

connection.

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 33 No. 10 – December 2009



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**Think ecologically
Choose the online *Connection*!
(page 3)**

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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

Whew, this issue is a complicated one. I didn't quite have visions of sugarplum Connections dancing through my head, but I was imagining a holiday-month newsletter with reports of Christmases past and future. When I sent out a request for stories or paragraphs, I thought people would pour in their fond memories and expectant hopes. What has arrived in our computers is a vision of real life. Rom is kind enough to begin our issue with her holiday "snapshots." Ruud and Erik introduce many of us to "Sinterklaas." AND, like the echoes of newscasts, Joseph sends us a report of another Ugandan danger. Martha writes from Kenya, sharing good news for LGBTI people there. Carrol etches her perspectives on her recent, emotionally complicated visit to a conference at Andrews University. Our speaker for European Kinship Meeting gives Kinship members some vision and some choices to make. We hope our travelogue and EKM pictures will be a small gift to you and an enticement to join us next year. We have a reminder for all of you who use the Connection for something other than recycling. We have a New Year's Eve adventure announcement. Even more, as this year ends, we have our hopes for you and our visions for your safety, your rich life, and your happiness. We know that the holiday season can be full of complicated feelings and personal interactions. We know it can contain loneliness. We know they can contain a few too many people, opportunities, and sleepless nights. What we want you to know is that, in each program we plan and outreach we consider, you are remarkably important to us. We hope that you will take good care of yourself, for you are infinitely valuable. Gentle blessings.

Catherine



Hear Ye, Hear Ye!!

A very important announcement



Beginning with the January *Connection*, we will be primarily an online newsletter. This will give us a chance to let more people see our wonderful, colorful layouts, be more ecological, and be more cost-effective. We want to use finances wisely to support the many programs that are being developed. If you would like to continue to receive the *Connection* as a postal mailing, please write to [connectioneditor@sdakinship.org] or to SDA Kinship at PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA. If we do not hear from you, you will be added to the list of people who will be informed when the electronic version of our newsletter is online.

If your email address has been changed lately and you haven't informed us yet, please don't forget to update your contact information on the website by editing your profile in the Members Area (KOL)!

Any of us, whether we receive the *Connection* in postal mail or e-mail, can help defray expenses by donating US\$25.00 or more. You can do that by credit card on our website or by a check mailed to our office at SDA Kinship, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA. ▽

✉ *Dear All*

On November 19 the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has legalised civil unions for same-sex couples, becoming the first region in Australia to do so.

The ACT is a small, self-governing territory around the Australian capital, Canberra. It does not have the full rights of a state, and indeed the ACT is completely surrounded by New South Wales, the largest state in Australia. The bill, which has just been passed into law by the territory's legislature, was sponsored by the Greens Party.

A similar law—passed by the same parliament a year or so ago—was struck down as illegal by the Federal Government, but this new law is slightly different, and it is thought that the Federal Government will not intervene this time.

The news has been very muted—there has been nothing about it on TV at all, and I only accidentally heard about it today. Apparently it has been just quietly moving along in the background without much fuss or hoo-haa.

David from Sunshine Coast, Australia



Celebrations

Noel Primus (Australia)

Seasons come and seasons go. Christmas comes at the beginning of the summer here. I am planning to go to Auckland, New Zealand, to visit my best friend. The trip is about three hours by air from where I live in Australia. We shall have a great time shopping and drinking coffee in the markets. We're planning beach walks with the dogs and time to have unplanned adventures. It's cool to have a girl friend over there with whom I can share the holiday.

Erik Macville (The Netherlands)

Since these festive days in The Netherlands have a pagan heritage, my mother and her mother quit celebrating *Sinterklaas* and Christmas when they became baptized Adventists. I had to overcome a barrier when our church began to celebrate Christmas.

In my opinion, Christmas Eve is something one should attend in a Roman Catholic church because Catholics are the ones who have the pomp and splendor that best express the holiday. We Adventists don't have the tradition to do it properly. In the Netherlands we celebrate December 24, 25, and 26.

▼ *Sinterklaas and Santa Claus* (page 16)



When I had the average family of husband/wife and two children, I put up a Christmas tree and we had a special Christmas dinner. We spent the evening playing games or watching shows on TV. These days my children and grandchildren gather at my house on one of the Christmas days. On the other one my partner and I spend the evening at his sister's home.

New Year's Day was very important to my family. It included visits to relatives, special traditional dishes, congratulations, outspoken intentions, but also thoughtful introspection. These days I go to the church before sunset on New Year's Eve. My son who became a widower in 2008 can still use some support from me, and my four grandchildren love to see their granddad(s).

I attended two Kinship meetings in 2009. I plan to begin the 2010 by hosting the next one at home in the end of January.

Kees Meiling & Ruud Kieboom (The Netherlands)

Usually we celebrate *Sinterklaas* (December 5) with friends or not at all. When with friends we draw lootjes (lottery tickets) on which is the name of one of the group members. We are supposed to keep ➤

A String Too Short to Save

Rom Wilder

Sometimes I wonder what it is that makes Christmas mean "Christmas" for me. Is it the smell of Christmas? The sounds? The sights?

I love Christmas music, don't you? Whether it's performed by Mannheim Steamroller or the Vienna Choir Boys or Julie Andrews, it is the season for me.

Or maybe it's the smell of pine and balsam. If it's the hottest day in July and I close my eyes and smell balsam, it is Christmas!

And music. Love the music!

Oh, maybe it's the lights. We might have been money-poor when I was a kid, but a few cents' worth of gas got our family up and down the streets with houses lit just for Christmas. It takes more than a few cents of gas now, but the lights are still magic.

And did I mention the music?



A Different Kind of Christmas for the LGBTI in Kenya

Christmas is almost here and everyone here in Kenya is anxious about something. Since 2008 we have experienced post-election violence that left thousands of people displaced from their homes. Others were killed in the most horrible ways. Now the politicians and the perpetrators of the violence are about to be prosecuted in the international criminal court. This is a real cause of anxiety. The constitution of Kenya is about to be reviewed. Kenyan citizens are required to vote for or against it.

In the midst of all these events, the LGBTI community is heaving a sigh of relief. After being neglected or traumatized for many years, they see that the light at the end of their tunnel is beginning to shine. Lesbian and gay voices are being heard because of the Kenyan couple in the United Kingdom who decided to take their marriage vows in England. God has a myriad of ways to answer the prayers of His children. News of the wedding hit Kenyans by surprise. Of course there were mixed feelings, but the ceremony paved the way for human rights organizations to come out strongly in support of the couple and the LGBTI community in general.

We have media centers that are supportive of us. One of them even interviewed a transgender person. That interview was a major eye-opener for the public. This is a new beginning for a long journey, but these events are giving us lots of hope.

The Kenya Human Rights Commission, for which I work, is planning to hold a series of forums to sensitize the community about the LGBTI issues. We're going to approach this issue cautiously by tackling the biological perspective of the LGBTI lives. In these forums we plan to distribute reading materials, some of which are on the SDA Kinship website. We hope that these forums will allow people to ask questions that will open the doors for debates and discussions, which eventually will reduce the stigma that surrounds the gay community in Kenya.

So, as you can see, ours will be a busy and vibrant Christmas. If you would like to support our efforts, we welcome materials since copying is so expensive here. We also need your prayers for the success of this sensitive project. If you have questions or would just like to contact me, my email address is [marthawangoi@yahoo.com].

God bless, *Martha* ▼

Christmas Eve is a tossup between the Mitten Tree Service—where angels in high-topped tennis shoes and shepherds in bathrobes come seriously up the aisle to where the cardboard animals most certainly cringe, knowing the likelihood of getting knocked over by a nervous Joseph is pretty good—or the late service with the choir, orchestra, homily, and the smell of candles at the end of the service, where each person lights their candle from the person beside them. (Lighted candle remains upright—no drip—and the unlit one is perpendicular to get its flame. Hey, nothing wrong with a bit of practicality on Christmas Eve!)

It would be horrible to have to choose only one. The sights, the smells, the sounds. Then, again, maybe Christmas has so many parts to it that if you lost one of those senses, you'll still have the others to be your Christmas.

(Should I have added Christmas cookies? Was I pretty clear on the music?)

One thing I am sure of is this: that I wish for you as much comfort as you need and enough joy to make your heart dance every day.

► the name secret (we usually manage to keep it) and to buy a little present and write a nice poem to it (which Ruud loves to do, but usually people find this the most difficult thing to do). We love to wrap our presents in a disguise with a link to the person, the poem, or the gift. This year, however, we won't celebrate Sinterklaas because we will be in Frankfurt, Germany, for a dinner meeting with our (former) Kinship members. We want to try to revive the German group that is actually non-existent at the moment after the leader's departure. It will be our Sinterklaas gift for this year if this evening marks the beginning of a new Kinship Germany group.

Christmas we used to celebrate with our parents (Christmas Eve and Christmas Day) and a beloved friend who had polio since his youth (December 25, "Second Christmas Day" in The Netherlands). Unfortunately Ruud's parents, Kees' father, and this friend have passed away, so since then the tradition left is

a Christmas dinner with our mother(-in-law). We have no special recipe for Christmas but like to make something special. In recent years our Adventist church has begun to celebrate the holiday. We'll probably go to that service this year.

For New Year's Eve, we usually celebrate with a group of friends we feel close to, either in one of their places or ours. We prefer they come to us, since the spectacular fireworks at our place is a real treat at midnight and because we have no car and have to cycle back home in the middle of the night! ▼

He who has not Christmas in his heart
will never find it under a tree.

—Roy L. Smith

At Last We're Talking

Carrol Grady

Here are my thoughts and reflections (that were posted on the Spectrum blog) on the Andrews University "Marriage, Homosexuality, and the Church" conference held in October. Although most of what I heard there was difficult to listen to, it wasn't unexpected, or anything I haven't heard before. But first I'd like to look at the bright side.

1. The Church is *finally* officially talking about this issue! This is what I've been pushing for the last 19 years. While other denominations have been having this discussion for as long as 30-40 years, our church, typically, is the last to become engaged. But in some ways that's good, because a lot of preliminary discussion and scholarship has already been done, and our struggle may thus not have to last as long; we can learn from other churches. On the other hand, Adventist homosexuals have suffered longer in silence. I suppose our church leaders have avoided this issue for so long because they have seen how it has divided other churches, but it can be avoided no longer.

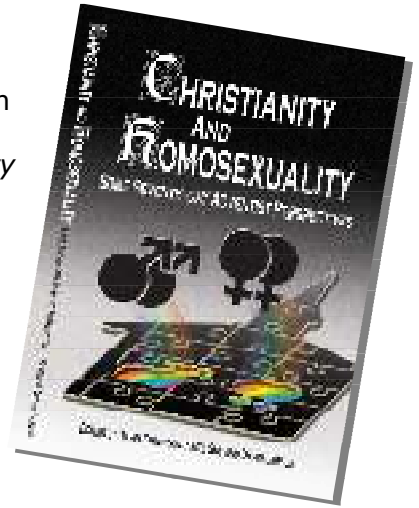
2. I appreciated that Dr. Richard Davidson acknowledged the church has failed in the way it has dealt with this issue in the past. And several presenters called for the church to make a much greater effort to put the talk about compassion and love into action. "We need to love homosexuals into the church," stated one presenter.

3. After hearing one discouraged attendee predict that this conference was just intended as a lead-up to another, even stronger, official directive from church leaders, I was very encouraged to hear a call made for more conferences to be held in the future. I believe this will happen. One of the GC Vice Presidents commented to me, "This conference has been very one-sided."

Andrews University



The conference, which was admittedly in response to the *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* book and the "Adventists Against Prop 8" website, addressed the possibility of orientation change, the religious liberty issues, and the theology.



Dr. Mark Yarhouse, a psychology professor from Regents University, presented his self-published, non-peer-reviewed research which refuted the APA's statement that orientation is unchangeable. However, his definition of change included chastity, and some advancement along the Kinsey scale toward heterosexuality. Although the study did cover six years, only 61 out of an original 98 participants remained at the end. They were all participants in one of the Exodus-supported change ministries. 14 of these self-reported that they had more heterosexual feelings and less homosexual desires, 18 reported attaining chastity, 10 felt they had moved some degree toward heterosexuality, 4 reported no progress but were still trying, 3 had given up but had not embraced a gay identity, and twelve had given up and accepted themselves as gay. One may also assume that those who dropped out of the study may have done so because they were unsuccessful.

Although this showing was not spectacular, Dr. Yarhouse emphasized that change may be very difficult, but that it is not impossible for some. He did say that those who don't succeed should never be told that they didn't have enough faith, didn't pray or try hard enough, or didn't want change enough. He also cast doubt on research showing a biological basis for homosexuality. I must say, though, that this presenter did exhibit love and a pastoral attitude.

The religious liberty panels were the most strident, overall, and showed the least compassion for homosexuals. One panelist was especially offensive in his remarks. But this was also the only area to include a dissenting voice, so I must congratulate them for that. It almost seemed to me, from some of the remarks made, that they feel if their stance on gay marriage makes our church more vulnerable to Sunday laws, so be it.

Nick Miller, director of the International Institute for Religious Liberty at Andrews Uni-

versity and organizer of the conference, presented his rationale that gay marriage should be opposed because of its less-than-ideal effect on children, who do best when raised by their two biological parents. Of course, this ignores the fact that many children are successfully raised by adoptive parents or by a single, divorced, or widowed parent, while many gay and lesbian couples are raising happy, well-adjusted children and many heterosexual couples in dysfunctional marriages are not good parents.

The impression that I got from some remarks in the presentation by Barry Bussey, director of the NAD religious liberty department, was that society is moving inexorably in the direction of gay marriage, and our church will be a small minority opposing it, so we must be careful in handling this issue because society will be watching us closely. During one Q&A session I asked, "Do the rights of Christians who believe homosexuality is a sin trump the rights of Christians who support homosexuals?" I felt the answer was unsatisfactory and didn't really respond to the question.

The theology panels presented a very rigid stance that the Bible is clear in condemning homosexual acts. There was also an attitude that their position was unarguably the only right one, and other views are revisionist, although I believe it was Dr. Roy Gane who said that it was alright for the church to entertain healthy dissent. He also gave the *Christianity and Homosexuality* book a good plug and suggested that everyone ought to read it before making up their mind. I must admit that several of the theology panelists strongly urged a more proactively loving church.

Dr. Robert Gagnon, a New Testament scholar from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, seemed to be particularly certain and aggressive in opposing same-sex relations. He declared that all sins are not equal and that homophobia is a natural reaction to such unnatural actions. I can't help wondering if perhaps one of the reasons for inviting him to participate in this conference is that he represents a minority in his Presbyterian Church USA denomination, and warned that the Adventist Church doesn't want to be in the position his own church is in.

Two ex-gay men told their stories. Both had spent many years in a promiscuous, drug- and alcohol-filled secular gay lifestyle. My observation of people like this is that when they return to God they associate homosexuality with all the ugly aspects of their former life and feel they must reject the entire package. Mrs. Inge Anderson, director of the GLOW and GLADventists internet groups, spoke of her empathy for homosexuals and her belief that God can find "the one person" a gay man can be sexually attracted to and urged gay/straight marriage if celibacy could not be maintained. Unfortunately, two of the



Carol Grady

married men who were previously examples of her theory have since left their wives.

During the conference I experienced several family entanglements regarding this issue. Perhaps the most traumatic moment for me came at the beginning, during the welcome by Nick Miller, organizer of the conference. Nick was an RA in the PUC dorm where my son was living, and he told my son's story, using a different name. Some of his facts weren't completely accurate, and he conveniently omitted the abuse and threats my son suffered from other dorm residents, which Nick did nothing to prevent. I know a number of people present knew who the story was about. [Nick rebutted this on the Spectrum blog, asserting that he knew nothing about the abuse and that he doubted the dean of men did either or he would have told him about it. I admitted that I simply assumed he knew since my son had said he told the dean about the abuse, but that the dean most certainly knew and later apologized to me.]

I believe that, disappointing as the overall emphasis of this conference was, it is just a first step in a continuing engagement on this subject. It is my prayer that love for our gay and lesbian members will be a leavening agent in current disagreements. ▽

Books:

***Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives and My Son, Beloved Stranger* can be ordered online at www.sdagayperspectives.com.**

Leaflet:

***Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It?* in different languages can be printed from www.kinnet.org/leaflet.**



As you probably know, the European Kinship Meeting is divided into a four-day series of workshops with some outings and a series of outings with worships and other activities. We wanted to share with you some of our photos and our adventures.

First of all, if you would like to look up where we've have been you could "Google" St. Marks College, Saffron Waldon. You could also look up Corfe Castle. It is both the town and the castle we saw from our "holiday villa."

Wednesday: Catherine arrives in the morning, takes a nap at the hostel where she is to meet the Dutch contingent, and then runs across the street to the St. Pancras Station to accost them as suitcases and backpacks pile out of the train from Brussels. We are all amazed that it worked. Now we think we could meet anywhere in the world. We had rented a room for five with private bath. Hostels are very clean, very inexpensive, and quite Spartan. In London, where things are so expensive, this is more than fine.

Catherine Taylor



St. Martin in the Fields

We set off for our first stop, half-price tickets at the theater office, then lunch. These wonderful people are willing to indulge in Catherine's predilection for falafels. Then off to see Ruud's wish, The National Gallery. Out of the museum and around Trafalger Square and, ah, St. Martin in the Fields Church. We get there just in time for Evensong. It is lovely. We see La Cage aux Folles and laugh so hard...well, you can imagine aching sides. We end the evening with a starlight stroll along the Thames... and don't get very lost.

Thursday: We tour The Tower of London. At the end of our outing we pile ourselves into the next train, grab our luggage at the hostel, pile ourselves back into St. Pancras Station, and head for Liverpool Street and the Great

English railway system, get our tickets, and run to the assigned-on-our-ticket Platform Four... where the train is not leaving for Audley End... quick consultation...next train is on...nope, the scheduled train is on Platform Six. We learn this and run for the door as it closes. We shout but the train is already moving. The attendant just shrugs. We consult. We talk to the attendant... well, there is another train leaving from the NEXT platform in a few minutes. We pile into that one quickly. Turns out it is the faster train. Whew...



We get to Audley End's station and there are Mike and Joachim and Absolom waiting for us. Into cars and through the lanes to St. Mark's. Oh my, it is like a cross between a Benedictine Monastery and Hogwarts High School. We are delighted...and we haven't even had a meal yet.



Many greetings, make the bed, find the rooms, and then dinner. We should have known at those first moments that the food would be unusual and a pure delight. Melon appetizers, great vegetarian loaves, wonderful salads. Who knew this was England? I have rarely been able to eat vegetarian food outside of a pub.

The speaker for our weekend is one of those rare gifts. He speaks in ways that I find ethical, interesting, informing, and, well...vision building. I could



listen for longer than he speaks, and that is unusual in my experience.

At night I realize I am still the princess and the pea. These beds are sooooo hard. I have an empty one next to me and pile on the extra duvet. Whew... finally comfortable... I snooze...

Friday: Our days were scheduled for morning and evening meetings with adventures in the afternoon. Friday's option is to tour a remarkable house, built to have royalty as guests (none ever arrived). It's called Audley End and I know you can see it on the internet if you would like. It is right at the end of the street where St. Mark's is and is an easy walk for folk. You can ask Floyd about his "easy" walk back. I take the three- or four-mile hike option. I just need to get out and move at a steady, non-tourist pace. There are about four of us and we walk the hills and streams of the area. There are lots of beech trees and some seeds and drying foliage that I think Ruud would enjoy having for his flower arrangements. We are all back in time for a wonderful dinner. The place serves salmon for the meat eaters as well as vegetarian and vegan options.

Sabbath: In the afternoon we do a tour of Cambridge. I have heard about the music at King's College Chapel for years. Mike has organized our outing so we can enjoy Evensong there. The plan is to go out for dinner afterwards, but we discover that there is a graduation going on in all the colleges of Cambridge University and are surprised but enjoy ➤

all the gowns and excited parents. The trees are just beginning to hit peak foliage, and the walk under their canopies is a treat. Mike has told us to get in line for Evensong by five-fifteen or so. My wander group arrives at five o'clock, and even now the line is so long that we have to sit way in the back of the chapel. We can't see anyone but we can hear the music.



Because of graduation, all the dining areas are absolutely packed. For some odd reason, we cannot fit in a group of 23. We finally find a Chinese noodle place that has room for us. We should have known. We later call it the meal, and toilets, of which we will not speak... so I won't.



Sunday: Today is the final meeting and then the dance of getting some people to Stansted airport to pick up cars while the rest of us clean up the place. Because of Sunday rush hour, our drive to Dorset takes longer than expected; but we are not on a schedule. We eat at a lovely restaurant somewhere between here and there. More decent vegetarian food. This is such a change from the England I began to visit only sixteen years ago. We do some grocery shopping because the stores close at 4 pm on Sundays and we want to make sure we have some food for breakfast. Because of the route we take, I get to see some parts of the Thames and south London that

I have never seen before and will not see on my train and tube trips.



We get to our home of the week around 10 pm. Or rather our villa of the week. Or...no, I think that's the best name for it. We are so startled by its unexpected size and design we wake up from our driving slumbers. Oye. This place was built around the twelfth century, the same time as the original town church and castle. From the street we wonder if it is going to be big enough to fit all ten of us. When we get inside it takes us fifteen minutes to find all the bedrooms. I am not sure we will ever find all of the bathrooms. It takes me three days to be able to find my room without a bit of a tour. We wander around and giggle. Fortunately, at dinner, we had organized who was going to sleep in what room. If we had seen the rooms before our decision-making process, there would have been much more negotiating. I think minor royalty would and perhaps has felt comfortable here. One of the prints in the entry way has matting signed by Tony Blair.



Monday: I wake up hearing the fountain that centers the courtyard outside my room. I go downstairs. The breakfast table has been set up the night before in Dutch, English, Scots, Kenyan, and German style. Bread, cheese, peanut butter (*Pindakaas* in Dutch, if

you remember from the last travelogue), honey, fruit, and tea cover the large kitchen eating area. Our group has shopped the night before for breakfast foods and our house host has left a welcome basket with cheese and bread and juice. The house has been covered in flowers. The kitchen, each bedroom and bathroom, and some of the sitting rooms have vases full of lilies. We've never had such a welcome.

We don't just have a laundry room. We have a laundry suite that seems to come with a coffee pot in case one needs a break in the middle of washing chores. Melanie and I give folk the chance to ship their laundry into the char suite. We separate into colors and begin to give us all some clothes for the next part of the journey. The group sets out to explore the town and castle area. I just have to finish up the copy for the October *Connection* so I stay behind and work on that and the laundry. It feels so good to get that project off my schedule so I can play with open conscience the rest of the time.



The group troops home for lunch, and then we set out for the first of Mike's hikes. The drive to the village is lovely, and Mike has a plan that will have us see several spots of the lovely Dorset coastline. We hike down the hill away from the car park and set out along the cliff edges... well, not that close to the edge. There are amazing rock formations. The sky is cloudy but not full of haze.

This walk was probably designed for goats or escalators or parachutes or perhaps a helicopter. We all scramble down and then back up again and agree to take the longer, more gently sloping hike around the next part of the hills, rather than do that adventure again. Absalom and Mike are in remarkable condition and probably related to Wyoming Mountain Big Horns. They can go anywhere.

We arrive close to the car park at dusk. Five of the group slog through the cow corral, taking a direct route to the road. Five of us think maybe our shoes cannot survive the cleaning that will be needed if we do. We look around for another spot to climb out, find it, head down the road, and realize we have gotten ourselves turned around; it's dark, there is more than one car park, and our cell phones don't have reception on the top of this particular cliff. The great thing about this is that everyone keeps their good humor... or tries to. We do an unexpected tour of the west side of the village by moonlight. We find which direction we should be heading. And we find our car park.

We don't have space to share with you all our adventures, but hope you enjoy a few of the photos. We just want to give you a sense of the adventure and delight of this part of European Kinship Meeting. ▽



Which Story Will We Live By?

These articles are based on talks by our speaker at the European Kinship Meeting in Saffron Waldon, Essex, England, 25 October 2009

Subconsciously we all look for security, significance, and self-worth. There are six basic (or framing) stories that typically direct our lives.

The Domination Story – Identity, peace, and security can be achieved by being in control. “If only we were in charge.” *Empire.*

The Revolution Story – Identity, peace, and security can be achieved only if we get our oppressors off our backs. “Through violent means we will throw off our oppressors.” *Revenge.*

The Purification Story – Identity, peace, and security can be achieved only through shaming, blaming, scapegoating, and excluding a minority. “If only these people would change or disappear.” *Genocide.*

The Victimization Story – Identity, peace, and security can be achieved through preserving the memory of a past injustice. “If only our oppressors could be brought to justice.” *Weeping.*

The Isolation Story – Identity, peace, and security can be achieved only through withdrawing from the corrupt, doomed majority. “If only we could be left alone to be ourselves by ourselves.” *The elect/elite remnant.*

The Accumulation Story – Identity, peace, and security can be achieved through accumulating possessions in a competitive economy. “With enough wealth, we can survive.” *Economic Advantage*

All of these stories are designed to create *conflict*.

In Jesus’ time **The Domination Story** was represented by Caesar, Pilot, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. **The Revolution Story** was lived out by the Zealots. The Scribes and the Pharisees subscribed to **The Purification**

Story. The Galileans, farmers, Samaritans, and those classified as “sinners” were part of **The Victimization Story.** The Essenes advocated for **The Isolation Story.** Stewards, tax collectors, and rich landowners were prime examples of **The Accumulation Story.**

Jesus came with a **very different story:** *The time has come, he said, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.* He brought **The Story of New Creation**, a story of re-creation. Instead of mortals, God is the Protagonist and the Hero of the story. The focus is reconciliation: with God, with our neighbor, with our enemies. The action is repentance—turning away from all that fearfully or selfishly creates conflict. The action is creation by God, new creation through God, reconciliation with God and created beings. The theme is, “Some of us for all of us.” The Kingdom of God is a life lived in liberation from regimes and other narratives.

Which story will you choose to live? ▼



Jesus Comes to the Other Side

Again, Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that He got into a boat and set it out on the lake while the people were sitting on the shore along the water’s edge.—Mark 4:1. Then when evening came He said to His disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”—Mark 4:35

“The other side” was a technical term meaning “enemy territory.” Decapolis was a ten-city area comprised of the remnant of the people mentioned in Deuteronomy 7:1: *When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you...the Hittites,*

Girgashites, Amorites, Canannites, Perrizites, Hittites, and Jebusites, seven nations stronger than you,... you are to destroy them. These were pagan people. They indulged in violent worship. They practiced pig worship. The center of Roman power was there, with six thousand soldiers stationed in those cities. Jews considered this a place where Satan lives. No rabbi would EVER go there.

Jesus and his disciples arrived on the shore of this place and were greeted there by a man so possessed by a legion of demons that he *lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. He broke the*



chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. —Mark 5:3-5. When he saw Jesus, even in the distance, he fell on his knees in front of the Savior and begged for help. This man knew who Jesus was, even if the demons that possessed him would not let him use his own words. The Kingdom of Light was in direct confrontation with The Kingdom of Darkness. Notice that the name the evil ones used was "Legion," a direct reference to the power of the Roman armies in the "enemy territory." Even there, "He who will be judged" has the power. He who has come from the other side of light will vanquish evil.

The natives of the region were amazed by the power of Jesus but not ready to hear His message.

The loss of the income from the pigs and their objects of worship had incited their fears. They "begged" for him to leave." The healed man *begged* to be allowed to leave with Him.

In what could have been a crushing disappointment, Jesus refused the request of the recently healed man and sent him to tell his story to the still injured. Jesus sent a man of a cursed race to help save those whom no Jew would care for. What seemed like a huge curse became an extraordinary blessing, not just for the man, but for an entire community of people.

When Jesus came back, the people were ready to be taught—so ready, in fact, that they stayed to listen without food or provisions. It was the second miraculous feeding of a multitude. The first feeding was in Galilee. Then, the disciples picked up 12 baskets of food remnants to represent "food" for the 12 tribes of Israel. In Decapolis the disciples picked up seven baskets of food remnants to represent "food" for the seven gentile nations that will be saved from this missionary trip.

Jesus was saying, very clearly, these are ALL MY PEOPLE. He was willing to go into any enemy land to win the battle with darkness. If the Good News is not Good News for everyone, it is not Good News for anyone. ▽

Praying for Uganda

Kinship Member Joseph Brown sent us this report

Museveni warns against homosexuality

Emmanuel Gyezaho
Kampala

President Museveni has joined the anti-gay crusade, saying he had received reports suggesting that "European homosexuals" had launched a recruitment drive in Africa.

He urged the youth to reject the advances. Expressing his homophobia, Mr Museveni said the youth must stand firm and abhor the divergent sexual orientation.

"I hear European homosexuals are recruiting in Africa," said Mr. Museveni on Saturday, to an audience of mainly youth at the Kampala Serena Hotel that homosexuality is unnatural. [sic]

"We used to have very few homosexuals traditionally. They were not persecuted but were not encouraged either because it was clear that is not how God arranged things to be."

The NRM leader was speaking at the inaugural Young Achievers Awards ceremony, an event organised by Tetea Uganda, a private firm, to honour the country's youth who have excelled in various disciplines.

The President's comments follow efforts by lawmaker David Bahati (NRM, Ndorwa West) who moved a private members Bill last month—The Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009, to outlaw homosexuality in the country.

Included in the draft text are not only condemnations of same-sex relations, but a new crime that carries the death penalty, and a criminal sentence for having sex while HIV positive.

Taboo subject

Homosexuality remains a taboo subject in many African societies and if passed in its current state, the Anti Homosexuality Bill, condemned by rights groups, would make Uganda one of the most dangerous places for gay people.

"You should discourage your colleagues [involved in homosexuality] because God was not foolish to do the way he arranged,"



said Mr Museveni, adding, "Mr and Mrs, but now you have to say Mr and Mr? What is that now?"

The President's comments will enrage Uganda's gay community which has strongly protested the new Bill, and will put Mr Museveni's regime on a collision path with several of Uganda's critical donors who are strong proponents of homosexuality and the ideals of civil liberties. Rights advocates have said the government's stance on homosexuality is illegal, not to mention an outrage.

Mr Museveni also cautioned the youth against drug abuse, and said, "If you know, tell your friend who is being tempted to smoke those drugs; counsel them. Aids and drugs are here."

Tennis ace Duncan Mugabe, 19, scooped the overall Young Achiever of the Year award for his exploits on court, while the late Yvonne Namaganda was awarded, posthumously, a hero's award for her heroic endeavours in saving the lives of fellow pupils at the tragic Budo Junior School inferno.

Mr Museveni was himself a beneficiary of an award, scooping the Life Time Achievement Award for what Tetea Uganda Managing Director Awel Uwhanganye said was the President's contribution in providing an "enabling environment" for Uganda's youth to exploit their talents.

"The future of Uganda is in the hands of you young people," Mr Museveni said. "I implore you young people to have love for your nation and embrace patriotism, discard sectarianism, tribalism and religious bigotry." ▽

Re-printed from *Daily Monitor*, November 16, 2009.
[http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/news/Museveni_warns_against_homosexuality_94665.shtml]



Kinship Calendar

December 2009 and January 2010

- Dec. 5** Frankfurt, Germany—German-speaking LGBTI people with Seventh-day Adventist backgrounds are invited to dinner at Frieder's home.
-  Women's Chat at sdakinship.org, 3 pm eastern US time, 9 pm Netherlands, 6 am (December 6) Sydney, Australia
- Dec. 11** Women's Chat at sdakinship.org, Friday evening at 8 pm Eastern US Time, 10 am Sabbath morning Sydney, Australia time.
- Dec. 1** Region 1 will be attending the Boston Gay Men's Chorus Holiday Concert.
-  Region 8 members and friends will meet on Saturday night at 6:00 pm for our annual Holiday Party and Gift Exchange at The Sausage Factory in the Castro District of San Francisco. Please bring a wrapped gift, suitable for either gender, not to exceed \$20. R.S.V.P. as soon as you can to help us with planning. Contact Obed Vazquez, Region 8 Coordinator (contact info: see Jan. 16.)
-  Women's Chat – 3 pm Eastern US time, 9 pm Paris Time
- Dec. 31 - Jan. 2** Region 1 & 2—Kinship at First Night—New Year's Eve Weekend in Colonial Williamsburg *
- Jan. 9** Region 1 Kinship Meeting at the Forum in New York City and tour of The Cloisters
- Jan. 16** Our Region 8 January Meeting will be in San Francisco with a potluck starting at 3:00 pm. Mark your calendars and watch your email box for more details or you may contact Obed Vazquez, Region 8 Coordinator, at [region8@sdakinship.org] or 925-457-5035.

Check the **Events** on sdakinship.org for other meetings.

* Kinship at First Night (Dec. 31-Jan.2)

You are Invited to Join Us for a New Year's Eve Celebration! On the 31st of December, Kinship will be in Williamsburg, Virginia, for their wonderful "First Night" celebration. Events include dinner at a Christiana Campbells (a colonial American restaurant), many options for concerts, plays, performances, and the opportunity to spend time with your Kinship family. On New Year's Day we have plans to tour Colonial Williamsburg. We will have a Friday evening vespers and Sabbath morning worship.

We have made hotel reservations at the Best Western in Williamsburg. Costs are \$69.00 per night for a room with two double beds and \$72.00 per night for a room with a king size bed.

For more information or to make reservations, you can contact Yolanda at [region2@sdakinship.org] or Catherine at [region1@sdakinship.org]. We look forward to seeing you!

connection

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Meet the real

Santa Claus

in The Netherlands!

For many Dutch, especially children, Christmas is not the most important feast in December. December is much more associated with *Sinterklaas* (also called *De Goedheiligman*—The Good Saint) a traditional winter holiday figure. It is celebrated every year on Saint Nicholas' eve on December 5. The feast celebrates the name day of Saint Nicholas, patron saint of, among other things, children. Saint Nicholas (280-342) was a bishop of Myra in present-day Turkey.

It is also celebrated in other parts of Europe and, additionally, many Roman Catholics of Alsatian and Lotharingian descent in Cincinnati, Ohio, celebrate "Saint Nicholas Day" on the morning of December 6. The traditions differ from country to country.

*Sinterklaas arrives
by boat from Spain*



Sinterklaas traditionally arrives each year in mid-November by steamboat from Spain—even though the bishop was originally from Asia Minor. He is then paraded through the streets, welcomed by cheering and singing children. His assistants, *Zwarte Pieten* (Black Peters), throw candy and *perpernoten* (small, round, gingerbread-like cookies), into the crowd. The children welcome him by singing traditional *Sinterklaas* songs.

In the Netherlands, Saint Nicholas' Eve is the chief occasion for gift giving. The evening is called *Sinterklaasavond* or *Pakjesavond* (Presents Evening) on which children (& adults!) receive presents. One aspect of *Pakjesavond* is writing small poems for gifts saying something about the child or adult or containing a hint to the nature of the present.

Sinterklaas has a long red cape, wears a white bishop's dress and red mitre (bishop's hat), and holds a crosier, a long gold-coloured staff with a fancy curled top. He carries a big

book that tells whether each individual child has been good or naughty in the past year. He is said to be very rich, he lives in a castle in Spain, and likes to give presents on his birthday rather than receive them. He is also said to be very old and often says, when asked, that he doesn't know how old he is because he "lost track" a long time ago. He traditionally rides a white horse called "Amerigo."

Zwarte Piet (Black Peter) has his origin in the bishop's legendary past. Three small Moorish boys were sentenced to death for a crime they did not commit. The bishop intervened and they were saved. To show their gratitude, the boys stayed with *Sinterklaas* to help him. *Sinterklaas* and *Zwarte Piet* usually carry a bag, which contains candy and a "roe," a bunch of willow branches used to spank naughty children; in actuality, a chimney sweep's broom. The *Zwarte Pieten* toss candy around, a tradition supposedly originating in St. Nicholas' story of saving three young girls from prostitution by tossing golden coins through their window at night to pay their father's debts.

Sinterklaas is the basis for the North American figure of *Santa Claus*. It is often claimed that during the American War of Independence the inhabitants of New York City, a former Dutch colonial town (New Amsterdam) which had been swapped by the Dutch for other territories, reinvented their *Sinterklaas* tradition, as Saint Nicholas was a symbol of the city's non-English past. The name *Santa Claus* supposedly derived from older Dutch *Sinte Klaas*. However, another study

in 1978 by Howard G. Hageman, of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, maintains that the tradition of celebrating *Sinterklaas* in New York existed in the early settlement of the Hudson Valley, although he agrees that "there can be no question that by the time the revival of St. Nicholas came with Washington Irving, the traditional New Netherlands observance had completely disappeared." To this day, the Saint Nicholas Society of New York still has a feast on December 6.

In earlier times, the feast was both an occasion to help the poor by putting some money in their shoes (which evolved into putting presents in children's shoes) and a wild feast, similar to Carnival, that often led to mass public drunkenness. After The Netherlands became a largely Protestant country, many Calvinists argued that the feast of *Sinterklaas* was too *paaps* (papist) and should be abolished. However, the feast was so popular, even among the Protestant population, that these efforts were largely unsuccessful.

The modern tradition of *Sinterklaas* as a children's feast probably originates from the illustrated children's book *Sint Nicolaas en zijn knecht* (*Saint Nicholas and his Helper*) written in 1850 by teacher Jan Schenckman (1806-1863). This book introduced the concept of *Sinterklaas* delivering presents through the chimney, riding the roofs of houses on a white horse, and arriving from Spain.



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