

connection.

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 34 No. 1 – January 2010



Rannoch Moor, Scotland @Mike Lewis

Remember that you
are a light set on a hill.
Your very life, lived honestly,
changes this world.

◀ Ellen White ▶

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WHO WE ARE...

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

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) 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. SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn or even mention homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts that are used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up as LGBTI has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

SUPPORT KINSHIP

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

SDA Kinship, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA

or visit SDA Kinship's
website at:
www.sdakinship.org.





From the Editor

Welcome to 2010

By the end of December, most of us think the season for gifts is over. Working in the Kinship community has taught me differently. As the articles, notes, and thoughts came in for this issue, I began to feel like I was sitting before the Christmas tree again. Each person's work or thoughts or plans seemed like a gently wrapped, around-the-world surprise of caring and hopefulness. We have several contributors from Australia, one from Malaysia, a few from the United States, one from England, and one from the Netherlands. This editor, who so wants the world of Kinship to be represented, is delighted. I am grateful to hear news of the groups that are forming, grateful to hear anthems of support in the devotional Ben sent and the letter David wrote to Spectrum, grateful for the gentle thoughtfulness Larry and Rom brought to two different kinds of losses experienced by Kinship members recently, grateful for the news Brian and Adam wanted to make sure we heard, grateful for Kevin's reminder to look for blessings, grateful that Kinship is adding a voice of outrage to destructive actions by a church leader, mostly grateful that you are out there, creating more stories of courage and hope—grateful for you. As I mentioned last January, I am not much for New Year's resolutions. I think they are the road paved with discouragement. Instead, I would like to offer you encouragement and blessings. Chaos Theory postulates that the wings of a butterfly in Jakarta affect the climate in Dunblane. Remember that you, as Ellen White once wrote, are a light set on a hill. Your very life, lived honestly, changes this world. So I wish for you perseverance. I wish for you hope. I wish for you large doses of humor. I wish you for someone who loves you. I know for certain that Someone loves you. I wish for you dreams to push you forward. I wish for you good and gentle memories that feed you. I wish for you safety. And I wish that you will be able to take good care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine



As We are Getting Older

Famed psychologist, Eric Erikson, who theorized about the eight stages of human development, described generativity in midlife as a very significant foundation for the last stage of life. For Erikson, generativity meant creative and productive work, and especially activity that contributes to the betterment of the society. Being generative has also been associated with feelings of well-being. The more one gives (up to a point), the better one feels about life. For example, a study of 520 people aged 55-84 found that generativity accounted for approximately 80% of their feelings of well-being, more important, even, than intimacy. Yet, generativity is not exclusively an activity characteristic of mid-life adults. Rather it can be a continuous way of life. Indeed, according to research by McAdams, de St. Aubin, & Logan (1993) and Sheldon & Kasser, (2001), commitment to nurturing younger people increases over the age span. Generative activities among older people are often focused on those who are beyond the family circle, as well as within it, through forms of volunteer work, civic engagement, and interpersonal relations involving caring for non-family members.

In this context, research from Hong Kong makes a contribution. In Hong Kong, many older people are not formally educated, in contrast to the young. Because of this, members of younger generation often express a disrespect and disregard of their older relatives. This tendency reduces the seniors' ability to engage with them and thus express their generativity. This has repercussions for their sense of well-being. To verify these trends, researchers studied 190 people, average age of 73, at two time periods, one year apart. They were evaluated as to their sense of being respected, their generative activities, concern with passing on their knowledge to the next generation, and their psychological well-being. The findings indicated that generative action and well-being depend importantly on the degree to which one's actions are valued and respected by others. If one feels respected, it increases one's generativity and enhances one's feelings of well-being. Interestingly, in this study, engaging in civic activities seemed to generate more respect than that found from children and grandchildren. At the same time, however, the younger generation would be well-served by giving respect to their elders; it has positive potential for their own well-being, as well as for their seniors. ▽

- ① - *The Positive Aging Newsletter*,
Kenneth and Mary Gergen.
- "Generativity among young, mid-life, and older adults,"
Psychology & Aging, 8, p221-230;
D.P. McAdams, E. de St. Aubin, and R.L. Logan (1993).
- "Getting older, getting better? Personal strivings and
psychological maturity across the life span." *Developmental Psychology*; K.M. Sheldon & T. Kasser (2001).



In memory of David Vanier

Contributed by Larry Hallock

David Vanier, 20-year partner of J. Lee Todd, died unexpectedly last month in the wee hours of the morning at their home in Coarsegold, CA (near Fresno). He was 62. David had experienced horrific back problems and pain over a number of years, requiring multiple surgeries and keeping him in a chair much of the time over the past several years. It is ironic that Lee, being older than David, became the caregiver in their family, rather than the other way around.

You might remember Lee as a dear friend from the earlier years of Kinship, a staunch supporter of the organization, and generous contributor. I met him at the first Kinship Kampmeeting in 1980. In those days, we had lots of people able and anxious to launch lots of projects, but little money with which to do it. Lee (and others) often came to the rescue, financing such projects as mass educational packet mailings and a live-operated hotline advertised on Seventh-day Adventist campuses, to name two examples.

I will remember David as a kind and generous soul who could bake any kind of pie you might name—and it would always be better than downtown!

Lee met David while working for GM in Detroit. They moved to California when Lee retired. ▽



God gave us memories that we might have roses in December

Unknown

Erratum:

In last month's paper version of Connection page 15 was printed twice due to an unfortunate mistake during the printing process. It is possible to read the back cover article on Kinship's website at www.sdakinship.org, Members Area (KOL). ▽

Room for Grief

Contributed by Rom Wilder

We just don't have room for grief in our lives. Other countries, other cultures, have rituals and time. Once when I'd "lost" a child (Bob and I were in the process of adopting his niece, and his sister came back and changed her mind) I found myself writing numbers backward—and other evidence of my brain shorting out. A friend who was a chaplain explained it was the mind's way of making space for the grief. I hadn't known before that happened that indeed the brain does do things when our hearts hurt.

Rom asked that this piece be dedicated to Abigail, the beloved 13-year-old Sheltie of a Kinship member. Abby died December 22, 2009.

It's unusually quiet. The TV is turned to the "light classical" station, the Christmas tree lights are still on, and a muffled vacuum is in a nearby apartment. It's truly all quite peaceful.

The music changes from Vivaldi to Boyce. The vacuum sounds like it is coming from inside our apartment. I listen more carefully and realize it isn't a vacuum at all. It's our yellow lab—our sweet-faced girl who can look straight through your eyes into your soul, our snow-loving dog—snoring.

In my teens I would sometimes be unable to sleep because of my

father's loud snoring down the hall. Even closed doors didn't do much to muffle the noise. But this snoring, the faraway vacuum sound, this 60-pound hunk of yellow fur and bones and velvet ears, this love's even breathing isn't a noise one would even want to muffle. It is a comfort, a reminder that I am not alone in the room, that there is other life breathing besides me and the ants who've come in out of the cold.

A lot of things can be purchased today. Most are even available online. But some things cannot be bought, cannot be wound up or even battery-activated. One of those is the sound of a Labrador Retriever's

happy tail thumping against something and another is the 300% relaxed snoring of that dog.

Each year I sincerely wish people comfort and joy. For me, one of life's great comforts is the sound of the dog snoring, and one of life's great joys is the sound of that dog's tail of welcome home—whether you've been gone 3 minutes or 3 weeks.

I hope you have enough dog snoring in your life to comfort you and assure you all is peaceful and well in one small corner of the planet. And I hope you have enough tail wagging to fill your life with joy and assure you that you are loved unconditionally by the owner of that tail! ▽



Memories of Orlando Kampmeeting 2006

Memories



We are God's Work of Art

Ben Kemena

“We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has already designated to make up our way of life” (Ephesians 2:10, New Jerusalem Bible).

“We are God's work of art”—this is an amazing assertion! It takes us by surprise. Was Scripture really this affirming when we were children? I don't remember it being so positive. Other translations of this text may not state it quite as boldly, but this translation does have a stunning appeal! However, we actually are God's work of art, each and every one of us! We may be a work in progress, perhaps; but we are beautiful in both our essence and our growth.

Vincent van Gogh viewed Christ as "an artist whose medium is human flesh." The Ephesian Scripture actually continues, *“created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has already designated to make up our way of life.”* We are God's medium, we are God's good work, and we are to create goodness. The text offers us the confidence and encouragement to believe in ourselves, in our inherent worth and beauty, and in our ability to do good.

The so-called "glamour-and-glitz" fashion community may shake our confidence in our own beauty by creating the cult of the body beautiful, but in the eyes of which beholder? An institutional church may shake our self-worth by creating a cult of heterosexuality or the cult of the unattainable perfect saint, but are we not loved and saved by grace?

Our loving Savior sees to the heart of the matter and to the core of our own personal being. Like an artist who believes in her/his work, God expresses confidence through Scripture and explicitly reminds us that we are good and that we are capable of doing good. God joyfully nurtures each and every one of us as a matter of hope, joy, and love—divine art.

*Holy Artist, we are Your work of art, created in Christ Jesus. Help us to live the good life You intended for us. (Based on *The Word is Out* by Chris Glaser)*

Navigating KOL (Kinship OnLine)

By Floyd Pönitz and Ruben D. López

The middle section of the KOL page gives you links, news, announcements, instructions, etc. Check out the link to the video from European Kampmeeting!

On the left side is your navigation menu. Here is where you navigate through the KOL pages. At the very top of the menu it will say "Hi <your username>" and either "No Messages" or it will list how many private messages you have received from other members. Click on the link to take you to your profile and you can read your messages.

The first section includes: *(see right)*

The first link just brings you back to this main page.

The KOL Wall has been developed and it is very much like the Wall on Facebook. You can post your thoughts, what you are doing, thinking, etc., here.

Recent Profile Updates! shows you who has recently updated their profile and what public updates have been made.

My KOL Profile and Settings is where you update your profile, change your password, add a profile picture, and change your settings.

KOL Membership Lists is where you can search for other members by region, name, interests, etc. Live KinChat! Click here anytime you log on to chat with fellow Kinship members. ➤



In October, during the conference on homosexuality at Andrews University, Dwight Nelson preached a sermon that was unsupportive of lesbian and gay Seventh-day Adventists. This is a response written by a heterosexual Adventist and published at www.spectrummagazine.org, the online version of Spectrum, a publication of Adventist Forum.

A Letter of Support



David Potter

By David Potter

Dear Dr. Nelson,

Firstly, thank you—and praise God—for your ministry. It is a blessing to both my wife and me, but especially my wife as she is often home alone on Sabbath while I'm away preaching at distant country churches. Because her health doesn't permit much travel, she often depends on Hope Channel for her Sabbath morning service.

Last Sabbath I was away preaching when Elaine watched your sermon on homosexuals in the church [Sex in the Temple: What's So Gay about That?]. It's the first time she's been disappointed by your message. She was saddened by your explanation that homosexual believers must remain celibate in order to be true to their Christian calling. She couldn't help thinking of the hundreds of thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) Adventists you would deny the joy and intimacy of a committed relationship and doom to lonely lives and the statistical likelihood of an early grave. But her response is not simply emotional. This is an issue we have both taken an interest in and looked into.

We have a question for you: Are you absolutely sure that all homosexuality (i.e. the acts) is sin? It's clear you have done some reading on this topic. I'm sure you have read some of Roy Gane's material, perhaps his Leviticus-Numbers commentary. You may also have read the Ferguson-Guy-Larson book on gay Seventh-day Adventists. If so, whether or not you are persuaded by the theology of Jones and Guy, you will be aware that a credible challenge to the traditional church position exists, one the church cannot just brush aside.

Last year I reviewed this book. The review and a sympathetic editorial by Nathan Brown were published in the *Record*. Perhaps not surprisingly, these two items drew a storm of protest from the conservative wing of the church. It was so explosive that the decision was taken not to publish any letters on the topic. No healthy dialogue ensued. The lid was put back on the can of worms, the traditional position was trotted out to placate those that feared the sky was falling in, LGBTI believers were returned to their holes, and nobody had their theology or their prejudice properly tested. No doubt some feel their theological position is impregnable and needs no testing. But this type of thinking doesn't facilitate progress. Rather it tends towards fossilisation.

You must be aware that Scripture is silent on the issue of homosexual orientation. You would know that the KJV does not use the word homosexual. No English language Bible used the word before the middle of the 20th century. The handful of Bible references to same-sex activity appear to refer to abusive or violent acts motivated by lust (Rom 1:27). They say nothing about relationship or gay love.

The Sodom story cries out to be properly understood. It was a planned gang rape of two strangers by all the men of Sodom, "both young and old" (Gen 19:4). They can't possibly have all been gay. After their big night out, most of them would have returned home to their wives and families. Why would heterosexual men want to rape men? Ask jail inmates why they do it. Ask soldiers why they do it to captured enemy combatants. It's not uncommon. In fact, it's common enough that two instances are mentioned in the Old Testament (Genesis 19, Judges 19). ➤

➤ Kinship OnLine

The "Connection" Newsletter... here is the latest *Connection* (in full color) as well as archived *Connections* from previous years. You can print the *Connection* from this location if you prefer having a paper copy. More tips for KOL coming soon.... ▼

➤ A Letter of Support

The Benjamite story is instructive. Just as Lot offered the Sodomite mob two young women to assuage their lust, so the Ephraimite and Levite offered the Benjamites two women, the old man’s virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine. In the end the concubine alone was sacrificed. The men treated her so appallingly that she did not survive the ordeal. These men were no more gay than the men of Sodom were. Ezekiel 16 applies as well to this story as it does to the other. In neither case is the primary issue sodomy or homosexuality.

A question: Is it fair to define heterosexuality by the behaviour of rapists? Why, then, would you define homosexuality in terms of “homosexual offenders” (1 Corinthians 6:9)? In doing so you create a tautology if, in fact, practising homosexuals are by definition sexual offenders. Of course, the word homosexual is not in the original. We both know it was supplied by the translators. A bit more clarity is needed on exactly what Paul meant by “homosexual offenders.” The tautology is removed if you understand him to be referring to pederasty or male prostitution or sodomy as practised by the men of Sodom, or to the bisexual behaviour that was common in the Greco-Roman world (and condemned by Paul in Romans 1). But to see it like this, you may have to abandon the view that 1 Corinthians 6 encompasses all homosexuality.

In the 21st century, we have a better understanding of sexuality. A growing body of research suggests that sexual orientation is due to nature, not nurture or choice. The church needs to learn from this research and reconsider the sociological implications. Without question, God requires sexual purity from his people, both straight and gay. This is un-

arguable, as is the fact that the Edenic model involved a man plus a woman, not two members of the same team.

For me, not being a theologian is both a disadvantage and an advantage—a disadvantage in that I can’t deal with the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and make confident pronouncements about the precise meanings of obscure passages, but an advantage in that my perspective is not overwhelmed by theology. I’m interested in what can be learned from a range of sciences. Because of this, I’m no longer convinced by the traditional church teaching on sexuality. Good theology must be informed by good science. Church history shows that this is not the way it’s always worked. Indeed, the church has often impeded the progress of science. But believers have nothing to fear from true science: it provides insight into the handiwork of God. I no longer



believe that the Bible condemns all same-sex relations. I have a good conscience before God. By the way, I am neither gay nor bisexual. Rather I am an advocate for a misunderstood minority group in the church. For too long LGBTI believers have been treated as pariahs, as outcasts, given no respect, driven to desperate measures. It’s time personal pre-

judice was set aside. The heterosexual majority in the church must learn to accept that homosexual orientation and behaviour are just as natural and normal for homosexuals as heterosexuality is for the majority. Our view of them is not gracious and our narrow understanding of Scripture is not necessary.

In our fallen condition we cannot avoid the effects of sin. For example, we cannot avoid ageing, sickness, baldness, left-handedness, birth defects, inherited conditions, mutations, extreme personality traits (e.g. sociopathy). We have no control over these effects of sin. God won’t judge us for them. On one occasion the disciples queried Jesus about such a case, wanting to know whom to blame for a blind man’s affliction. In response Jesus said that neither the man nor his parents were to blame (John 9:3). I believe Jesus would see homosexuality in the same way. It is an outcome that owes its existence to the effects of sin, but is not itself sin. There is no choice involved; it’s a legacy. Yes, we all inherit sinful natures that God wants to begin transforming. And He demands that our sexual behaviour be above reproach. But He doesn’t appear to be in the business of changing people’s sexual orientation—as the church’s painful experience with Colin Cook shows (countless other examples can be cited). I wish Wayne Blakely well, but his relatively recent rebaptism is only the beginning of a long journey. It’s a bit early to be trumpeting him as a truly reformed gay man. The gay people I know are just as incurably gay as I am incurably heterosexual. ▽

① David Potter is the Coordinator for General Studies at Avondale College.

Connection ▽



Stephanie and Joy (2004)

You Put a Smile on My Face

You put a smile on my face.
You turn my frowns upside down.
Every time I think of you I smile.
Every time I think of you I laugh.
I think of all the good times we have shared.
I think of all the silly little things that you do.
I think of all the things you do to take my mind off
my problems.

You are forever in my heart.
You are etched in my soul.
You have touched my life in so many ways.
There is so much beauty in you!
You have such an infectious laugh!
A twinkle in your eye!
You're like a rose.
You may have thorns, but hey don't we all?
I find that beauty inside you the most precious.
But with you the beauty shines straight through you
for all to see.

You do not ask for conditions.
You do not ask for change.
You do not say there are limits to my love and
understanding.
I have opened my soul to you.
You have sat and listened.
You didn't reject the real me when you saw it.
You embraced me instead.

I see your pain.
I feel your pain.
I too am where you are and have been.
Open your eyes and look at yourself.
You are unique and special.
You are just the way you should be.
God sees you and smiles at you.
He says, "WOW! What a perfect creation."
He only sees the real you.
He loves you so much!

Today I pray
that you will see yourself as God
and I have seen you.
You have touched so many lives.
You have healed so many hearts.
Most of all you have touched MINE!

- Stephanie Spencer

Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn, or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude.

—Dennis Wattley



New Year's Eve

Kevin Rabe

On this night I sit out on the balcony watching the evening's shadow fall all around me. The clouds have lost their glow of pink and have settled into the realization that it's going to get dark soon. Lately, most New Year's Eves find me alone and enjoying my own company. No one else shares this balcony. Downstairs the noise of a party underway is floating up to my floor. I hear a booming voice.

I was supposed to go out with my friends from Jersey Street. The weather is unpredictable so I have called off our plans. The mosquitoes are out in force! I think I'll go inside.

A short time ago, on this last day of December, I wrote on the last page of my prayer journal for the year. I found myself listing the blessings and saying, "Thank You." This year brought: a new grandson, a new great nephew, new opportunities at work, blessings from God for the love of family, and for keeping Mum with us a little longer.

There have been disappointments. I had to move BUT God provided a new home to move to. There have been disappointments with friends but God has given me grace to be forgiving and motivation to move on. There have been times when my relationship with Him appeared to wane and grow lukewarm, but He always reminded me that He is in control and has held my hand a little tighter. Even in my times of loneliness, God sat with me and embraced my loneliness, which I was able to embrace, knowing that one day I will see Him face to face.

I give thanks for the folk who smile at me and for those who stop to say "hello." I give thanks for those who expressed appreciation for my work and recently nominated me for the *Making a Difference Award* and the *Star Award* just when I needed to be cheered up. My aunt in America keeps in touch with her emails. It is such a joy to be part of a family who stays in contact with each other. At Christmas time it was heart-warming to receive messages and greetings from my brother and sisters wishing me both Merry Christmas and Happy Birthday. When I have felt alone Cliff took me out for lunch, Belinda shared a cheery greeting, Con gave me a hug in the elevator, Kevin and Theo sent a Christmas card from New York City. The messages from friends far and near are a gift of God to me. I thank Him. I am grateful for my daughter Fiona and her children. I am grateful for my daughter Kerrie. I find joy in the faces of the children when they greet me.

I am reading *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* as well as Barak Obama's book *The Audacity of Hope*. I have enjoyed a delightful DVD, *The Young Victoria*.

Well, in four hours time it will be the New Year. With so many gifts in 2009, roll on 2010! Happy New Year!

Memories of Kampmeeting Australian Style 2005



Memories

Hong Kong Pride Parade 2009



Reported by Adam Lee

Hong Kong had its second annual pride parade on November 1, 2009, just a day after the Taipei pride march that recorded the largest number of marchers ever in the history of Asia's pride parade in which 25,000 people turned out in a show of pride and solidarity. This was also the first pride march for my partner and me.

The parade themed "Be Proud! Be Yourself!" received wide publicity around the world. Even if nothing had changed in terms of public policy, at the very least, the parade achieved the objective of coming out loud and proud to the world in greater visibility. The aim of the parade was to raise awareness and promote understanding of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered and intersex persons besides bolstering the courage and confidence of the LGBTIQ communities themselves.

Hong Kong's second pride parade recorded a total of 1800 participants, nearly double the number of

marchers last year, thanks to parade director Connie Chan and her dedicated team including members from the Women's Coalition of Hong Kong, Rainbow of Hong Kong, LesLoveStudy, Midnight Blue (a male sex worker support network), and Gay Harmony (gay counseling hotline).

This year, renowned Hong Kong film director Ann Hui was conferred the title of the first Rainbow Ambassador. Ann has pledged to lobby for equal rights for the LGBTIQ community in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's top officials, including Chief Executive, had unfortunately turned down invitations to attend. This reflects the government's lack of concern for the welfare of its queer citizens. Current public policy does not address LGBTIQ issues in any way, let alone public funding. Nevertheless, the League of Social Democrats legislator Wong Yuk-man attended the parade to show his support for equal rights.

Parade participants gathered at the Southern Playground in Wan Chai at 2:30 pm as they prepared for the hour-long march. LGBTIQ groups from Hong >

➤ Hong Kong Pride Parade 2009

Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, gay and straight citizens of Hong Kong, foreign expats, and tourists from around the world turned out to show their solidarity to Hong Kong's largest street party. A giant pink ball was bounced up and down over the crowd, and a rainbow shower launched. About 20 volunteers held a giant rainbow flag and participants went under it to get the "rainbow shower." With the giant flag leading the way, the parade kicked off into Hennessy Road as the public looked on. Some cheered as marchers sang, danced to the music and chanted slogans in their pink costumes holding rainbow flags, placards, and colorful banners along the route to Chater Garden in Central.

Besides those mentioned earlier, LGBTIQ organizations in Hong Kong that participated included the Student Christian Movement, Blessed Minority Christian Fellowship, Elements LGBTIQ Teens Club (a voluntary organization reaching out to queer teens through social activities, peer counseling, parental support, school talks, and HIV testing), and Civil Rights for Sexual Diversities, among others.

China's contingents included LGBTIQ and PFLAG groups from Beijing, Tianjin, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Shandong, Shanghai, and Guizhou among others. Taiwan was represented by InterPride (International Association of Pride organizers) and Taipei's Gingin bookstore.

International groups that participated included the Interbank LGBT Exchange represented by 13 international banks as well as Amnesty International. Teenage boys and girls from an international school held up placards while chanting human rights slogans.



Blessed Minority Christian Fellowship, Hong Kong's only non-denominational Christian community, marched for the second year. BMCF has been reaching out to those most marginalized by church and society

since 1992. About a dozen LGBTIQ members of BMCF turned out to march, holding a rainbow flag with the words "God Loves the Queer Too" pasted across it. The Rev. Silas Wong, a straight ally working with BMCF, also marched. BMCF members handed out brochures stating their beliefs that homosexuality is not a sin and that it is possible for homosexuals to truly be Christians. BMCF has a good number of allies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong Divinity School of Chung Chi College, the Hong Kong Women Christian Council, and the Hong Kong Christian Institute, just to name a few.



At the closing program in Chater Garden, parade participants were treated to a feast of popular songs and dance performed by local queer and straight artists. The Chater Together After Pride Parade Show was hosted by openly gay radio DJ Brian Leung of RTHK2's "We are family" gay radio program which broadcast weekly. Three members of Hong Kong's first gay soccer team One Nil were interviewed on stage. At the end of the show, Brian led the audience in joining hands and raising them high while chanting the slogan "Gay and straight living in harmony, equality, and mutual respect" showing that "we are a family" regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Hong Kong's premier English paper, the South China Morning Post, published a positive report on Monday titled "Members of the gay and lesbian community turn out to paint the town pink with pride." Parade director Connie Chan was quoted as saying, "Many Hong Kong people still see same-sex partners as queer or something that they should stay away from. We hope to make the parade more like a carnival rather than a protest demanding this or that from the government. We hope people see us as a happy community."

Following the successful campaign this year to have same-sex couples covered under the Domestic Violence Ordinance, the next item on the agenda of

Hong Kong's LGBTIQ activists is to have sexual orientation covered under Hong Kong's anti-discrimination law. The greatest resistance has been coming from right-wing Christian groups. So there is still much work to be done.

The long term goal of the LGBTIQ movement can best be summed up in the manifesto of the Global Chinese Tongzhi (LGBTIQ) Annual Conference held in Hong Kong in 1999, which states in part: "Let everyone be a healthy person under the sun... Let there be no discrimination, fear or hatred on account of race, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, language or any other difference among people. Let us accept, respect, and appreciate each other's differences, and learn from those differences until the dualistic dichotomy of heterosexuality versus homosexuality is broken, and a truly harmonious society is born." ▽

Health Tip of the Month

Berries and Walnuts add tang and crunch to breads, cereals, and yogurt—and do a little something for your brain, too. Turns out that the polyphenols in walnuts and berries help quell the inflammation and oxidative stress that can injure the brain and lead to memory problems over time. In fact, the polyphenols in berries and walnuts—as well as in grape juice—are so powerful, some research suggests they might even help reverse cognitive decline once it occurs. For example, in one study of older adults with mild dementia, the subjects performed better on memory tests after Concord grape juice was added to their diets. So sprinkle some nuts and berries on your breakfast cereal, serve it with a side of grape juice, and let brain-boost begin.



A String Too Short to Save

Rom Wilder

Gratitude

A lot is said these days about having an attitude of gratitude. I'm pretty sure I have it, but on December 25 I saw it in its purest form.

Our 3½-year-old doesn't really remember a lot about Christmas before this one. She remembers a small fiber-optic tree we put up for her, but she remembers nothing of gifts. Christmas to her is trees with lights and balls on them, which is why I purchased a very tall pre-lit Christmas tree this year. (Oh, the joy of not having to struggle with the lights!)

Christmas morning she came into the living room in her warm sleepers and was happy to see her daddy had stayed overnight with us; she was happy to see the dogs (who insist on telling her goodnight and good morning for every nap and night of sleep); and, of course, she was happy to see her aunts and the Christmas tree.

Lynn handed her a large bag and told her it contained a present for her. She pulled out the present with accompanying *thank you's* and *wows*. It was a road she could put together for her many, many tiny cars. After playing with it for about ten minutes, Lynn said, "There's another present here for you," and handed her another large bag.

"For ME? ANOTHER one?" she asked in near disbelief. Yes. As she pulled out the little grocery cart (which I'd put together the night before, thus becoming a true parent), she exclaimed, "Oh, a cart! It is just wonderful!"

She played with it for a while, expressing her joy and saying "thank you" several times, and then played with her road and cars, again with joy and gratitude. There were a couple of other gifts for her, but she didn't even ask if they were hers. She had no sense of entitlement, only a sense of pure gratitude and joy.

I wonder if there's a way to climb back into that mindset, that place where the expectations for gifts don't exist and where the reaction to them is pure gratitude?

Uganda

We want you to know that Kinship is working with the Seventh-day Adventist Church administrators and thought leaders who understand and support LGBTI issues to offset the terrible influence of the Ugandan Adventist Union President.

Australia – Noel Thorpe

We will have a Kinship booth for Sydney's Fair Day on 21 February. The biggest and best-loved community event of the season, Fair Day will officially launch this year's Mardi Gras and promises a fun, relaxed day out for all the family, even the pets! Up to 70,000 routinely turn out to sit on the grass, browse the stalls, gorge themselves on the plethora of delicacies available at the stalls, and catch up with old friends—and make some new ones. We'll be at our booth from 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM and would love to have you come by for a visit!

For those of you who plan ahead, we are already developing our Australian Style Meeting in Sydney on the 25th of September. We are going to have some very good speakers.

As always, we invite you to visit our website at <http://www.sdakinshipaustralia.org/>.

Manchester, England – Ornette Clennon

Recently we had our first Kinship "chapter" meeting. Abs, Paul, and I met up at the Taurus. This was Paul's first Kinship gathering. Over dinner, we chatted about our faith and sexuality. Paul shared with us some of his Hebrew studies of 1 Samuel 18. This was fascinating because it added light on the physical relationship between Jonathon and David. Abs recommended that we watch the Jewish film *Trembling before G_d*. This film about gay Hasidic and conservative Jews covers many of the same issues Paul discovered in his studies. I've asked Paul to email his study to me. I also shared my study about the context within which Leviticus was written. All of this was about affirming our position as sons and daughters of God, from a spiritual as well as subjective point of view.



Canal St.

After dinner we explored Canal Street where it seemed that paparazzi were waiting to take our photographs. Lucky for us we cut a dashing picture. We never did find out which celeb they were actually waiting for! Because we wanted to continue our chat in a relatively quiet and civilized environment, we went to The View. Abs found us a comfortable nook downstairs where we quaffed our drinks and continued our chat until we were rudely interrupted by the almost unbearably loud piping of the X Factor (some of you might know it as American Idol). Must be our age, but we had to leave. Paul's last train was at 9.30. Because we didn't want to risk missing his way home, I ended up giving the lads a glamorous tour of south Manchester before heading back into town to unite Paul with his train!

We had an adventure finding the hotel where Abs was staying because the building was dark, the lettering on it was subtle, and the night was dreary. We all had fun. We're already talking about having meetings in other parts of the country.

Region 7 Blue Mountain Chapter – Page McDaniel

In my nursing classes, I have been offering some education on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues. My students have been attentive and have asked pertinent questions. In this small area these classes have been a means of getting the word out that there is support for students. Another class I will teach next semester will create more opportunities to reach out to LGBTI students and possible allies.

We recently had the first meeting of our Walla Walla Valley chapter. We focused on making it a business and organizational meeting and are quite excited about our plans.

Each of us has a little different focus and set of skills which I believe will make for a great working group. We are planning a social meeting in January. A very supportive heterosexual couple has graciously offered their home as a meeting place. We are consulting with gay students to gather their wisdom about how to reach out to others. We are connecting with faculty and staff who are known to be gay-friendly with the hopes of creating safe zones on campus. We have identified about a dozen so far. We have plans to do some informal sensitivity training with them and then use a logo sticker to be placed on office doors to designate these zones. Pacific Union College already has this in place. Wouldn't it be great to have this same logo in all Seventh-day Adventist college campuses?

Kinship Europe – Ruud Kieboom

On December 5 nine people met at the home of a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Frankfurt, Germany. We began plans for regular meetings in this part of

the country. We've scheduled two dinner meetings for the next year.

On January 30 we will have our third Dutch Kinship meeting in The Hague. We are happy that the interest for our meetings here is growing!

We are planning our European Advisory Council for May in Dunblane, Scotland.

Begin to plan to attend the European Kinship Meeting in September! It will be warm and wonderful. ▽

▽ World ▽ News ▽ World ▽ News ▽

Brian Smith sent us these items:

Indonesia:

A new Indonesian law that endorses stoning to death for adultery and up to 100 lashes for homosexuality should be repealed immediately, according to Amnesty International. The law was passed by the Aceh Provincial House of Representatives in September 2009. Amnesty International says stoning is cruel and constitutes torture, while criminalizing adultery and homosexuality breaches international standards as well as provisions of the Indonesian Constitution.

England:

Women in same-sex relationships in the UK can now register both names on the birth certificate of a child conceived through fertility treatment. The change in law confers legal parenthood on the mother's female partner, giving lesbian families the same rights as heterosexual couples.

Pakistan:

Late on Wednesday, December 23, 2009, the Supreme Court in Pakistan ordered that the government officially recognize a separate gender for Pakistan's hijra community, which includes transgendered people, transvestites, and eunuchs. The court told the federal government to begin allowing people to identify as hijras when registering for a national identity card.

Such cards are necessary for everything from voting to more informal situations; patrons must present the card at cybercafes before surfing the internet, for example. Not having an identity card, or having one with incorrect information, leaves a person vulnerable and easily excluded from society.

In India, voters are required to identify their sex both on their voter ID cards and at the polls. The insistence that they identify as male or female effectively barred many transgender and transvestite people from the polls until late this year, when the government declared that for the purposes of voting it would recognize a third option.

The ruling in Pakistan, though, potentially reaches much further.

In addition to the order for government recognition, Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry also issued a warning that the *hijras'* rights of inheritance, which are often informally ignored, would be enforced, and that police harassment would not be permitted, a sign, perhaps, of rulings to come.

connection ▽

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