

connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 40, No. 4, June 2016



1981



1983



1988



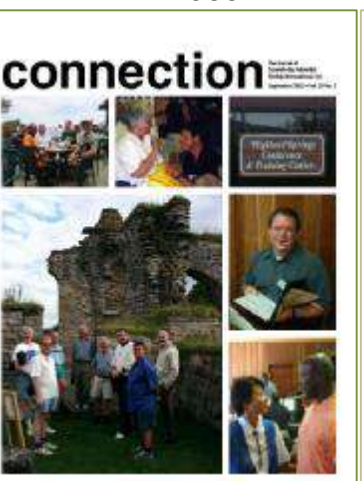
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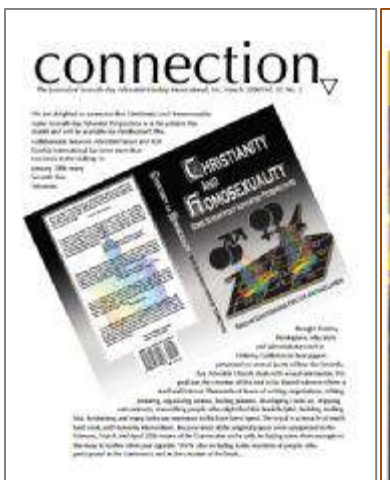
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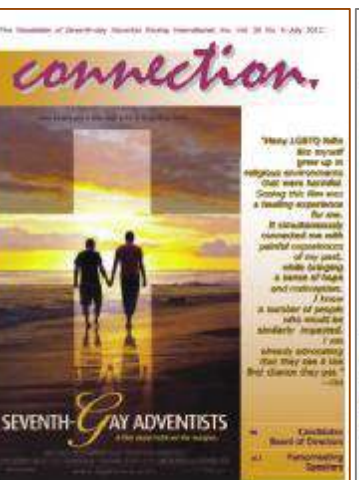
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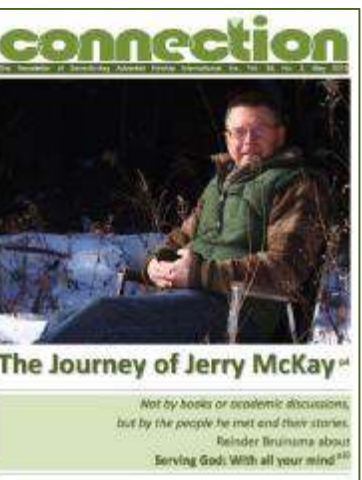
2008



2012



2014



2015

1977 CONNECTION, VOL. 1 — 40 2016

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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) non-profit 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 2,500 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.



PO Box 244 ♦ Orinda, CA 94563 USA

or visit Kinship's website www.sdakinship.org/resources for information about

- Find a Gay Friendly Church
- *Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?*
- *Living Eden's Gifts*
- Previous *Connection* issues
- ... and more.

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www.sdakinship.org/regions-groups

CHAPLAIN

Marcos Apolonio, chaplain@sdakinship.org

CONTACT/INFORMATION

info@sdakinship.org

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 SDA Kinship Int'l, PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563 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.)

RESOURCES

- www.someone-to-talk-to.net
- www.buildingsafeplaces.org
- www.itgetsbetter.org
- www.sgamovie.com
- www.facebook.com/sdakinship

... and more

From the Editor

The SDA Kinship Board of Directors has voted to have this issue be the last one that will include routine distribution via postal subscriptions. Subsequent issues will be digital. This is not a choice Ruud or I would have made, but we are a part of a larger group with larger corporate priorities. For the last 40 years, Kinship has sent out paper issues to members on six of the seven continents. (I don't have records of issues being sent to Antarctica.) Recently we have had a mix of electronic and paper issues. Some paper copies have been sent to individuals over those six continents who have not had easy access to the internet. Floyd organized a project that sent paper copies of *Connection* to Adventist school and university libraries all over the world. We have had members in Europe, Africa, and Australia who have used extra copies to reach out to fellow church members or events. If you have thoughts, questions, comments, or reactions, you are most welcome to direct them to Kinship at info@sdakinship.org.

One of the gifts for me, as I put labels on your *Connections* is that I saw you as individuals, many of whom I prayed for or thought about as I got each issue ready to send out. You made our world smaller and more personal.

Ruud and I would like to take this opportunity to express our special appreciation to a quiet member of our team. Doolittle's Print Serve, in the persons of Debbie and Mike, has been our printer for 13 years. When I first accepted editorship of the *Connection* in September 2003, I found them in a search for local New Englanders who would easily accept working with an LGBTI Adventist group. They have not only been professional but also gracious, funny, willing to go the extra mile (or three) to catch and correct our last minute mistakes, or accept our shifting financial procedures. Debbie's brother has been the one who personally stuffed and sealed all the envelopes, saving me hours of mailing prep. It is hard to say when our relationship went from polite to being part of our community, but I am very glad we got to work with them. Debbie and Mike, you are an unexpected gift. As I say to all our readers, I say particularly to you now: Take good care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable.

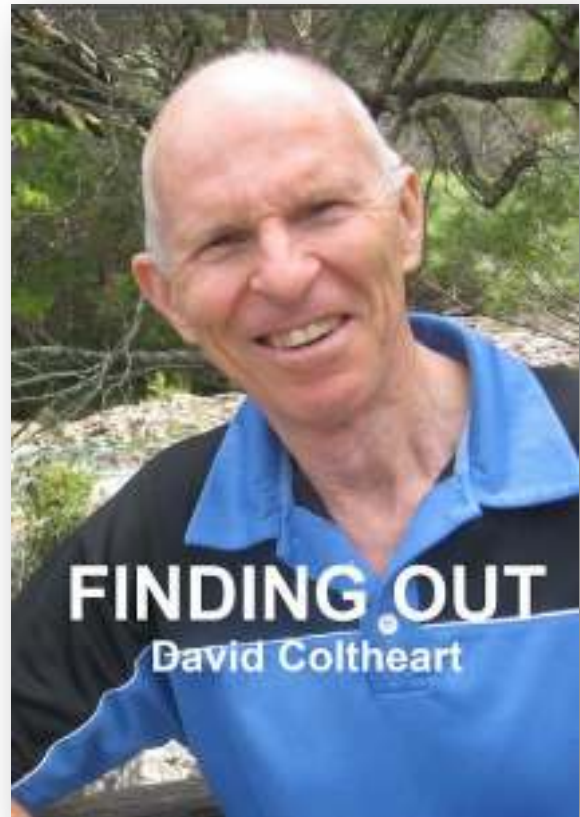
Catherine



From Member Services:

For those of you who have been receiving paper copies, we would like to make sure that you know a few things:

1. You will be able to get a **full-color copy** of the issue by following the links in the email notification you receive each month and printing it on your home printer or taking it to a FedEx Office® to print it out.
2. We very much want to stay in contact with you. Please send SDA Kinship (info@sdakinship.org) an email confirming we have your most up to day e-mail address.
3. If for some reason you are absolutely not able to access the *Connection* on line, please contact us at info@sdakinship.org or drop us a postal note, with your phone number, at the address listed inside the front cover, so we can discuss how to get your paper copies of the *Connection* to you.
4. As Catherine said in her intro, you are also most welcome to send your thoughts, reactions, and comments to us at info@sdakinship.org.



An autobiography

Now available on line at
<http://findingout.webs.com/>

By Gerard Frenk

Two thousand years ago, there was a little book that almost did not make it into the Bible. If it had not been for a rabbi about my age (deep sixties), those few precious pages would now not be read in the back pews by flushed church-going teenagers.

His name was rabbi Akiva.

We meet him in an important gathering of Jewish scholars probably held in the year 90. On the agenda: a book of fewer than a dozen pages. The question being asked: should it be part of the Holy Scriptures: in their language, is it a book that requires you to wash your hands before touching and reading it? A number of opponents have spoken. They consider the book to be a piece of erotic literature. It should not be of Scripture. When they have spoken Akiva takes the floor, and he speaks the words that are now forever linked to the little scroll on the table before them:

"The whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies."

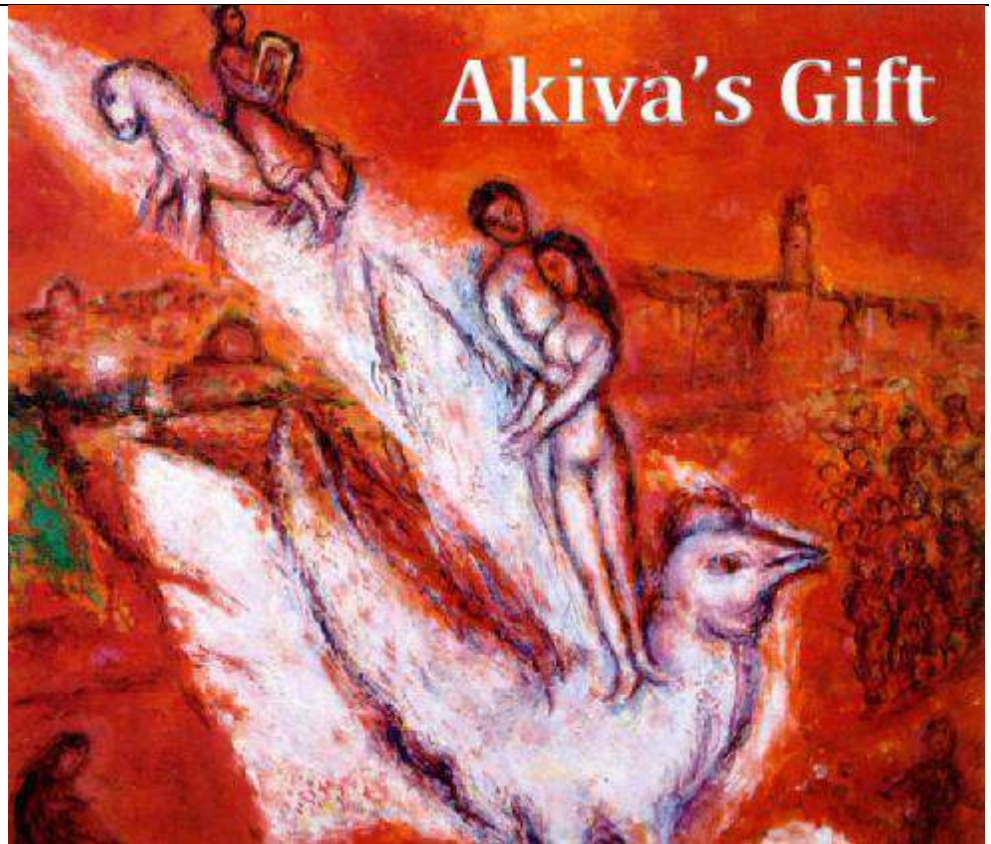
Clearly, it took more than these few words; but, in the end, his view prevailed.

Akiva read the book as a hymn, as a reflection of God's love for his people. Therefore, it belonged in Scripture. To get his way, he played down that it was (also) a series of poems about love, in which erotic attraction plays a major role.

If you've never read *Shir Ha-Shirim, Song of Songs*, tonight may be a good time to start. If you have a partner it might light a little fire. It's erotic poetry at its best. It is knowledgeable, but also innocent and pure. What needs to be named is named indirectly, by means of metaphor. Like all good poetry, it's all about images, pictures, suggestions...

We hear him speak of a beautiful garden...but is it a garden? There's fruit to be eaten... but is it fruit, or maybe lips? Flowers, perfumed air, trees giving shadow... it seems like paradise. Or is he describing a body?

Back to Akiva. Although he downplayed the erotic aspect, he was certainly right when he pointed to its theological content. He sensed that human relations were in some way sacramental, pointing beyond themselves. In his



Song of Songs – Marc Chagall

thought, love is a reflection of another Love. How did he come to that view? By reading well. He would have noticed that in the poems people dream and in those dreams are constantly running, calling, asking, and above all searching and... sometimes... only sometimes do they find. It seems that love, the lover who is constantly desired, is out of reach, cannot be touched, disappears in the night, stands outside the gate, knocks on a door but cannot enter. Perfect harmony, perfect love remains partly dream, seems to be ephemeral. It is only present for a moment and then recedes. The poet touches a universal emotion here. Isn't that what we feel shortly after... in that quiet, heavy moment when we stretch out beside each other, in bed.

That is perhaps the greatest secret about love, that there is always a "beyond the moment." There is a secret, a constant more that can be sought. Not serially, but in the one you know and love. The other is never fully understood, cannot be completely had, does not completely belong to you, is not your property. There is always some secret left to be discovered. However much is given, the source need never be dry. However great the thirst, you need not die from lack of water, lack of love. And that, says Akiva, is what you may also discover when God reveals himself. For He is always far ahead of us, in front of us, we never have him, he is an everlasting fountain, always open and giving, but... finally, he is also a deep secret, more than we can ever know, more than we may even expect.

This is what the *Song of Songs* suggests. A look at a few passages will underscore such a reading of the poems.

At dawn let us slip out and see if grapevines and fruit trees are covered with blossoms. When we are there, I will give you my love. Perfume from the magic flower fills the air, my darling. Right at our doorstep I have stored up for you all kinds of tasty fruits. 7:12-14

Always keep me in your heart and wear this bracelet to remember me by. The passion of love bursting into flame is more powerful than death, stronger than the grave. Love cannot be drowned by oceans or floods; it cannot be bought, no matter what is offered. 8:6-7

It's an invitation, not a right. It's a wish, not a must. Love is given, not demanded. That is the deep truth about both human and divine love. That's why it is at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is given by God, not demanded by man.

Young women of Jerusalem, promise me by the power of deer and gazelles never to awaken love before it is ready. 2:7, 3:5, 8:4

This refrain is also a strong theme in *Shir Ha Shirim*. It seems to say: you might want to wait. Don't go out hunting for love. It's not something you experiment with. People are not to be had for a forty-day trial... money back guaranteed. The *Song* says: love happens, is discovered, is given. The poet says we should *never awaken love before it is ready*. And that's a line of poetry, not a moral message. It is to be read, savored and lived. Love can't be bought says the poem. And that, the apostle Paul might say, is profound theology: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.* ▼



Rabbi Akiva

A Sanctuary for Conversation

A Sanctuary for Conversation was created by Chris Blake, Cassie Martsching, and Aphee Messer. This is a three-hour workshop with the purpose to create safe spaces for positive, healing, informed, and authentic conversation. It was piloted at the Berkeley Seventh-day Adventist Church on March 5 and we're looking forward to it being held in more churches.

People can visit <http://opendialogueresources.org/> for more information and contact us at opendialogueresources@gmail.com to request a sample copy of the workbook. Here's the press release:

New Workshop Promotes Dialogue with LGBT+ Adventists

Can Adventist churches create safe spaces for positive, healing, informed, and authentic conversation?

A Sanctuary for Conversation: Listening, Loving, and Learning is a three-hour workshop that helps to answer that question. Through this workshop, churches will be introduced to a model for engaging in conversations that lead to clarity, hope, and healing.

This workshop responds to the North American Division's Statement on Human Sexuality¹⁾, which states, "The vital and opportune role of the Adventist Church is to educate its members about sexuality and purity within the context of grace."

A Sanctuary for Conversation also addresses the General Conference's Call for Peace²⁾, which states, "There needs to be dialogue and discussion in place of diatribe. In particular, Christians should always be ready to 'reason together,' as the Bible says."

The workshop opens with active learning activities and includes interviews with LGBT+ people and parents of LGBT+ children. Additionally, a professional psychologist will define terms and answer questions about orientation and gender. Participants will learn better listening skills, statistics about LGBT+ youth, the difference between acceptance and agreement, and signs of safe and unsafe churches. At the end of the workshop, participants brainstorm practical ways to transform their church into a sanctuary for Jesus and for God's Holy Spirit.

For more information or to purchase copies of the leader's guide and workbook visit the site³⁾, or email to OpenDialogueResources@gmail.com.

Previous Workshop Testimonials

A Sanctuary for Conversation has been tested with pastors, youth ministries leaders, and churches. Below is feedback from people who have experienced the workshop.

"I have grown because of the time I spent listening to the presentations, discussions, and panel. As a result of this workshop, I have taken away an understanding of how to become a better minister to all."

"The spirit of loving, humble discussion was filled with opportunities to sense and share God's Holy Spirit."

"We asked them to become more empathetic, not to change their beliefs, and as we showed tangible ways to do that they seemed very receptive, which was incredibly encouraging." (a gay Adventist presenter)

"Thank you for the courage to hold this event."

"Especially enjoyed the interviews with actual LGBT+ people."

"I came today asking God to make me a student, and my prayer has been answered."

"During my 27 years in Adventism, I have never seen such a spirit of humility expressed by the leaders of the church. No one came to prove 'I'm right, you're wrong,' or to 'school' someone else on their theology. Instead, we all came to learn, be honest, and work together to improve the lives of our LGBT+ youth."

"If you want your church to be a true community that is loving and compassionate, then do this workshop—it will make everyone more aware of their humanity." ▼

- 1) (<http://www.nadadventist.org/site/1/2015%20Documents/NAD%20Statement%20on%20Human%20Sexuality-Nov%202%202015.pdf>)
- 2) (<https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/0/call-for-peace/>)
- 3) <https://opendialogueresources.org/>

In connection 35 years ago...

KINSHIP
NEWSLETTER OF GAY AND LESBIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND THEIR FRIENDS No. 10 Vol. 4 OCTOBER 1981

KAMPMEETING '81-
WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS

Dear Kinship Friends, General Conference Officers and Local Pastors:

I've experienced many weeks of prayer and spiritual retreats, but this past Kinship Kampmeeting has been the most spiritually rewarding and refreshing week of my life.

As a member of a local SDA church, I have been actively involved with Sabbath School and youth programs. All my life, this church has been my anchor through many storms. The stable backbone of church school, boarding academy and college has been the backbone of my life. Needless to say, I love this church dearly. I look forward, with anticipation, to the soon coming of Christ.

I cannot express the joy and peace that I received in being surrounded by the love of my fellow Christians, gay Christian brothers and sisters. Many, who like myself, have been rejected in this church. Many who have suffered because of the church...suffered because they could not fit into the narrow structure imposed by the limited acceptance of our church. Oh, the agony we endured--to change--to fit--to be accepted--many, to be "average"--like everyone else. Often to be loved by family...and church friends.

When will this church--our church--study the grave problem that faces us--who love the church--the church that does not love us. Thank God for the courageous professors and clergy who dare to show us the love of Jesus by coming and sharing with us at Kampmeeting. May God bless you until we meet again.

In our Lord's love,
Leslie Field

Breaking News from Australia

Kinship member David Coltheart writes:



"I am happy to announce that my 300-page autobiography is finally ready to read and is now available online to download as a PDF. Six years in the making, it tells the story of my life back in New Zealand, my growing up years, my college years, and the 28 years I had in the [Seventh-day Adventist] ministry. Obviously, the whole point of the book is my coming-out story

and how I reconciled my sexuality with my spirituality. At least one person (Carrol Grady) has an honorable mention and I pay special tribute to her role in making the last ten years the happiest of my life (or anyone's life). The book finishes with our commitment ceremony in 2011 and our wedding in 2014.

"I pray that the book, called *Finding Out*, will make a positive contribution to people's lives and will add to the vast amount of literature designed to tell people who we are. You can download the book (free) here: <http://findingout.webs.com/>

"Don't forget to go to the Photo Gallery as well. Please feel free to share the link as you wish.

"God bless,

"David Coltheart

"Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia"

David also appears in the new documentary *Here I Am* in which gay and lesbian Christians tell their own stories. Designed as a discussion starter for Christians to use with their families and churches, the 35-minute movie is available free on YouTube and Vimeo.

—<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSjAan3OuJA>

—<https://vimeo.com/158130932> ▼

Journey (Part X)

By Jerry McKay

In the introduction to my story, I mentioned that people have asked how my faith and my orientation intersected and collided. During that first year at CUC, there was a spiritual “event” that conspired against me to create great expectations on one hand and disillusionment on the other. Those expectations intensified my internal conflict and would carry forward to the time when I was in reparative therapy. Because my spiritual formation was profoundly influenced by that event, I will explore it at some length. Bear with me, as I get a bit theological.

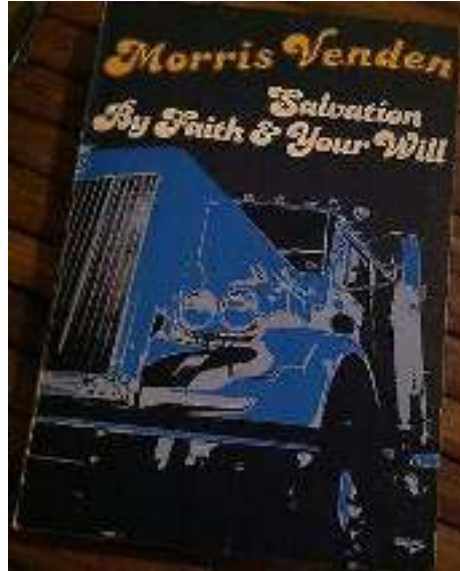
While I was in Japan, an Adventist pastor had been giving Week of Prayer lectures on Adventist campuses in the United States. I initially learned of Morris Venden through audiocassette tapes (showing my age again). While I enjoyed the taped messages, I was thrilled when I obtained a print copy of the fall 1975 *Student Movement*, the student newspaper for Andrews University. That 28-page issue was a transcript of Venden’s Week of Prayer messages.

As was my practice with any spiritual material, I methodically worked my way through it, ruminating over every word. I underlined, highlighted, circled, checked, and re-highlighted poignant comments that I felt related to my experience.

Venden’s sermons were rich with illustrations promising a victorious life. They focused heavily on the loaded concepts of *continual obedience* and the *correct use of my will*. He used a road trip as a running parable. On this road trip, intimidating Peterbilt transport trucks represented the threat to my obtaining personal victory in the here and now as I moved toward the Kingdom of God.

In this parable, my temptation was to cling to control of my will -- the steering wheel -- thinking I could out

maneuver those trucks myself. By clinging to the steering wheel, I would in effect be assigning Jesus to the passenger seat. My spiritual “work” was to surrender total control of the wheel -- my will -- to Jesus. Then I would experience continuous personal victory.



This quote sums up the heart of his message. “If as a Christian, you haven’t yet discovered meaning in the personal daily devotional life, don’t try anything else... It is the entire basis of the Christian experience; ongoing communion and fellowship with Jesus.”

Throughout those 28 pages, Venden repeatedly emphasized that the only way to access the benefits of the

cross was through a faith relationship with Christ.

Of course, my ears perked up when he quoted from my cherished devotional companion to the Bible – *The Desire of Ages*. Quotes like the following pulled at my heartstrings. “When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.” And again, “If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions will be in harmony with the will of God.”

By now I think you can appreciate why I became preoccupied with Venden’s message. He insisted that a relationship with Jesus was comprised of Bible study, prayer, and the Christian witness – “the three tangibles by which all other intangibles are made tangible.” While his emphasis was not new, it re-enforced what I had been doing since my baptism at age twelve – *diligently practicing a devotional life*. And now, I had a year of mission service to add to my list of tangibles.

The inner conflict this created was intense, as awareness of my ori-



entation increased while not experiencing any of the promised benefits. Because I was not becoming heterosexual in any sense of the word, I could only conclude that Venden's explanation applied to me.

"Now the only explanation for [not obtaining victory in the Christian life]," he insisted, is "that there must be an on-again, off-again abiding in a sense, to explain the failures that we have seen in our lives." "Because," he continued, "if we do not abide in Christ at any given moment – depending upon Him, leaving Him at the wheel, in the driver's seat – our feelings, thoughts, purposes, and actions will not be in harmony with the will of God."

What was I to think? The only conclusion I could come to was that I had not been intentional enough about my devotions, or that I was not doing it correctly. Because I was already primed by years of personal devotions, I was ready to do, with a vengeance, any variation on a devotional life I thought necessary to end my secret struggle.

I know I am repeating myself, but you must appreciate how deeply I identified with Venden's emphasis. When he said, "The only part that you can do in the fight of faith is an ongoing daily personal fellowship." I took it to heart. I also took to heart the promise that if I came into this growing relationship with the Lord Jesus, "Jesus would fight my battles for me.

Scattered throughout Venden's sermons were phrases gathered from Ellen White outlining the changes that would occur if God took control of my will and then gave it back to me with Him in charge. While the list was extensive, I became preoccupied with those that seemed to speak directly to me. When God is in control, Venden insisted: inclinations and affections change; thoughts and desires change; impulses and tendencies change; passions are subdued; and our feel-



ings, emotions, and imaginations are transformed.

That is quite a list. While it is not unusual for a Christian leader to speak in these terms nor for a Christian to seek these changes, I became preoccupied with them. To my detriment, I confused each characteristic with my orientation.

A non-Adventist might find it difficult to appreciate the force I gave to comments made by Ellen White. She holds a prophetic-pastoral role within Adventism, and the church would not be what it is today without her. She is like the Church Fathers are to Catholics, Luther to Lutherans, Calvin to Reformed people. Whether it was White or the Bible, I frequently misread and misapplied what I read to my orientation. I did not read "change" statements as universal promises offering hope and encouragement. I read them as absolutes which I must experience if I were truly a faithful follower of Christ.

Therefore, if one thoughtful hour contemplating Jesus' life was not sufficient, then maybe two thoughtful hours were necessary. While I did not follow a two-hour per day routine, the thought that I was not being faithful enough in my devotions haunted me. I often wondered if the Apostle Paul was correct. Perhaps, in some way, my devotions were misguided and that I was worshiping the creature rather than the creator. As a result, I was under God's wrath and being "handed over" to these desires. I felt the implications were staggering – if

not eternal – in consequence.

Earlier I mentioned expectations. Venden's message heightened my expectation of a change in my feelings and attractions. However, because of my naivety about the nature of sexual orientation, I was setting myself up for a great disappointment. At the time, I understood my experience in the same way many see it. To use a commonly used but equally confusing term, I saw my orientation as a *propensity*.

Propensity is a tricky word. Some definitions sound more like behavior as in a *tendency* to eat too much, or an *inclination* to talk too much, or to have an angry *disposition*. When the term propensity is used to describe homosexuality, the person using it typically believes that I am heterosexual with homosexual *inclinations*. That was not how I experienced my orientation.

Other definitions sound more stable and enduring – even innate. This is where orientation fits in. If a heterosexual friend said he has a *deeply ingrained or strong natural proneness* toward the opposite sex, he would be describing his orientation as a state of being. Over the last 30 years, I have never heard one of my heterosexual friends describe his or her sexuality as a *propensity*. For them, it is who they are. Even if they remained celibate, they would still experience the world as a heterosexual. At least, that seems the case when I swap stories with my heterosexual friends.

Likewise, I often hear the misguided comparison of homosexuality to that of prostitution or adultery. Often it is spoken of in terms of an addiction like alcoholism or gambling. These are not orientations. Some are behavioral choices while others may reflect a propensity. All people can participate in these irrespective of orientation. Likewise, people of either orientation

can have a propensity to be greedy, arrogant or just plain foolish. On the positive side, the fruit of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – can be seen in the lives of all despite their orientation.

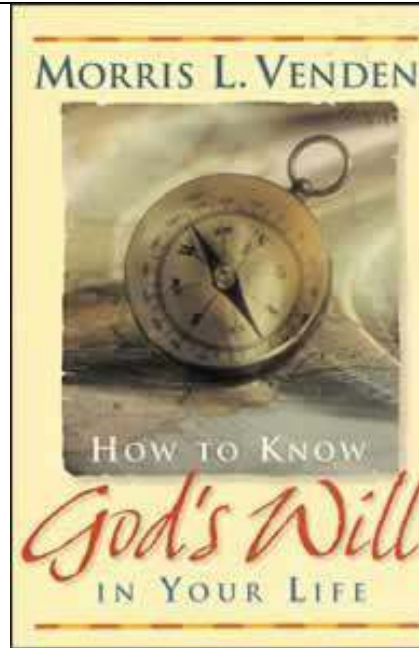
At the time, I did not make the distinction between state-of-being and behavior. Some people don't like it when I express my orientation as a state-of-being because they would prefer that homosexuality were a propensity – in the behavioral sense. I have to live with reality, however, not what others believe or would prefer.

In this state of confusion, I embraced the belief that my spiritual practices would change my orientation. I expected the emergence of a totally different state of being. Had there been some shift in my experience, it would have suggested that Jesus was fighting this battle for me. But there was nothing! I went to bed wondering when I would no longer be the evidence or object of God's wrath.

Three words from Jesus' phrase "as a man thinks in his heart so is he" succinctly capture how I felt at the time. I was always trying to figure out how to purge the "so is he" from my person. It was like trying to split a theological or psychological atom. For me to hate the sin, was to hate myself. Linking continual obedience with the elimination of my orientation was a recipe for insanity.

Put another way, my devotional life was being overshadowed by a set of destructive assumptions. Assumption One: The spiritual person will always be victorious. Assumption Two: My orientation should not persist if I was totally submitted to Jesus. Assumption Three: If it did persist, I was to blame.

Venden talked at length about the right use of the will. "One of the great misunderstandings in the Christian life," he wrote, "is how to use your



will and your will power." The big question he admitted was how to know where divine power begins and human effort ends. He wondered how much God expects us to do and how much we could expect from God. How could Venden write with such certainty in the face of such questions?

These "frustrating and heavy questions" as he put it, plagued me for the next decade and more. It is out of my experience that I plead with pastors or counselors to examine the theological framework from which they ask others to live their lives.

It would be easy to blame Venden's message for leading me into a quagmire of uncertainty. Believing that my devotions – prayer, Bible study, and witnessing – would result in a change in my orientation, I was left in spiritual turmoil. In this let-go-and-let-God theology, I eagerly anticipated some kind of divine intervention, but it never came.

The saddest part in all of this was that my devotional life was becoming a daily reminder of failure rather than the grace-filled space where I had always met with my Savior.

At this point of personal crisis, it would be easy for some to interject that if I had had a proper understanding of the gospel, I would have experienced the change I hoped for. By "proper," they would mean a Reformation understanding in which Luther would have me locate my salvation in the objective life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I would be introduced to that *Good News* when I started reparative therapy a few years later.

In that context, my counselor constructed a therapeutic approach focused on the external work of Jesus. I was encouraged to "claim" my heterosexuality by faith in the same way I would claim my salvation by faith in Christ. I was counseled to believe that what I held by faith – my heterosexuality – would become more and more tangible.

The saddest part in all of this was that my devotional life was becoming a daily reminder of failure rather than the grace-filled space where I had always met with my Savior.

While learning about the *Good News* was life-changing, in that context, I was asked to do things which now seem unethical. When I get to that part of my story, I will elaborate on how I was to apply "the right use of my will" in a gospel context to change my orientation.

I never told anyone about the significance I gave to Venden's message – neither the hope nor the trepidation. At the same time, I was so enthusiastic, that I persuaded the college pastor to let a group of us – which included Donna – fix up a tiny old church that sat unused in the village of Lacombe. I was determined to fill the town with the hope of victory in Jesus while not experiencing it myself. Sadly, this marked my growing trend of ignoring reality.

We got as far as repainting the interior walls before academic demands dampened that dream. We were fired up, though, and throughout the year, many study groups were spent dissecting Venden's sermons. With all of this going on in the background, I continued with studies and attempts at dating.



As a healthy 20-year-old male, my libido was as charged as any of my friends and I was always affected by visual stimulation. Because this experience is beginning to sound routine you might be tempted to think I was growing accustomed to it. That assumption would be wrong.

As always, the dormitory was the primary source of visual distress. The "wanting" to look never ended and the constant modifying of my behavior was draining. I spent as little time as possible in those community showers even though there was a bit more privacy than back at Kingsway. Even though I could arrange my mornings so that I got in and out of the showers ahead of the others, I couldn't avoid all the scantily clad guys moving about in the halls!

Awareness of my orientation was further heightened because finding a mate was taking on a serious tone. For us single theology majors, there could be a sense of desperation. Next to the degree itself, having a wife in arm at graduation was a not-so-unwritten expectation for employment. This little fact was not lost on me. In the back of my mind, there was a growing concern that all my dreams

might be in jeopardy if I couldn't find a wife.

Most of my friends were dating. Kelvin settled into a serious relationship. Despite the happiness I had for him, it was hard to watch him and Marcia together. I couldn't help compare myself to Kelvin and others. Their obvious attraction to the opposite sex made me very aware of what I did not feel. Even the tender act of holding someone's hand was out of my reach. When the desire to hold someone's did cross my mind – and it did – it was that of a male friend. In turn, that thought was followed by those "why" questions, followed by a headache.

Naturally, some women were more physically appealing to me than others. I may not be sexually attracted to women, but I am not blind to aesthetic beauty. Still, even stunning beauty failed to arouse sexual interest. And that is the crux of the issue. Without physical attraction or emotional appeal driving me, little else could follow. My social interactions were similar to walking through that bee-filled shed. Everything was happening around me, but I was disconnected from it all. To function day to day, I had to suspend most feelings and emotions.

With my attempts to date, a trend emerged. Generally, by the time a second date might have occurred, I had identified a reason a relationship could never work. It was usually a superficial reason, often a physical reason. Before I elaborate, I feel I should do as TV stations do and state that any resemblance to any person is entirely coincidental, and to protect the innocent, names have been changed.

My dating year looked like this. If Miss September had a small mole on her neck at the beginning of the month, all I could see by the end of the month was a huge hideous

growth. If Miss October was a full-figured girl on the 1st, by the end of the month, all I could see were breasts. If Miss November were less blessed "in that way," by the potential second date, I was sure I should be dating the full-figured girls. Miss December's hips were too hippy by the end of the month; Miss January's slender arms were definitely too thin by the 31st; Miss February's hair was too curly or too short or too long. Miss March's ankles were too stout. Miss April was deficient in every way; and Miss May – well, the school year was over by then – proving there was just no one meant for me that year. Meanwhile, there were just-fine guys everywhere I looked. I can make light of this now, but at the time it was distressing.

When I couldn't rationalize ruling out a potential a mate based on physical appearance, I used my field of study. As a theology major, there was the ministerial "must-have list" – an unwritten list of essential characteristics women must possess in order to be a good pastor's wife. She should be able to play the piano (even teach piano if need be to support our family). As well, she should be able to cook a fine meal, entertain, and get along with every church member. She must be able to create and manage the perfect Adventist home. No one ever met all those criteria. Subconsciously, this played right into my denial system.

Whenever I imagined a future that included a wife and children, there was no link between them. I had no fantasies about "knowing" a woman as Adam knew Eve. Even during those embarrassing nocturnal emissions – which I had no control over – women were never featured. And yes, Christian men studying theology have nocturnal emissions! Any children in my imaginary family had either been discovered under a cabbage leaf or delivered by a stork.

If there had been the slightest at-

traction, there would have been something to work with. I had zero *propensities* for the opposite sex. I thought about this day in and day out, week after week, and month after month.

My only ongoing relationship was with Donna, although there was never any mention of our being in a "relationship." We were always doing things together. If we weren't going shopping, we were attending prayer groups. Often, rather than attend a social function on campus, we would sneak away to make a campfire in the woods beside a nearby lake. Under normal circumstances, this would all have been so romantic. For me, it was only platonic.

After a year and a half at CUC, things literally changed one night. In early December, I got a phone call in the middle of the night. Night calls are disturbing because they often mean something serious. This was a serious call but for an exciting reason.

When my foggy head cleared, I realized it was the director of the language schools in Japan. Bruce was calling to ask if I wanted to come back to Japan for another year. Silly question! For the last year and a half, I had been chattering about Japan every opportunity I could get. The only problem – Bruce didn't need me at the end of the school year. He needed me that January.

Although Kelvin was supportive, he told me years later that he wondered why I hadn't decided to finish my degree and then go back to Japan as a pastor. There were any number of reasons why I jumped at the opportunity, but two stand out. Life in Japan was more exciting and rewarding than working on my degree, and it was an escape from the growing conflict between career expectations and my orientation. There was one other good reason. Donna was already there!

Whatever the case, the next couple of weeks flew by. I had to write exams, finish papers, and make a trip home for Christmas. By early January, I was thrilled to be back in Tokyo. ▼

Winter/Spring Reports

Family and Friends

We were invited to be a part of a panel interview at the Berkeley Adventist Church, which was doing Chris Blake's program, "A Sanctuary for Conversation." It was an honor to be a part of it and we connected with a few people there.

We have been asked to meet with Stephen Eyer and Daneen Akers and Bryan and Judy Ness to have a discussion on an idea of setting up safe homes for young LGBT persons who have experienced rejection in their homes. As we have not had that discussion yet, I'm not sure where it will go. It will be good to have Judy Ness, as she has experience in these kinds of cases, and it will be important to have her feedback.

Kris has been asked to speak at the NAD [North American Division] summer camp directors' meetings in British Columbia this April. (Please keep him in your prayers!) The topic of discussion will be Seventh-day Adventist summer camps and transgender youth (in particular, but some discussion will also occur on the LG aspects, as well). They are asking for his testimony and his expertise, as both a parent of a transgender child and as past summer camp staff.

Kris and Debbie Widmer,
Family and Friends Coordinators

–To contact the **Family and Friends Coordinators**, email family-friends@sdakinship.org.

–For more information online, visit <http://sdakinship.org/regions-groups/groups/family-friends-of-kinship.html>.



Kinship Women

As the weather warms up here in the "Great White North" I am looking forward to the summer. A time to get out and play after being cooped up indoors for many months. I am also working on finalizing the plans for our Women & Children First Weekend.

Time to Register: We still have a few spots available...

The house is filling up! Women & Children First weekend registration is on the Kinship website at <http://sdakinship.org/events/women-children-first.html>.

The dates are **July 22-26, 2016**. The number of attendees is limited this year; so if you are planning on attending, please register early. We have already had several members register and it is on a first-come-first-served basis. Women & Children First Weekend is open to **all** female Kinship members, including our wonderful allies.

Please feel free to contact me with any other suggestions or ideas that you may have for KinWomen. I can be reached at women@sdakinship.org.

Debbie Hawthorn-Toop
Director of Women's Interests

–More information at <http://www.sdakinship.org/regions-groups/groups/women-of-kinship.html>



In connection, 30 years ago...

INSERT, side 1

Kinship Connection

April, 1986

Remembering CRAIG ROBERTS



Craig Alan Roberts, 28, died in San Francisco, California on Thursday, February 20, 1986 holding the hand of his lover and partner of ten years, Vern Schlenker, Jr.

Craig participated in structuring the organization and the incorporation of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Prior to Kinship's incorporation, Craig recognized the need for gay Adventists and friends to contact one another. His dream became a reality when he introduced KINSHIP KONTACT, Kinship's correspondence/referral service, now including several hundred names, in 1981. Many friendships have been formed and cemented as a result of his vision.

Craig, a native of Sacramento, is also remembered for his sensitivity, his unique sense of humor, his genuine concern for the well-being and happiness of others, his love of

the out-of-doors, the messages from his expressive brown eyes and the joy he shared through music and poetry.

Those who continue to love him include his lover, Vern Schlenker, Jr. of San Francisco, former president of SDA Kinship, his parents, the Schlenker family and his extended family of Kinship, Orion and many personal friends.

At one of the memorial services held in Craig's honor, 28 helium-filled balloons, one for each year he lived, were released as his favorite hymn, "Amazing Grace," was sung to close the celebration of his life.

A fund has been established by Kinship to provide financial assistance in Craig's memory to Kinship members with AIDS who experience difficult financial circumstances. Checks should be made payable to: SDA Kinship and a notation should be made to indicate that the funds are for the Craig Roberts Memorial Fund. Additional information is available by calling Kinship at: (213) 876-2076. Persons wishing to contact Vern directly to lend support and love to him during his time of deep sorrow, may do so by calling: (415) 626-6240.---

Looking at "Those Texts"

By Catherine Taylor

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Leviticus 17:26, 27 describes the purpose of a set of policies designed to ensure that the Hebrew people would be distinctly different from pagan cultures around them. In dress, in understanding the meaning of the temple and the sacrificial system, in ceremonial observances such as Yom Kippur and the year of Jubilee, in diet, in relationships with each other and with non-Israelites, in the way Israel expressed their trust in God as they observed Sabbath, and in the way they learned about dominion as they cared for the earth, animals, and each other, Israel was to stand apart from the violent, self-absorbed, child-



sacrificing, power-hungry nations at their borders. Israel was to be an object lesson of separateness: nothing co-mingled, no reminders of pagan practices. To strengthen understanding of this goal, prohibitions included: no mingling of seed in the field, no mingling of materials in the cloth, and no practices connected with fertility rites. Israelites were to grow from a people inoculated with the superstitions and values of Egypt and Canaan to citizens of their own nation, living Heaven's principles.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are part of this Holiness Code, given when Israel was inaugurated into nationhood.

Sexual intercourse between assumedly heterosexual men was forbidden on several counts:

1. It was a normal part of the forbidden fertility rites. Sexuality was used to gain power, satisfy the local gods, and manipulate life outcomes by pacifying selfish deities. Its precepts assumed a lack of trust in a benevolent God and a desire for power instead of service as a focus of dominion.
2. The Canaanite practice of anal rape of conquered or subjugated peoples violated God's principles of care for the vulnerable and replicated the violence and denigration abhorred by God.
3. The seed contained in semen was to be used for procreation, needed at a time when Israel was a small nation still commanded to populate the earth. As part of the separateness code, it was not to be co-mingled with other seed nor to be spilled on the ground in an act of selfishness. People who could not produce children were considered cursed.

In this particular policy, it is interesting to note that there is no mention of long-term committed sexual relationships between men whose sexual/emotional desires were for each other and nothing at all about same-sex relationships between women.

Seventh-day Adventists are called to be a people who live out Heaven's principles. We are a people who want to follow the teaching of the Bible seriously. However, in our studies of the sacred texts we have come to understand that some policies given to Israel in the time of Moses are not applicable to us today. Meat-eating Adventists are not commanded to eat only meat killed in the Levitical fashion. Adventist men do not leave the sides of their head unshaven. Adventists are not told to wear clothing made of only one fiber. We have not been commanded to avoid companion planting crops. We do not make slaves of neighboring nations (as far as I know). We do not physically stone those who either do not keep Sabbath or keep it differently than we deem appropriate.

Today, the criteria by which followers of Yahweh are "set apart" are based on non-Levitical standards. Ellen White has written "not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring one... are you prepared to help your brother." When encouraging us to be separate from the world she writes. "That which distinguishes the people of God from worldlings is their sympathy for others, their tenderness, their meekness and lowliness of heart: they reveal they wear Christ's yoke and are recipients of the gift of the Holy Spirit."

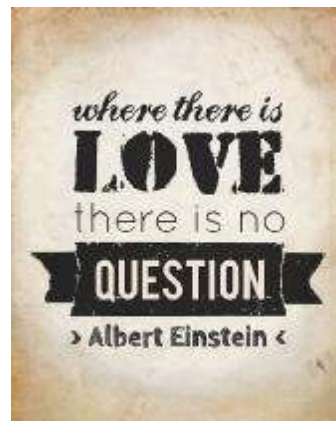
We have been commanded to follow the practices des-

cribed in Isaiah 58: "Lift the heavy burdens..., avoid the pointing finger and malicious talk." We have been instructed to memorize 1 Corinthians 13 and make its detailed description of love a part of our life. We are counseled to learn and follow the meaning of Sabbath rest, trust in God, eat a diet healthy for us, understand that only God is immortal, and know that it is Jesus who, by returning, will rescue the world from the misery, destruction, violence, illness, and death with which we are surrounded. While Ellen White repeatedly mentions the sanctity of marriage, nowhere in her writings does she condemn long-term committed same-sex relationships.

Ellen White does condemn the "strange sin of Sodom" that led to its destruction in Genesis 19. If we follow her practice and see how the Bible describes the nature of that strange sin, we will find in Ezekiel 16:49: "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things." This text, along with an understanding of how God feels about rape, certainly fits with God's focus on our mandates of protective and nurturing dominion.

Ellen White wrote extensively on sexual mores, but she did not specifically address homosexual behavior or orientation. What is interesting about her choice not to address the issue is that the concept was well-known in her lifetime. The first papers on sexual orientation came out of Europe in the 1840s and the term was in common usage in America by the 1890s. For many years, some writings of Ellen White were used to justify the church position against homosexuality, but these references had to be withdrawn when further review showed that Ellen White was addressing inhospitality rather than condemning gays and lesbians. In the *Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality* voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, October 3, 1999, you will find no reference to Ellen White as a footnote or supporting comment.

Like the children of Israel, Adventists are to be a people set apart, a people noted for their love of and compassion for others, for belief in the mortality of humankind, a healthy diet, keeping the Sabbath holy, and an expectation of the soon return of Christ. Do our policies and our practices demonstrate the principles that have been set before us? ▼





Non-Monogamy in Gay Male Relationships

By Michele O'mara

After studying 566 gay male couples over a three-year period, Colleen Hoff of San Francisco State University discovered that roughly fifty percent of gay male couples choose to be non-monogamous. Blake Spears and Lanz Lowen are a great example of how this works. Spears and Lowen started dating in their mid-twenties with the agreement that they will keep their relationship open. Thirty-four years later the couple is still going strong. In fact, this duo credits their relationship success in part to their decision to keep their relationship open.

Lowen and Spears have taken their interest in non-monogamy a step further by studying 86 non-monogamous, long-term (8+ years) gay male couples. Their research reveals that forty percent of the 86 couples started out with agreements to be open and have maintained this status while the remaining sixty percent of the couples took an average of 6.5 years to open their relationship. The average length of relationship for the 86 couples in this study is 16.2 years.

While I'm not interested in promoting or discouraging open relationships, I do find it fascinating to consider what makes this arrangement work for so many gay men. Of the 86 couples in the Spears/Lowen research, only one couple is raising young children. This does not surprise me. Raising children is a time- and energy-consuming experience that will unlikely leave much room for extra play, or an additional romantic relationship. In an email exchange with Hoff, she explained to me that while they did collect data on parenthood for the couples in their study, they did not separate that data out to examine the relationship between monogamy and parenthood.

Another thing I also wonder, does the open option work better for men than for women? Is this really an issue that is rooted in sexual orientation, or one rooted in gender? Traditionally men are thought to be better at separating sex from emotion, which is helpful in an open arrange-

ment. As Spears and Lowen point out on their website:

We found many couples had a somewhat compartmentalized perspective and approach to outside sex. "It's just sex" – a release without meaning, quite separate from the relationship.

The statistics on fidelity among men and women suggests that monogamy is a struggle for heterosexuals, too. According to Peggy Vaughan, author of *The Monogamy Myth*, "Conservative estimates are that 60 percent of men and 40 percent of women will have an extramarital affair." That's a whole lot of cheating. To clarify, infidelity is deceptive non-monogamy, but an open relationship is non monogamy that occurs with the consent and knowledge of both partners.



Dan Savage chimed in on the topic recently during a guest appearance on *The Joy Behar Show*, saying:

I believe men can be monogamous. But I believe that it's a difficult struggle. You know, when you're in love with someone and you make a monogamous commitment, it's not that you don't want to sleep with other people; it's that you refrain from sleeping with other people.

The culture says if there is love there is no desire for others and that makes people—essentially puts them—at war with their own instincts and leads to lies and deceit because you're lying and deceiving yourself.

In my own practice, having worked with more than 1,000 lesbians over the last decade, I would be very surprised to discover that lesbians choose non-monogamy at a rate of fifty percent. While my sample of gay male couples in my practice is much smaller, it is large enough to support the notion that fifty percent of gay male couples open their relationship to outside play, or poly relationships (additional, consensual, romantic relationships).

Some advocates of gay marriage are discouraged by findings such as Hoff's and Lowen/Spears's. Maybe if we all focused a little more on how to make our own relationships work, and less about how others are going about it, we would all end up with more meaningful and satisfying relationships.

What works best for you? At the end of the day, that's all that matters. ▼

European KINSHIP Meeting

European Kinship Meeting 2016 1-5 September in Seminarhotel Odenwald, Germany

We invite you to join us at the beautiful Seminar Hotel Odenwald near Frankfurt where Kinship has held both an EKM meeting and several Safe Places trainings.

[<http://www.seminarhotel-odenwald.de/>]



Our primary speaker will be Dr. Arlene Taylor, a brain development and function specialist, who has a very interesting way of talking with groups. She will be talking on:

- The Brain and Spirituality
- The Brain and Sex/Gender and Orientation
- The Brain and Sex Differences
- The Brain and Humor
- The Brain and How to Talk about Difficult Issues

Saturday night we will have a presentation of: *A Gay SDA Play*. For our Sunday excursion, Kinship Germany is planning a Magical Mystery Tour. We plan to have at least one German-speaking session. There are lovely walking trails and comfortable places to sit in the back yard and have coffee.

The cost will be: € 299.-

Information: write to Catherine Taylor, coordinator EKM2016 at katgurian@aol.com



Note: Registration for EKM-holiday is closed, but feel free to visit us and join us for day excursions.

connection

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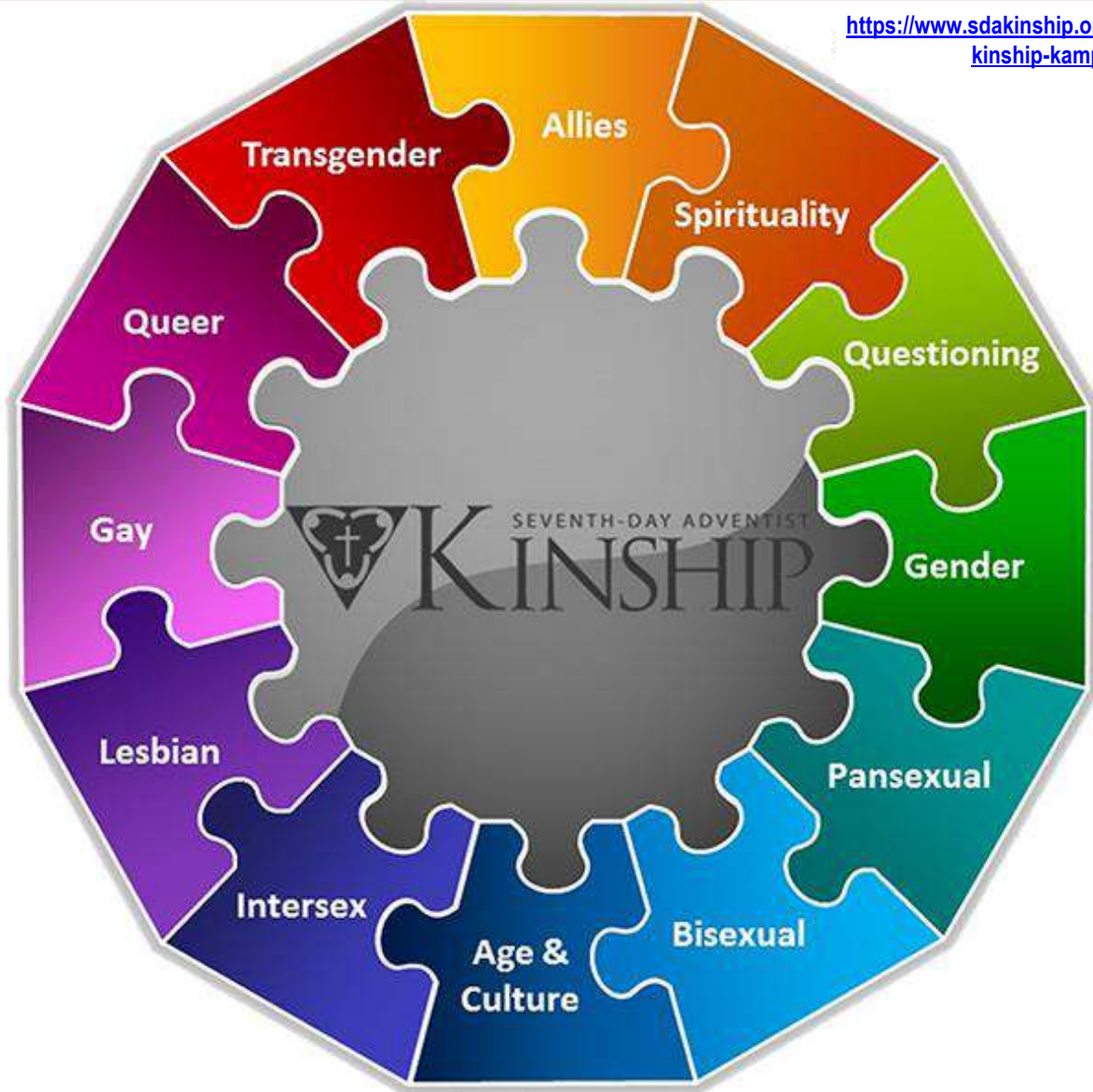
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Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press
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SDA Kinship Kampmeeting 2016

July 26-31, 2016

<https://www.sdakinship.org/events/sda-kinship-kampmeeting.html>



Kinship...Breaking down barriers for a healthier community!

The annual pre-Kampmeeting Event



WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

July 22 - 26, 2016 – Damascus, – Maryland USA

Register and pay in full now on

<https://www.sdakinship.org/events/women-children-first.html>

A special retreat for the women of Kinship held near Damascus, Maryland. Bring yourself (and your children, if you wish) and enjoy this time to rest your body and soul while cultivating the friendships that are so important to us!

This is a collector's item: the last printed edition on paper of **connection**

