

# connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 40, No. 1, January 2016

Tanja Koppers  
from Germany  
reports on P5

## Homosexuality “Bible Study” Day: Hannover

Brad Nelson from  
the USA wrote  
“A Gay SDA Play”

## P12 Play reveals gay struggle in SDA church



#### KINSHIP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

|                               |                                            |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| President                     | : Yolanda Elliott                          |
| Vice President                | : Naveen Jonathan                          |
| Treasurer                     | : Karen Lee                                |
| Secretary                     | : Rosemarie Buck                           |
| Director of Church Relations  | : Dave Ferguson                            |
| Director of Women's Interests | : Debbie Hawthorn-Toop                     |
| Director of Communications    | : Jonathan Cook                            |
| Director of Youth Interests   | : Rebecca Kern                             |
| Director of Development       | : Yeshara Acosta                           |
| Directors-at-Large            | :                                          |
| -                             | Mischka Scott (IAGC Rep)                   |
| -                             | Floyd Pönitz (Int'l. Growth & Development) |
| -                             | Debbie & Kris Widmer (Family & Friends)    |

#### WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a non-profit support organization. We minister to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-day Adventists who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is a global organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people worldwide.

Founded in 1976, the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 2,500 people in more than forty-three countries.

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



PO Box 244 ♦ Orinda, CA 94563 USA

or visit Kinship's website [www.sdakinship.org/resources](http://www.sdakinship.org/resources) for information about

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

#### CHAIRS

|                                       |                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Executive Committee                   | : Yolanda Elliott |
| Finance Committee                     | : Bob Bouchard    |
| Kampmeeting Committee                 | : Kristina Burgos |
| Communications Committee              | : Jonathan Cook   |
| Governance Committee                  | : Rosemarie Buck  |
| Nominating Committee                  | : Dave Ferguson   |
| Member Services                       | : Naveen Jonathan |
| Technology                            | : Justin Mezetin  |
| Int'l. Growth & Development Committee | : Floyd Pönitz    |

#### LEADERSHIP TEAM

|                                 |                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Office Manager                  | : Member Services Team |
| Web Administrator               | : Linda Wright         |
| Publications/Connection Editor: | Catherine Taylor       |

#### REGIONS AND GROUPS WORLDWIDE

[www.sdakinship.org/regions-groups](http://www.sdakinship.org/regions-groups)

#### CHAPLAIN

Marcos Apolonio, [chaplain@sdakinship.org](mailto:chaplain@sdakinship.org)

#### CONTACT/INFORMATION

[info@sdakinship.org](mailto:info@sdakinship.org)

#### SUPPORT KINSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to SDA Kinship Int'l, PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563 or donate securely online at [sdakinship.org](http://sdakinship.org). (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting [treasurer@sdakinship.org](mailto:treasurer@sdakinship.org). You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

#### RESOURCES

- [www.someone-to-talk-to.net](http://www.someone-to-talk-to.net)
- [www.buildingsafeplaces.org](http://www.buildingsafeplaces.org)
- [www.itgetsbetterforadventists.org](http://www.itgetsbetterforadventists.org)
- [www.sgamovie.com](http://www.sgamovie.com)
- [www.facebook.com/sdakinship](https://www.facebook.com/sdakinship)

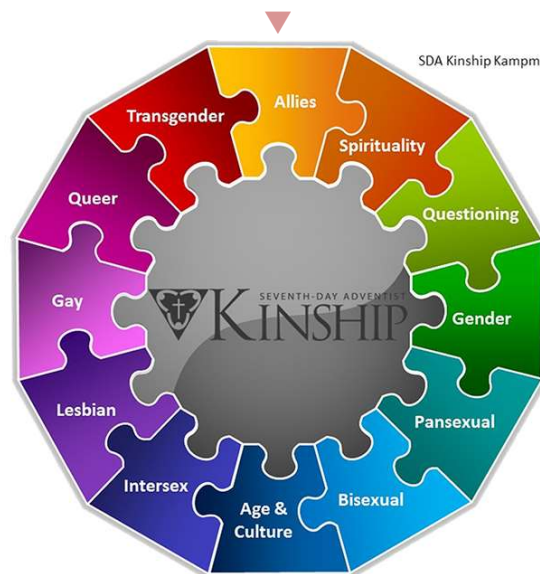
... and more



## From the Editor

I really do not expect you all to remember what I write for the New Year's issue each January. It's a good thing because I almost always start with the same comment. *I don't believe in New Year's resolutions.* This could be because I am not particularly good at keeping them. I do believe in goals. I have lists and calendars and I follow them. It's good to know I have at least one of the qualities of "highly effective people." I also believe in building basic principles by which we live our lives. Some of the principles stay the same our whole lives. Some of them shift and grow as we do. All of this said, the transition to another year seems to be a good time to evaluate: our year, our goals, our dreams, our relationships, our projects, our opportunities, our inspirations. For this issue, we included Michele O'Mara's little article on Four Agreements. They are a construct that might help us with this evaluation that is *not* a resolution. Arlene Taylor's article shares some lessons she has learned while "Growing Older." Whatever age we are, I think these have relevance. Then, we've included three stories of remarkable people who don't think they are remarkable. Tanja Koppers is Kinship's regional coordinator in Germany. She is recreating an active group that meets regularly. That would be enough, but there is more. In November, she stood up in front of 120 German pastors and church workers at a conference on *The Bible and Homosexuality* and shared her story. It wasn't easy for her. She knew there would be representatives from *Coming Out Ministries* there. She asked for prayers and support. And, well, you can read what she wrote. We're continuing Jerry McKay's story of his journey toward wholeness. This month he heard appreciations for that story from someone in Zambia. Finally, we've got an article about "A Gay SDA Play" that Bradley Nelson wrote. I know most of you have not seen it, but I think you would really enjoy the stories and the truth about us that he shares. These are five very special people. I am glad I know them. However, they are no more special than you—just different gifts and different journeys. Notice how you affect others. Wonder at what the ripple effect may be. Dream at least one impossible dream, and then see how close you can come to living it. Try to follow every good impulse. Most importantly, take good care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine



SDA Kinship Kampmeeting 2016

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



HELLO EVERYONE,

THE LOCATION AND DATES FOR NEXT YEAR'S KAMPMEETING HAVE BEEN SET.

DATE: JULY 26 – 30, 2016

LOCATION: CONFERENCE CENTER AT THE MARITIME INSTITUTE  
692 MARITIME BLVD, LINTHICUM HEIGHTS, MD 21090

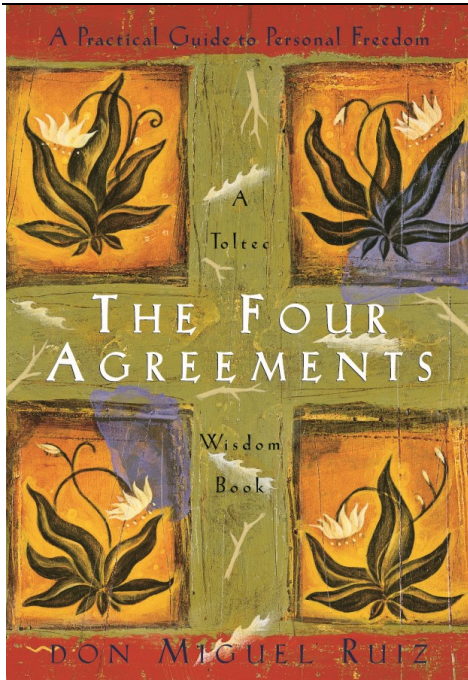
KAMPMEETING FEES (THESE ARE "EARLY-BIRD" DISCOUNTS.  
FEES WILL INCREASE AFTER FEBRUARY 28.)

|           |                   |                         |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| ROOM TYPE | SINGLE ROOM       | : \$1,064.00 / 5 NIGHTS |
|           |                   | : \$ 213.75 / PER NIGHT |
|           | DOUBLE ROOM       | : \$ 800.00 / 5 NIGHTS  |
|           |                   | : \$ 166.25 / PER NIGHT |
| COMMUTERS |                   | : \$ 300.00 / 5 DAYS    |
|           | W/ LUNCH & SNACKS | : \$ 65.00 / PER DAYTT  |

FOR PAYMENT OPTIONS AND IF YOU NEED SOME FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ATTEND KAMPMEETING, VISIT

[HTTPS://SDAKINSHIP.ORG/EVENTS/SDA-KINSHIP-KAMPMEETING.HTML](https://sdakinship.org/events/sda-kinship-kampmeeting.html)

KRISTINA, COORDINATOR SDA KINSHIP KAMPMEETING 2016 ▼



# FOUR AGREEMENTS

By Michele O'Mara

In 1997, author Don Miguel Ruiz wrote a book titled, *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom*. His “agreements” are as follows:

1. Be impeccable with your word
2. Don't take anything personally
3. Don't make assumptions
4. Always do your best

I like that he came up with a succinct way to really target powerful behaviors that have the potential to influence your choices in a way that keep your life on track. If I had only four things that I could use in this life to guide all of my choices and decisions, these are the agreements I believe will hold me to the highest standard.

My four agreements would be:

1. Know your truth
2. Accept your truth
3. Live your truth
4. Be grateful

**M**y agreements are obviously influenced by the work I do and the damage I see when people do not know, accept, and live their truth. I also come from a place of believing that *all people are fundamentally good*. It is only when we deviate from who we really are that we find trouble and engage in troubling behaviors. *My definition of a deviant is someone who steps away from who they really are.* Are you a deviant? It's not too late to change your course.

## KNOW YOUR TRUTH

**T**o me, there is nothing more powerful than accessing the truth of who we are. To do this, we must lose the stories others have of us. “She’s so forgetful,” or “She’s afraid of commitments,” or “She’s not smart, but she sure is pretty,” etc. We must also lose the stories we’ve made up about ourselves. “I’m not good enough.” Or, “Once people get to know me, they will discover I am not as \_\_\_ as they think I am.”

One of the hardest parts of stepping into our truth is that we must be willing to risk disappointing those we love. These stories prevent us from accessing our truest self. Who are you without any stories, stereotypes, assumptions or other limiting thoughts? *What would you be doing differently in your life (big and small things) if you were not worried about disappointing someone, anyone?*

## ACCEPT YOUR TRUTH

**W**hen we access our truth, our next challenge is to accept it. Sometimes we discover things we are not comfortable with. I know that when I realized I was attracted to females, I didn’t want this to be true. I was in middle school. And I was gay *when gay wasn’t cool*. I spent years trying to make it not true. By rejecting my truth, I denied my gifts, I distanced myself

from those I love, and I convinced myself I was defective. This, my friends, is not the path to freedom. What are you denying or refusing to accept about yourself? *What are you afraid to be, that you already are? What are you afraid to feel, that you already do?*

## LIVE YOUR TRUTH

**W**hen we live our lives closely aligned to the truth of who we are, we find joy. Joy is the result of alignment with our truth. Joy doesn’t lie. *When we are joyful, we are accessing our most fundamental, truest self.* Joy is not fleeting, like the pleasure of a good movie, a favorite food, or the purchase of a new Vespa (if you are lucky enough to have a partner that thinks it’s a great idea to get one). It is an enduring sense of satisfaction and positive energy about our life and about ourself in this life.

By accepting our truth, the path is clear to live authentically and happily. By accepting the truth that I am a lesbian, I was able to stop apologizing for who and what I am. Eventually, I even learned to celebrate and enjoy my identity. *This is where the power is—the power is in the truth.* When we make peace with the truth of who we are, we are free. We can go about our lives without apology; and, in this, there is much for which to be grateful.

## BE GRATEFUL

**A**s you journey toward a life that is aligned with who you really are, make time to experience gratitude along the way. Anytime you experience life in a way that pleases you, pause long enough to give thanks. My favorite definition of gratitude is that it is like saying to the universe, “More of this, please.” ▼



# Homosexuality “Bible Study” Day

## Niedersachsen-Vereinigung (Lower Saxonian Conference)

By Tanja Koppers

Hannover, Germany

I had been asked to speak for Kinship. Because I knew *Coming Out Ministries* (COM) had also been invited, I was very concerned and nervous as I prepared my talk. I asked Kinship members for prayers and good thoughts. I talked with our ally Karsten who would introduce all the speakers. He was not happy about the decision to invite COM but knew the conference did so to make sure both sides of the story were presented.

I appreciated the first two speakers: Rolf Köhler and Mike Pearson. Rolf’s talk focused on the different ways Biblical texts often used to describe LGBTI people could be interpreted. He illustrated the issue that there is not always one way to read or interpret the Bible. He managed to do this without sharing his personal opinion. He was neutral and open. In the open discussion following his talk, Rolf was challenged to share his own perspective but managed to stay neutral. I don’t think it was easy for him, and it seemed that some members of the audience were frustrated because they did not get clear answers on the topic. Rolf had been requested to present in a way that the audience had to decide for themselves. He did a good job.

Mike Pearson chose the topic, “Strangers Bringing Gifts.” His first illustration was not about homosexuality but about refugees and immigrants—and the attitudes toward them and other strangers held by Old Testament teachings and by Jesus. Mike went on to say that homosexuals are strangers in our congregations who bring needed gifts to our church communities. He listed 20 different points, some of them quite radical, to support his premise. I cannot remember them all and hope there is a way to get a text of his talk.

I really liked hearing what he said. I can also understand why some people in the audience shook their heads when he shared his more radical points. In the discussion time after his presentation, there were more statements than questions. Some members of the audience said the topic is important to them because the lives of friends and relatives have shown them the need to change their minds on this issue. One woman, who was divorced from her husband of 17 years of marriage when he came out as gay, spoke about the need for more openness for lesbian and gay people. She said they need to have a home in our Adventist community. She said that she wishes no one should have to fear coming out. Her words and her demeanor brought tears to my eyes.

I was the third speaker. Approximately 120 people were in the audience. During my talk, I saw many people nodding. Sometimes I saw tears. I try to respond to an audience from “where they are.” It seemed to work this time. As soon as I stood in



front of them, I calmed down and could speak without fear. I could only feel warmth and goodwill from the people in front of me. There was no formal discussion time planned after my talk. The informal break gave a more casual opportunity for me to connect with people. A lot of people came to me and thanked me for my courage to speak so personally. Some told me of their solidarity with me and some told me of their sympathy. I was asked for the contact information flier that Kinship Germany developed. I hope, of course, that it will reach the people who need the information. There were no critical questions.

The last speakers were Wayne Blakely and Mike Carducci from *Coming Out Ministries*. Both experienced sad childhoods filled with abandonment, abuse, and violence. Both said they are still gay and do not support change ministries. Wayne said that through prayer he came to a celibate way of life. He also shared that this is his way and that it is not necessarily the truth for everybody. He wove his awful childhood and difficult family situation into a construct that original sin is why he is gay. From my perspective, he used badly translated Bible verses and out-of-context quotes from Ellen White to support his credo. He first stated he did not support change ministries; but, towards the end of his presentation, began to talk about healing. I have to admit I sat next to Mike Pearson and mumbled, “Oh, can’t anybody stop him?”

After the official “end” of the conference, we had some lively conversations. Some people came to me and said the position of the *Coming Out Ministries* speakers did not seem authentic to them. Other participants told me that the COM speakers seem to be trying to blame others for a sexual orientation with which they were born. Perhaps it was their American style with a German audience. Perhaps the audience could see that the stories they shared were not those of people with “normal” lives. My story isn’t normal but more healthy and easier to understand.

Looking back, the conference was well-prepared and had an open atmosphere. All of us speakers shared concepts and stories on which the attendees will have a chance to reflect. I hope we opened a lot of hearts. ▼

# Like Growing Older

*Dr. Taylor, do you like growing older?” That question was flung in my direction smack-dab in the middle of a presentation. Momentarily startled, I realized there is no simple yes or no answer to this question and was pretty certain it would be a mixed bag. Having never been asked that specific question before, and with such an emphasis on the word like, I figured it deserved some thought. “Let me ponder that for a while, and I’ll put something in writing—eventually,” I replied, continuing on with my presentation. And I have eventually come up with some musings.*



By Arlene Taylor

I’ve been fortunate to have several *best friends*. Still do. I myself was never one of my best friends, however. As I grow older I’m actually becoming my own best friend. That’s been a welcome surprise and nothing I ever heard discussed during my growing-up years. I know myself better than anyone else. After all, I’ve been hanging around with *me* my entire life, and I’m the only person who will be with *me* my entire life! During this process, I am learning to be kinder toward myself and others, and far less critical of any of us. Human beings all have differing brains, and most are doing the best they can at the time with what they know—myself included. And when I come in contact with those who are not doing the best they can at the time with what they know, I know how to implement appropriate boundaries to minimize the negative impact of their behaviors. I find it is easier to sustain a positive mindset—knowing that it’s a choice and just takes practice.

As I am growing older, I’ve stopped second-guessing myself and have given up worrying about the opinions of others. I’ve earned the right to be wrong—no one can know everything, after all—and am okay with saying, “I don’t know enough about that topic to comment on it—and I’ll look it up.” Occasionally I

make a mistake on purpose just to remind myself that I’m human and that’s what humans do. Make mistakes. (Sometimes they even learn from them!) Life is so much less stressful this way. As one woman put it:

*And whose business is it anyway if I choose to read a book on my Kindle or challenge my brain at Lumosity.com on my computer until 4 AM and then sleep until noon? It’s my business. I can dance with myself to those marvelous tunes of the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s and, at the same time, if I wish to shed tears over a lost love I can do that as well. I can walk the beach clad in a swimsuit that is stretched over a body whose parts are shifting. You know you have everything you had in your youth, but none of it is exactly in the same place. And I will plunge into the waves with abandon if I choose to do so, despite pitying glances from the Hollywood set. They too will grow older. Maybe.*

I’ve stopped spending time being concerned about my memory. My brain has always been somewhat challenged by itty-bitty details related to topics of no interest to me whatsoever. Besides, some of the other things are just as well forgotten (e.g., the 16% I received on my high school trigonometry test, or the eighth-grade schoolmate who told me I

was so stupid I’d never amount to anything at all, much less make any significant contribution in life). Intelligent memory can continue to improve over an entire life, so I concentrate on building those skills and on recalling the really important details related to health and longevity.

I’m honing my sense of spirituality, experiencing awe in a magnificent a green-flash sunset or in a child’s delight over a tiny kitten, in the spine-tingling thrill of glorious music (both the sounds and the spaces between them), in a truly affirming dinner with a lifetime best friend, or in how humbling it is to contemplate the universe.

I revel at being able to connect with many individuals in different countries around the world and to contact almost anyone on the planet using just the touch of a button. I enjoy sharing brain-function information and experiencing the heart-brain reward when I discover that my efforts have made a difference in the lives of some—especially when they practically applied the knowledge gained and found life to have improved exponentially.

Sure, my heart has been *broken* a time or two (or more), or at least it has felt like it was being stomped on, squeezed out to dry, and hammered

with a tire iron. How can a heart not ache when it loses a loved one, watches a dear friend self-destruct, sees a child suffer, knows that a beloved pet has bitten the dust, or recognizes clear injustice—if not actual evil? But broken hearts can heal stronger, much like a broken bone. They can mend, and the experience can contribute strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is somewhat sterile and may never have known the relief of being imperfect.



I am blessed to have lived long enough to have identified silver hairs (among those I have left), and to have watched my youthful laugh lines etched into deep grooves on my face. Now that I have learned the benefit of daily mirthful laughter, those grooves are ever deepening. So many have died before their hair could turn silver, or they have never laughed—or not laughed enough to have created a facial map of who they are. I am even grateful to have lived long enough to need (and to have received) a couple hip replacements (something that wasn't available to ancestors of mine who wrestled with osteoarthritis and passed that tendency on to me). We did like to ice skate!

So, in answer the question "Do you like growing older?" the answer in the main is *most of the time*. I have seen too many people exit this planet before they understood the great freedom that comes with growing older. There are many things I like about it. Not every

thing. But we typically give up something to get something. No, I won't inhabit this planet forever, but I am aiming to reach at least age 122 years 164 days with good mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Meantime I shall continue to surround myself with smart, affirming people who are on a similar journey, who can laugh with me at the vagaries of life, and who are willing to just jump in and take this aging journey. After all, none of us has ever done it before, and we only get one shot at it. I, for one, want to make that shot count for something.

While I am still a living, breathing member of the human race on planet earth, I shall avoid wasting time lamenting what could have been or should have been or might have been. Or worrying about what was, what is, or what will be. And so I shall *wear purple* (if I feel like it), eat two bites of Tiramisu (if I want to), laugh at what tickles my funny bone (even if mine is the only brain laughing), drive an hour to spend an hour with my family-of-choice, and devote less time thinking about being nice (and more time thinking about being graciously functional).

Here's to the joys of growing older, of soaring over the century mark like a shooting star against a cobalt sky! Oh, by the way, thank you for asking the question.

©Arlene R. Taylor PhD

<http://arlenetaylor.org/articles-monographs/taylor-articles/aging/12-like-growing-older>

Here is a test to find  
whether your mission  
on earth is finished:  
If you're alive, it isn't.

- Richard Bach



Mark your calendars now for  
**Rehoboth Beach  
mini-Kampmeeting!**

The dates for our Rehoboth Beach  
weekend will fall on

**April 28-May 1, 2016**

It will be a week later this year, so  
we're counting on the weather to be  
perfect! Make sure you start planning  
for it now!



The annual pre-  
**Kampmeeting Event**

**Women and  
Children First**

**July 22 - 26,  
2016**

[https://www.sdakinship.org/  
events/35-women-children-  
first.html](https://www.sdakinship.org/events/35-women-children-first.html)



# Journey

By Jerry McKay

(Part VII)

## Missionary to Japan

I finished high school in 1974 with better grades than expected and more confidence in my academic abilities than when I started. I attribute that to an environment in which I felt safe and content. There was no comparing my years at Kingsway to my first year of high school back home. Graduation, however, did not mean I had to relocate to continue my studies. Because Kingsway offered the first two years of a bachelor in theology, I started my degree in Oshawa that fall.

Other than changes in the nature of my studies, my first year of college was not much different from high school except for two things. Donna did not stay in Oshawa. She went to Andrews University, a Seventh-day Adventist educational institution in Michigan; and I was introduced to the student missionary program.

In the '70s and early '80s, the Adventist church operated an extensive network of language schools throughout Asia. Most of the teachers were students from Adventist colleges and universities in North America. Most volunteered for one-year terms.

Perry—my subcutaneous-layer-of-fat friend—had spent the prior year in Japan, and it had transformed his life. He spoke with such enthusiasm about his experience that I was inspired to sign up for mission service. In fact, seven of us from my graduating class signed up. Perry also made plans to return to Japan for a second term.

I did not want to go to Japan, however. Despite Perry's enthusiasm, he was no more able to convince me to go there

than he had been to influence my appreciation of the female form. I volunteered for Indonesia. Once the decision had been made, every free moment during the remainder of the year was devoted to organizing suppers, canvassing churches, and washing cars to raise the money for our airfare.

As I said, despite Perry's glowing testimony about Japan, Japan was the last place I wanted to go. I have no idea why except that I had probably been influenced by my father's negative comments about Japan when I was growing up.

Dad was 13 when World War II began, so he was well aware of the war in Europe. He was 13 days short of turning 16 when the Imperial Japanese Navy bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. From the safe but mundane environment of the family farm, Dad's fascination with the war eventually took over, and he ran away to enlist.

Even if he had been of age, he would not have been accepted because a slight heart murmur was detected during a medical. Dad also had flat feet! As well, his father caught up with him and persuaded the authorities that dad was needed at home to help run the farm. Dad was sent home.

After that, he always resented being "forced to work on the damn farm." For the rest of his life, though, he was fasci-

nated by war history. Although that made for easy Christmas gift ideas—there is no shortage of books about WWII—the downside was that I often heard him speak with disdain of General Tojo and the atrocities of the Japanese military. Add to that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and you can see why Japan might not hold much fascination for me.

Of course, as you might expect, shortly before we were to leave for our respective destinations, I was asked if I would go to Japan. Apparently, there was a shortage of teachers. As this adventure had been on one of my numerous prayer lists, I was sincerely open to going wherever I thought God might indicate.

So, in June 1975, with one year of college under my belt and two weeks shy of turning 19, I hesitantly set out for The Land of the Rising Sun. It helped that Perry and two of my classmates would be going with me. Our Japan-bound band of four parted ways with our fellow missionaries and drove to California. We made a great road trip out of delivering a car from Toronto to a friend of a friend who had moved to Los Angeles.

I don't remember much about L.A. other than Disneyland and Universal Studios.

I grew up watching Disney's *Wonderful World of Color* every Sunday evening





on our black-and-white TV!

Realizing a childhood fantasy of climbing up into The Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse was a thrill. Not to be outdone, Universal Studios gave me the opportunity to pass through the Red Sea from the safety of a tour bus. It wasn't quite as dramatic as when Charlton Heston parted the sea in the 1956 movie *The Ten Commandments*, but my Bible-believing imagination made up for the lack of drama.

Just before we were to leave the continent there was one traumatic event—



Hawaii is an island paradise. Despite that fact, or perhaps because of it, I was not let off the same-sex attraction hook. Honolulu, in particular, had surprises waiting for me.

First, Donna had signed up for Japan while at Andrews University. However, we had made no plans to meet in Honolulu. So, when she stepped off the airport shuttle in front of her hotel and I was standing on the sidewalk in front of her, she was so startled she “lovingly” hit me on the face and then laughed sheepishly! It seemed we couldn't be separated.

I had mixed feelings about meeting her. Even though I was pleased that she was going to be in Japan, seeing her in Honolulu revived old anxious feelings about having to be more than I felt I could be. Meeting Donna, however, was not as stressful as the other surprises Honolulu had waiting for me. During our three-day stay, two awkward situations occurred.

One afternoon, a group of us decided to visit the Polynesian Cultural Center. To get there, we had to take a bus. At one stop, a man was sitting on a bench just a few feet from the bus. He was attractive. As I was inclined to do, I was

getting our hair cut. Because we were to become a revered *sensei*—teacher—we were required to conform to Japanese grooming standards. Even though my hair only went to the bottom of my ear lobes—short for the mid-seventies—it would be too long for Japan.

As if we were about to join the military, we marched into a local barber shop and ordered the barber to take it all off. Well, at least enough to reveal the entire ear. While it was a bit traumatic and my concern over my appear-

ance was in overdrive, I was willing to make any sacrifice for God!

From Los Angeles, we headed to Hawaii for a second mini-vacation. The drive to Los Angeles and the flight to Honolulu—the first I had ever taken—were exciting enough to push most pre-occupation with my orientation to the back of my mind. It was easy to hope *it* had been left behind. To my disappointment, my feelings about guys, the absence of attraction to women, and the angst that accompanied both followed me like the rest of my baggage.

#### Honolulu in the '70s

looking at him while pretending to look through or past him. It didn't work.

Suddenly, he looked directly at me and made a suggestive gesture while motioning for me to get off the bus. I was stunned. His solicitation left me feeling totally exposed. I became very self-conscious and terrified that my friends might have noticed and by chance discovered my secret. After the bus had moved on, I was left with a feeling of heaviness I had never felt before that lingered for hours.

The second event was similar but even more anxiety-producing.

This time, our group was in a small diner. Two of my fellow missionaries were facing out the window toward the street. I was facing into the interior as was the fourth member of our group. After a few minutes, a man sitting a few tables away looked at us and shouted at us to stop staring!

If I felt exposed by the previous event, this time I wanted to disappear. The classmate sitting beside me spoke up and apologized for any misunderstanding indicating that no one was staring at him. We muttered something about looking at something behind him. That was not true, and I knew it. And, yes, the

stranger was attractive. And, yes, I had been sneaking a peek or two while waiting to be served. Once again, I was caught.

These events further illustrate the challenge I was facing because of my orientation. Although, for very different reasons, I knew why those guys had reacted as they had. They had caught me exercising my appreciation of their physical appearance. One had liked it, while the other clearly did not.

My companions' appreciation of physical beauty was as active as mine and no less controlling. Strolling with them on Waikiki Beach had proved that! They, of course, did not need to be as discreet as I had been. Their world was filled with attractive women; my world was filled with attractive men. I couldn't have explained why any more than they could have.

When we see objects that attract us, we want to *look* at them whether they are sunsets or attractive people. Why something attracts us is another story. When someone has an attractive smile or beautiful eyes, we want to look at them. And, yes, when they wear their clothes well, I liked to look, as well. My

wanting to look at an attractive man said more about the nature of my orientation than most friends can ever appreciate.

This is, perhaps, the most difficult concept to explain to friends and acquaintances. However, as I have said before, I was never attracted to women *and* men. To borrow a word of the apostle Paul, I had never selected to *exchange* my heterosexual interests for homosexual interests. My attractions had always been *only* for other men.

My uncle used to use horse blinds to keep his horses from being distracted by objects to their right or left. Even if I had borrowed those blinds, I still had to deal with what was right in front of me. I could try to ignore my orientation, but it was always there. I was drawn to what was attractive to me—and that was men. At that point in my life, I was not sexually active; but my orientation influenced what I wanted to look at. Pretending my attractions didn't exist was

exhausting, as was the moral judgment I imposed upon myself.

At the end of those two days, feelings of social awkwardness had increased; and I had become more confused than ever about how long was too long to look at someone. I felt an uneasiness that I had never experienced before. Additional “why” questions were added to the lengthy list I was already rehearsing. The only way to cope was by compartmentalizing my world even further. This, of course, made the integration of my mind, body, and spirit impossible.

Of course, I didn't talk to anyone about those events. I wouldn't have known where to begin. If anyone had brought up the bus stop event, I'm sure I would have dismissed it or made fun of the person who had simply acted as a mirror of my reality. I might, in fact, have protested too much!

Unexpectedly, I was left with a preoccupation regarding the guy who had

made the suggestive gesture. I kept thinking about him. I wanted to know who he was. I wanted to talk to him even if I had no idea what I would have talked to him about. It was a very strange experience being within a few feet of someone I thought probably understood something of my experience. I couldn't forget the guy at the bus stop.

Except for those unsettling experiences and getting the worst sunburn in my life, our little vacation was a blast. From Honolulu, Japan was only six hours into my future. As our departure approached, my attention turned from beaches and bus stops to pagodas. I recalled the mission stories I had read when I was a child. Although those missionaries had gone overseas by boat, I was just as overwhelmed with excitement and some dread when our fully loaded China Airlines 747 took off for Tokyo.



During our orientation sessions at school, Perry had talked about what we might expect in Japan. Nothing ever prepares you for the real thing. Japan had an element of shock. Our flight landed in Tokyo late at night. As soon as we stepped off the plane, it was obvious that English had vanished and that everyone around me had dark hair and brown eyes.

Being mid-June, the rainy season was well underway. Rainy season is a month of on-again-off-again rain. When we left the airport the warm damp night air hit us like a wall and brought every alien smell up close and personal. The ubiquitous lights of Tokyo were accentuated by the rain and made our drive—on the left-hand side of the road—to the church headquarters in Yokohama dizzying. Canada felt very far away.

At the church compound, we were fed and shown a place to sleep. My assigned roommate never showed up. He arrived the following day on a second plane load of would-be teachers. Once again, like my first night at Kingsway, I was on my own in a strange place. When I turned off the light for the night, I couldn't help wondering if I had bitten off too much or if God had made a mistake.

Once everyone had arrived, we were whisked away by Shinkansen—Japan's high-speed train—to Osaka where the flagship language school was located. There we had a crash course in teaching conversational English and were given more cultural tips for living in Japan. Practicing large-group English language teaching methods with people I did not know pushed my introvert boundaries to

the limit, but I survived.

I was not impressed with Osaka because it was too big for my liking, and the language school was the largest in the country. To accommodate the 500 students per quarter, a large group of teachers would naturally have to stay there. If Osaka was too big, Tokyo was colossal. The greater Tokyo area is one of the most populated places on the planet with a population similar to that of Canada—35 million. For this reason, Tokyo was that last place I wanted to live. Therefore, I hinted, hoped, and prayed about going to a smaller city and a more intimate school.

You guessed it. I was asked to go to Tokyo, and I accepted.

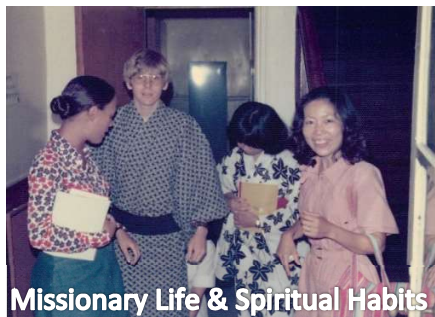
For the next year, I spent nearly every waking moment in Amanuma, a western suburb of Tokyo. The language school

was on the same compound as the Adventist hospital. Founded in the early 1900s, the hospital and church were landmarks. In fact, the small one-way street that winds its way from the commuter train station to the hospital is called Kyokai Dori—Church Street. Everyone, for miles around, knew of the hospital and church.



The language school was in one of three unique two-story wooden buildings that had been constructed to house missionary families. It was a miracle they were still standing.

They were around during the Great Kanto Earthquake that had occurred September 1, 1923. In addition to damage caused directly by the earthquake,



Missionary Life & Spiritual Habits

Although we spent many hours teaching English, everything else we did was about missions and, therefore, had a spiritual focus. We used every opportunity to introduce our students to Jesus. During the week, in addition to language classes, we offered Bible classes—in English, of course.

We were free to conduct those classes as we chose. I liked that they were small and intimate. We tried our best to unpack the mysteries of the Bible. Because I couldn't sing well and did not play the guitar, my classes weren't as musical as some of the others. That

Tokyo had been ravaged by fire. The earthquake had struck at lunchtime on Saturday when people were cooking. I was told that each of the three houses had had a brick chimney. While the houses stood and escaped the fires, the chimneys collapsed and were never replaced.

Then, during World War II, Tokyo had been firebombed. One night in March, American forces had dropped some 1,600 tons of incendiary bombs. Approximately 15 square miles of the city had been destroyed and 100,000 people died. Although the bombing was centered near the docks, far from the hospital and those wooden houses, they too might have gone up in flames if the war had not ended six months later. I had students who were living in Tokyo during the earthquake and the bombing. They had fascinating and painful stories to tell.

In the 1970s, however, there were fewer foreign missionaries around. Because of that, two of those houses were used for other purposes. The SDA Language Institute was in one of them, and we all loved it. The history and architecture of the building created an excep-

tionally intimate and exotic place to teach and study. It was the very environment I had been praying for.

tionally intimate and exotic place to teach and study. It was the very environment I had been praying for.

I clearly recall climbing the stairs to the second floor of the school and standing in front of the door to my first class. It was too late to turn back. Relying totally on our week of orientation, I walked into that class of 15 high school and college students. It was the perfect way to begin. Most of the students were my age, and we connected instantly. Many from that first class became lifelong friends.

We worked hard—teaching 30 plus hours per week. We had private and large group classes. We taught children, teenagers, and professionals of all kinds. And then there were the housewives' classes. We usually taught them in the morning and afternoon. They got that informal designation because when the husbands went off to work their wives were free to study English. Compared to the classes of university students, those housewives were the most enjoyable to teach. And when we had our end-of-term potlucks, those ladies were the ones who introduced us to amazing Japanese food.

In addition to our weekly Bible classes, we went to church each Sabbath with the Japanese Adventist community. We wanted to be there in case a student decided to attend, as well as to participate in worship ourselves. For most of the year, we understood little of what was said during church. Our ears would perk up, however, when the melody of a more traditional hymn filled the sanctuary. No matter what language they are sung in, *Amazing Grace*, *Rock of Ages*, or *Blessed Assurance* are recognizable and heartwarming hymns.

On Saturday afternoons, we had our own fellowship at the school. We taught students our favorite contemporary Christian songs—in English, this time. We shared our favorite Bible stories and

didn't mean they weren't popular. They were. All those thoughtful hours each day contemplating the life of Christ helped me bring the story of Jesus to life. It should be no surprise that I put a lot of thought and energy into those classes and that they were the high point of my week.

On occasion, someone would express a greater interest in the Bible and wanted to learn more about Jesus. When that happened, we suggested studying together privately. Those private Bible classes were the most precious hours I spent with people. Whether it was one of my students or that of another teacher, we were pleased when someone decided to study in Japanese with the local pastor.



tried our best to answer “simple” questions like the nature of good and evil and the meaning of life. The best part was sharing our personal testimonies of faith in Jesus. By the time we were finished, the sun had usually set on another Sabbath. Then our socializing began. If we didn’t play games at the school, we would head out for pizza or bowling—even skating. There was no shortage of things to do in Tokyo.

Every year, we had the honor of attending the baptism of someone from the language school. They were often the first in their family to become Christian. With less than one percent of Japan’s 130 million people identifying as Christian, becoming Christian was no small decision and did not go unnoticed. It was an inspiration to know how courageous they were.

On a side note, I learned a lot about “witnessing” in Japan. Back home, sharing one’s faith often seemed contrived. So much of my faith-sharing experience had been about debating doctrinal differences. It felt like we associated with people only to make converts. In Japan, we became friends and remained friends whether interest in Jesus was present or not. That experience had a lasting impact on me.

Because our life had a mission focus, I was more conscientious about my personal devotions in Japan than I had been when I was in school back in Canada. I enjoyed getting up early and heading off to the language school before anyone else. The school was quiet and those old wooden houses with their large sunrooms were the perfect place for long periods of reflection. Along with my

Bible, I had my weathered copy of *The Desire of Ages* by my side. I methodically worked through both during the year. I cherished those hours of solitude.

I needed lots of time for prayer because my prayer lists were longer than ever. I sent lists of names back to Canada asking friends to pray for students. A number of friends, including my roommate Kelvin, received a prayer list or two. Those extended periods in prayer were no burden.

To my chagrin, my Bible study and prayer didn’t alter my sexual orientation. It did not diminish because I was a missionary. On the other hand, neither did it appear to limit God’s presence and blessing in my life. The evidence of God’s spirit in the lives of LGBT people is often a conundrum for some. ▼



Bradley Nelson, author of “A Gay SDA Play,” sits in front of the Walla Walla University theater building, Village Hall

Photo by Greg Lehman

## Play reveals gay struggle in SDA church

<http://union-bulletin.com/news/2015/mar/28/play-reveals-gay-struggle-in-sda-church>

By Sheila Hagar of the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, Saturday, March 28, 2015

Bradley Nelson’s “A Gay SDA Play” is coming out at a precipitous time in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as it wrestles with its traditional stance on homosexuality.

Since beginning work on the staged reading piece in 2008, the Walla Walla Valley resident used interviews he conduct- ►

► ed over a year to portray the problems “of being gay and SDA” in a world that doesn’t always understand either, he said.

The result is a documentary-style presentation based on more than two dozen interviews that explore the real-life struggle between the Seventh-day Adventist religion—highly represented in the Walla Walla area—and people who come out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender within its membership. [...]

Being non-heterosexual while being Adventist does not match up, according to Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. The church’s stand is unequivocal: While the church recognizes every human as valuable and deserving of dignity, the Bible clearly shows sexual intimacy is restricted to marriage between a man and a woman.

“For these reasons Seventh-day Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships,” according to the church’s official statement.

Nelson, 37, sees it as a division between who he is and who his church wishes he was. He grew up in the local Adventist community in a “very SDA” family.

“I went to all the Adventist schools here,” he said. “My immediate family all still are active SDA.”

He did his theater undergraduate work at The Adventist Walla Walla University and earned a master’s at Ohio University. He tried Chicago on for size afterward, but felt more comfortable in the Walla Walla Valley when he returned about two years ago, he said.

### A search for support

Nelson’s work on “A Gay SDA Play” was influenced by a documentary-style play at Whitman College in 2001. That playwright had interviewed a number of young, gay adults and echoed their experiences on stage.

Nelson attended the presentation with others from the Walla Walla University drama department and discussions that followed in the classroom opened the idea of exploring the topic in Adventist culture.

“Within the next couple of years I worked for the college in media relations, and I was going through a bit of my own coming-out process, trying to figure out who I was in religion and sexually,” he said.

In his search for identity and support, Nelson discovered the community built into SDA Kinship, an international non-profit support organization that provides a safe way for its LGBT members to socialize and have fellowship.

“So I decided to go to their annual meeting,” he said. “And because I had been considering this idea of a play, I decided to just go for it.”

That meant bringing along a mini-cassette recorder and asking people—mostly strangers of “all ages, genders, ways of identifying themselves sexually and in religion”—to trust him with sensitive information.

His approach was to simply ask for their stories, and that was all the prompting it took.

“I think everybody has an interesting story if you give them the opportunity to tell it,” he said. “I heard some really painful things, and some of those make it into the play and some of those don’t.”

As he did himself, many of his subjects had not grown up hearing the words “homosexual,” “gay,” or “lesbian” spoken at home.

“Literally, not once,” he writes in the “A Gay SDA Play” script. “I had very little concept of ‘homosexuality’ other than how it was condemned every once in a great while from the pulpit at church. As far as I knew homosexuality was not even an Adventist issue. I was very naive.”

Among other real voices, whose names were changed for the script, are Kay, who descended from a long line of Adventist missionaries; Cory, who converted to the religion; and Shawn, whose family has always been Adventist.

And there is the dawning of realization that the church they were raised in and that they love doesn’t want them for who they are, the play reveals.

There is struggling with different versions and interpretations of the Bible’s wording about homosexuality, exploring gender stereotypes as children, the awkward coming out as gay at while at Adventist colleges.

*A rehearsal of “A Gay SDA Play” at The Power House Theater*



### The big picture

The “docudrama” is a microcosm of a far bigger and more historic picture, said LuAnn Venden, the play’s director and a teacher of English and theater at Walla Walla University since 1999.

“The church position is exclusionary,” she said. “It’s very similar to the civil rights puzzle in terms of race; I feel the rhetoric is the same.”

Venden said she is as Adventist as the play’s subjects. Her grandfather, Melvin Venden, was “a pretty famous” evangelist for the church, and her father, Morris Venden, was an international Adventist pastor, speaker, and author.

Speaking as the play’s director and not on behalf of the university, Venden said gay students don’t have a place or ►



► acceptance in any official capacity on the WWU campus.

Despite an unofficial gay-straight alliance student group at the school, *Students for Equality*, Venden finds herself being a primary support for young adults seeking answers.

"I've become known as someone who is safe to talk to," she said. "I'm straight and I'm married, but probably every quarter I have at least three new students whom I have never met before show up at my door and say, 'I heard you are safe to talk to' and burst into tears."

They are young people struggling to reconcile their orientation and their religion, and "they are already torn apart," she added.

She believes the stance the church has taken on homosexuality is "morally wrong.

"And if I end up being wrong, I would rather have erred on the side of love, compassion, and acceptance," she said. "And that's the huge reason I am doing this play."

Nelson's play captures this turmoil in the church "100 per cent," she said.

"There's still the majority that want people to be quiet, like 'Don't ask, don't tell' so they don't have to do something about it." ▼

Sheila Hagar can be reached at [sheilahagar@wwub.com](mailto:sheilahagar@wwub.com) or 526-8322.

"Jesus got the idea that while He believed in certain absolute truths, others didn't agree and they could still co-exist."

I read this statement on Twitter recently and it really intrigued me. It's been haunting my dreams; and yes, I realize that is weird. I'm the first to admit that I am slightly weird, too.

@*metamodernfaith* tweeted this peace of infinite wisdom from Dallas. He has four followers, one of which is another of his accounts. Compared to Stephen Fry, @*metamodernfaith* is Twitter small fry. But he's there; and while I'm quite uninterested in Fry's twenty-two thousand tweets, @*metamodernfaith*'s seven to date fascinate me.

You see, I'm a young Christian. As such, I don't always fit in with other Christians. If you read about Christians in the news, it's often about horrible stuff, like the right to discriminate against certain groups. We find them arguing over whether to accept woman leaders in their churches or whether gay marriages should be allowed or not. And a little bit further afield some are campaigning to make abortion illegal. I don't really even care about these topics; I find them irrelevant.

Well, that's not entirely true; I do care, but in a distant, detached kind of way. I care but only because I'm so ashamed of my fellow Christians for behaving like this. Sometimes I think Christianity would be great if it weren't for all those bickering Christians. Or as the refrigerator magnet that my ex-Christian sister gave me says, "*Dear Jesus, please protect me from Your followers.*"

Maybe I should start at the beginning. I didn't grow up in this country; I was born in apartheid-era South Africa. I

# I like to believe that there is a God



By Tom de Bruin

experienced horrible discrimination firsthand, even in the Christian community that I was brought up in. At a reasonably young age I moved to Europe but have never settled. I currently spend a third of my time in Amsterdam, another third in Cardiff, and the rest at airports and on KLM flights. And (spoiler alert) I'm a minister.

I grew up Christian, but I left the church. Christianity and Christians didn't mesh in my mind. Reading the Bible, I found teachings of love, acceptance, and care. Jesus seems to do nothing else but teach this message. But, looking at my fellow churchgoers, I saw gossip and judgement. These Christians were the least "Christian" people I knew.

You can imagine my surprise when one day I woke up, and I felt that I just *had* to become a pastor. I hadn't been to church in years, but I could not think of anything else. It was stupid and crazy. I was reasonably successful at my work in the computer programming sector. I had a great future ahead of me with a smart company car and a good salary. I'd say good parties, too, but computer geeks actually throw terrible parties! I didn't go to church. I didn't like church. But I just *had* to become a pastor, a minister, a vicar.

I did my utmost best not to become one, but I failed. It's been fifteen years since that strange day, and I've been a minister for eight of them. And looking back, I'm glad I made the choices I did.

I've learned a lot in those years. Yes, church generally is still not very interesting. And, yes, there are still thousands of



Christians doing horrible things. But I've come to see that we often throw the baby out with the bathwater. The bad press of some ruins it for the rest.

Today I am a Christian, and I like it. I'm different from most, but most are also changing. I don't go to church so that I will go to heaven. I'm not even convinced that I want to go there. I don't have a list of things I must and mustn't do. I don't get into arguments with people about creation or evolution. I don't tell teenage girls that God will be sad if they get an abortion.

And I certainly don't force my views on anyone else.

Yes, I have views and opinions. I like to believe that there is a God. I like to believe that that God created me and the rest of the world. I like to think that God holds all life sacred and hates it when we are hurt. I like to think that some choices are better than others. I like to think that what @metamodernfaith says about Jesus is true for me too: 'Tom got the idea that while he believed in certain absolute truths, others didn't agree and they could still co-exist.'

So why this article? And why this magazine? Well, I like to think that if you've got something good, you might want to tell others about it. I tell my friends about the best burgers in Cardiff. Succulent patties, crispy buns, excellent sauces. I even tell strangers on the street who may happen to be hungry.

Sadly, the best burger joint in Amsterdam closed down. I dream of those burgers. My wife and I reminisce about them on nostalgic Sunday afternoons. I can't share those burgers with anyone anymore. It's too late. Christianity is like my best burgers. If my life is awesome, much more so than before, surely it is just natural for me to tell others.

So what is Christianity and church for me? It's very simple. I think that we all have a hard time being our best. We have this tendency to be happy with mediocrity. Not only in school or at work but in everything that we do. Too often we just go for 'good enough'. This is true for most people.

While we are going for "good enough", we are also struggling with the things that pull the hardest and shout the loudest: money, bosses, careers, degrees. But, despite this, we know, deep down inside, that we are failing in the quiet places where it counts the most.

Workaholicism is so common that it's become a Hollywood cliché. We are all familiar with the typical workaholic father. Then there are the elderly, hidden away in care homes; the children are sent off to daycare, so that their working parents can earn as much as possible. The people we love are pushed aside so we can do the jobs we hate. Deep down, we feel guilty about this and hide. We hide in alcohol; we hide in more work.

At the same time, people we don't know suffer even more than our loved ones. Homelessness and poverty are so prevalent that you barely notice people begging anymore. Immigration laws are becoming stricter; countries are arguing as to how few refugees they can take, while far-away foreign workers are exploited so we can have cheap clothing. They suffer out of sight, out of mind, so we can look good for less!

This is the state of Western culture. Do you recognize it?

We need an antidote, and one of these antidotes is Christianity. It has become my antidote; and, as far as I'm concerned, it's the best antidote out there. I wish everyone would give it a try.



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

Editor : Catherine Taylor  
Circulation : Floyd Pönitz  
European Editor : Ruud Kieboom  
Production : Ruud Kieboom  
Proofing : Jonathan Cook,  
Yolanda Elliott, Carrol Grady  
Jacquie Hegarty, Floyd Pönitz  
Printing : Doolittle's PrintServe

The *Connection* is published by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. PO Box 244, Orinda, CA 94563 USA. Submissions are welcome and may be directed to the editor at [connectioneditor@sdakinship.org](mailto: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 244, Orinda, CA 94563 USA or emailed to [subscriptions@sdakinship.org](mailto: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.

© 2016 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.

## EUROPEAN KINSHIP MEETING (EKM) 2016

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

Location Seminar Hotel in the area of Odenwald (Frankfurt)

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



Tom at Newbold College

Christianity gives me a weekly day off. A day when I won't work. I call it Sabbath. A day when I prioritize the ones I love. On this day I go to church; and, yes, sometimes it's boring. But it's a "good" habit, a day which pauses my life and helps me focus on what is really important.

My career is important but my wife is more so! Money is necessary, but enough is enough. I'd rather take a day off to spend with my aging parents than work an eighty-hour week. My boss often has ridiculous demands – what boss doesn't – but church helps me remember: for him good enough is enough, but for my family and friends good is not nearly enough.

Christianity helps me be a better person – someone who lives a better, kinder life. And that's a lot of what Christianity is all about. Often I hear Christians and non-Christians alike arguing about unimportant stuff, and I hear a northern accent from Game of Thrones saying, "You know nothing, Jon Snow." Because they don't. They really don't.

I am happy to be a Christian. It makes my life better. It helps me re-configure my life around important issues. My advice? Give it a go; it might make your life better, too. ▼



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

She will be talking on:

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

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

The cost will be: € 275

For more information write to Catherine, coordinator for EKM2016, at [katgurian@aol.com](mailto:katgurian@aol.com) ▼