

connection



Blessings

KINSHIP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Yolanda Elliott
 Vice President: Naveen Jonathan
 Treasurer: Brian Durham
 Secretary: Ruben López
 Director of Church Relations: Terry Rice
 Director of Women's Interests: Karen Wetherell
 Director of Communications: Ashish David
 Director of Youth Interests: Ronoldo Appleton
 Director of Diversity: (to be determined)
 Directors-at-Large: Ruud Kieboom (Europe)
 Sharlett Reinke (Parents, Family and Friends)
 Keisha McKenzie (Development)
 Membership Services: Member Services Team

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Executive Committee: Yolanda Elliott
 Finance Committee: Sherri Babcock
 Kampmeeting Committee: Fred Casey & Twid Widmer
 Communications Committee: Ashish David
 Governance Committee: Ruben López
 Int'l Growth and Development Committee: Floyd Pönitz
 Diversity Committee: (to be determined)
 Nominating Committee: (to be determined)

REGIONAL COORDINATORS, USA

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

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATORS

Argentina: Omar Aliani,
kinshipargentina@sdakinship.org
 Asia: Adam Lee,
kinshipmalaysia@sdakinship.org
 Australia & New Zealand:
kinshipaustralia@sdakinship.org
 Brazil: Itamar Matos de Souza,
kinshipbrazil@sdakinship.org
 Canada (east): Jerry McKay,
kinshipcanada@sdakinship.org
 Canada (west): Judy Coates,
kinshipcanada_west@sdakinship.org
 Central & South America:
kinshipsuramerica@sdakinship.org
 Europe: Ruud Kieboom,
kinshipeurope@sdakinship.org
 Kenya: Rena Otieno,
kinshipkenya@sdakinship.org
 The Netherlands: Ruud Kieboom,
kinshipnederland@sdakinship.org

South Africa: Pierre Matthee & Johann Lubbe,
kinshipsouthafrica@sdakinship.org
 Uganda: Joseph Brown,
opendoor@webmail.or.ca
 Venezuela: Carlos Pajuelo,
kinshipvenezuela@sdakinship.org

OTHER COORDINATORS

Transgender/Intersex: Twid Widmer,
intersex@sdakinship.org / transgender@sdakinship.org
 Older Adults: Ren Reynolds,
olderadult@sdakinship.org
 European Young Adults Under 30:
 Itamar Ahsman, kinshipeurope_imru@sdakinship.org
 Webmaster: Linda Wright,
webadmin@sdakinship.org

CHAPLAIN

Marcos Apolonio, chaplain@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 a global organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people worldwide.

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

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

SUPPORT KINSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)



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

From the Editor

Alzheimer's Blessings.

Yep, that is what I thought of when I asked the rest of you to share your blessings from this year. Of course there are countless others. My marriage continues to improve. My relationship with my mother is closer than ever. When I bike in the morning I start my ride to bass warbles of hoot owls and end it with the avian sunrise symphony. I have found a place to work with people I enjoy, flexible hours, and clients that continue to teach me. I am enjoying my time in Virginia, the home of my first three years. Living with my uncle underscores what a loveable, quirky man he is. I treasure my time with him. And then there is Auntie. I had two mothers before it was fashionable—or politically correct. Spending my infancy and toddlerhood living with both of them in our little Hampton, Virginia, home gave me a bond with and picture of Auntie as the cake-making, clothes-sewing, patient, always-loving mother figure of my post-Virginia yearnings. Visits over the next fifty-four years did little to dispel the notion. When Uncle Charlie asked Karen and me if it might be possible for us to move south so they could stay in their home, I thought my primeval request had been granted. Imagine my surprise, one night, when Auntie bounced her 89-year-old, four-foot eight-inch, arthritic frame into my room and used the only two swear words she knows (thankfully) to make some point about how the back door should be locked. I speechlessly imagined the invasion of the body snatchers. Welcome to World Alzheimer's. She is demanding, possessive of every aspect of the kitchen she can no longer manage, jealous of Karen during local football games with Uncle Charlie, incensed at the thought that someone else might weed *her* gardens, and, the list goes on. Then there are the times when she apologizes for not knowing who I am or she is gently puzzled that it is not 1933 and we are not in her McFarland childhood home. And there are the times she wraps her arms around me and wants to tuck my 60-year-old self into bed at night. And the times when she invites the respite workers to come live in our home because she is concerned they are visiting because they don't have one of their own. Oh, and there is last night when she leaned over the ICU bed to hug her Charlie of 68 years and said ever so gently, "I will always love you." Her Alzheimer's is teaching me to love in a way that makes everything I thought I knew about love seem self-serving. It is a very complicated blessing. It makes me stretch to understand that loving a human being means going on a journey to corners of the brain and life I cannot fathom and with which I can be remarkably uncomfortable. I imagine many of you also have complicated blessings. I would enjoy hearing them. It has been a pleasure to have so many write to us and share your gifts of the last few months. If more of you would like to continue this collection, I will be delighted to print your thoughts. In the meanwhile, take good care of yourself for you are an infinitely valuable – blessing.

Catherine



By Ben Kemena

It can be challenging to share inspirational sentiment at Thanksgiving that is beyond cliché. However, this has been a year of reflection and review for me. I recognize contemplative examination of my own life as a privilege and joy, a place of awe.

Can it be that 40 years ago I was training to be a hospital orderly? Some of you are old enough to remember when such medical attendants were commonplace. Can it be that 30 years ago I was in medical school at Loma Linda University? That's when I first learned about Kinship and discovered that gay Adventists were not oxymorons. They are me! Can it be that nearly 20 years ago I met my partner-spouse? We managed to find each other, even though I was living in one of the most isolated areas of the United States. Mike and I celebrate our 19th anniversary in January. Can it be that 10 years ago? Well, you get the idea....

In the past few weeks, I brought my acute care practice of hospitalist medicine to its final chapter. Twenty-three years in one specialty is long enough. I have just started my new career journey in palliative care. All of my patients are in the hospital. Most are in the intensive care unit. Generally my patients want a combination of aggressive medical treatment combined with holistic symptom management. That's my new role. It is a high-stakes situation that includes some very difficult circumstances and outcomes.

This week, I was able to successfully send home a 38-year-old mother of three with stage 4 (there is no

Thanksgiving 2012



stage 5) breast cancer. I was able to send home a 27-year-old fellow with acute leukemia awaiting bone marrow transplant. In those same days, I also had to attend to the deaths of a 22-year-old woman with ovarian cancer, a 31-year-old man with alcoholic liver disease, and a 20-year-old auto accident victim. As you see, these are not situations for the faint of heart, be it family, patient, or medical teams doing their best to care for these precious human beings.

I have been through an amazing life crucible with you, my Kinship community, that inspires me now. Attending medical school as HIV/AIDS was discovered and defined, I survived to bury almost everyone I loved, including significant relationships which faced an untimely doom. Serious illness often separates a patient from family, friends, church, and society. We all know how difficult it is to reach out and prevent this from happening. The isolation of those who are ill is particularly poignant when we are victims of oppression. Too many of us know the sting of loss, the undeserved guilt

of surviving, and the ardor of keeping our lives moving forward while mourning the loss of loved ones. It's not fair, and bereavement defies words.

A good friend of mine complained of a stomach ache this summer. I finally "forced" him to see his doctor. Eighty-one days later, he died of pancreatic cancer. He was 47 years old, in otherwise great health, without vices. We all have stories, grief, and struggle in our lives. Our common every day routines are a privilege, filled with dignity and virtue that can change in the twinkling of an eye. Death and loss help reaffirm our priorities. They can temper and heal our character when we listen to our better angels.

This Thanksgiving, I'm joyful for the simple things that only occasionally drive me crazy. My partner's car ran out of gas (you have to fill the tank, dear). My father accidentally talked to me on his upside-down cell phone and could not understand why he "can't hear nuthin'." My friend fell in the high country and I wrenched my back getting him down in one piece (so much for the gay agenda). I sat in a pew and felt the kind hand of a deacon on my shoulder. These are the special times of our lives in this comic-tragic real world. In them I recognize the loving face of my Savior, even as I grieve, navigate transitions, and face my own chronic infirmities. I have been blessed by the privilege of age, perspective, and maturity. Mind you, I'm still knuckle-headed at times; and once a nerd, always one.

I commend you to marvel at the complexity of your own God-given life, your journey, and the amazing life-book you are living each day. It is worth pondering now and then—and it is worth acknowledging and celebrating the simple, fabulous, amazing, and divine pleasures! The blessing of

every Thanksgiving is a call to place our life in review. I have learned that this thankful review is also a cornerstone of faith on which we strive to learn and grow. Each of us sees life through a spectacular set of lenses, prisms, and rainbows. For me, my blessings include all of you. I stand on so many of your shoulders. I am comforted by your gentle words, encouragement, and warm embrace. Thank you. ▽



I would like to give special thanks for God's care over me over these many years of my life—almost 76 now. Kinship has helped me realize that there are many others who are dedicated to their spiritual journey and who share similar feelings. May we all recognize the special gifts that God has given to us and use them for His glory that serves our fellow human beings.



—Tom Durst, Washington, USA



Blessings

As I look back over the year, I believe the blessing came in our slow steady morning worship.

The seeds were planted at the first Book and the Beach I attended. I still can't believe my partner convinced me to join her for a weekend at the beach. I learned about a God who loves all of us. I wanted to learn more; and there was a special book, fresh off the press, I could buy—*Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*. With the book in hand, we began to have morning worship.

At some point during the reading, talking, and praying I realized I wanted to give my heart to this God who loved me. I wanted to be baptized in the same beach waters I had seen at Book and the Beach. My baptism was the greatest blessing of my life. The water was rough but Catherine and Pastor Steen supported me while I went under the water. With my new birth, God signed the adoption papers and I became part of the family of God. There were no words to explain my joy and excitement, so I laughed. Then I looked on the shore of the beach and saw my partner Gay and the loving arms of Kinship singing "Shall We Gather at the River?" I am a new Christian looking forward to many more blessings.

Yours in Christ, —Carol Marts, North Carolina, USA



Garrol (middle)

Carol and I have been together over 20 years.

2012 has been the best year because I have watched her come to know a God that loves her, loves us as lesbians, and blesses our love for each other. We started having family worship in the mornings. We pray for each other and ask God to lead us to be true. It is real; we can be open everywhere but church. We spend Sabbath learning more about our God and honoring Him by spending time with God's

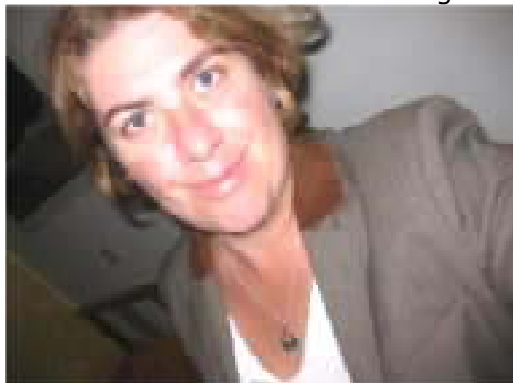
creatures: birds, fish, and people wanting to know more about the real God. We visit my mother in the nursing home, reminding her that God still loves her, and then we pray with her.

Today I give God all the glory for leading Carol to baptismal waters. I am so glad we have pictures of that wonderful day, Catherine on Carol's right side and Pastor Steen on her left side presenting her to God and inviting her into the family of Kinship, till the Adventist Church learns God has room at His table for all of us. I cried and held my breath as the group sang praises, prayed, and enjoyed laughter. What a joy—yes, the best joy ever! And the beginning of blessed life of learning and loving and forgiving. I laughed. Carol laughed, too.

Love,

—Gay Goree, North Carolina, USA

2012 has been a very new and interesting year for me. I am sitting peacefully at my desk remembering the blessings. In September 2011, I joined a wonderful family; I am very blessed to be part of this amazing group called SDA Kinship. I am thankful for all the new input and connection to friends. This community has made it possible for me to become more open and loving to my own family and to myself. I am thankful for the grace, gratitude, hope, and love that are with me all the time. I am grateful for God who always stays on my side. I am thankful for life—without that I would never get to go through bad and good times. I am truly thankful for my four sisters and a new member to our family, my first niece who was just born. I have huge respect for the family, friends, and Susan, who came in the right moment and who has been a huge blessing.



—Andrea, Germany

I have blessings too numerous to count. I feel like God speaks to me like the poem that begins, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways..." How has God blessed me? Every morning I'm greeted with the morning dew and sterling sunshine. I'm awakened by the morning breath of my dog in my face. I'm able, physically, to take a morning walk even with physical aches in my knee. The daily food I

choose for breakfast is abundant. Daily texts from family and friends who check on my welfare or just share a laugh or sorrow make my day. It's the little things in my life that really bless me. I know all these good things are God's way of showing me how He loves us. Kinship is an integral part of God's blessings.



—Joc, California, USA

God has helped me from the very worst hunger I have ever experienced.

—Jeremiah, Kenya



My niece and nephew are my best blessings.

Each of them visits me at least two times a year to bolster me up. My great-niece has just moved to San Francisco to finish her studies. They will all be here with me for Thanksgiving. Because she is here, my nephew will be coming more often. Having my family in the Bay Area is a very happy event. They will be able to come up here to Sacramento regularly.

I am so glad I have been able to be home for more than two years! I have not had another stroke. I have had no falls that lead to a hospitalization. Lovely old friends who keep appearing bring me great happiness. One of my helpers stops by regularly and plays games with me. I so enjoy her visits. Two Kinshippers have found my home a welcome

place. I have a caregiver who is a Seventh-day Adventist and who knows *exactly* what I want to eat and travels to the Adventist Book (and food) Center to get it. For all these things I am most grateful!



—Virginia (Ren) Reynolds, California, USA

During a particularly challenging family crisis I took a very important licensing test, for which I had been unable to study. Upon entering the test center I prayed to Jesus, asking Him to be with me during this test—and this test of life. As I entered the testing center, a calm spirit replaced my heartache and I read each question with a merry curiosity. I still do not know if I passed the small test. However, I realized at that moment that my life was going through a larger test and that God is with me through this time. ***Time and time again, God is bringing sweet guidance and a merry curiosity to my heart and mind and soul.***



—Crystal, New Jersey, USA

Thanks for the opportunity to share a blessing that I have experienced this year. As you know, my sweetheart, Stephen, and I, were married August 25 in Washington state. Our theme was “Over the Rainbow.” Let your imagination fly with that one!

Our greeter was Glinda, the good witch, in drag—very beautiful! Our ushers were the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion. Our flower girl was three-year-old Lily, dressed as Dorothy from the Wizard of

Oz. Our audience was made up of loving friends and family who were given the title, Honorary Friends of Dorothy.

The Portland Gay Men’s Chorus sang three songs, “Marry Us,” “Everything Possible,” and “I Will.” It was a storybook wedding in so many ways; but more than anything, it was a meaningful and beautiful declaration of our love to each other. Leif Lind was our officiant and he did a wonderful job of working with our theme.

There were at least ten Kinship members in attendance.

Life is wonderful for us now. We live in Vancouver, Washington, and White Salmon, Washington, because my job still takes me away for half the month. Whenever you’re in the Northwest, stop by for a visit.



—Terry Phillips, Washington, USA

It is difficult to put in a few words all the gifts God has given me this year. Here’s my list: the gift of my family, the gift of looking into someone’s face and recognizing God in them but not seeing gender or sexual orientation, an 11-year-old third grader who helped me learn how to teach reading to him, gift of friends—met and unmet—around the world through Facebook, sponsoring Seventh-day Adventist students in a Haitian Episcopal school, gift of friends in many “communities,” God’s gift of becoming a more mature Adventist who can happily and joyously embrace the world without embarrassment in the presence of Adventist friends.

Probably the best gift is the gift that Kinship declares that everyone is allowed *to be*—to be themselves as God designed them; everyone is allowed to accept themselves as God thought they would like themselves; and, knowing this, they joyously embrace themselves and their gifts and share these with all around.

—Steve, Georgia, USA

I have had many blessings over this past year, but two in particular stand out. Although I have been unemployed since the first of the year, I have been blessed with the support and help of a caring and unselfish partner who's been willing to contribute part of her retirement income to provide us with the health insurance premiums we need! The fractures in my back have benefited by all this time off as well! Also, I was able, with the help of Vocational Rehab funding, to attend a phlebotomy class this summer and am now a Nationally Certified Phlebotomist! God has been so good to help us survive financially and health-wise thus far, and I am continuing to trust that we will survive the rest of the year as well! I feel so truly thankful and blessed!



—Karen McLauthlin, Oregon, USA

*Minha maior bênção é que eu estava depressivo e por perder um namoro, e por sofrer na carne muitos preconceitos, pensei em me matar, quando retomei os estudos da bíblia e do grupo kinship me senti amado por Deus nosso Senhor! **e Sou feliz por que vocês me proporcionaram maior contato com o Deus que conheci na infância.***

My greatest blessing is that I found our Kinship group. Because of them I was able to begin to study the Bible again and to feel loved by God. I had been depressed. My relationship had ended. I had thought about killing myself. But you have given me again the contact I had with the God of my childhood.

—Rodrigo from Brazil

I have so many blessings, I can't begin to count them! The arrival of Toby, our 15th grandchild and Dante and Lily, our great-grandtwins probably rank near the top. The many signs of progress for my LGBTI friends— in society, and in the church as well, especially through Stephen and Daneen's wonderful film. Fifty-six years of marriage to my college sweetheart, Bob. My 76th birthday and another year of

life. And most of all my assurance of God's never-failing, unconditional love.



—Carol Grady, Washington, USA

This year has had many absolutely awesome blessings. The greatest one started when I re-read the famous Ellen White quote, "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ." *The Desire of Ages*, page 83. Shortly after reading this quote, late in 2011, God convicted me to embark on my own journey through the life of Christ.

Over the next few months, He led me to several resources that allowed me to assemble a comprehensive chronological harmony of the gospels, along with the parables of Jesus, and then match that up with the three Ellen White books that focus on the life of Christ, His parables, and the Sermon on the Mount. This took me until near the end of June to complete. Then I commenced my own journey through His amazing life for you and me! I am anticipating it to take about three-and-a-half years (but I'm in no hurry! Building a relationship with Jesus takes time—no different than with another human being!). What has made my study so valuable, though, is how I'm learning to apply what I'm reading and studying in these resources. This is where my son comes into my story.

While the church encouraged me (over 35 years ago) to marry as a way to cure my orientation, it didn't work. I eventually became very disillusioned with everything about me, and left my marriage, my family, the church, church employment, and God! I stayed away from anything Christian or churchy for over 20 years, though I never forgot any of it. I am very grateful to God that, during this time, neither of my two children left the church or their relationship with God (the credit goes to their mother for this!). Though they had their own struggles to deal with while growing up in a broken family, they have come out stronger and more trusting in God than ever before.

It was during the past few years that my son (unknown to me) developed a new way of studying the Bible that makes it a lot more meaningful and practical. He has called it the *Reflective Bible Study Method*, which he then developed and applied to an online chronological study of the life of Jesus. (I think God knew I would need it, so He was already working on His own timetable for my benefit!)

Now, after studying an event in my harmony listing, I open up his online lesson covering that passage, and focus on the seven very open-ended questions that really get me thinking, struggling, learning, growing, and praying over the passage. His lessons have been a great blessing to me in my journey back to God (that began about one and a half years ago), and I can only anticipate them being a great companion for the next three-plus years until I'm done. Anyone interested in checking out his Life of Jesus studies, should first check out his www.ReflectiveBibleStudy.com website, which explains his methodology plus the application of it to a chronological study of the life of Jesus. I can't imagine anyone not receiving a great blessing from journeying through these studies for themselves, as I am.

May God bless Kinship for your great service to our Seventh-day Adventist-oriented gay members! I hope to meet many of you sometime in the future.



—A.K., Canada

I have been very blessed this year by having life unfold in God's time and by becoming more aware of that time. Rather than being frustrated that things have not gone as I planned, I have received blessings from not trying to make things work the way I planned. Not being able to attend Kampmeeting opened the opportunity to participate in "Book and the Beach." That weekend was a great blessing. Having a steady stream of company early in the year provided a great blessing of time with friends and family, and slowed down working on the house to a more human and manageable level. Not being overly stressed at having plans for a vacation with friends

fall apart. Those plans came back together in a way that allows us to see our friends and see the Albuquerque showing of "Seventh-Gay Adventists." Now, we'll get to take our friends to see the show as well. Time and again this year when things seemed to be going haywire, I discovered they were actually working out better than planned.



—Terre Price,
California and Texas and New Mexico, USA

I am thankful for the long line of researchers, pharmaceutical companies, and physicians who have contributed to restoration of my sight. In August of this year I suffered a sudden and almost total loss of vision. During my weeks in the fog, I was blessed by the kindness of strangers, good folk who read labels for me in the grocery store, identified transit buses for me so that I could get to and from the doctor's office, and drove me home from surgery. I pray that I will be as ready to bless others with my empathy and practical assistance in the years ahead.



—Robert Ramsay, Surrey, BC Canada

God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him.

—unknown

It was a great blessing to go to European Kinship Kampmeeting. [sic] Unexpectedly, my finances pulled together at the last minute and allowed the trip to happen. I made new friends like Leif Haugvik, whom I introduced to Kinship on the internet, and saw old ones from 40 years ago in Europe. I have a new student, a tenor with an amazing voice, whom I am training for a career in opera.

My health has been good the last five months since moving into my new house. I am blessed that my lungs were not destroyed from the gas leak in



—Roberto Londis, Costa Rica

my first house. I am blessed that my bronchials survived living in the second house where the leaky roof and blowing mountain wind nurtured lots of fungus. This year I landed in my beautiful, well-built house, and all those illnesses disappeared. *So I give thanks to God for these blessings.*

I take every day as a special day. Each day I work hard. I celebrate every day I see the sun rise. The nature of my work as a nurse helps me appreciate life even more. We work with people who have had difficult times. I have learned that there is more to work than earning money. That lesson has helped me to learn to treat everyone fairly and as I would like to be treated. I have had some arguments but try to think, "How would I like to be treated?" I appreciate the encouragement I have gotten from friends and family members and colleagues. I could stay here in the Odenwald (Kinship Europe holiday location) for a week if the weather would be nice. ☺



—Absolom Chavula, Kenya/Scotland

My blessings are my wife, my children, and my grandchildren, especially the latest one. This side of Eden my family is my highest love. To me, religion is communicated through human beings—like through my children, my family members, and my friends. This is the first and foremost way of seeing and experiencing God. That is why I appreciate this kind of communication tool the most. I appreciate that my back operation was successful. That is quite the relief. I appreciate being alive. I appreciate every morning, the day, for the way things are as they are. I have no complaints, except for the fact that I never became General Conference President! That is the only regret in my life.



—Frieder Schmid, Germany

I have Kinship and now a group in Germany. I have many people around the world who are friends. This gives me hope. It is a comfort for me that I am not alone. It is a comfort that people say, "You are not alone." We are a family. We are many people in the world. The Kinship meetings from year to year are one of my mountain peaks and I wait for the next meeting—and another mountain peak. I am so glad that I have Stefan, my family, my mother, and my church in Bremen. They know that Stefan is my husband and they see us a family. This is a miracle. My life with church, with Stefan, and with his family is normal; and this is a miracle. This is a wonderful present from God.



—Joachim Duerling, Germany

My family is my biggest blessing.

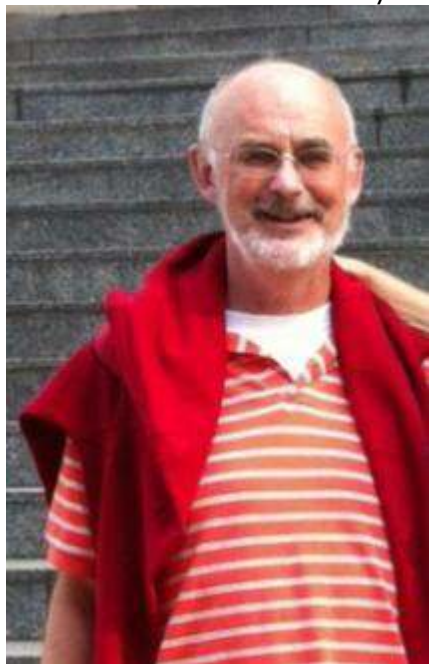
The new grandchild is a blessing. I am still healthy and able to work. Our life is work and family. My biggest blessings are our friends. We have an income that allows us to donate to our family. We are content with what we have. We do not need much. We like to share. We are a growing family. We have a good relationship with our sons and our daughters-in-law. And Kinship, of course.



—Ingrid Schmid, Germany

Blessings: Being with Ruud, being healthy, having the company of friends, swimming in lakes and the ocean, having a good condition.

I have started to translate *Julianus Apostata* into Dutch. I would also like to get money for it. I don't need to be rich but it would be fun to get paid for it. We went to Greece with good friends of ours. I speak a bit Greek, and I can read new Greek. It was very nice to be in Greece. I liked our trip to Portugal and the company of all gay men at our yoga course. Within a few days we found a basis for mutual understanding and empathy. It was a pity when it was over. Of course, the sunshine in Greece and Portugal is wonderful. We don't always have sun in Holland.



—Kees Meiling, The Netherlands

I got a new work contract. Now I have a permanent job. I appreciate the people around me, especially Ivan, Tai Chi, and ARK, our Seventh-day Ad-

ventist church plant. I developed some personal skills at both my work and in Tai Chi. I am a beginner instructor in Tai Chi. I am now training nurses at my facility in dementia. I feel more like a whole person. My abilities and gifts are more accessible to me and to others now. I am now preparing to teach my first beginner Taoist Tai Chi class. I have another presentation coming up for volunteers who work with dementia. I am going to be a project leader for a ward with Down's syndrome people with dementia. There is not enough knowledge in the residential facility so I am going to do the training for the doctors, nurses, aides, physiotherapists, other counselors, behavioral specialists, dietitians, those who look at the ergonomics of our systems, the team leaders, etc. I will give a continuing course in dementia. I have some very nice opportunities for which I am planning. The gifts of this last year are what is making the next year possible. Ivan is seeing that this does me good. I am becoming more and more my own



person. I am finally doing what I am good at. I am the treasurer for ARK. Because of the system that I developed we are now able to get our church plant subsidy from the Dutch union. I do volunteer work for the Tai Chi society. We go to as many meetings as I possibly can. I have just been asked to be the treasurer for Kinship Europe. I am glad I get the chance to set this up well.

—Melanie de Weger, The Netherlands

I am happy about my 25 years with Kees. I am happy that Kinship Europe is ten years old and that we are growing. There are now more people willing to organize the European Kinship Meetings. This is a blessing. I am grateful for my job, and that the Euro crises did not affect my job or my income. I have someone who I can always turn to. I really enjoy creating the layout for the *Connection*. I wish we could have two a month. This is one of my favorite hobbies. I am happy I can be of help to some people in Kinship. My health is a blessing. We had wonderful trips to Greece and Portugal, both for the first time. I am happy about the new German-speaking group we are setting up. There are a number of people who have shown interest so we have a base. Frieder said he is willing to come to EKM next year and do one

German-speaking meeting. I am happy we have this beautiful documentary, *Seventh-Gay Adventists*. It can be a big help with the church if the church is willing to listen.



—Ruud Kieboom, *The Netherlands*

There's lots of little things; our church in Bremen, for example. Our congregation is still a safe haven and interesting place for us to be, especially as a couple. Visiting Joachim's mother for Christmas. She is always very kind to us. It is nice to visit with her and take some time to sit together and talk about almost anything. We had a really cold winter for a couple of weeks, where all the lakes and canals around were frozen. We had real snow, five or six inches of it. Though I hate cold weather, it was really nice to see snow and walk outside in it. One tiny little thing that I really appreciate is that we got tickets for a special exhibit at our local park. It has one of

the largest collections of rhododendron bushes. There was any color you can imagine. Some had two color mixtures. Some looked like they had sprinkles on them. I am amazed by the different smells that each type of rhododendron has. This is always a great thing to do in spring. A guy we have known for ten years is the only person to be allowed to have bees in this park. When we eat that honey, it smells like the park in the spring. He does not sell this honey anywhere else in the world. It is a privilege to have this. If you drive through parts of Bremen with open eyes you can see old rhododendron bushes that were not destroyed in the war. This lasts for two to three months because the different varieties of the bushes bloom over an extended period of time.



—Stefan Pietruska, *Germany* ▽

Book and the Beach

By Steve Marlow

I want to thank you for outdoing yourself this year. Having a banquet at every meal was a delicious experience. I really enjoyed the delightful experience of foods from other lands and cultures. I want to thank you for listening to the Spirit when it suggested your first thought of having a group for a weekend. I find joy that you wanted to continue each year, despite all the aggravation of checking items off your list as each preparation is done.

Thank you for putting up with not knowing until the last minute who would be coming with me. Thank you for allowing me to bring Ben and Micah. I have known them for about five years.

They are still babes in their religious experience. They are attempting to worship the God of their understanding as they know Him. It is almost impossible to explain the culture shock one will encounter when someone new comes into our Seventh-day Adventist group. I thank you for assisting with the healing of this culture shock. On the way home, Ben and Micah were discussing the weekend. The most memorable event in their minds was when the group told all the things they liked about them. They couldn't believe that people had noticed them in that way, and the group's words of appreciation helped to reinforce the good qualities about them. Sorry that Micah was ill

much of the weekend. He has not been well for several months. He has several endocrine problems and debilitation from a chronic illness on top of that. I hadn't realized how much he had changed in the last year till this weekend. I normally only see him a couple hours at a time.

Thanks so much to you and Yolanda for developing these group activities. It was wonderful to see the three persons this year be allowed baptism into the Seventh-day Adventist church. It is not easy finding a "community" to accept us. But our adoption papers (not our baptismal certificate) are signed by God in heaven and He does not allow us to revoke them. ▽

Seventh-Gay Adventist?

By Reinder Bruinsma

A short item in a recent Dutch newspaper told of a Roman Catholic priest in one of the southern provinces of the country who refused to baptize a baby. Why? Because the parents are a lesbian couple. The priest concluded that his conscience did not allow him to perform the baptism. A colleague in another parish, however, was willing to baptize the infant. The bishop commented that the priest had not asked the advice of his superiors. He has the freedom to use his own judgment, even though he may, under these circumstances, not have acted in the wisest possible way, the bishop added.

In any case, Adventist preachers will not face this particular dilemma. The Adventist church does not baptize infants, whether the parents are homo or hetero. But Adventist pastors increasingly face similar problems. More and more often Adventist ministers face the question of how their church thinks about same-sex matters, and must ask themselves what they think themselves and what choices they will make.



I know of a number of cases that currently play out in the Adventist Church, in The Netherlands as well as in Belgium. Can a lesbian woman, who has been living for years in a stable, monogamous relationship, be baptized and become an Adventist church member? Must we tell a homosexual couple that wants to receive a blessing on their relationship, that

they “live in sin” and that, therefore, the church cannot bless them? Can an Adventist homo safely come “out of the closet” and retain his/her responsibility in the local church?

The discussion about homosexuality and everything that relates to it has hardly started in the Adventist Church. The church is still too busy with the commotion surrounding ordaining female ministers, and the problems concerning a literal six-day creation. But, in the meantime, it is clear that the questions regarding same-sex relationships, which according to many Adventists are unequivocally condemned by the Bible, can no longer be ignored. It is also clear that these various issues have one common denominator. It is the basic question: How does one read the Bible? Can you only read the Bible in such a way that you have little or no room for maneuvering in these matters? Or can you, in good conscience, and with the unwavering belief that the Bible is the Word of God, in fact, also read the Bible in a way that leaves room for a non-literal approach that takes into account that we live today in a world that starkly differs from the world of Bible times?

Not too long ago I saw the film *Seventh-Gay Adventists*—a fascinating documentary that followed three Adventist same-sex couples over a period of some years. The film pictures in a clever, sometimes surprising, and often sad, manner what homosexual men and women must go through when they want to be full members of the Adventist Church.

One of the partners of one couple asks his brother who is an Adventist pastor, to officiate at their marriage ceremony. He goes through a lot of inner turmoil. He does not know how to handle this situation. But, eventually, he de-



cides to respond positively. “Because,” he says, “if I make a mistake, I’d rather err on the side of humanness and mercy, than that I make a mistake by giving too much emphasis to rules and organizational policies, without due regard for real people of flesh and blood.”

It will be a while, I guess, before we can have an open discussion about these matters at all levels of the church, in all countries, and in all cultures. There are indeed a great number of theological, cultural, and historical issues to consider. Might it be that, for the time being, we could follow the example of the two Dutch priests and their bishop, who stated that the priests could make their own independent decision in this matter. Could it be possible that we give the Adventist minister, and the individual Adventist congregation, the same kind of space and freedom? I suspect that most of those with a “different” sexual orientation will understand that not all pastors and church committees will, in good conscience, come to the same judgment. But it may, at least for now, provide a pragmatic and yet spiritually responsible way out of many terrible dilemmas.

It may be that my thinking may change again in the next year or so. It has changed in many ways in the last few years. I continue to struggle with several aspects. But I have concluded that always saying “No” when brothers and sisters with a “different” sexual orientation want to be full members of the church is no Christian option. ▽

Health Tips of the Month

Managing Joint Pain

Chronic pain comes in a variety of forms. Joint pain is a common one. If

you suffer from stiff, achy joints, you're not alone. Twenty-seven million Americans have osteoarthritis—leader of the pack when it comes to joint-pain culprits. You can thank other causes, as well, including ligament and tendon damage, muscle tears, excess body weight, age, bad posture, and poor biomechanics. Whatever the reason, there are special steps that can help ease painful hip, shoulder, spine, and knee pain. Here are five of them:

- 1. Eat to relieve joint pain.** Food can't prevent or cure joint pain, but certain nutrients not only enhance muscle and bone strength, they also take a bite out of joint pain. Fill your plate with foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, pain-fighting polyphenols, and vitamins C, K, and E.
- 2. Move to improve joint pain.** Resist the urge to hit the couch when your joints hurt. Move through the pain instead. Why? Exercise triggers the production of lubricating synovial fluid and feel-good brain chemicals, and improves joint pain, function, and range of motion. It may even boost cartilage growth in the knees. Ask your doctor about exercises that help rather than hurt your joints.
- 3. Watch your weight.** If you're overweight, ask your doctor for a safe weight-loss plan. Every excess pound you shed takes 4 pounds of pressure off your knees, and can reduce hip and back pain, too.
- 4. Work with your doctor.** Ask your primary care physician if a specialist can help you with your joint pain. An orthopedic specialist and/or physical therapist may be better equipped to tailor an effective pain-treatment plan.
- 5. Don't ignore joint pain.** Pace yourself and avoid activities that aggravate your joint pain, such as running long distances, lifting heavy objects, or kneeling for hours pulling weeds. Use a daily pain diary to note the activities that worsen or improve your joint symptoms.

Whole grains are rich in fiber, a good-for-you ingredient that curbs appetite and helps you manage your weight. Maintaining a healthy body weight is important to keep chronic pain at bay. Whole grains are a good source of magnesium, a mineral that has been shown in animal studies to fight muscle pain. Enjoy a wide variety of whole grains—from whole wheat bread to fast-cooking quinoa and bulgur—to relieve chronic pain. Enjoying salmon in your diet is a good bet for managing chronic pain.

Salmon is rich in pain-relieving omega-3 fatty acids, but it's also a great source of another potential pain fighter: vitamin D. There's a strong link between low levels of the sunshine vitamin and chronic pain, and emerging research suggests supplementing your diet with vitamin D may help ease the discomfort. A 3-ounce serving of salmon has nearly half the RealAge-recommended daily dose of vitamin D: 1,000 international units (IU), or 1,200 IU if you're older than 60. Enjoying salmon in your diet is a good bet for managing

chronic pain.

Olive oil is liquid gold when it comes to fighting pain. This elixir is rich in antioxidant polyphenols that help inhibit a common pain-causing mechanism in the body. Plus, olive oil makes a great substitute for butter, which is high in saturated fat. That's great, because too much saturated fat in the diet has been shown to erode bone strength and trigger pain. Enjoy this Mediterranean alternative in your next pasta sauce, salad dressing, or sauté. But use it judiciously. Olive oil has 120 calories per tablespoon.

When it comes to *spices* with potential pain-relieving properties, go for the gold: ginger and turmeric. Ginger contains four substances (gingerols, paradols, shogaols, and zingerone) that have analgesic qualities similar to aspirin or ibuprofen. Turmeric—a spice used in Indian and Thai curry dishes—contains curcumin, another ginger-family member that may also help fight pain.

Grab a basket of sweet, juicy *strawberries* next time they're in season (or use frozen ones anytime). These red treats are chock-full of vitamin C, an antioxidant with powerful properties that relieve pain, according to research. Some studies suggest vitamin C may help people experience less pain after breaking a bone or having orthopedic surgery. Similar research indicates vitamin C may hinder arthritis-inducing cartilage loss and the formation of bone lesions in the joints.

Toss a *spinach or arugula* salad for a jolt of vitamin K—a nutrient with potential pain-soothing properties, according to some preliminary research. Vitamin K also helps maintain strong bones and healthy joints. In one study, older adults with ample blood levels of K were less likely to develop osteoarthritis, compared to a low-in-K control group. You can get all the K you need from dark leafy greens: a cup of raw spinach has 145 micrograms (132% of what you need for the day). Caution: Vitamin K also helps with blood clotting, so if you're taking blood thinners, check with your doc before boosting your K intake.

Can yogurt and *other dairy foods* relieve chronic pain? Not directly, but they do contain two bone-building nutrients: calcium and vitamin D. Not only does vitamin D do more than build bone strength, it may also play a role in reducing chronic pain, according to some study findings. So, load your grocery cart with yummy, creamy (but low-fat) dairy foods fortified with the sunshine vitamin. Can't stomach dairy foods due to lactose intolerance? Reach for calcium- and vitamin D-fortified orange juice or soymilk. ▽

Kinship Older Adults

Risk and Renewing of Zest

Writer Ken Budd suggests that the key to a healthier, happier you is to do some things that take you out of your daily routines, your usual pleasures, and your "comfort zone." Often, after 50, people reduce the amount of risky behaviors they want to engage in. Frequently, the result is that boredom sets in. Life is safe, but dull. Without any challenges, people often turn to activities that are not very healthy, such as smoking and drinking too much, and finding a comfy spot on the couch.

Budd recommends that you consider ways of challenging yourself in any arena of life. The advice to get outside your comfort zone is not a request that you run with the bulls in Pamplona. It doesn't have to be a challenge that puts you in harm's way. What is important is to become actively engaged with people and ideas in a way that gets you on your toes. New experiences help breathe vitality into your life, and this often leads to exhilarating feelings of joy.

For long term marital partners, the danger of becoming stuck in old patterns that have been satisfying in the past is ever-present. Having the kids over for Sunday evening supper may be satisfying, but after 15 years it becomes less so. Changing the time to a brunch followed by afternoon games lends a new luster to family life, as does a Sunday apart. It may be hard to see comfortable patterns as the enemy of a good marriage, but with an occasional upsetting of the routine, new excitement can be found.

Budd also recommends becoming a novice at something. Learn a new language, visit a new place, take up a new sport, or be willing to put yourself into a position of being a rank amateur. The fear of failing or making a mistake is something we have learned to avoid; instead, being willing to fail leads to new powers and potential pleasures.

One of the benefits of doing novel things is that the neural pathways in the brain are reconfigured. New connections are made, which makes you more able to think and act in new ways. Taking tango lessons, for example, allows your body to acquire new physical moves and new orientations to your dance partner and the floor.

As author Rick Foster said, "The more I say yes, the more variety there is in my life. I force myself to say yes because... health [is] directly tied to novelty and change. Every time I've said yes, it's paid off." ▼

From: "New Adventures, New Risks, New You," by Ken Budd. *AARP The Magazine*, June/July, 2012, 60-63



connection▼

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

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

The *Connection* is published by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141 USA. 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 USA or emailed to subscriptions@sdakinship.org.

Members may also update their contact information online. The Kinship mailing list is confidential and used only by Kinship officers. The mailing list is not sold, rented, or exchanged for any purpose.

© 2012 Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc.

All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship Int'l, Inc.

Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

Baptism at *Book and the Beach* Weekend

◀ *Book and the Beach* discussions were the first time Carol had ever heard about the God who loves us lesbians, gay men, bisexual, intersex, transgender people, and those who are celibate or attracted to the opposite sex. After her first meeting three years ago, Carol began to study the Bible with her partner Gay and become convinced that she believed what Seventh-day Adventists understood about the Bible, even if some Adventists ignored Bible teachings in order to be judgmental. She chose to be baptized in waters around the Nags Head, North Carolina, venue for *Book and the Beach*. The entire group wandered lanes and truck paths to the perfect sound side location and sang "Shall We Gather at the River?" while Carol chose to follow a God who loves her and join a church that is still learning what that means.

Nice memories of Kampmeeting 2012



Connection