

I am connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 39, No.1, January/February 2015

From the President's Desk

—January 2015

*By Yolanda Elliott,
President SDA Kinship Intl.*

As each New Year arrives, we look back over the past year in an effort to make resolutions or decisions for the brand-new year to improve our lives and be more fulfilled! I have no less responsibility, as president of SDA Kinship, to look back at some of the things we got right this past year, and also see what we can do better moving forward.

As always, our main goal is to support our members as each walks their own path. We also want to help facilitate the education of those in our church who truly wish to learn about our wonderfully diverse community.

In Kinship's early years, our main goal was simply finding each other in a very hostile world. As time progressed, we were there for each other during the AIDS crisis; we supported each other through the Colin Cook "reparative therapy" abuse debacle; we encouraged each other as some of us were removed from our churches, thrown out of schools, or abandoned by our families or homes. Through all of this, Kinship has been a safe harbor. And it continues to be.

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KINSHIP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, 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

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CONTACT/INFORMATION

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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.itgetsbetterforadventists.org
www.sgamovie.com
www.facebook.com/sdakinship
... and more

From the Editor

At the 2003 Kampmeeting Bob Bouchard asked me if I would edit the *Connection* for a year. I remember him saying we could do eight to maybe sixteen pages per issue. I think I remember him saying if we could do four issues a year that would be a great success.

Twelve years later (my, how times flies) it seems we've made a lot of changes. For starters, the editor, layout artist, proofreader, printer, mailer, and label addresser have become a team. Ruud Kieboom is still coming up with new ideas for graphics, ads, illustrations, fonts, and color. Floyd manages our mailing list and makes sure the database is updated. Through his efforts the *Connection* is now going to Adventist schools and universities around the globe.

Jacquie Hegarty and Carrol Grady are the core of the proofreading team. They meticulously make us more professional and less likely to shock those who are erudite enough to know where the semicolons and apostrophes should really go. We have a great group of photographers who send us visual memories of Kinship events. In the last twelve years we have gone from a totally print issue to being primarily an electronic publication, with paper-in-the-mailbox options for those who would like them. Ruud and I used to interview people in person. Now the speaker option on our mobile phones has us gathering Kinship stories from long distances at odd hours. Linda Wright, the remarkable person who administers Kinship's website, makes sure the electronic mailing arrives in your computer on time. She is the one who sends out broadcast emails when we have a question we would like all of you to consider and answer for us. For this January/February issue she is the one who sent the email asking all of you to tell us about someone you appreciate or treasure. And, for the first time this issue, she is the one who puts in the links that will allow you to respond to us immediately after you read each article.

Bob gave me one piece of advice that hasn't changed. In fact, I don't think it has changed since Vickie spent so many years and much remarkable work giving us the *Connection* a few decades ago. He said Kinship members want to hear stories about other Kinship members. He knew that what makes our community strong, and is the reason for our existence, is the remarkable group of people spread across 40 countries who consider themselves part of SDA Kinship International. For that reason we always include stories of our members. For that reason we always, but hopefully gently, try to get you to share your thoughts and history. For that reason we always end this section by saying, *Take good care of yourselves—for you are infinitely valuable.*

Catherine



God's Valentine Gift

God's Valentine gift of love to us
Was not a bunch of flowers;
It wasn't candy, or a book
To while away the hours.

His gift was to become a man,
So He could freely give
His sacrificial love for us,
So you and I could live.

He gave us sweet salvation, and
Instruction, good and true--
To love our friends and enemies
And love our Savior, too.

So as we give our Valentines,
Let's thank our Lord and King;
The reason we have love to give
Is that He gave everything.

For God so loved the world
that he gave
his one and only Son,
that whoever believes
in him
shall not
perish
but have eternal
life

Happy Valentine's Day



Door to Happiness

By David Coltheart

According to recent research, Denmark is the happiest country on earth. Norway, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Canada, and Australia are in the top 10. The United States is 17th, just ahead of Ireland. You can find the full list on Wikipedia under “World Happiness Report.”

For many of us, finding happiness is a lifelong search. There are theoretical shortcuts. The most common—alcohol, drugs, desire, or power—often end up perpetuating a life of misery for ourselves and others. The word itself is overworked and can cover a multitude of human wishes for the ideal—including favorite ice cream flavors and vacation spots.

My research indicates that the English word happiness is most nearly related to the Hebrew and Greek word *blessing*. As children we prayed that God would *bless the missionaries*. We say “God bless you” when parting from friends and loved ones—or when sneezing. We ask God to bless our food, our families, and our fellowship. When I do this, I am asking that the people for whom I am praying will be happy, that they will benefit from what God offers us: health, peace, and joy. This kind of blessing also gives us meaning and purpose. In a Christian context, blessing and happiness have to do with being right with God.

The Beatitudes, Jesus’ introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, is a list of happy outcomes promised to Christ’s followers. Deriving from the Latin *abundant happiness*, they describe qualities of life or attitudes toward others that are not just good for those around us, but the prescription that makes us complete and whole. Going against all cultural norms of the first century (and the 21st) the beatitudes are the path to our possi-

ble selves, healed from the ravages brought on by several millennia of human selfishness, domination, and toxic contexts.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

What is it that changes us or strengthens us and leads us to become the happy people Jesus described? First, I think we need to know, through experience, the God of the blessings. Jesus claimed to be the Door through which we may pass from sorrow to joy. “I am the door. If anyone enters by

Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9).

As we watch how Jesus is with us in our lives, we learn the power and joy of acting like He does: being meek, mourning for others, ending strife, living mercy. It’s not what we are taught on the playground or in the board room, but it is the currency of Heaven. It’s an experiment. Try it. Jesus did it first. He’s got some experience with it. We will find He gives us the power to be so, out of His generosity, even when our feelings might dictate another action. He calls it a door that is always available and invites us to enter. “See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it” (Revelation 3:8).

God calls us to a happiness that is shared in Heaven. He invites us to try the means to it in our lives, work, relationships, churches, and experience. He takes the risk to give us the choice to find out whether Heaven’s ways really make us happy. And, if we find ourselves yearning to be able to act in the ways that bring us the most happiness, the Holy Spirit gives us the power and the courage to do so.

This desire of Heaven gives us a lot about which we can rejoice. The door to God’s blessings is open—no one can shut it. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

Some Adventist administrators, pastors, educators, and members have thought LGBTI Adventists are not good enough to fellowship in church, not pure

enough to participate in outreach, and not righteous enough to share in service. Because of their orientation, devout Adventists have been locked out from teaching the children or preaching the Word. They have been banished from choirs and music groups, refused the right to sing or speak, and even denied the symbols of Jesus' sacrifice at the Communion table. Throughout Christian history there have always been those on the margins—placed there by race, religion, nationality, marital status, gender, message, etc.

Erring humans do not have the power to deny Heaven's blessings or happiness. God's focus has always been "to loose the chains of injustice and to untie the cords of the yoke, to set the opposed free and to break every yoke...to do away with the yoke of oppression, to avoid the pointing finger and malicious talk" (Isaiah 58). God is still working

with His followers to change us into living that life.

In the last words of the Bible we are invited to "Come...Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17). The "whoever" is as broad as the world and includes everyone.

In what ways are we poor in spirit? We will be given a wealth we may not even understand.

For whom do we mourn? We will be comforted by the One who loves us most in ways that heal us.

When we are meek, know that meekness was a descriptor of Moses and can change history and the world around us.

When we hunger and thirst for righteousness, know that Heaven will change us.

When we are merciful, know that the ripple in that pond flows with such power it makes a circle back to us.

When our motives are pure and selfless from the inside out, we will be able to stand the brightness of self-sacrificing love that surrounds the Deity.

When we are peacemakers, we are citizens of Heaven.

When we are persecuted for following the Way of love, we have a chance to learn *and* to teach how Heaven looks at power.

When Jesus spoke the Beatitudes to people living under Roman rule and Pharisaical bigotry, He knew he was presenting a path that went against almost everything His listeners understood. But these odd words met the hunger of their hearts.

The actions Jesus prescribed are the only power that truly conquers evil. These actions are full of happiness. These actions are full of blessing. ▼

Send your comments/feedback to connectioneditor@sdakinship.org

Kinship Women

By Debbie Hawthorne-Toop

One of our members, Karen McLauthlin, was in a serious auto accident last November. First responders had to use the *Jaws of Life*® to get her out of the car. Several broken bones and three surgeries kept Karen in the hospital for a couple of weeks. Transferred to a rehabilitation facility, she continues to improve slowly. Knowing that Karen would still be in rehab during Christmas, Stephanie Spencer and several Kinship sisters coordinated a holiday celebration for Karen and her partner. The group decorated and brought a small tree and some presents. It is caring like this that makes me glad I am part of this loving Kinship group.



Please continue to pray for this couple. I also ask that you please pray for each one of our Kinship sisters and brothers. We all have our own journey with ups and downs, love and betrayals, laughter and tears. I know from personal experience that knowing there are others out there praying for us helps more than many imagine.

Women's Saturday Chat



North America

San Francisco 6 AM – Washington DC 9 AM

South America

Santiago 11 AM – Rio de Janeiro 12 AM

Africa

Accra 2 PM – Johannesburg 4 PM

Europe

London 2 PM - Moscow 5 PM

Asia

Tel Aviv 6 PM – Islamabad 7 PM – Beijing 10 PM

Australia (Saturday night/Sunday morning)

Perth 12 PM – Sydney 3 AM

**Subject: Host's choice!
and things the participants have on their hearts.**

Use the world clock converter to determine your local time and join the chat!



There are a lot of people in this world who talk a lot and say nothing.

Her name was Lottie Woodruff and she was my first grade teacher.

Most of her students—and their parents—considered her cool, distant, not the usual warm and fuzzy type associated with first grade. I saw her in a very different light; she was just who I needed. You see, I was left-handed. And this was 1947, still in the day when a great many teachers tried to force us lefties to learn to write right-handed. The result was usually a writing style that was cramped and hard to decipher because it was the product of a very unnatural act. But Miss Woodruff was enlightened. She watched me pick up a pencil (no ball-points yet) with my left hand and immediately set about informing me that although I was “different”—the only lefty in the class—I should do what was natural for me. I should learn to hold the pencil correctly, but it didn't matter in which hand. I would be held to the same standard of legibility, but I could do it the way that was natural for me. I still had to learn to cope with right-handed scissors, among other things, but thanks to Lottie Woodruff I knew that although my way was different and not always understood, it was in no way better or worse than that of the majority, an important lesson for a first grader.

By Gay Goree

I got my breast cancer diagnosis a few weeks before Carol and I went to Kinship's "Book and the Beach" mini-Kampmeeting.

One of the first things the group did, when I announced my illness, was to wrap me into the middle of their circle, lay their hands on me, and pray. There had been no greater experience for me than that moment.

I was too sick to attend last year's meeting but they still prayed for me. They made sure Carol got caretaker's prayers. I have asked for Kinship prayers when my chemo brain made me think I had dementia. Looks like I don't ☺. I ask for Kinship prayers when Carol and I are too sick to take care of each other. I ask for Kinship prayers when I am just tired.

There has never been a time when I did not know in my heart that prayers were being said for me and for Carol. Last week the mammogram said it looks like I am good to go.

Thanks for giving a reason to put these ideas on paper. I want to thank you.

By Dave Coltheart - Buderim, Queensland, Australia

The person I treasure most is my husband, John.

We met on an internet chat site seven years ago and have been together ever since. This week of years has been the happiest of our lives. John is a keen gardener. He transformed our ordinary backyard into a tropical garden. Both of us love to travel, but John is the one who decides our destination and itinerary. He will spend a literal year (or more) planning our next overseas adventure, making all the bookings online, and working out our route. Last year we spent an amazing month meeting the people of and photographing the incredible scenery of Nepal and Vietnam. John is shy when he first meets strangers. Even so, after he complains about having to go to a social function, he rises to the occasion and sparkles with conversation. He loves good food and invariably chooses the nicest restaurants when we eat out for our anniversary or my birthday. Although he comes from a different religious background than me, we have found a church home where we can both worship together. I treasure John more than anyone else on earth.



By Brian Smith - Australia

Recently I nearly died in the local hospital from what I think was bacterial pneumonia.

I treasure that doctor who, when I was in crisis, sat by my bed all night so I would not be alone. Someone told him he should go and get a rest. That doctor refused and spent the dark hours watching over me.

By Karla Davis

I most treasure Yahuah (God and the Holy Spirit).

They are my divine parents. They have saved my life more times than I can count. Each morning as I get up and each evening as I go to bed, I talk to Them as if They are right here listening to me. They have helped me become the whole person I am today. My life is right where it should be because of Yahuah. They talk to me through impressions in my heart and mind. I appreciate Their great love for me. They protect me and guide me wherever I go. Without Them I can do nothing. Yahshua (Jesus) is my bridegroom. I look forward to spending eternity with all of Them.

By Miles Thomas

I treasure many but I must pay tribute to the late Dr. Ruth Murdock of Andrews University.

As her student in graduate school, I found her to be a remarkably intelligent and caring woman. In my experience of the Adventist Church, it has been difficult to find people who are both conservative and open-minded. I felt safe going to her when my denial about my gayness was crumbling and my marriage was in trouble. In our private counseling Dr.



Murdock was accepting with no trace of condemnation.

As I negotiated my life, I decided to remain completely faithful to marriage vows until my four children were grown and educated. Then I could responsibly move out, get divorced, and come out. Become a whole person and going into the gay world in my mid 50s was an eye-opener! Throughout this whole journey, I remain grateful to my compassionate professor.

By Marvin Baker

In Kansas, fourteen years, six months, and seven days ago, we said our vows to each other.

I have often quoted, "It is not good for people to live alone." I didn't want to suffer the pain of loneliness, and I thank God many times a day for the gift he has given to me. Paul meets my need for love and intimacy. His love challenges me to be better than I ever dreamed I could be. He supports my creative whims and encourages me to be myself. Walking with God and Paul fulfills a lifelong dream. ▼

In prosperity, our friends know us; in adversity, we know our friends.

—John Churton Collins



HOLIDAY FRAZZLED?

CHOOSE TO LIVE DEFRAZZLED!

By Arlene Taylor

©Arlene R. Taylor, PhD

Scene One

S – *Hospital Employee Lounge*
“Holidays are absolutely the worst!” exclaimed Nell, sinking into a recliner and covering her face with her hands. “Everyone but everyone scurrying around like rats abandoning a sinking ship. I wish I could avoid them all.”

“What?” asked a colleague, sipping coffee and nibbling on a donut. “Holidays, rats, or a sinking ship?” Everyone chuckled. Even Nell.

“I’m with you,” said Hans, sliding off his stool. “They’re all the pits: rats *and* holidays, to say nothing of a sinking ship!” He paused just long enough in his

stride to throw a crumpled sandwich wrapper into the trash bin and hold open the door for an incoming lab tech.

“We sure see the outcome of holiday stress,” commented the nursing supervisor, opening a Chinese carry-out container. “Especially in the Emergency Department and Mental Health. Cardiology, too, for that matter. And the Intensive Care Unit... Most everywhere, actually.”

Scene Two

S – *Hospital Staff Cafeteria*
“How is it,” asked an endocrinologist of the next person in line as both inched along the serving line, “that the words

holidays and *stress* have come to be inexorably linked together?”

The pathologist laughed. “Your guess is as good as mine—or better. After all, you see the people who’ve developed serious problems due to the negative stress but who are still alive. Me? I meet ‘em in the morgue after the stress has done for them but good.”

“You mean *bad*,” snorted a security officer, entering the conversation while waiting to swipe an employee badge. “Or after too much alcohol or other recreational drugs dulled their brains into driving dangerously.”

Scene Three

S – Hospital Chaplain's Office

"Holiday stress. Bit of an oxymoron, that." The visiting cleric sighed. "A holiday is supposed to be a time of happy relaxation. Stress, on the other hand, at least undesirable stress, connotes tension or anxiety from whatever has altered one's equilibrium. Hard to relax when you're in a state of bodily or mental tension. Impossible to have fun."

The chaplain nodded. "I always put in some of my longest, saddest, and most stressful hours around holiday seasons."

Ponderings

Are hospital employee lounges, staff cafeterias, and chaplain's offices the only places where conversations about holiday stress typically occur?

Quite unlikely.

Similar scenarios abound. My brain's opinion is that the stress has everything to do with expectations: yours as well as those of others. It often comes from just running on the treadmill of life and failing to take time to analyze not only what is really important to you personally but also how you can extract the meaning of the holiday season without getting caught up in all the decorating, merchandizing, and partying melodrama.

The paradox is that holiday frazzle can even come from following "traditions," giving little if any thought to whether or not they still work for you—if they ever did.

A few decades ago, several bouts of post-New Year's pneumonia brought me up short. (*Laid me out short*, I should say.) You can get out of a trap only when you figure out that you're in one. I decided enough was enough.

So, what have I learned about holiday frazzlement, negative stress, and wellness?

- I learned that in life we rarely get what we deserve. More often we get what we expect. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "The ancestor of every action is a thought." I realized I had expected to become exhausted during the holidays. Of course, my brain and body obliged to make sure those thoughts—and expectations—materialized. So I changed my thoughts and my expectations.

- I learned that the most important reason for the holidays (for me) is to spend happy and relaxing quality time with good friends and family-of-choice. I stopped the myriad of holiday decorations, the frenetic shopping for gifts none of us needed, and the preparation of over-the-top meals loaded with traditional foods that went to *waist*. (Excuse the pun.)

- I learned that it was easier to reach consensus about holiday "defrazzling" than I'd thought it would be. Many held similar ideas but hadn't wanted to say anything for fear of hurting the feelings of others. We got on the same page to (1) simplify decorating by letting the kids do it (maybe not what we were used to but good practice for them), (2) donate to local food banks in lieu of presents for the adults (the smaller children still find presents under the tree), and (3) prepare meals that are nostalgic and tasty but simpler and healthier. I stopped doing everything from scratch right before each holiday. Cooking ahead of time and freezing some of the dishes makes preparing the holiday meals pretty much of a breeze, relatively speaking. As Aesop said, "A crust eaten in peace is better than a banquet partaken in anxiety." And our "crusts" are always pretty good!

- I learned that holidays are times when I need to be even more centered about keeping my life in balance with physical exercise, plenty of water, and sufficient sleep. Add to that focusing mostly on the reason for the season. No one can do everything. You always give up something to get something. I now ask myself: "What will I need to give up to get that? What will it cost me? How much am I willing to pay?"

Frazzled

Noun: a state of being weary or exhausted

Word Origin: probably from Middle English *faselen*, to fray

Defrazzled

Noun: a state of being neither weary nor exhausted

Word Origin: probably from Taylor's ponderings, c 2014

Did you find yourself frazzled during the holiday season just passed? If so, your best option is to break the cycle: *De-link the all-too-predictable outcomes of holiday burnout*. An ounce of prevention is worth ten pounds of cure after it's over. Plan today for this year. Then, right after the next holiday season has passed, for the following year, decide *now* what you are going to do differently *then*.

Metaphorically, turn down the volume on the seasonal noise, starting with negative conversation. In "The World According to Mister Rogers," Fred Rogers calmly reminds both children *and* adults:

In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers.

We humans spend a relatively short amount of time on this planet. What is your track record with holiday frazzle and stress? Remember: A rat race is for rats only!

Concentrating on what is really important can make all the difference in the world. You just might start anticipating holiday seasons with less dread, more delight. *Have happy holiday seasons from here on out*. Choose to live defrazzled.

I sure do—now! ▼





By Jonathan Cook

J really enjoy traveling. Just recently, my boyfriend and I went to France, Belgium, and The Netherlands. I like learning about other cultures. I am fascinated by the interconnectivity of the world. Travel and being in other cultures exposes me to issues I need to consider. I would like to take a year and travel around the world. When I joined Kinship I found out there are lots of people, all over the world, with whom I share similar experiences.

I am a musician with a BA in piano performance. Mixing my interest in music allows me to travel and interact with people who have been places I would like to see. I have friends who have performed all over the U.S. and Europe; performing is a place of commonality that ties us together. Being Adventists ties us to other kinds of cultures. Being LGBTI breaks down differences. We are not specific to any region or ethnic group. It just is. It pulls us together. I believe there are more things that we mortals have in common than things that separate us.



J am passionate about advocacy. When I was at Pacific Union College, I was in the first group that formed GASP—Gay and Straight People. I think it is a great name. I know the people who founded it. One of them, Jonathan, just graduated from medical school. I think this is the seventh year for GASP at PUC. Remarkable. We never knew if GASP would affect people's lives, much less last. It was encouraging to have support. Faculty would put Safe Places logos on their doors so students would know they would have a safe place to talk. I think it is valuable for students to know there is someone to talk to. I thought there might be five people. By the time I was leaving PUC, this unofficial, non-advertised group had 60 or 70 people in the first meeting. I had been terrified to come out. I was surprised by so many students who are willing to be out. Even so, I was the first openly gay student elected to the student senate at PUC. There may have been other gay students who were on the senate before me but they had not been able to be so open.

My partner and I met at PUC and dated from the time I was a freshman. We had no blueprint about how to be in a relationship as gay Adventists in

a church school. We played it by ear. I would have liked to know how other gay people navigated an Adventist college system. We took our lives together one day at a time. In the beginning we were very discreet, driving an hour away from campus to go to dinner or a movie. We would act like we were really close friends and not dating. There were challenges. Sometimes we were outed by people... "So, how long have you been together?" We never had any bad experiences when we came out as a couple. In general, millennials are not as judgmental about same-sex relationships as the generations before them. Also, there was a ton of supportive faculty. My boyfriend is much more private about his personal life than I am. I don't think GASP was easy for him. We had our rough patches. A lot of the things we would fight about were outside stresses. We would realize we weren't fighting with each other; we were reacting to stress.

With my family, it was a little rough in the beginning. I heard a lot of the typical Old Testament-based arguments. Even with the disagreements, I always knew my parents loved me, even if they thought I was confused. They realize it is not a choice but a development.

J think I am a third-generation Adventist. My dad was born Seventh-day Adventist. My grandfather was an Adventist pastor for a short time. He left the church but raised my dad and my aunt as Adventists. I find myself re-evaluating my decision to be an Adventist every time I hear the church leadership do something damaging to the LGBTI community. I think I may be an agnostic Adventist, meaning I believe in God but I

don't necessarily believe in what church officials say. I have definite doubt about the divide between faith and formalized religion. I like deconstructionist theory and queer theology and learn from Biblical stories. Some Adventists place Ellen White on a much higher plane than others. I think certain schools of Adventist thought hijacked Ellen. I like the notion of present truth. How can people apply Leviticus to us and not to their own behavior? I think spirituality is complex. Atheism is not edifying. I could get frustrated and just leave Christianity, but this has been a really important part of my life. I am happy that I have come back into this context and am finding myself. This is my culture; it is what I know. I want to make a change from within. Our voices matter. We have to speak up for the people who are afraid to. I cannot imagine being a gay Adventist in Kampala or Nairobi. I want to make a better place for gay Adventists to go.

I do not regularly attend a conventional Adventist church. I really liked going to Church 1.0 at the Kinship board meeting. I enjoyed the PUC church. It felt safe to me. Pastor Tim Mitchell is one of the big reasons I remained an Adventist. He was the PUC pastor from 2003 to 2013.

J am trying to remember how I found Kinship. I think it was through GASP and because of Dr. Aubyn Fulton. He talked me into joining Kinship. I think Kinship has a great opportunity to engage people in college. It gives us a sense of being connected. I think I joined in 2010 or 2011. I became more active when I read things on *Spectrum* and responded. I was in contact with one of the

editors of *Spectrum*. He introduced me to people in Kinship. I became involved with the responses to the gay issue in Uganda. This galvanized my energy. I want to keep church officials accountable to the people of these countries, for their own good. As Kinship's Director of Communications, I am here in a more official capacity.

I enjoy politics and the intersection of politics and religion. Kinship used to be about support. Now I think it is a mix of support and advocacy. As early as 1985 one of the *Connection* articles talked about marriage equality. It is fascinating for me to see how Kinship members

were discussing marriage equality so soon in the history of the organization. I am amazed at how brave they were.

I would like to increase the role of Kinship with the Adventist church and our LGBTI members. I want us to be a bigger voice. I want to increase the grass roots movement. I want to keep the conversation moving forward.

My friend Terre asked me when I thought there would be a time that Kinship is not needed. I think that is a long time from now. I want more young people to know Kinship's sense of community with a group of people to support us and advocate for our best interests. I am

amazed to be with people who are vulnerable with each other. I am looking forward to the Pomona Kampmeeting next year. I want others people to experience that part of our community. In general I am looking forward to learning from and building on all the different experiences of our members. I would like to see more interaction among all Kinship members throughout the world. Maybe we could sponsor a mission trip. I am looking forward to meeting as many LGBTI people with Adventist backgrounds as I can. I look forward to hearing their stories. I wish our church leaders would also be willing to do so. ▼



I love getting to know people. I think everyone has something to offer. I like in-depth conversations rather than chit-chat. I like hearing what people are passionate about: relationships, traveling, and history. I like hearing, at the deeper levels, about almost any topic that interests the speaker. Everyone has a story to tell. We all come from different walks of life. God has created each of uniquely and we all have something special to offer. People are each a piece of the jigsaw puzzle. We need to have all the pieces to make a complete picture. The picture in the completed puzzle is a picture of Jesus.

I am approachable. I say this because I can get focused on my work and then it appears that I don't have time for others. People might not be able to read me. I want it known that people can come to me with questions, to talk, to pray. I think most of the time when I am in groups I am more quiet. One-on-one, you can see my excitement and my enthusiasm. I am a good listener.

I love to travel and explore new places. My favorite is the Narrows at

By Karen Lee

I love Jesus. I stand amazed at His perfect love and patience. I am glad that every day is a new day filled with opportunities. Even when I fail to live up to the standards by which I aspire to build my life, Jesus has patience with me. He is willing to continue His walk with me. He gives me grace and mercy. Every moment of every day, Jesus is the center of my life. Every choice I make, every action I take is because I want to be closer to my God. His way is the best way. I want to be one with Christ.

Zion National Park. When I walk the trail and go between the tall, red stone walls on either side of me, I feel closest to God. I enjoy the national parks of the U.S. I have traveled to Europe and to Asia: Taiwan, China, Japan, Hong Kong, France, Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Amsterdam (where I competed in the Gay Games, running the 1/2 marathon). I was a student missionary in Taiwan.

My fascination with traveling the globe began with jigsaw puzzles, postage stamps and coins—each showing a new place to dream of. Of course there were also those years of Sabbath school mission stories. I like meeting people wherever I go and learning about their lives and interests. I want to see Lake Havasu Falls in Arizona with its terraced pools of water. I want to visit Antelope Canyon and revel in the weather-formed rock walls rising high on either side of hikers. I feel closer to God when I am outside in these environments. I enjoy the way exercise kicks in my endorphins and leaves me feeling happy. Other favorite hiking places: Zion, Bryce, Arches, Escalante,

the Grand Staircase, La Fayette Reservoir, Mt. Diablo, and Muir Woods. Oh, yes, and I want to see Australia and Greece.

I am Kinship's treasurer because I want to help people. Kinship has always been very dear to me as a gay Adventist Christian. This is the best way I can be of help because this is what I am good at. I enjoy the work, though it takes time to do it carefully. I do not see myself as the visionary. I am the one who does the details.

What would I like to say to the Adventist Church? I would like to be myself when I go to church. I don't want to have to hide who I am. I want to be loved and accepted and welcomed into the church and the homes of church members and not be judged. I would like to feel that it is safe one day, when I have a partner, to bring that person to church. By safe I mean that we won't be told that our talents are not needed and that we should sit in the back row. This happened to me. ▼



[Health Tips]



Fighting wrinkles is anything but fighting the inevitable.

And at this point, your average five-year-old could probably tell you that the first step is staying out of the sun. So what else can you do? How about rearranging what's on your plate tonight.

Load up on these:

- ✓ Vegetables
- ✓ Beans
- ✓ Olive oil
- ✓ Nuts
- ✓ Whole-grain bread

Cut down on these:

- ✓ Red meat
- ✓ Sugary, processed foods

Sure, every health expert says you should eat this way, but skin researchers have found that people who actually do watch what they eat not only have bodies that are physically younger, healthier, and slimmer but also are less likely to get wrinkles. Cool.

Why? Experts suspect it's because the foods in the "load-up" category are crammed with antioxidants, those cellular warriors that fight both aging and disease. Specifically, credit for their wrinkle-fighting success is given to five potent antioxidants—zinc, selenium, and vitamins A, C, and E—which excel at reducing the amount of free radicals that skin cells produce. Free radicals are what do the aging damage in the first place.



Influenza

By Ben Kemena M.D.

For me it's another day at work in the non-profit intra-urban city hospital that is my professional home. More than 40% of my patients are completely uninsured. President Obama's Affordable Care Act is not required and is not provided to "undocumented" immigrants to the United States. I see influenza through this lens of this place.



Sub-zero temperatures have forced many people into closer quarters. This epidemic flu strain mutated shortly after this year's vaccine was developed and distributed. The vaccine can shorten the course and duration of the illness, but will not completely prevent this flu. In Denver, Colorado, flu-related deaths are being confirmed by autopsy and secondary lab testing. Many of those fatalities are children under the age of 12. To protect the young ones, at my city hospital, we have banned visitation of all children under the age of 14 unless they are a patient. In adults, this influenza, combined with pre-existing conditions such as cancer, emphysema, stroke, etc., can easily be lethal. We are asking that adult patient visitation be limited to those who are not overtly ill, that all visitors wear masks, wash hands, and glove in-and-out of the rooms. We instituted this protocol December 15 and it may be required through April.

We are advising our most at-risk children and adults to avoid crowded venues: malls, supermarkets, banks, churches, post offices, airplanes, mass transit, and restaurants until we see a decrease in the number of cases. If one must go to a crowded area we suggest going "after-hours" to help minimize exposure. Some pretty amazing families have agreed to television interviews, describing the heartbreak of losing a family member to influenza. They are hoping this will save others the pain they are experiencing. It's heartbreaking. We want our community to understand that the protocols being put in places by local facilities—hospitals, nursing homes, rehab centers, ventilator facilities, dialysis, etc.—may seem harsh but we want to save lives. This epidemic is affecting all of us at some visceral level.

In the wake of the flu, we are also seeing a much higher rate of norovirus (the "cruise ship virus"), enterovirus (the "stomach flu" which can also cause viral meningitis), and RSV (a respiratory virus). Once your immunity is stressed after the flu, you are much more susceptible to picking up other illnesses. We have encouraged increased phone use, face time, or Skype to help family and friends stay connected during this time. It's not the same the same as a personal visit, but better than coming to the hospital with a broken hip, complicated by unwelcome influenza. In the last snowstorm we had 17 patients with new hip fractures arrive in a 12-

hour period. Many of the falls occurred in adults already battling the flu while trying to shovel snow.

As Adventists or those with Adventist backgrounds, we are fortunate to have a fine tradition of eating healthy foods. We also have a tendency to think cleanliness is next to godliness! Eat well, eat healthy, wash compulsively and often! I believe that vitamins, good food, hydration such as water, herbal tea, soup, etc., and some natural supplements can be very useful during times like this. Products like Purell® can be used about four times before you need to wash and start over! At my hospital, we actually track the medical staff with hidden mobile ceiling cameras to help enforce handwashing. We hand wash before entering a patient room, we hand wash after exiting a patient room, and, even if it's 30 seconds later, we hand wash again before entering the next room. Hospital room garbage and paper towel waste is collected every few hours round-the-clock.

If you have been exposed to someone with the flu, consider contacting your health care provider immediately for anti-viral prophylaxis. These medications do not prevent the flu but they shorten the duration and severity of the illness. These medications do have significant neurological side effects in some patients and you would want to discuss the benefits and burdens with your health care provider. If you feel like you have the flu, these same anti-viral medications can be started to help you through it, but are best given within 48 hours of symptoms. Don't tarry! The duration of this flu appears to be about 10-14 days for most people we see. They usually end up missing work and other activities.

If you become ill, please let others help you! This isn't "just a flu" or "just a virus." It is a potentially lethal illness.

All of you are precious! It is my prayer that you stay well! ▼



There are no more hours in a bad day than in a good one!

—unknown

Kinship Germany Meetings

on Saturdays February 7,
March 14, and May 2

in the Frankfurt area

Info at kinshipgermany@sdakinship.org

By Ingrid Schmid and Tanja Svinkas

In Germany we are trying to schedule meetings in homes of Kinship members more often. Since several members/friends live in the greater Frankfurt area, we decided to meet there to get started.

In September we met at Tanja's, and in November at Frieder and Ingrid's home. We did not have speakers or a special program. But we were happy to welcome new friends and hope to add some more as we continue to meet. In November we watched the Seventh-Gay Adventists movie, which was well received. It is nice to spend time together, in the backyard or around the table with some nice food and share whatever is on hearts and minds.

The next regular get together will be on Saturday afternoon, February 7, 3 p.m. at the home of René and Marcel (Address: Goldsteinstraße 7, 60528 Frankfurt). We want to take time to get to know one another better, listen to each other's stories, and discuss topics of general interest. Everybody is welcome to attend. Please inform Tanja if you plan to come.

On March 21 we will have an extra (not planned) little get together in either Mainz, Frankfurt, or Erzhäusen with special guests Catherine Taylor and Floyd Pönitz from the USA. Catherine and Floyd are in Germany for the annual Safe Places meeting in the Odenwald area, with pastors and educators in Europe. They will report us on the meeting. We hope that many are able to come and meet with Floyd and Catherine and to learn about this special project with remarkable results. Please write to Tanja Svinkas or kinshipgermany@sdakinship.org if you want be informed about the exact time and place, so we can know how many people are joining us then.

On May 2, David and Werner agreed to be hosts in their home in Spielberg.

If you live in Germany and would like to be a host, please let us know. It would be great if the group could grow again.

European Meeting

Now is the perfect time to plan your early autumn holiday. This year our European Kinship Meeting (EKM) will be held in lovely Florence, Italy. We found an excellent speaker and are already researching houses with pools on the Adriatic for our traditional post-EKM holiday.



EKM meeting : 27 August - 31 August

EKM holiday : 31 August - 7 September

More information soon to be announced.



Book and the Beach Mini-Kampmeeting

October 1-4, Nags Head North Carolina

\$235 per person — This covers lodging & meals as well as an adventure and dinner, lots of music, devotionals, and discussions.

**Register now, pay 50% of the cost,
and pay the remainder before September 15, 2015.**

From the President's Desk

► *continues from cover*

At our earliest Kampmeetings, we invited sympathetic and caring pastors and educators from the Seventh-day Adventist Church to come speak to us. (One of these was reported on in the 1970s by *Spectrum Magazine*.) Kinship members invited these church workers into our gatherings so that they could get to know us and we them, and so that we could form mutual relationships. At these meetings, we often heard that we were loved and worthy. This was a wonderful message for those of us who had been marginalized. I'm now beginning to wonder whether there are more messages for us to hear and share.

Lately, I've had several conversations that have inspired me to reflect on whether we keep doing things the way we've always done them, and whether that is the best thing for our community. For the last 12-13 years, we've included some of those sympathetic and caring straight church workers in our Advisory Council and worked with them to help Kinship stay connected with the denomination. Some of our members feel that this is extremely important work. Others are less convinced; they feel that the denomination will always be closed to us.

And so as we start this year, perhaps it's time for us all to reevaluate for ourselves and for Kinship whether seeking a relationship with or acceptance from our denomination should be the focus of our efforts. Our members have a wide range of expertise. I would love for us to use that expertise to educate the Adventist community; and the more members who step forward to contribute, the more we can do. But, historically, we've often asked our straight allies to come and speak to us instead. Why is that?

Please don't misunderstand me. I do believe we need our straight allies, pastors, and educators to continue working with us. The perspectives and experience they have to share is so very helpful; and I do feel that nurturing these wonderful relationships is extremely important for them and equally important for us.

What if this year we recalibrate the work we do? Perhaps it's time we stop reacting to every negative speech and statement that comes from the GC's scholars and presidents, the church's big-name evangelists and media companies, or educators and conferences. Last year we said "every story matters" and we wrote our truth. Maybe that's what we all need to do more of. Maybe our experts and our experiences should be at the heart of our work. And maybe it's time we speak for ourselves instead of encouraging others to speak for us.

We're qualified to put out accurate information about our community, because we are the experts on our own lives. Instead of just responding to the outdated, inaccurate, and totally absurd information that is dispersed about us, we could steadily write and publish up-to-date, accurate, and compelling information about who we are and what we experience. We matter, and we shouldn't have to jump every time the church sneezes.

I don't believe we should beg to be a part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I won't beg; I'm Adventist regardless of what anyone else in the denomination says. I also don't blame any of our members who leave the church feeling that it is no longer relevant for them. It's hard to stick around any place where you're not wanted or appreciated.

To me, Kinship is relevant. It's relevant for this community of LGBTI current and former Adventists. Whether we stay church members or ►



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Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press
Association.

► find other communities to be part of, we each have a voice. This year, use your voice. Speak for yourself. Share accurate information about our awesomely wonderful and diverse community. We are awesome! And we have powerful stories to tell! If all of the diverse voices of our community joined in telling our own stories, we'd sound way better than the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. In 2015, I say, let's start singing! ▼



[Rehoboth 2011]



Register now

at www.sdakinship.org

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship Kampmeeting July 14-19, 2015

Kellogg West Conference Center & Lodge, Pomona, CA USA

Preceding Kampmeeting 2015

KinWomen

Friday 10 - Tuesday 14 July
women@sdakinship.org



[KinWomen 2014]

