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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 a global organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people worldwide.

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

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

SUPPORT Kinship
Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International.

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

PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA
or visit Kinship’s website at: www.sdakinship.org.
From the Editor

“If I have seen further it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants.”
—Isaac Newton

There was Sappho. Well, really, her name in Greek was the feminine Sappha. Medieval translators were so shocked at the erotic poetry she wrote to women in her life that they changed her name to “make” her male. We know the truth. There were Aristotle and Alexander. In the following millennia there were fuzzy whispers of “special friendships” shared by nuns and conjecture about the loves of women who dressed as men and served as doctors in the middle of European wars. There was Edward II of England, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Artemisia Gentileschi, Caravaggio, Rosa Bon Heur, King Richard the Lion-hearted, King James of the Bible translation, de Maupin, John Milton, and Katherine Bates who wrote America the Beautiful. We wonder about the witches who were burned. We cringe at the knowledge of who were the faggots used to light their pyres. There were quietly acknowledged Boston Marriages in early New England. There was Patience and Sarah (yes, they were real women). There was Oscar Wilde and Gertrude and Alice. There was Bayard Russell, a civil rights hero. There were the queens that night on Christopher Street who fought back. There is Troy Perry, who founded MCC. There are the founders of Kinship who met in the desert and the quiet allies who heard their stories. As most of you know, June is called Pride Month. We tend to dress up in outfits that best suit our personalities and parade down the local lanes and avenues. As I type this I don’t feel so much personal pride as total gratitude for those who have shown and still show me a road much less traveled. You are my heroes. I learn from you on a daily basis. I am in awe of your courage. Take good care of yourselves for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine

Many thanks to Bruce and Eddie who fielded an early morning research phone call.

* for information about the Region 2 Vespers, write to YSElliott@aol.com
Labels

By Debbie Hawthorn

Each one of us carries labels. Some of my labels are daughter, niece, cousin, aunt, sister, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, wife, mother, grandmother, friend, neighbor, consumer, and employee.

I am no different than any other woman. I laugh. I cry. I feel warmth and cold. I feel rain, snow, and sunshine. I enjoy life. I share with others in their joys and sorrows. The only thing that makes me different from ninety percent of other women is that I fell in love with a woman instead of a man. This gives me a new label: lesbian.

Falling in love with Joy has been the best thing that ever happened to me. I have a wonderful, loving, kind, sharing relationship with my wife. I have never been happier. I didn’t ask for it, I didn’t go looking for it; it just happened. But this love has cost me.

I grew up an active member and participant in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In summer I traveled around Alberta and British Columbia (Canada) running Vacation Bible Schools. I taught in the children’s departments, ran the young people’s club, told children’s stories during church service, and belonged to a worship team. I led out in song service, prayer, Mission Spotlight, and more. I sang in my home church and was invited to other churches to sing. I ran a ladies’ worship group, belonged to a prayer group, and created children’s bulletins with activities for the kids to do during church. I was on the church board, the nominating committee, and the Alberta Children’s Ministry Committee.

This came to an end suddenly. When I told my mother about my new relationship, she said she would make sure I never sang in her church again. My sister went to her pastor and took steps to make sure I did not work with children again, not even telling the children’s story up front during the main service. She moved to have my membership revoked from the church. The process included someone standing in front of the congregation explaining why they were dropping my membership. A fellow church member who cared about me called and informed me of this potential church action. To protect Joy’s parents and my brother, who attended the same church, I wrote a letter requesting my membership be dropped.

I lost my relationship with my mother and my one sister; I lost my best friend. My oldest son would have nothing to do with me for a couple of years. I met my granddaughter when she was two.

I am still puzzled by these personal and congregational reactions. I am still the same person I was before, just a happier, more content, secure, and stronger version. I have not lost my voice or the ability to sing; I do not treat children differently. I did not lose my relationship with God. All the research I find indicates that being gay is not contagious. I wonder why the fear and anger.
“Getting to Know You”

By Andrea Roundfield, with Dahlia Holmes.

Our adventure began November 2010 when we met online. Oddly enough, seven years earlier a mutual friend told us both about each other and suggested we correspond. For some reason, she never told us each other’s name, described our looks, or gave us contact information. The one thing our friend did correctly was make an accurate assessment.

Within 24 hours of our internet introduction, we were talking to each other on the phone for hours at a time. There are now few waking or sleeping moments when we are far from each other. We share our morning routines, we “eat together,” and we find ways to travel to work together. Our hearts are in constant communion.

Our first face-to-face meeting happened at the end of December at Dahlia’s home in Tampa, Florida. Right after stepping off the plane, I met her parents and her best friends, all of whom were very protective. I survived. I have been accepted with open arms. I see how much they love her; and their love shows me, more deeply, how special she is.

We have found joy, love, peace, and fulfillment in each other. We are proof that prayers are answered in delightfully unusual ways. We believe that God made us for each other and brought us together at just the right time. We are making plans to merge our family and our lives. We both have children and live miles apart; but, for us, the difficulty is worth learning how far, how deep, and how high our love can go and grow.

Kinship Elections

The Kinship Board of Directors and the Nominating Committee are pleased to present to the membership a preliminary slate of candidates for the 2011 Board of Directors:

- President: Yolanda Elliott
- Vice-President: Naveen Jonathan
- Director of Church Relations: Terence Rice
- Director of Women’s Interests: Karen Wetherell & Julie Beach

According to the Bylaws, the slate will not be finalized until July 5, 2011. Prior to that date, members who have a passion to serve or minister to others within Kinship may still come forward and present their qualifications to the Nominating Committee. Potential candidates must meet the Bylaws’ criteria for the position as posted on the Members Only / Board Documents portion of the Kinship website. Expressions of interest should be submitted to the Nominating Committee Chairperson at nominations@sdakinship.org.

Please read about our candidates in the July issue of the Connection and on the Kinship website. Also, keep an eye out for “meet-the-candidate” opportunities online during the next month.

Since this year’s election will be held electronically, we are looking forward to having all Kinship members participate in this important process!
MENTAL TASKS: NO PROBLEM FOR THE AGING

Everyone knows that age may bring about challenges to memory—possibly owing to the greater storehouse of what one has learned. Yet, this does not mean that they have more trouble with other mental tasks. Research conducted at North Carolina State University in Raleigh compared older adults with those under 30 in terms of making intuitive decisions, such as choosing a competent home repair contractor or quickly deciding about a chess move or playing a bridge hand. In general, the older people did as well or better than the younger ones. Thomas Hess, one of the researchers, suggested that “Seniors have a knowledge base they can fall back on.... That information can be automatically accessed. It’s not something they have to think too much about.”

The life experiences of older people create a set of heuristics that younger people have yet to acquire. More of the world is novel to them and they have to access it, starting from scratch. (The reverse is probably true if the task involves installing a DVD player.)

Do you like growing older?

The emphasis was definitely on the word like.

Momentarily startled, I turned toward the questioner, a program participant at the EduQuest Road Scholar event for which I was the main speaker. The question had been flung in my direction smack-dab in the middle of one of my presentations, so I replied, “Let me ponder that for a while and I’ll get back to you.” I’d never been asked that specific question before, at least not in so many words, so I have pondered it. A lot. And I’ve come up with a few musings.

There are some definite benefits to growing older. For example, I’m becoming kinder toward myself and others, and less critical. We all just have different brains and are doing the best we can with what we know. And I’m actually becoming my own best friend. I know myself better than anyone else. After all, I’ve been hanging around with me my entire life!

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

I know my brain can be a bit forgetful at times. But that’s nothing new. I’ve always been somewhat challenged by itty-bitty details. Besides, some things are just as well forgotten (e.g., the 16% I received on my high school trigonometry test, or the eighth-grade schoolmate who told me I was so stupid I’d never have a boyfriend or amount to anything at all, much less make any significant contribution in life). And eventually my brain does remember the really important things. Like how magnificent a sunset can be, how warming a child’s delight over a tiny kitten, how truly affirming dinner with a life-time best friend is, how thrilling glorious music, how awesome seeing new sights in other parts of the world, how amazing to connect with almost any-
one on this planet using just the touch of a button, how humbling to contemplate the universe, and how rewarding to share brain-function information with others—especially when they have practically applied the knowledge gained and found life to have improved exponentially—and know your efforts have made a difference.

Sure, my heart has been broken a time or two (or more), or at least it has felt like it was being stomped on, squeezed out to dry, or hammered with a tire iron. How can a heart not crumple when it loses a loved one, watches a dear friend self-destroy, sees a child suffer, knows that a beloved pet has bitten the dust, or recognizes clear injustice—if not actual evil? But hearts can heal and mend much like a broken bone, the experience contributing strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is somewhat sterile and may never have known the relief of being imperfect.

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

As I am growing older, I find it is easier to sustain a positive mindset. I worry less about what other people think and care more about what I think. I’ve stopped second-guessing myself. I’ve even earned the right to be wrong, and occasionally I make a mistake on purpose just to remind myself that I’m human and that’s what humans do. Make mistakes. (Sometimes we even learn from them!) Life is so much less stressful this way.

So, in answer the question, Do you like growing older?, the answer in the main is, Most of the time. I have seen too many people exit this planet before they understood the great freedom that comes with growing older. There are many things I so like about it. Not everything. But we typically give up something to get something. No, I won’t inhabit this planet forever, but I am aiming to reach age 100 or 120 with good mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual function. Meantime I shall continue to surround myself with smart, affirming people who are on a similar journey, who can laugh with me at the vagaries of life, and who are willing to just jump in and take this aging journey. After all, none of us has ever done it before, and we only get one shot at it. I, for one, want to make that shot count for something.

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

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

Age does not protect you from love. But love, to some extent, protects you from age.

—Anais Nin
**Brazil Supreme Court awards Gay Couples New Rights**

[source: BBC News]

The ruling means inheritance and pension rights will improve for those within gay partnerships in Brazil. Brazil's Supreme Court has voted overwhelmingly in favor of allowing same-sex couples the same legal rights as married heterosexuals. The decision was approved by 10-0 with one abstention. The ruling will give gay couples in "stable" partnerships the same financial and social rights enjoyed by those in heterosexual relationships.

Brazil is the world’s most populous Roman Catholic nation and has an estimated 60,000 gay couples. The ruling makes Brazil one of very few South American nations, after Argentina and Uruguay, to allow gay unions with benefits similar to those afforded a heterosexual married couple. “The freedom to pursue one’s own sexuality is part of an individual’s freedom of expression,” said Justice Carlos Ayres Britto, the author of the ruling.

Gay activists welcomed the decision, saying it marked an “historic day” for the country. “The degree of civilization of a country can be measured by the way people in a nation treat their homosexual community,” Claudio Nascimento, head of Rio de Janeiro state’s Gay, Lesbian and Transsexuals Committee said, according to O Globo. From now on same-sex couples will be able to register their civil partnerships with solicitors and public bodies, giving them proper inheritance and pension rights. However, the landmark ruling stops short of recognizing gay marriage, which could involve public or religious ceremonies.

Brazil’s Roman Catholic Church had argued against the decision to allow civil unions, saying the only union referred to within Brazil’s constitution was that between a man and a woman. The country’s recently elected President Dilma Rousseff has made the issue one of her big social policy reforms.

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**Stem Cell Transplant Cures HIV In 'Berlin Patient'**

[source: Huffington Post]

On the heels of World AIDS Day comes a stunning medical breakthrough: Doctors believe an HIV-positive man who underwent a stem cell transplant has been cured as a result of the procedure.

Timothy Ray Brown, also known as the "Berlin Patient," received the transplant in 2007 as part of a lengthy treatment course for leukemia. His doctors recently published a report in the journal Blood affirming that the results of extensive testing "strongly suggest that cure of HIV infection has been achieved."

Brown’s case paves a path for constructing a permanent cure for HIV through genetically-engineered stem cells.

Last week, Time named another AIDS-related discovery to its list of the Top 10 Medical Breakthroughs of 2010. Recent studies show that healthy individuals who take antiretrovirals, medicine commonly prescribed for treating HIV, can reduce their risk of contracting the disease by up to 73 percent.

While these developments by no means prove a cure for the virus has been found, they can certainly provide hope for the more than 33 million people living with HIV worldwide. Alongside such findings, global efforts to combat the epidemic have accelerated as of late, with new initiatives emerging in the Philippines and South Africa this week.

**Brian adds to the above:**

A cure for HIV has also been included in the list of those cured, in a "Cancer Cure" book which also mentioned intensive ozone treatment. I suggested to my sister that she try this cure for her cancer. Then I decided I would try drinking it first, just to see if there were any side effects. The concentration of H2O2 used is very high and must be diluted properly. I used distilled water. The concentration became nauseating (and I am healthy to being with) and I couldn’t continue. There are a couple of juices mentioned to add to the water to help with this problem but they were difficult to find and expensive.

If anyone is interested in this book let me know at huckleberry2076@hotmail.com.
Uganda anti-gay bill 'shelved by parliament'
[source: The New York Times]

Uganda’s parliament has adjourned without debating a controversial bill which includes the death penalty for some homosexual acts. The Anti-Homosexuality Bill has been condemned by Western leaders and human rights groups, some of whom are celebrating victory. The bill, first introduced in 2009, could still be brought up when the new parliament meets later this year.

Uganda is a largely conservative society and many people condemn homosexuality both as un-African and un-Christian. But in recent years, some gay rights groups have been set up in the country.

Homosexual acts are already illegal in Uganda but the bill would increase the penalty for those convicted to life in prison.

Those found guilty of "aggravated homosexuality" - defined as when one of the participants is a minor, HIV-positive, disabled or a "serial offender" - would face the death penalty. Anyone failing to report to the authorities a person they knew to be homosexual would also be liable to prosecution.

Internet campaign group Avaaz said the bill’s lack of progress was a "victory for all Ugandans and people across the world who value human rights". "We must now ensure this heinous bill can never return to parliament again," said Avaaz campaign director Alice Jay.

Maria Burnett, of Human Rights Watch, said it would still be a very long fight to stop the Ugandan legislation as the issue has not gone away. "The international pressure over the last year and a half has been very important to show that Uganda cannot act in isolation from the international community," she said.

US President Barack Obama has condemned the bill and donors have urged Uganda’s government to ensure the measures never become law.

But David Bahati, the MP who introduced the private member’s bill, said he would try to reintroduce it when the next parliament convened after February’s elections, and said it had achieved his goal of sparking debate. "We have made important steps in raising the issue and that will continue," he was quoted as saying by the AFP news agency.

In January, David Kato, a campaigner who led condemnation of the bill, was murdered not long after suing a paper that outed him as gay. Police denied the killing was because of his sexuality. Three months before the murder, Uganda’s Rolling Stone newspaper had published the photographs of several people it said were gay, with the headline "Hang them."

Presbyterians Approve Ordination of Gay People
[source: The New York Times]

After 33 years of debate, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has voted to change its constitution and allow openly gay people in same-sex relationships to be ordained as ministers, elders, and deacons. The outcome is a reversal from only two years ago, when a majority of the church’s regions, known as presbyteries, voted against ordaining openly gay candidates. The vote was 205 to 56, with 3 abstentions.

Cynthia Bolbach, moderator of the church’s General Assembly, its highest legislative body, said “Everyone was civil. There was no applause, no cheering. It was just reflective of the fact that we are moving forward one other step.” The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) now joins a growing bloc of historic, mainline Protestant churches that have voted to accept gay clergy members and church leaders — a bloc that includes the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church. (The largest mainline Protestant denomination, the United Methodist Church, is still fighting over the issue).

In the next few months, the denomination will gauge the reaction from its more theologically conservative members, who believe that ordaining sexually active gay people is inconsistent with the Bible. Some have already departed. The Presbyterian News Service estimates that approximately 100 congregations have left the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the last five years. Several were large congregations, which could help explain why the vote in some presbyteries switched from 2009. The change approved on Tuesday does not mean that presbyteries must ordain gay candidates — only that they may. The wording leaves the decision open to local presbyteries, according to church officials. It says that governing bodies that consider candidates “shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates. The measure changes the church’s constitution by removing a 1997 amendment that said those ordained were required to live “either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman” or in “chastity in singleness.”
We would like to introduce you to....

Ananda Guzman

was born in the Dominican Republic to a “very traditional” family. These days she works as a senior retail sales associate for Goodwill Industries in Delaware. When she is not working, Ananda enjoys playing sports and participating in summer events. She says, “My partner Chris is very loving and understanding. She is trying to fully know her concept of God.” They found Kinship because Chris was looking for a group “that could fit us better as Seventh-day Adventists but understand and accept us as gay. I love God more now. I enjoy life and I am happier to know that I am not condemned the way my other church made me believe. These days I want to experience the Holy Spirit and go where God wants to take me. I am trying to make my relationship with God stronger and my relationship with Chris better.”

Brink Bush

I am the 13th generation of a John Bush family from Wilshire England. They helped settle Jamestown Virginia in 1616. I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1961 when my parents were young and trying out the big city life of Atlanta. When I was about three years old, they moved back to Americus, Georgia, my father’s home. My father’s family has been in the Americus area of Georgia since the 1820s. I have two brothers and one sister. My parents still live in Georgia. I don’t have a partner at the present time.

Music is my profession, hobby, and religion. I am Organist/Director of Music at the Cathedral of St. John in Providence, Rhode Island. My other interests are architecture, cats, and history.

Yellow is my favorite color. My favorite music is piano and orchestral works. My favorite movie is Delores Claiborn. My favorite book is A Private Disgrace. I like Greek, Italian, Chinese, Thai, Middle Eastern, French, and Mexican food.

Kinship has been helpful to me by providing information on homosexuality and the Bible. I want to meet LGBTI people in this organization who really embrace the Advent Message.

This year’s pre-Kampmeeting event will take place July 17 and 18. We have booked 30 staterooms on the luxurious Queen Mary, docked in the Long Beach, California, harbor. A mere US $150.00 per person guarantees you lovely accommodations, two complimentary breakfast buffets, a chance to wander an historic ocean liner, transportation to Catalina Island, and a chance to meet or have a reunion with wonderful people. We are looking forward to seeing you! You can register at sdakinship.org (Events | Women & Children First) or you can send your registration check to our office at PO Box 69, Tillamook, Oregon, 97141-0069.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact Karen, our Director of Women’s Interests, at women@sdakinship.org.
Throughout the New Testament, we observe Jesus explaining what His Father, God, is like and how we are to live in His kingdom. Today, we are going to spend our time in the book of John, chapter 3. This is the story of Nicodemus, a religious ruler who visited Jesus.

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Nicodemus was a celebrity in his community. The Bible gives us a clue that he was a religious ruler. Nicodemus belonged to the elite religious order called the Pharisees. In Jesus’ day the Pharisees were a pious and religious extreme group of practitioners of The Law. They made an interesting group because of their religious zeal. To the Jew, The Law was the most sacred thing in the entire world. The Law was the first five books of the Old Testament. They believed it to be the perfect word of God. To add one word to it or to take one word away from it was a deadly sin. Since The Law was the perfect and complete word of God, it must contain everything a man need know for the living of a good life.

The Pharisees took it upon themselves to live out The Law perfectly. This meant they followed the Mishnah-codified scribal law and the Talmud, which was an explanation of the Mishnah. In what is referred to as the Jerusalem Talmud, there is a section explaining the Sabbath law that runs to sixty-four and a half columns. In the Babylonian Talmud, it runs 164 double-sided pages. There is a story of a Rabbi who spent two and half years studying just one chapter, 24 chapters of the Mishnah.

The scribes wrote and worked out the laws. The Pharisees committed their lives to obeying and living out the laws—each and every detail. The Pharisees were a relatively small group. There were never more than 6,000 of them. They were known as a chaburah, or brotherhood. They entered into this brotherhood by taking a pledge in front of three witnesses that they would spend all of their lives observing every detail of the scribal law.

Nicodemus not only belonged to this special group of religious men, he was part of the Sanhedrin, an elite inner circle of 70 Pharisees. These religious rulers of the Jews had the right to govern over the spiritual laws of every Jew, anywhere in the world. Nicodemus was one of the supreme court justices of his day. He was rich. He was influential. He was well-known. He had a lot to lose.

The Bible says “he came to Jesus at night.”

There were probably many reasons for the nighttime visit. Jesus was very busy during the day. Jesus couldn’t go anywhere without having a crowd following him.
Nicodemus could have wanted to see Jesus late at the night because he didn't want to be seen or noticed, jeopardizing his reputation or stature. Just like Nicodemus, there are many people who claim in private to be Christians. They/we only practice our faith or attempt to be in relationship with God in private. In other words, we don't wear our faith on our sleeves. We are unwilling, perhaps ashamed, or unable to fully give our lives over to Jesus for everyone to know. Does your family know you are a follower of Jesus? Do your co-workers know you are a Christian? Do your neighbors know that Jesus is the Leader in your life? How would your relationship change if you fully lived out your faith in Jesus in the light? If you are going to be a radical follower of Jesus, you have to come out of the closet, out of the dark and follow Him. There is no such thing as a closet Christian.

Here is a man who has a PhD in religion, a spiritual leader of his community, who comes to Jesus in the middle of the night, and his opening statement is that “we know you have come from God.” This is the first step of coming out of the dark: you must acknowledge Jesus for who He is. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9, New Living Translation).

“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see [enter] the Kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

Here Jesus begins to use Kingdom language. He is explaining what it means to live in God’s Kingdom. Let’s read this same verse from The Message Paraphrase.

Jesus said, “You’re absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it’s not possible to see what I’m pointing to—God’s Kingdom.”

“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Nicodemus is stunned by Jesus’ response. How in the world am I going to be able to go back into my mother’s womb? To enter or see the Kingdom of God I have to become a baby? What Nicodemus is saying, “I know this is necessary; but, from my experience, this is impossible.”

Here is a man who has lived an entire life following a set of thousands of the carefully constructed rules, commandments. His life has been ordered by rules and more rules, all of which are an ends to a mean. He believes that if he follows these rules, he will then enter the Kingdom of God.

We are witnessing Jesus deprogramming Nicodemus. Nicodemus believes that to enter the Kingdom of God you must obey a set of rules. All of a sudden he is faced with an entirely new paradigm. Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Jesus says in order to enter the kingdom of God you must be born again. The phrase, born anew, this idea of rebirth, runs all through the New Testament. Peter speaks of being born anew by God’s great mercy (1 Peter 1:3). He talks about being born anew not of perishable seed but of imperishable (1 Peter 1:22, 23). James speaks of God bringing us forth by the word of truth (James 1:18). The letter to Titus speaks of the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). Sometimes the same idea is spoken of as a death followed by a resurrection or a recreation. Paul speaks of the Christian as dying with Christ and then rising to life anew (Romans 6:1-11).

He speaks of those who have lately come into the Christian faith as babes in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1, 2). If any man is in Christ it is as if he had been created all over again (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Christ there is a new creation (Galatians 6:15). The new man is created after God in righteousness (Ephesians 4:22-24). The person who is at the first beginnings of the Christian faith is a child (Hebrews 5:12-14). All over the New Testament this idea that Jesus is teaching of rebirth and re-creation occurs.

In other words, God is giving us a Do Over.

This is a profound moment in the life of Nicodemus. Here is a man that has spent his entire life thinking he knew what needed to be done to enter the Kingdom of God. Take a look at his response. Nicodemus is in shock. It is in utter disbelief. “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?”

Don’t read Jesus words as being rude or insensitive. What Jesus is describing to Nicodemus, is the idea of re-birth or regeneration, something already known in Jewish culture. This Jew knew all about rebirth. When a man from another faith became a Jew and had been accepted into Judaism by prayer and sacrifice, he was regarded as being reborn. “A pro-
selyte who embraces Judaism,”
said the rabbis, “is like a newborn
child.”

The Gospel of Inclusion

I want to point out a significant part of this story that Jesus so carefully articulates. Based simply on his pedigree, Nicodemus believed he had all of the qualifications to be saved. He was a Jewish man, He was a Pharisee, and He was part of the Sanhedrin.

Throughout this narrative, Jesus carefully deconstructs the qualifications on entering the Kingdom of God. In verse three, he says, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again.” As this narrative begins, Jesus includes Nicodemus by using the pronoun, you. He is saying, here is what you need to do to enter the Kingdom of God. However, in verse 7, we see a very subtle shift in vocabulary. “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (ESV).

I am not sure why Bible translators did not include the proper form of this word, you. But, this time in verse 7, the Greek form of you is plural.

“Do not marvel that I said to [you all], ‘You must be born again.’” (ESV).

Jesus is now expanding the perimeters of who can enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus says, you don’t only have to be a member of the Sanhedrin or Pharisee to get the royal treatment. In fact, you all widens the gate to every Jew. Can you feel the pain that Nicodemus must have been experiencing? In the late of night, he was getting schooled by the Savior of the world. Everything that he had learned about faith was becoming compromised. All of the work and discipline he had invested into his life was being shaken at its core. But Jesus was only getting started.

In John 3:16 Jesus summarizes God’s purpose. In order to fully understand the breadth of this text, we must read it in its context with verses 15 and 17.

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

In verse 15, Jesus says “that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” This must have been a tough statement for Nicodemus to hear Jesus say everyone has a shot of being saved and entering the Kingdom of God. Within this context, when Nicodemus hears the word everyone, he is still thinking of Jews.

Then we get to verse 16. The very first word of this verse is a preposition. The word “for” is a connecting or linking word to an existing phrase. It is used as a function word to indicate purpose or an intended goal. When you read the “for” you must realize that it is connecting you to an earlier thought: Everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him. For (Because) God loved the world so much.

It doesn’t say, God loved the Pharisees so much… God loved the Sanhedrin so much… God loved the Jews so much… Everyone who believes may have eternal life because God loves you.

Now in order to fully read this passage in context, we need to add verse 17: “Everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. For (Because) God loved the world so much. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

There are many of you today who are living with a tremendous amount of shame and guilt for the sins and hurts you have committed. Some of this is past sin. Some of it is current sin, stuff that you can’t let go of and that is weighing you down.

Take a close look at what Jesus says: God didn’t send Me here to condemn you for your sins…. In other words, I am not here to beat up on you and torment you for your sins; rather, God sent Me here to save you.

Jesus looks at Nicodemus, one of the wealthiest, most famous, and most powerful men of His day. Here is a man who came seeking clarity and searching for salvation. Jesus looks at him and says, If you plan to enter the Kingdom of God, you must come out of the dark, and follow Me. Living your faith in the shadows of darkness permits you to hide your sin. Come out into the light, so everyone can see your life, your love, your devotion for God.

“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”
Have you been living your life in darkness? Has your faith been concealed and hidden? Have you lived a life following a bunch of rules, hoping that your perfection will get you the keys to God’s kingdom? Have you been weighed down with a sin problem that you have been hiding in the shadows of the darkness? Do you want to give your life to Jesus? Completely?

God wants to give you a Do Over and new start with Him. God wants us all to have a second chance—this time under His authority and love. “After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing.” This story ends with Jesus giving people the opportunity to start over through baptism.

I want to give you the same opportunity today. In Matthew 10, Jesus says some really harsh words to him about being sold out: “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”

What Jesus is saying here is, this is all or nothing. Nicodemus made that decision inside his culture. He protected Jesus during the debates to destroy the Savior. “Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, ‘Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?’” (John 7:50, 51, NIV). At the death of Jesus, Nicodemus made a stand in front of every peer and traveling Jew. “Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds” (John 19:38-39, NIV).

What does Jesus’ call mean to you? How will you respond? ◀

This talk was presented at Rehoboth Beach Mini Kampmeeting

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**A Month of Pride**

Kinship will be participating in three Pride weekends in June. You can pick one, two or three to attend!

**June 4**
—Sacramento Pride (Region 8) kicks off in style. The parade starts at 10:00 am from 5th and S Streets and runs north on 5th, turning east on N Street. The festival opens at 10 am where you can enjoy $2 mimosas until noon, and wonderful entertainment and fun until 6 pm.

**June 11**
—Boston, Massachusetts David Thaxton, Sean, Betty and a few others are planning to attend the march together. There is some talk about being participants. If you would like to join us in Boston, please feel free to contact David at Region1@sdakinship.org.

**June 26**
—New York City Pride Parade Region One is planning two ways to participate in this event. Ronoldo is coordinating our participation in the March itself. If you would like to join us, please feel most welcome to contact Ronoldo@gmail.com.

We are looking for flag and banner bearers and a sense of adventure. Bruce and Eddie will be hosting their traditional corner to watch the festivities. If you would like to join them, please feel most welcome to contact them at bneinny@aol.com.

We look forward to seeing you at these celebrations!
European Kinship Meeting 2011 will be located in a self-catering cottage, located in Auvers-sur-Oise! We have eight bedrooms with four beds and a bathroom each. The meeting room is a place where we can have our meals and discussions. A terrace lies outside, next to the kitchen. Everything is on the ground floor. We have access to a private parking area. The train station is only a ten-minute walk from our cottage. We are planning to enjoy the trails along the river, horseback riding, and a connection to the village and to the city of Paris.

Guest speaker Luca Marulli will focus on “The Welcoming Heart and Body of Jesus: Is There a Place for Me Too?” He is on the Ethics Committee for French Adventists and knows that the issue of homosexuality will come up and needs to be addressed by the church.

For our EKM holiday week, which is following our meeting, we have found a stunning place in the countryside about 45 km from Paris. This lovely place has a beautiful view, a wonderful garden with a little swimming pool, and is nicely decorated. Only for the happy few who register in time! Price for the week approx. € 175 (room only).

You can register on www.sdakinship.org

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Member of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.
Rehoboth Beach Mini-Kampmeeting

This year, by popular request, Yolanda added an extra day to the gathering. The beach house was full! Kinshippers drove from as far north as Massachusetts and as far south as Georgia to enjoy Jim Chilson’s cooking and vespers, Kumar Dixit’s talks, a thoughtful Sabbath school discussion, great music, poetry, and “sanctified jokes” from Heidi Johnson. We've included these photos so you can have a sense of our weekend. We shared Kumar's worship talk on pages 11-14 so you can have a sense of the gifts we received.