor to arrive, I looked out the window and saw that he was crying tears of joy. I started to cry as well. The ceremony was intimate; just close friends and family. Victor's brother-in-law Andy gave Victor away. My poppa Aaron gave me

away. Maria Crosman, minister from the George School run by the Quakers, performed the ceremony. Victor and I wrote our vows. I sang my favorite song: You are the Wind Beneath My Wings. My heart lept with joy, when I looked out at the audience and saw my sister Kim and my nieces Lauren and Terry in attendance. The reception had a wide variety of food. Our scrumptious wedding cake had been designed with pride colors. *Carl Williams*



Kinship Voices

My blessings over the year 2006 include having one of my research studies published for the first time in my life. I was blessed to be offered a new job as a school counselor out in the desert here in Southern California and am loving every moment of every day that I go to work there. My blessings also include reaching a more peaceful, happy and contented place in my life and walk with God. *Naveen*



I am grateful for our book building workshop on Homosexuality and the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Ontario last January. I celebrated both my 70th birthday and my 50th wedding anniversary. I got to have visits with my grandchildren. *Carrol*



I enjoyed Kampmeeting in Orlando Florida this last July. I am grateful for my involvement with Kinship after being kicked out of church leadership position for being gay. I got to go home to Australia in July and August. *Scott*



This past year has been nothing but wonderful. I've completed school and I'm now working at a department store where the management wants me to move on from lowly seasonal hire to supervisory position. But most of all, I'm blessed to be part of Kinship and glad to have such wonderful friends in the group. *Ruben*



Greetings. All has been well here in Uganda. We had our Second Kampmeeting, and we expect to have the third one in the Last week of January 2007. I was able to travel to Europe and I met with Kinship members like Ruud and Kees although I missed the Kampmeeting in Sweden. We have had a wonderful year with many blessings of the Lord. We hope next year will be more of the same. I send all my warm greetings to Kinship members all over the world with Good news of Christ Jesus. *Joseph Brown*

My dad, I think, will be fine after his radiation is done. Everyone is sort of healthy and happy. I hit fifty and I am doing fine. I don't feel as old as fifty used to look to me. I feel young. Everything is good. For now I have a full house. I have a good group of ladies now. This is not as hard as last year where I had four people die. *Yolanda*



My best blessings were being with my Kinship friends at our Florida Kampmeeting, the Rehoboth Beach Mini Kampmeeting and the Vermont Mini Kampmeeting. *Denise*



Well, I lived through a serious car accident and an armed robbery this week. My car is totalled and the credit union was held up but we are all okay. My mother's health has improved. Our family here in Burlington has grown by three pet: our dog Annabelle and two kittens, Henry and Oliver that Tom gave me on my birthday. I am glad I have this opportunity to be more involved with Kinship. I am glad to have people who will pray for me. *Jeremy*



Whew, blessings. The conference in Ontario about Homosexuality and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Being able to go to Sweden. What a gift. I fell in love with Reino and Ingemar's part of their country. Always my time in Cornwall. Getting to edit the Connection and be in contact with so many remarkable people. Karen is a blessing. Oh yes..the miracles of the Vermont Mini Kampmeeting and the pleasure of Rehoboth. Closer relationships with my family. Wandering through New York with Bob and Bruce and Eddie. Being able to supervise the most remarkable team of people. All my dogs, cats, wild turkeys, wandering coyote and migrating birds. Having some extra time off this December to enjoy the holidays. Catherine



It is hard to remember all the blessings in a year where we experienced so many gifts each and every week. I was extremely blessed to spend my first year with my wife, Catherine at my side. In February she agreed to go with me on a cruise of the Western Caribbean even though she was sure she would be seasick and bored. We had such a wonderful trip full of blessings; many aspects of nature we enjoyed and the people with whom we came in contact. By the end of the cruise

she had already gone to the main office to sign up for two more! It has been a blessing to go to the numerous Kinship functions throughout the year. I enjoy being able to worship God in an environment where I am accepted and understood. I must also say that one of my blessings is to be able to worship each week with an SDA congregation that also is accepting of us and encourages us to in leadership roles. It has been a blessing to go through this year with my 4 daughters and the challenges each one has experienced. I am grateful to watch them grow in maturity and in their relationship with God. I have been blessed in my job this year with deeper relationships with my co-workers and I have watched some grow closer to God. I was just blessed this week with the best massage I have ever received in my life. This person is only fifteen minutes from my house. One of my blessings is that I can share all of this with you, my family. *Karen*

I am very blessed and often forget how blessed I am and take things for granted. This past year has been a fairly good year. I was able to travel back to the Midwest for my high school reunion. I got to visit with a number of classmates. What was interesting is that some of the classmates I did not really care to see were the ones with whom I ended up with having the best conversations. Ahhh maturity does make a difference. Was also able to spend time with my grandson; nothing like those hugs from a little child. And of course I was especially blessed with the Kampmeeting in Florida. The interesting topics of discussion and the inspirational morning walks and devotionals were a great way to start the day.

God has blessed me with getting thru a few health problems, with great neighbours and a wonderful church family. May this coming year be full of blessing to all as we face the challenges of life. *Ron*

One of my biggest blessings this year is my friends and my job. *Jon*

One of the peaks for this year is a new friend. It is very important for me to have close intimate friends and she came into my life at an important time. We share a lot of similar interests. She is an artist and melted my heart when she gave me a beautiful painting of sheep in the marshlands at noontime. I know that God sent her to me and I am thankful. I am glad I got to attend Kampmeeting in Sweden and see Karen, Catherine, Ruud and Kees. I am glad we got to spend some time and talk to each other. Next week my husband Jørgen and I are going to Madeira Island. We are more than happy to see beautiful places, have the sun in our eyes and feel the warmth. Friends, if you want to visit Denmark, you are heartily welcomed! *Nomi*



It has been a wonderful blessing to me to see firsthand the wonderful growth of Kinship this year. It has been wonderful to work on a book that will rock the church, see a new generation of leadership added to the Board; travel to Brazil to meet new members and find my ministry expanding as more pastors are needing retraining. *Dave*



I have been incredibly blessed this year with an academic program I love so very much at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. I have a great job and working environment that supports me, the best friends a girl could ask for, a great roommate, a wonderful bio-family and extended Kinship family, and two cats that never cease to amuse. *Suzy*



It's a blessing to know that God is with us every day. The days we spent with everyone at EKM5 had an atmosphere of love and encouragement. We are proud of the environment in which we live in and we are happy that all of you enjoyed it. Blessings to all of you in the Kinship family. *Reino and Ingemar*

connection

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I've had a number of blessings this year. The most important is that my grandmother made it through a very tricky operation. I'm also very blessed to have a new job which is allowing me to learn new skills and greatly improve the ones I already have. *Travis*

Lisa and I got back together. My mom is enjoying her new place. I appreciate the experiences I am going

through. Even though they are difficult, they are helping me grow, mature, and learn. I am glad that I've been able to be more in touch with Karen and Catherine. This is big for me right now. *Katie*



Continued on back cover...

A Passing Year

Seen in 2006...



Kinship Voices...

After many not-so-good years, 2006 wasn't so bad! The recent election was the icing on the cake. Maybe we'll change direction in ways that will result in fewer people dying needlessly, and more "deserving" poor being able to make a living wage for their 40 hours of work... Although I'm not much in touch with Kinship anymore, it is a blessing to know old friends are still there, and to remain in touch with them, and to stay in touch with still others in small ways such as this. A big highlight and great blessing of the year for me was the two weeks I spent volunteering at a hospital in Peru last May in a project to help the indigent. My thanks go to David Wong for donating most of the travel. My most treasured memory was a

visit to the local old folks' home. I can't put my finger on exactly why, but I think it has to do with the sheer amount of living concentrated in one place. Navigating life for seven or eight or nine decades is a profound accomplishment. Nothing tops the blessing of having someone new in my life. Tijuana and I celebrated the first year together in our home in November—and that's the thing that really made 2006 special for me. Can an agnostic call these things "blessings"? Let's see: (blessing noun [in sing.] " a beneficial thing for which one is grateful; something that brings well-being"

Yep, I guess so! *Larry*

A yellow lab with ears softer than velvet whose tail wags her body in excited greeting if you've been gone. Even for five

minutes! A miniature Dachshund who lives next door and spends a lot of time with us. *Rom*

My blessing is that my mom has accepted me being gay. She comes to visit. She loves my partner. She welcomes him into her home. *Carl*

This year we got to go to France to see our family. My Mom had successful heart surgery. We're also getting a deeper understanding of God's love and character. *Tami*

Last April Faith was born to Sherrie and Jill. She is our third grandkid and what a delightful child! Our grandchildren are such a blessing! I enjoyed spending a month with Sherrie and Jill and their family this year when Faith was born. *Fern*

