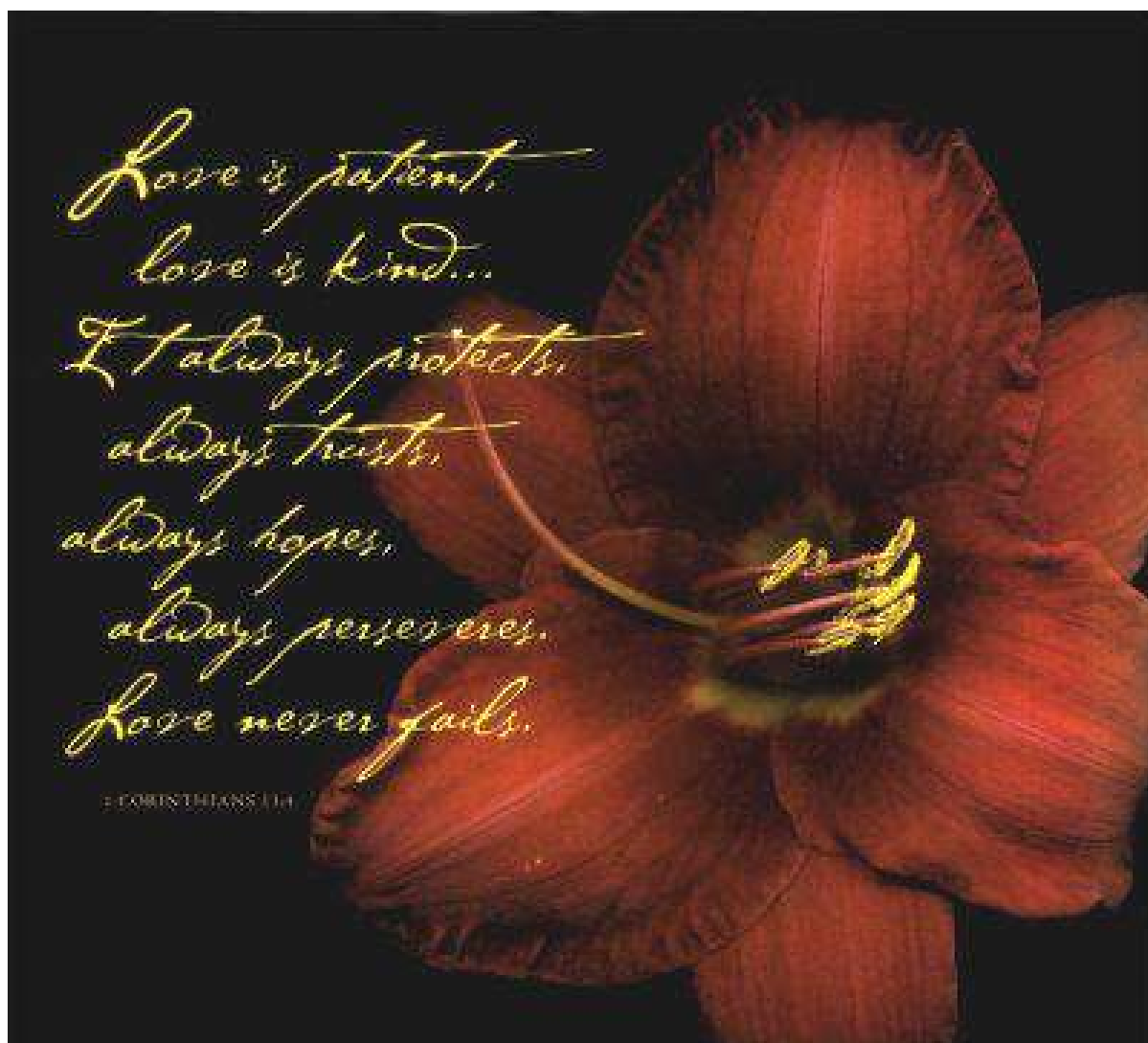


connection.

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 33 No. 2 – February 2009



KINSHIP BOARD

President: Bob Bouchard
 Vice President: Isis Montalvo
 Secretary: Bev Winsted
 Treasurer: *To be appointed*
 Director of Church Relations: Dave Ferguson
 Director of Communications: Jacquie Hegarty
 Director of Diversity: Obed Vazquez-Ortiz
 Director of Women: Brenda McColpin
 Director of Youth Interests: Ruben López
 Directors-at-Large: Carrol Grady, Ruud Kieboom
 Connection Editor: Catherine Taylor
 Kampmeeting Coordinator: Naveen Jonathan
 Membership Services: Fred Casey

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Advisory Council: Dave Ferguson
 Communications: Jacquie Hegarty
 Executive: Bob Bouchard
 Finance: Samuel Pang
 Governance: Bev Winsted
 International Growth and Development: Floyd Pönitz

REGIONAL COORDINATORS, USA

Region 1 (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY, PA, DE, NJ): David Thaxton and Catherine Taylor, region1@sdakinship.org
 Region 2 (MD, VA, WV, NC, SC): Yolanda Elliott, region2@sdakinship.org
 Region 3 (TN, AL, MS, GA, SC, FL): region3@sdakinship.org
 Region 4 (MN, IA, MO, WI, MI, IL, IN, OH, KY): region4@sdakinship.org
 Region 5 (AK, KS, LA, OK, TX): Floyd Pönitz, region5@sdakinship.org
 Region 6 (ND, SD, NE, WY, UT, CO, NM): region6@sdakinship.org
 Region 7 (AL, WA, OR, ID, MT): region7@sdakinship.org
 Region 8 (NV, HI, CA zip 93600+): Obed Vazquez-Ortiz, region8@sdakinship.org
 Region 9 (AZ, CA zip 93599-): region9@sdakinship.org

AFFILIATED INTERNATIONAL REGION COORDINATORS

Australia-New Zealand: Noel Thorpe, info@sdakinshipaustralia.org
 Brazil: Itamar Matos de Souza, matoso25@yahoo.com.br
 Canada: Jerry McKay, ba360@ncf.ca
 Central & South America: Alexander Gomez Pasco, alexgpasco@yahoo.com
 Europe: Ruud Kieboom, kinship@xs4all.nl
 Germany: Roy Raetzer, roy@raetzer-botha.de
 United Kingdom & Eire, Mike Lewis, kinship_uk@scotmagic.co.uk
 Philippines: Jonathan Co, cancer108@hotmail.com

OTHER COORDINATORS

Intersex: Carolyn Parsons, intersex@sdakinship.org
 Transgender/Transsexual: Sandra Hoffecker, transgender@sdakinship.org
 Older Adults: Ren Reynolds, olderadult@sdakinship.org
 IMRU? (Young Adults Under 30): Ruben López, imru@sdakinship.org
 Webmaster: Linda Wright, webadmin@sdakinship.org

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 an organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people.

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 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn or even mention homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts that are used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up as LGBTI has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

SUPPORT KINSHIP

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 SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

SDA Kinship, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA
 or visit SDA Kinship's website at:
www.sdakinship.org.





From the Editor

Today is the perfect day for me to write a note on I Corinthians 13. Here I am, someone who has the text in calligraphy and framed over my computer monitor.

Someone who tries to read those verses every day. But yesterday, on the Sabbath no less, I was impatient, thoughtlessly unkind (I would like to say unintentionally thoughtlessly unkind – but that is not taking responsibility for my actions) and, therefore, rude and unprotecting. I wish I could rewind some of my choices. I wish I could unprint some of my words. I am looking into the mirror of my mind and feeling my own human frailty.

Perhaps that is one of the gifts of The Love Chapter. It humbles us. It also gives us lofty but very specific goals. It provides the opportunity to better understand other mortals when they make relational mistakes. It provides us the opportunity to “pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the process of rebuilding” (to quote part of a sentence in the Inaugural Address of Barak Obama) our spiritual/relational journey.

For me the greatest gift of I Corinthians 13 is that it gives me a picture of the One who is leading my journey. I spent way too much of my life worshiping a god who was more like Thor than Yahweh. I thought I could see lightning flashes around every mistaken corner, directed at every mistaken deed. The study and the work I have needed to integrate my spirituality and my orientation has helped me come to know a more Biblical Deity. When I make mistakes, large and less large, I realize I follow One who is patient with me as I am growing, whose primary focus is what Ellen White called “The Law of Kindness.” I am learning to know a Leader who is not rude, Who wants to listen to me, hear my concerns, consider my requests, and accede to those requests that are good for me. I now believe in One who is not easily angered at me, Who does not go, “Aha! I caught you,” but, “How can I help you?” I am coming to know a God who will always protect me, trust in me, hope for me, and be the One who perseveres to keep our relationship intact. I am learning that the only way I will ever become a human who can aspire to living I Corinthians 13 is to have a Parent who lived it first. Instead of lightning bolts “it will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self sacrificing love.” Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*.

This month we chose to focus on different ways Kinship members have experienced love. I may ask for contributions but I am always amazed and grateful at the different lenses through which our writers view their world. Take good care of yourself for you are infinitely valuable!

Catherine

The tasty green florets of broccoli are ripped with sulforaphane, a compound that seems to help keep high blood sugar moderated so it does less damage. When your blood sugar is chronically high, it can damage the cells of your heart, eyes, kidneys, and nerves. But in a recent Petri-dish study, adding sulforaphane to a mix of blood vessel cells and glucose cut oxidation (read damage) by as much as 73 percent. More research is needed to see if sulforaphane in the diet is as protective. But we already know that the compound is a super cancer fighter. So down the hatch—make this EatingWell.com broccoli dish tonight for extra sulforaphane:

Corn and Broccoli Calzones.

- 1 ½ cups chopped broccoli florets
 - 1 ½ cups fresh corn kernels (about 3 ears)
 - 1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
 - ⅔ cup part-skim ricotta cheese
 - 4 scallions, thinly sliced
 - ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
 - ½ teaspoon garlic powder
 - ¼ teaspoon salt
 - ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
 - All-purpose flour for dusting
 - 20 ounces prepared whole-wheat pizza dough, thawed if frozen
 - 2 teaspoons canola oil
1. Position racks in upper and lower thirds of oven; preheat to 475° F (245° C.). Coat 2 baking sheets with cooking spray.
 2. Combine broccoli, corn, mozzarella, ricotta, scallions, basil, garlic powder, salt, and pepper in a large bowl.
 3. On a lightly floured surface, divide dough into 6 pieces. Roll each piece into an 8-inch circle. Place a generous ¾ cup filling on one-half of each circle, leaving a 1-inch border of dough. Brush the border with water and fold the top half over the filling. Fold the edges over and crimp with a fork to seal. Make several small slits in the top to vent steam; brush each calzone with oil. Transfer the calzones to the prepared baking sheets.
 4. Bake the calzones, switching the pans halfway through, until browned on top, about 15 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving.

Rom Wilder

A String too Short to Save

I'm not sure of the exact moment it began. It probably had something to do with a small church within half an hour of Andrews University—and music. They were both intelligent, funny, creative, tender-hearted. She made lists, could tell you funny stories about everyone in the family, including Dear Sir, the cat, and you never felt she was judging you. He made fun out of everything from paying bills to eating ice cream, and you never felt he was judging you.

I was always welcome in their home, whether it was to study, watch Dick Van Dyke, play absolutely totally silly games they'd made up when their kids were little, or just take comfort in the activities of daily living going on around me as I sat and soaked up their love and spirit.

It's been a long time since I've seen them face to face. They live on the West Coast and I live on the East Coast. They've been through a lot of joy and a lot of challenges—like pacemakers and cancer (though they never complained about either to me!). Their children, who were between 12 and 17 back then, are all grown up now and have their own teenagers. His black wavy hair is now white. (I've seen photos.)

But inside they're still the fun and tender people who healed my heart so long ago. When we talk on the phone it could be 1970 or '80 or '90.

Their voices are still the same. She tells me stories that have me laughing till my sides ache, except now it is about their grandchildren.

When I would drive away from their home, I was torn between laughing and crying while the two of them stood there on the front step, a white hankie waving from his hand.

Thank you, Uncle Lou and Aunt Margie, for the gift of yourselves, for all the laughter and food and sleepovers, for your everlasting love of me and your acceptance of my partner. If your God is anything like you, we are all in good hands. ▽



Loving a Community - 1

Virginia (Ren) Reynolds

Almost immediately I found people I knew. They made Kinship somewhat more comfortable. A former student wrote a welcoming letter and offered me a leadership position. A number of people contacted me to describe my proposed role. All our interactions felt very personal. Many folk wrote letters, real ones, handwritten ones. There were no computers.

People in leadership thought carefully about what they wanted to convey on KinNet and in other press. I remember differences in our belief systems, but I do not remember impatience with those beliefs. Sensitive me would have taken note of that. Our focus was on building Kinship and making it a safe place. There were a few skirmishes once we did begin to grow, but the general harmony was something I had never experienced.

I believe the most valuable thing we've done in Kinship is to show love to every person who came to us needing to know what the Bible really says (and does not say) about homosexuality. I believe one of the great qualities of Kinship is that we help others go through the tough times they face in the process of accepting themselves as LGBTI people. I appreciate the generous gift of time given to Kinship and the number of years and dollars gifted by countless people who have donated in more than one way. Some wear special halos. ▽

Loving a Community -2

Carrol Grady

Catherine asked me to write about my relationship with Kinship. Thirteen years ago, I never dreamed I'd have any such relationship! Then my book, *My Son, Beloved Stranger*, was published, and I was asked to come and speak at Kampmeeting in Menucha, in 1995.

I agreed, feeling very tentative. I was not sure what I was getting into. When I arrived and began to register, Kinship leader Mike McLaughlin asked me how I ever came to choose Kate McLaughlin for my pseudonym and to call my husband Michael McLaughlin in the story. (My mother's maiden name was McLaughlin.) We shared a laugh over that coincidence. I stayed in a room with Sherri Babcock, someone I already knew. At worship that evening I was surprised but thrilled to hear the fervent—and beautiful—singing of the old familiar, well-loved hymns. When I spoke the next day, I was again surprised by the warm, enthusiastic response and the standing ovation. Before I departed, Dave Ferguson talked to me about trying to get something started to help parents. Needless to say, I left with a feeling of acceptance and friendship.

Somehow my boss, the ministerial secretary at the conference office, discovered where I had gone. He called me into his office to (more or less) reprimand me for going without permission, even though I went on my own time and on my own personal business. He explained that the conference was trying to get its constituents to accept some female pastors and was afraid that if the constituents heard someone who worked at the conference was "supporting" homosexuals this would work against the introduction of women pastors. He went on to say the constituents might feel the next step would be to bring in gay pastors! When I first started publishing my newsletter, *Someone to Talk To*, I was required to have it

approved by my boss. From my perspective now, I think this requirement forced my boss to read what I had to say which gradually made a dent in his understanding of LGBTI issues. Since Kinship encouraged its members to send the newsletter to their parents I became better acquainted with many of you.

A couple of years later I retired, made my first foray into the Internet, and became involved with GLOW (God's Love Our Witness), a support ministry for LGBTI people who were trying to be celibate. (I was still in my learning stage!) At that time several Kinship members were part of GLOW. As I saw how they were treated I decided to part company with GLOW. I had been planning to have an exhibit at the 2000 General Conference Session with Inge Anderson, the moderator of GLOW, but decided to continue my plans without her. Dave Ferguson and Floyd Poenitz showed up and gave the other two mothers and me much-appreciated help.

The next time Kampmeeting was at Menucha I was invited to attend and speak again. This time I stayed through the entire week, and the meeting had an even stronger impact on me. I was greeted with warm hugs by those I'd met before, met some wonderful new friends, and began to really feel an attachment to this welcoming and accepting family. They accepted me long before I came to the understanding I have today.

Over the last few years I have become increasingly involved with Kinship. I have even served several terms as a member of the Kinship's Board of Directors. While various members have their own quirks and foibles, just as in any group of people, I have never been part of any group where I felt more comfortable in being myself or more loved and accepted. Would that our church could become more like Kinship! ▽

Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream.

-Malcolm Muggeridge

The marksman hitteth the mark partly by pulling, partly by letting go.

-Egyptian proverb

So-called aging is not the deterioration of life, but the deterioration of our faith, our enthusiasm, our will to progress.

-Connie Fillmore

Loving Ruud



Ruud set up Kinship Europe. In a certain sense he *is* Kinship Europe. My silly joke is that I am the First Lady. But that is ridiculous, of course. I hope that being Ruud's partner is enough. When I think about telling our story, I think of it as something like, "Everything you wanted to know about Ruud but were afraid to ask!" Don't get excited now; I certainly won't say the most personal things. They are not really interesting for outsiders, you know. I hope to tell you something meaningful about us and our part in Kinship.

Kees Meiling

Kinship is supposed to be a family. In Kinship Europe we don't elect a president, but someone is needed here in Europe to organize things. Ruud does this, and people join hands to help because they believe Kinship is worthwhile and because they trust Ruud. Family implies a sense of belonging, just the way you are. You can choose your friends (you think, but they also have to choose you), but you don't choose your family. Your family is a gift to you; you are a gift to your family. Let's work to appreciate that! I keep telling Ruud that he is perfect and he believes me. (I am at least a perfect liar).

We readily accept that we are not perfect and we wish others to accept us as we are. However, when I was looking for a partner, I wanted someone who was both wise and beautiful. Like most humans, I wanted someone who would profoundly understand me, would say the right things at the right time, and would always be there when I need him, and only then! Fortunately, my fate turned out to be quite different from what I had in mind. Fortunately, I love Ruud and I have realized he is just perfect the way he is!

In a remote past, I thought about my future as being married and having children with a woman. I had very leftist and very secularist ideas about changing the world. As life turned out, my partner is a man. And he is an active member of the Adventist Church. Being gay was never really a problem. But I don't think I will ever be an Adventist. It was, however, inevitable that to some extent I belong to the Adventist Church as a kind of family. I chose Ruud and that implied the Adventist Church and, later, Kinship.

Ruud is a religious person, but he is not a propagandising one. For him religion is just a way of living or being or working. He never tried to convince me that I should be an Adventist. We have known each other for twenty-one years. We share similar beliefs and values. We both want to treat people the way we ourselves want to be treated. In everyday life our rare fights are about everyday things, not ideological controversies. Ruud is a liberal, a free-thinker. I would suggest that he is quite "normal." He doesn't claim to know exactly what the Supreme Being wants us to do and not to do. He believes in working hard to help people whenever he can. For instance, he works on the *Connection* for hours and hours. He enjoys it and tends to forget the world

around him. The *Connection* is a kind of emergency and my job is to help him survive. He would even forget to eat and drink. I don't just put the cup of coffee next to him; I also take care that he drinks it!

Frankly, I don't quite understand what people mean when they say they believe in a personal God. I felt more or less at home in the synagogue a long time ago. I can read the Hebrew Bible. I earn a living translating Hebrew books. Ruud lived for two years in Israel, so he also knows some Hebrew. We make people believe that privately we speak Hebrew; but that is, of course, nonsense! We share the same Judeo-Christian inheritance. We enrich our lives and stimulate each other's thinking. For both of us, community or solidarity is important. Perhaps God is just community.

What makes us both indignant is that the church excludes people from the community just because they are gay. If there is a God, I can hardly imagine that He/She would consider homosexuality as an abomination. I would like to make guarantees for gay people that homosexuality is not a sin, that the very idea is absurd! But who am I to give such a guarantee?

Ruud has a big family: nine brothers and sisters who all have children and grandchildren. My own family is very small. Being Ruud's partner, I have more than one extended family. We chose to be partners for life; family is an additional gift. ▽

Kees and Ruud will celebrate their 15th wedding anniversary on 14 February 2009.



Start a Kinship Chapter in Your Area

Nearly all LGBTI Adventists have one thing in common – the need to connect with other LGBTI Adventists.

You can change this by starting a Kinship chapter in your area. Contact the Kinship office for more information at office@sdakinship.org.



We would like to introduce you to:



David Coltheart lives on the Sunshine Coast of Buderim in Queensland, Australia. He attended Newbold College in the late '60s and early '70s. He earned his Master's Degree from Andrews University in 1974. When he returned to Australia he worked as a pastor/evangelist in Sydney. For twenty-eight years David worked for the Adventist Church as a conference evangelist, a union evangelist, and an administrator in the union office in Papua, New Guinea.

These days he is a project manager and technical writer for a firm that writes training materials for Industry, especially mining. He recently bought his own home and enjoys living in an area surrounded by rain-forest but only ten minutes drive from some of the best beaches in Australia. Every Sabbath, he attends a local Seventh-day Adventist Church that knows his orientation.

None of us will ever accomplish anything excellent or commanding except when he listens to this whisper which is heard by him alone.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Here is what he writes about his country: "You would be right at home in Australia. We have freeways and normal suburban streets where you won't get mugged, robbed, raped, or abducted! We have McDonald's, Wendy's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Most of our TV programs come from America especially over the silly season until the end of January (holiday months). We have planes that connect all the cities and regional towns at very cheap prices. The weather is beautiful and sunny. There is lots of open space. We have supermarkets and shopping malls, fabulous outdoor lifestyle, literally thousands of kilometers of deserted, golden beaches, and lots of Adventist churches and schools in almost every town. Kinship Australia connects LGBTI members together from time to time. Our annual Kampmeeting is in Sydney in October 2009. Check out the Kinship Australia website at <http://sdakinshipaustralia.org>.

"Australians are among the friendliest people on earth. We have to be. We have people living here from all over the world, literally. Go see the movie *Australia* starring Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman. It is well worthwhile. The movie was filmed in northwest Australia (the region known as the Kimberleys) and features a fabulous story with jaw-dropping scenery set just before and during World War II. I am going to that area in May for a two-week camping and safari tour." ▽

Loving God,

Trusting God?

Robbie Kaplan

In the late 1800s, an Adventist camp meeting was convened in Napier, New Zealand. Ellen White was the guest speaker, so it was a very special time for the early believers. My father's mother was present and talked to Ellen White personally. The rest is history. She became an Adventist (as did my mother after having studies with a New Zealand evangelist.) Over a period of several years my older siblings and I also joined the church. My father more or less left the church as a result of being a Gallipoli veteran but returned to the fold prior to his death.

There were seven in our family. I am the youngest, the only boy, and gay to boot. This is something I struggled with for most of my life. For many years it coloured my relationship with God. As I have gained maturity I have learned to accept what cannot be changed.

My mother was a wise woman. She and a tiny number of other very supportive Adventists lived the gospel regardless of what the Adventist norm was in that time period. From my perspective then, they kept a balance between the legalism of keeping the seventh-

day Sabbath from sunset to sunset and creating enjoyable picnics at places like the Meeting of the Waters, a beautiful spot in the bush (without snakes!).

By the time I was baptised at the age of 15, (in New Zealand in a river in the middle of winter and a long way from home), I realised I loved God and felt somewhat secure in Him in the way of the young. However, a gnawing sense of loneliness, which was to be a foretaste of how I would feel for most of my life, would make its appearance now and again. It didn't take long for the battle with my sexuality to begin in earnest.

I knew at an early age I was gay. I realised it wasn't necessarily God's "fault" I was born this way, and was sufficiently aware to realise that if He wanted, He could change me at the flick of His Godly fingers to become "normal." I told Him one day, when I was praying on my knees yet again, that if He wanted me to go to hell then that was okay but I innately knew I could never change of my own volition and told him as much (politely, I think). I got up from my knees and "walked away" to see what He would do about the matter, if anything. (I never believed in hell, but in my young mind I was trying to make it sound as melodramatic as I could.)



God proved my belief by denying any change. From then on I accepted my lot and didn't bother God about it any further. I didn't actually see it as bad but learned early that it was not a generally accepted way of being. I was stuck in my unwanted sexuality as firmly as was Br'er Rabbit to the tar baby.

School days were happy—well, sort of. I recognise now that I was actually quite mixed up, but no one thought to take me aside and talk about it. I wish there had been someone to whom I could have spoken, but I just didn't dare to go to the teachers to discuss my homosexuality! Oh, no! In many ways God was the absent landlord for me (or the silent God, whichever applied). Saying prayers at night was automatic, somewhat akin to Tony Campolo's little boy who came in one night and said, "I'm going to bed. I'm going to be praying. Anybody want anything?" When my mother bought me some new sandals, I was so excited I wore them to bed! I still see this clearly.

In my younger days my relationship with God was fed by the good books Mum bought, as she was able, with very little money to go around. She chose wisely. These books always had good moral lessons and were interesting, as well. The story, *Hudson Taylor—Missionary to China*, made a great impact on me. I decided then I wanted to serve God when I grew up. However, in the latter part of high school, I got wrapped up in the legalism of those times that was fueled by some public evangelism, Sabbath School lessons, and the ways the writings of Ellen White were used.

My connection with God led me to attend college for the sole purpose of learning more about the Bible. It was the best thing that could have happened to me. During those four years, my relationship with God was greatly strengthened.

In 1981 the whirlwind struck. My mother and eldest sister died in the same week, but I will **never** forget the three absolutely wonderful people who stayed with me almost the entire day of my mother's death. They were

such remarkable representatives of God that I now know God was there for me in my time of critical need. In my months of grieving I collapsed, emotionally and physically. I needed to survive financially. I needed to work out the intricacies of having my gay mindset, and I needed to work out "the problem of suffering." At the time I didn't perceive the love of God. I felt damaged beyond repair, and I could not see His face. Everything I had worked and studied for was lost to me, except for college years. Later in life, it was those college years that allowed me to rebuild my relationship with God.

A few years later I came close to leaving the Adventist Church but had nowhere to go. I

commenced attending Good News Unlimited meetings each year when they came to Sydney. The months between meetings created a situation in which it took a long time before the news of the true gospel of the kingdom began to filter through into my weary heart and brain. I realised that God does indeed care about my pain. By understanding God's suffering as He watched Jesus die on Calvary, I came to believe that He truly understands the pressures and sadness earthlings face.

Years after this realisation, God impressed upon me that there were some people I needed to forgive. This was really difficult, and I don't mean maybe! God was patient and He needed to be. He didn't pressure me except for a polite, "Robbie, how are you getting along with that little assignment we chatted about a year or so ago—remember?" And I would answer slowly, "Yes, I guess so, Lord." It took several years for me to actually enunciate certain names in my prayers.

About a year ago, I realised that I myself had to ask for forgiveness for long-lost behaviors of my own. I asked God specifically if He would remind me of all these issues and instances. Within a very short time they came flooding into my mind. This experience was almost overwhelming for me. There is no way these long-forgotten parts of my memory would have returned of their own volition. This process became part of my understanding that God is working out the present for me from out of the things that have gone long ago.

As I attended more gospel-oriented meetings I grew into a more personal communication with God. Amazingly, I never blamed Him for anything that had happened nor took Him to task for not saving me from my tragedies. I did tell God what I wished had never happened and questioned the sense of such painful events.

It is easy for me to trust when things are going my way. It is difficult in the other times. However, I ➤➤

believe that trust is a key aspect of my relationship with God, as well as with earthly beings. Philip Yancey said something like, *"It is a unique and profound experience to have God alone and only God on whom to depend."* It was a frightening thought for me (and still is). I continue to think about it and wonder what will happen to me in my final days. Abraham Lincoln must have understood this when he penned, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day."



Today I believe that, unless I make a choice to walk away from God, I will be saved. I am thankful for the quote from Ephesians 2:8, 9: "But because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions... For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast...." (NIV)

I have a memory that continues to help me build my trust in God. As I was commencing my third year in college I decided I needed a new job. I declined the offer to work at the sanitarium factory, because I often had to work late at night; and I prayed to find another job. A few days later a fellow student asked me if I would like to mow lawns. I couldn't believe my *luck*. This was the best job of the lot! I could choose my time and exercise out in the open.

One Friday afternoon I decided to clean the shed where our huge and heavy mower was kept. To do the cleaning I needed to run the mower over the curb on a thick sheet of steel which required two hands to lift it. As my hands were about twelve inches away from

moving the steel I heard a distinct and somewhat loud "voice" in my head: "Don't pick it up there, pick it up from the other side." I recall pausing very briefly to say, "That's strange," but I had to obey it. I didn't feel like I had an option. It was uncanny. I went around and picked up the metal from the other side. Imagine my horror when I saw a huge nest of about twenty lethal Red Back spiders exactly where I would have put both hands. It must have been an arachnid reunion of both family and friends! I doubt I could have survived bites from so many. There was no nearby hospital.

Today when I get into the car to go shopping or to the post office I have an audible conversation with God as though he is in the passenger seat. These conversations are very meaningful to me. Sometimes I keep going over things that I should have let go long ago but God is patient and doesn't argue with me. He just reminds me that He has already cast them into the deepest sea, and that He remembers them no more.

I would like to leave you with three quotes that have great meaning for me today, even though they are goals I have not yet attained.

One thing I know—that because of Jesus Christ and because of what He is and did and does my whole relationship with God is changed. Because of Jesus Christ I know that God is my Father and Friend. Daily and hourly I experience the fact that I can enter into His presence with confidence and with boldness. He is no longer my enemy; He is no longer even my judge. There is no longer an unbridgeable gulf between Him and me. I am more at home with Him than with any human being in the world. And all this is because of Jesus Christ, and it could not possibly have happened without him. —William Barclay, Crucified and Crowned, p. 130

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:8, 9, NIV).

Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance; the only thing it cannot be is moderately important. —C. S. Lewis ▼

Please Don't Divorce Us

A beautiful slide show of Californians and others against forced divorce:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/couragecampaign/sets/72157611501972510/show/>

Press Release

Groundbreaking Research on Family Rejection of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Adolescents Establishes Predictive Link to Negative Health Outcomes.

Cathy Renna, Managing Partner: Renna Communications (www.rennacommunications.com), Washington, DC | New York, NY 917.757.6123 (cell)

Paper authored by Dr. Caitlin Ryan of San Francisco State University's Family Acceptance Project to be published in the journal, *Pediatrics*, San Francisco, CA.



For the first time, researchers have established a clear link between rejecting behaviors of families towards lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) adolescents and negative health outcomes in early adulthood. The findings will be published in the January issue of *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, in a peer-reviewed article titled "*Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Young Adults*." The paper, authored by Dr. Caitlin Ryan and her team at the César E. Chávez Institute at San Francisco State University, which shows that parents' rejecting behaviors towards their LGB children dramatically compromises their health, has far-reaching implications for changing

how families relate to their LGB children and how LGB youth are served by a wide range of providers across systems of care. The study and development of resource materials was funded by The California Endowment, a health foundation dedicated to expanding access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities. "For the first time, research has established a predictive link between specific, negative family reactions to their child's sexual orientation and serious health problems for these adolescents in young adulthood, such as depression, illegal drug use, risk for HIV infection, and suicide attempts," said Caitlin Ryan, PhD, Director of the Family Acceptance Project at the César E. Chávez Institute at SF State and lead author of the paper.

"The new body of research we are generating will help develop resources, tools and interventions to strengthen families, prevent homelessness, reduce the proportion of youth in foster care and significantly improve the lives of LGBT young people and their families."

Major Research Findings

- Higher rates of family rejection during adolescence were significantly associated with poorer health outcomes for LGB young adults.
- LGB young adults who reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence were 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide, 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse, compared with peers from families that reported no or low levels of family rejection.
- Latino males reported the highest number of negative family reactions to their sexual orientation in adolescence.

"This study clearly shows the tremendous harm of family rejection, even if parents think they are well-intentioned, following deeply held beliefs or even protecting their children," said Dr. Sten Vermund, a pediatrician and Amos Christie Chair of Global Health at Vanderbilt University. ➤➤

"In today's often hostile climate for LGBT youth, it is especially important to note that both mental health issues like depression and suicide and HIV risk behaviors were greatly increased by rejection. Given the ongoing HIV epidemic in America, in which half of all new cases of HIV are found in men who have sex with men and there is growing concern about prevention messages reaching young people, it is vital that we share these findings with parents and service providers who work with youth in every way," Vermund continued.

"When put to practical, day-to-day use and shared with families and those who serve LGBT youth, these findings will lead to healthier, more supportive family dynamics and better lives for LGBT young people," Vermund concluded.

The prevailing approach by pediatricians, nurses, social workers, school counselors, peer advocates and community providers has focused almost exclusively on directly serving LGBT youth, and does not consider the impact of family reactions on the adolescent's health and well-being.

Subsequent work with ethnically diverse families by the Family Acceptance Project indicates that parents and caregivers can modify rejecting behavior once they understand the serious impact of their words and actions on their LGBT children's health. In addition, even a little change in parental behavior appears to have a clear impact on decreasing LGBT young people's risk. This new family-related approach to working with LGBT youth being developed by the Family Acceptance Project engages families as allies in decreasing the adolescent's risk and increasing their well-being while respecting the family's deeply held values.

"The new family-related behavioral approach to care being developed by the Family Acceptance

Project offers great promise to change the future for LGBT youth and their families by helping parents and caregivers learn how to support their LGBT children and to prevent these extremely high levels of risk related to family rejection," said Erica Monasterio, MN, FNP, in the Division of Adolescent Medicine and Family Health Care Nursing at UCSF.

"Rather than seeing families as part of the problem, this approach engages them as an essential resource in promoting healthy outcomes for their LGBT children."

"We are using our research to develop a new model of family-related care to decrease the high levels of risk for LGBT young people that restrict life chances and full participation in society," said Dr. Ryan.

"Our easy-to-use behavioral approach will help families increase supportive behaviors and modify behaviors their LGBT children experience as rejecting that significantly increase their children's risk. However, redirecting practice and professional training—from not asking about family reactions to a young person's LGBT identity to engaging families in promoting their LGBT children's well-being—requires a substantial shift on the part of both mainstream and LGBT providers, health systems and community programs."

"Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Young Adults" is the first of many research papers on outcomes related to family acceptance and rejection of LGBT adolescents, supporting positive LGBT youth development and providing family-related care to be released by the Family Acceptance Project.

Methodology

The Family Acceptance Project uses a participatory research

For more information, please visit <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>

If you would like a copy of this paper, contact Cathy Renna at cathy@rennacomunications.com

Or you can find this press release online at <http://rennacomunications.com/press/new-research-on-gay-lesbian-bisexual-youth-and-impact-of-family-rejection>

approach. The research sample included 224 LGB young non-Latino white and Latino adults, ages 21-25, who were open about their sexual orientation to at least one parent or primary caregiver during adolescence. These youth were recruited within California from 249 LGBT-related venues. Family rejection measures in the survey were developed based on a prior in-depth qualitative study of LGBT adolescents and families throughout California from 2002-2004.

About the Family Acceptance Project

The Family Acceptance Project is a community research, intervention and education initiative that studies the impact of family acceptance and rejection on the health, mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth. Results are being used to help families provide support for LGBT youth; to improve their health and mental health outcomes; to strengthen families and help maintain LGBT youth in their homes; to develop appropriate programs and policies; and train providers to improve the quality of services and care these youth receive in a wide range of settings. ▽

Kampmeeting 2009 – July 15-19, 2009

During the month of February our thoughts often turn to love. So during this time why not think of those that have meant so much to us during our journeys as LGBTI people and invite them to the Third Annual Family & Friends Day at Kampmeeting 2009 in Seattle, Washington. Family and friends are invited to attend our program, July 15-19, at the Talaris Conference Center.

On Sabbath, July 18, we would especially like to have you invite your family and friends to a special worship service where we will honor them. Family and friends that join us only for this special worship service are invited to stay and enjoy a complimentary Sabbath lunch. Please RSVP by June 30, 2009, so that we can plan meals accordingly.

To find rates for attending the event please visit:

<http://www.sdakinship.org/km2009.htm>. For more information or to RSVP for the event, please email kampmeeting@sdakinship.org. I look forward to welcoming you and your loved ones in Seattle this coming July. – Naveen Jonathan



EUROPEAN KINSHIP MEETING 2009

**OCTOBER
22 – 25**



**ST MARKS
COLLEGE
SAFFRON
WALDEN**

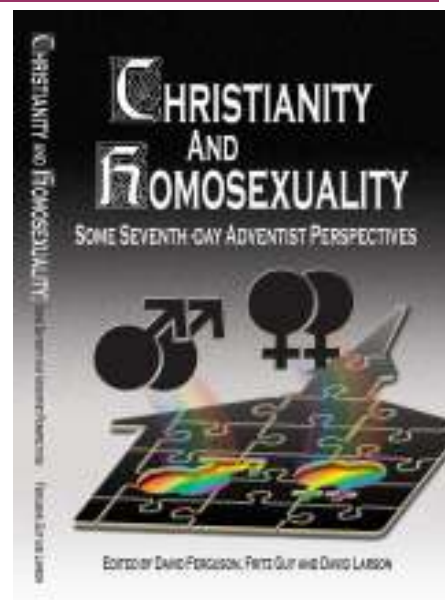
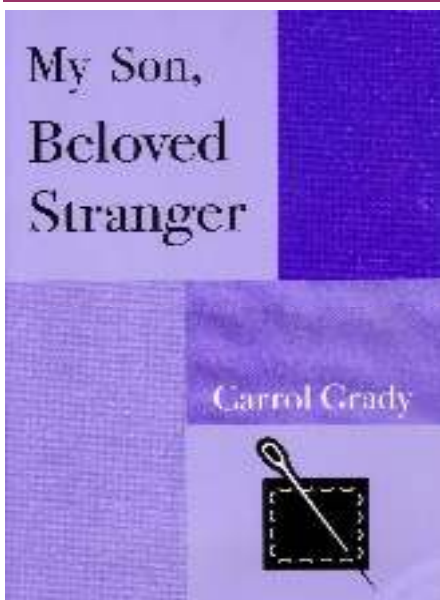
European Kinship Meeting 2009

Guest Speaker: Pastor Daniel Duda

The European Kinship Meeting 2009 will be held in St Marks College, an Anglican (Episcopal) Retreat Centre located approx 40 miles/60 km north-east of London. Parts of the building go back to the 17th century. The accommodation will be adequate; the fellowship fantastic, the scenery stunning, the spirituality stupendous and the worship wonderful!

There will be presentations, discussion, activities, social time, a half-day day tour to Cambridge, plenty of good food and a wonderful atmosphere in this secluded part of southern England.

After the Kampmeeting there will be a one-week holiday in Cornwall. – Mike Lewis



These books and DVD can be ordered online at www.sdagayperspectives.com

On Building Relationships

Ben Kemena



Ben Kemena

I think ongoing conversation and discussion is key. The process of dialogue needs to be open-ended and full of sharing rather than spiteful and agenda-laden. Even though relationship conversations may mature into a type of "shorthand" communication, the communication continues. Our lives are filled with contingencies and modernity; the nature of our negotiations through communication must be up to the task. Without continual work (yup, that terrible word), relationships will not endure. That's a pity because we can learn a lot about ourselves and our society through our relationships! As an adult, I continue to read and go to school, but I have learned most through the prism of the lives of those I love and care for.

When your differences are around things like, "At what heat should we set the thermostat?" I think that a medical review might be in order. Perhaps there are some undiagnosed medical issues around temperature differences and disparities (low thyroid states, certain types of cancer, menopause, and auto-immune illnesses), and these need to be investigated. This may seem far-fetched; but, as a doctor, I have learned to take these options into consideration. I think it could be considered a journey of caring to figure out the state of a family member rather than bickering about the thermostat and window settings! Smile! But, honestly, wouldn't both of you feel silly (or frightened) to know that you might be missing a significant health issue?

There are irreconcilable differences that cannot be negotiated; they may or may not threaten the entire relationship. Nowhere can this be more contentious than in a bedroom! Yet I know of many couples who actually sleep/rest in separate bedrooms, even while otherwise remaining intimate. Sometimes this is based on health reasons; sometimes on personal preferences. For instance, I know of a couple where one fellow needs a breathing machine at night to live a better and healthier life. But it's noisy and loud, and his partner simply can't abide by it. This

doesn't mean that they can't cuddle up on the couch to watch TV or a movie together (even falling asleep in each other's arms) or share a wonderful meal together or with friends. But they routinely sleep in separate beds. I also know of couples that work odd shift jobs and simply don't want to come home and disrupt the sleep of their partner. They have separate beds and/or bedrooms out of love and respect.

It is so easy to get trapped in the expectation of intimacy rather than the adaptation that intimacy can allow out of love and respect and joy. Somehow we have tied relational intimacy to the bedroom. We equate it with sex, sex, sex, because a big part of our society is driven by the commercialism of sex. Don't get me wrong. I believe that sex has a special place and role in an intimate relationship, but a nurturing intimate relationship is not utterly dependent on the sex dynamics in the bedroom. Indeed, sometimes the bed is simply a place to rest and renew one's own body. Loving partners (gay or straight) recognize this without criticism.

Perhaps, in an ideal world, the people we love would also be personally compatible with us in every way. This has not been my personal experience. What I hope for is a certain resonance with the most important parts of myself. When differences occur (and they will), these issues will require negotiation and compromise (which usually makes no one very happy; but compromise is part of maturity). I have never met two exactly compatible human beings. Frankly, some of the most committed couples I know seem to share very little in common on first blush. A little deeper understanding always reveals their bonds. Relationships are completely counter-cultural in a society that takes pride in a certain form of reckless and self-centered individualism. American society is so much more about "ME" and so much less about "US." If you are committed to forming relationships, be they friendships or intimate commitments or some place in between, know that you are swimming upstream in our social culture.

My partner of nearly fifteen years really enjoys big-city venues. If he could, he would vacation in a big city for the rest of his life. He savors the urbanity, the culture, the museums, the plays, the shopping, and the bustle. Me, well, not so much. Indeed, not at all. So we have to compromise. Sometimes, Mike takes on a big-city venue while I stay home. Sometimes, I go with him. We try to do things together, but sometimes he's just not up for it or I'm not up for it. That's okay. This past summer, I spent a week in the wilds of Utah and Arizona with two friends. Mike stayed home. Thinking about spending five days in the dirt without a shower just did not appeal to him. This autumn, Mike spent time visiting friends on the East Coast getting his "city fix." I stayed home. I just couldn't get myself up for the urban assault. However, we still strive to do things together, activities that push our comfort zones a bit. A trip to Phoenix might include a few days at the Grand Canyon. We value our relationship and understand that our intimacy does not automatically force an assumed sameness. I love Mike in part because he is so different from me. I don't want those differences to tear us apart. I want those differences to help both of us stretch, strive, and grow!

There was the issue of our little doggy (Sophie, a Cavalier spaniel) sleeping on our bed with us at night. Initially we thought this was a very bad idea but could not explain our logic to a crying little puppy. For many nights she would whimper in her box by our bed on the floor but would nestle in quietly on our covers while we watched TV. Mike and I both love dogs, but both of us saw dogs (even little fluff balls) as more animal and less fur person! The moment of disagreement finally came and we had to figure this thing out. Both of us finally agreed that Sophie needed to be taught limits and stay in her bed on the floor. Sophie finally got used to her little bed and stopped crying.

Then, one night after she had grown through her puppyhood, she was able to leap up onto the bed and nestle in to sleep. We do not know when this actually started happening. We think she would cleverly return to her bed at the sound of our snooze alarm clock but one fateful morning came without an alarm. When we awoke there she was, nestled in at the foot of our bed, against the rail, not daring to move any closer for fear of discovery. A new round of negotiations occurred and Sophie now sleeps on the bed at the foot rail every night. The only way we could stop this was to chain her up. This choice did not seem reasonable. She is now seven years old.

I won't tell you who originally wanted her on the floor and who thought her sleeping on the bed was cute. It doesn't matter anymore. Mike and I still talk and negotiate every day. There is nothing like two male egos (sorry if that sounds sexist, but I think little boys get taught much more about their "rights" as individuals than little girls) that can destroy a relationship if allowed to trample unbridled! Sometimes it takes a little puppy growing up to put things in a different perspective. ▽

connection ▽

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist
Kinship International, Inc.

Editor : Catherine Taylor
Circulation : Fred Casey
European editor : Ruud Kieboom
Photography : Karen Wetherell, Pearl
Pangkey, Ivan van Putten
Production : Ruud Kieboom
Proofing : Bob Bouchard,
Floyd Pönitz, Carrol Grady,
Jacquie Hegarty
Printing : Doolittle's PrintServe

The *CONNECTION* is published by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141. Submissions are welcome and may be directed to the editor at connectioneditor@sdakinship.org or mailed to the principal office address above. Include your name as you want it published along with your address and telephone number(s). If an item is to be acknowledged or returned, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Some *CONNECTION* contributors have chosen to remain anonymous or use pseudonyms. The *CONNECTION* reserves the right to edit manuscripts for length, syntax, grammar and clarity.

The mention or appearance of any names, organizations or photographs in this publication is not meant to imply a fact or statement about sexual orientation or activity.

Subscription requests or address changes may be sent to Subscriptions, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141 or emailed to office@sdakinship.org. The Kinship mailing list is confidential and used only by Kinship officers. The mailing list is not sold, rented or exchanged for any purpose.

© 2009 SDA Kinship International, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of SDA Kinship International, Inc.

Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

Impressions from European Kinship Meeting Holiday 2008

