Why Gay Parents May Be the Best Parents
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WHO WE ARE...
Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a nonprofit 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.)

Cover picture: http://hetorakelt.punt.nl

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

As I was getting ready to write my monthly welcome-to-the-Connection note, I accessed the wondrous Wikipedia to research Valentine’s Day. According to this not-quite-august resource, somehow humanity (or Hallmark greeting cards) has decided to create a holiday for lovers based on one or more saints who were martyred for their religious beliefs. Talk about pessimism—or marketing desperation. Sending affectionate or lascivious tokens or high calorie sweets to someone we love in February seems to be flying in the face of historical wisdom. Given the results of the several Valentines sharing their thoughts and feelings, I might want to avoid any kind of public display.

On second thought, celebrating Valentine’s Day might be a special statement for those of us in LGBTI relationships. Like Valentine, we have been persecuted, even killed, for nothing more than being honest and loving. For us to celebrate this day (or like the remarkable Kees and Ruud, choose to marry on it) is to say “No matter what you do, no matter what you threaten, I will choose to love. I will choose to love openly and honestly. All of you who choose harm cannot stop the love of my people.”

What a perfect day for us to say we love! We love (eros) with our passion and our sexuality and desire to revel in the body. We love (philios) our community, our siblings in this complicated journey, and our family and allies who feed us on so many levels. We love (agape) because it is a choice to be gracious and merciful people, and we want to share with others how we would like to be treated.

In this issue we are sharing Luca’s thoughts on a church that learned how to incorporate and love diversity. Ren wrote about some of the complications of loving. We’re including reactions of people who are sharing news of our community with the Adventist church in The Netherlands. We get to print some of the joy that Rom, David, and Bruce and Eddie are experiencing! We’re giving you some health tips so you can care better for yourself. And we’re including an article on how loving GLBTI parents are raising children. We hope you enjoy this issue. We hope you might even be inspired. We hope most of all that you will take good care of yourselves for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine

Kinship Event Calendar ‘12

February
3 Region 2 Vesper

March
2 Region 2 Vesper
24 Spring Board of Directors Meeting

July

30-31 European Kinship Meeting, Darmstadt (Ger)

August
30-31 European Kinship Meeting, Darmstadt (Ger)

September
1–3 European Kinship Meeting, Darmstadt (Ger)
3–9 EKM Holiday Week Frankfurt

1) For more information: write to region2@sdakinship.org

Every Friday: SDA Kinship Women Chat!
- 5 PM Pacific Time   - 6 PM Central Time
- 7 PM Mountain Time   - 8 PM Eastern Time
Log into the Members Area - Live KinChat!

Every Sabbath: Region 8 Worship Opportunity
(San Francisco). For more information contact Marcos: chaplain@sdakinship.org
I want to introduce you to the church of Antioch, the very first church for which Paul worked. This peculiar church benefited from diversity. For its members, diversity was a resource and an asset. The challenge, then and now, is to figure out ways that human beings in a diversified community can develop and foster a sense of belonging.

Acts. For the first time the Gospel becomes visible to the eyes of classical ancient society. No longer are we describing an anonymous sectarian movement of Judaism. Here is a faith that conquers the hearts of the Greeks and other Gentiles who had never accepted Judaism.

At this time Antioch was the third greatest city in the Roman Empire (after Alexandria, in Egypt, and Rome). Located in the area we now call Turkey, the city rested on the edges of a river with good access to both the sea and inland parts of Asia Minor. It was a crossroads and trading center. The population of almost one million was famous for their worship to the goddess Diana.

The community of Jerusalem, the mother church we could say, was concerned about and possibly suspicious of the conversions happening in Antioch. For that reason, they sent Barnabas to check on the situation. From early comments in Acts we know that Barnabas was generous, respected, and a Levite. In the entire book of Acts, he is the only person described as “a good man.” He went to Antioch and came to understand the situation and the nature of working with such a multicultural and powerful community. He brought to the fledgling work in this powerful city, Paul, the man with a perfect background and mindset to deal with its issues and opportunities.

I want to take a look at those who led the church of Antioch.

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (Acts 13:1)

Barnabas was a Jewish man, born on the island of Cyprus. Paul was Jewish but raised in Tarsus. Simeon was called Niger. This nickname, “Niger,” in Latin means “black,” the same word that we get the names of countries like Nigeria and Niger. So it is quite possible that Simeon was an African. Lucius was from Cyrene, the area of North Africa that is present-day Libya. Manaen, as a boy, played in the palace with the son of Herod the Great. This man was obviously from a powerful family and had great wealth. Unlike the church in Jerusalem, led by Jews from Galilee, the leadership of Antioch was multi-racial, multi-class, and multi-national.
Antioch is a lot like our church. Like Antioch we are situated at cultural crossroads. Every week we meet somebody new who might be from anywhere. Because our church is a worldwide movement, our members should not be afraid to listen to new ideas. For some, it is much easier to preach the gospel in Antioch than in Jerusalem. Diversity, though challenging, is also rewarding. Antioch is on the frontier, halfway between the mother church in Jerusalem and the Gentile world that has yet to hear the gospel. We also are on the frontier. Like Antioch, God has placed us, or wants to place us, in a very strategic place. Being able to preach the Gospel to everyone means giving everyone the possibility of belonging.

Like Christians of Antioch, we come from different places and situations where we developed our own identity. We take our mix of experiences everywhere we go. Like Antioch, we want to find a place where we can feel well and live our faith. For us, “living our faith” may not appear to be conventional, but it is always according to the teaching of our gracious Lord. Like the church of Antioch, we can become a supportive church for new and innovating evangelistic projects and even become a support for churches and friends that are going through difficult moments.

My prayer for us is that we can be like the church in Antioch. I pray that we can be a church on the frontier, ready to bring the Gospel to the unreached. I pray that we can be a church committed to the Lord, committed to ministering to and for God, committed to mutual love and respect.

The example of the followers of Christ at Antioch should be an inspiration to every believer living in the great cities of the world today.... His purpose [is] that the church members living in these cities shall use their God-given talents in working for souls. There are rich blessings in store for those who surrender fully to the call of God. As such workers endeavour to win souls to Jesus, they will find that many who never could have been reached in any other way are ready to respond to intelligent personal effort.


Love,

Alcoholism,
& Life Lessons

Virginia (Ren) Reynolds

In the early 1950s my first love came to Mountain View. We had the audacity to live only three blocks from the Adventist senior high school. As soon as she got there, we started to look for a place that was safe from the Adventist ghetto and far more private. We moved to another community, possibly six to eight miles away. Despite all our efforts, we ended up living a few blocks from Uncle Arthur Maxwell. His youngest daughter was a student of mine. From time to time we attended the Mountain View church.

My partner had graduated from Walla Walla Nursing School and worked at the old Stanford Hospital. We did not hide except when we went to movies. On those rare occasions, I wore a sort of disguise. We associated with my Adventist friends from Colorado but certainly were “out” to no one. We had both attended Union College. We lived in a faculty member’s home while my partner worked a 3-11 shift at a local hospital and I worked on campus.

Hiding while holding a job at an Adventist academy became more difficult but not impossible. We did become a bit more cautious the day the academy registrar appeared at our door unannounced. I invited her into our dining room where we were sitting at the time of her arrival. I have no recollection why she came or what excuse she used for her visit. We did not believe that it was a friendly visit. It was the beginning of difficult relationships with the offices of the principal and registrar. I think it also led to my partner leaving our relationship and getting married to a man. At the time I could not believe something like that visit could lead to this avalanche; but from my perspective now, it makes sense. My love later divorced her husband.

I moved back to Colorado and did substitute teaching until I decided to move to Sacramento. There I worked for a well-known ophthalmologist until the job I secured as a secondary social science, history, and English teacher was fully secure and I had tenure. I continued to work part-time with the doctor for several years because I could work to fit my schedule after hours, weekends, or holidays.

My first love became my second love. About the time we got back together we both learned the word “gay.” Not long after, we
could say “lesbian.” Soon we could voice “lesbian” without too much angst. It took too many years to have the process of full and complete acceptance occur within myself.

My two primary long-term relationships were with women who had issues with alcohol. Before I became involved with them, I did not have experience with alcoholism. I did not understand the complexity of the disease or the toll it would take. Both of these partners worked full-time, responsible jobs.

One of my partners was a nurse anesthetist. One night, when she was called in to the hospital, I begged her not to go. She almost fell down the three steps to the garage. That night I decided I would intervene if it happened again. She worked nights. During the day, when I was teaching, she would work in the yard, drinking all the while. She was a lovely person. Her only affair was with the bottle, but the alcohol took over and there was no room for a relationship. Somehow she kept her job. I saw an alcohol counselor who helped me get over the relationship.

Then I got myself into a ten-year relationship with another alcoholic. We loved to go camping together. We loved to fish. She enjoyed going to Colorado with me. We found places special to us where we could be out of doors. We would drive into the mountains to a ranch situated at 8500 feet. We would take our one-piece camper to the edge of Canada’s Lake Ontario to visit her parents. Even with all this goodness, after ten years, excessive use of alcohol and then her affair with an alcoholic woman with whom she worked ended our relationship. It was difficult to get over this one. For decades I thought I never would. A few months ago, after thirty years, she popped up, unannounced, at my door. I was quite remote. I wondered why she was here. I wondered what her motives might be for appearing out of the blue. The only good thing I can say about this visit is that, perhaps, I am finally over the relationship.

I am going to talk about one last relationship so that you have the opportunity to avoid mistakes I made. This relationship lasted six or seven years, but only because we owned property together. I was naive. On one shared piece, I put up the money for the down payment. On another I used inheritance money to buy it outright. These terrible errors forced me to have contact with this woman, even after the relationship was totally finished. She finally agreed she had no interest in one property except that she was in the relationship when it was purchased. She never even paid taxes on it. I gave her an equal part in the home where we lived. That was so difficult because I had already been the land owner. Be careful when you buy property together. Make sure it is with someone with whom you can make these agreements. I still have bad feelings when I remember these events.

I have used Al-Anon for my recovery. In its rooms I have shared parts of my story and learned the ways other members have dealt with situations similar to mine. I cannot give enough praise for this program. For decades, it has been available for free, in the United States and in other countries, to anyone who finds themselves in need of its knowledge and support. One of my caregivers is a member. Each day she is here, we share a reading from one of my Al-Anon books for women. I am very grateful that a dear friend urged me to go to Al-Anon! My favorite reading book is Each Day a New Beginning. Hazeldon Educational Materials. Center City, Minnesota.
Kinship Booth at Open Day 2011

Camp Meeting of the Netherlands Union of Seventh-day Adventists

By Ruud Kieboom and team

For those of you who have never been to the last day of Dutch camp meeting, Open Day booths are pitched onto the union office grounds and a wide variety of international food vendors, outreach programs, craft tables, art gallery fundraisers, ADRA announcements, and children’s activities appear. More than a thousand Dutch Adventists flow onto the grounds with shopping budgets, bags to collect materials, and a desire to chat with vendors and long-lost friends. Open Day draws Adventists who consider themselves conservatives, liberals, traditionalists, innovators, and everyone in between. The Dutch Union leadership welcomes Kinship as part of their outreach program options. This was our third year participating in camp meeting at Open Day.

Initially I wasn’t keen on participating in this event. I didn’t want to be confronted by anti-gay church members. I would rather spend my time helping LGBTI Adventists accept themselves and be accepted by fellow members of their congregation. However, I am Kinship’s European coordinator and founder of Kinship Netherlands. Because of my role, I think I should participate in the events that make Kinship visible to church members and leadership.

This year our booth was centrally located and impossible to avoid. Many people passed by, stopped, asked questions, and picked up Connections, Homosexuality: Can We Talk about It? and Eden’s Gifts. Our booth neighbors were Kinship allies and delighted to be next to us. Our large sign that proclaimed “ZDA KINSHIP” (ZDA = SDA in Dutch) in capital letters was visible from across the field.

We talked to church members and church leaders. Most discussions were positive. Some people came by just to say how important it was that we were there and that gay people should be accepted in the church. Others told us about the gay members in their congregation who have created a safe environment for other LGBTI Adventists. We gave these visitors information in the hope their gay and lesbian church members will contact Kinship.

Despite my concerns, there were hardly any negative reactions to our presence. If people didn’t agree with our goal, they just passed by or expressed their opinions in a polite discussion. They accepted our presence, realizing that there are different points of view possible in the church.

I was happily surprised that this time many people from Africa and the Caribbean islands stopped at our booth and showed interest in the display. They took the brochure Homosexuality: Can We Talk About It? and a free copy of Eden’s Gifts. A pity we didn’t have books like Christianity & Homosexuality and My Son, Beloved Stranger in store to sell. Next year we want to make sure we have the Dutch translation of Eden’s Gifts. Last time we sold many books at our booth.

Next year I plan to participate again, with Catherine, Kees, Melanie, and Ivan. Melanie took notes to improve our presentation. There is a need for Kinship to be seen and heard in the church.

I saw a lot of people from my past, from when I was a member of the Adventist young adult group. We need to be there for the people, not just for our own personal growth. The two booths next to us were so friendly. “Oh, you are from Kinship. It is so nice to be next to you.” They were glad we were here again. It was also very nice that many people recognized our booth and walked past it as if we were an accepted part of the Open Day. We are now an institution.

Melanie de Weger
– Having a booth is important; it makes us visible. Older people don’t have as much access to the internet. It is good to have real people with whom attendees can talk face-to-face. If you are a Seventh-day Adventist, and you see a booth for homosexual Adventists in our church, and it is condoned by the union, this is very important. That is totally not what we would find on the General Conference website. We are giving a very important message: We can stay in our church where we grew up and we are accepted.

I always enjoy being at a booth: Kinship, Tai Chi, or Ark (Adventist Regional Church). I like representing something in which I believe. I enjoy the positive reactions. I find it interesting to have the negative ones. I can reflect on myself and assess how I am coping with yelling. This year we experienced very few negative comments, compared to last year. I like the companionship of the people at the booth. Open Day itself is like a reunion for me. I get to see the older people who are still living. I don’t attend the ‘normal church’ regularly, so this is one of my primary ways of staying
Kees Meiling
— It was nice. I like the company. It is always a kind of a reunion. I get to see friends I haven’t seen for a long time. I think it is a positive contribution to gay emancipation, although it should not be necessary. It should have already been accomplished. But that is daydreaming. It’s fun to be there. It was a sunny day. It would not have been as much fun if had been raining cats and dogs.

Finally Married!

Catherine, our dear editor, asked us to write something “on what it is like to be married after 51 years of living in...New York.”

After 51 years of sharing our lives, time seems almost irrelevant. Words like love, trust, honor, and respect have always meant a lot to us as far as our relationship is concerned. The simple phrase “I love you” has not lost an iota of significance during all those years. Nevertheless, we felt that our love and basic rights were not fully protected under the existing laws. For many years, we have done everything we can to promote social, legal, and political equality for LGBTI members of society. We’re truly happy that, as of June 2011, New York State finally legalized gay marriage, a step in the right direction. We were both willing and eager to claim the legal rights thus granted by our state.

Thanks to the quality of service provided by our local New York City government, our actual marriage ceremony turned out to be a lot more meaningful than expected. It was conducted in a very dignified manner free from any qualifications. The support of special friends who witnessed the occasion was particularly moving to us. We also felt the moral backing of countless dear friends and relatives not physically present at the event. It was a happy and exciting moment for us.

Our love has not undergone any special transformation, but we feel a new sense of empowerment. It is good to be able to identify each other as husband or spouse if required. We get a kick from some of the reactions; but, generally, they have been very positive. We do feel a new sense of security in being able to face any challenges to our relationship that the future may bring.

Honestly, every day brings a new sparkle or tingle. Our life continues to be a celebration; and, in our minds, the real “wedding” took place many years ago. Happily, close relatives and friends have lately corroborated this idea. We thank the Lord for that!
The day of our commitment ceremony dawned cloudy. However, as the morning went by, clouds rolled away and revealed a perfectly clear, early summer day. My son drove us down a forest park road to the restaurant courtyard, overlooking a stream, where the ceremony was to be held. In response to our request, a cello and violin duo began to play Pachelbel’s “Canon in D” as we arrived. John and I walked down the steps on one side of the restaurant onto the grassy field below. Then we turned around and walked, in an arc, back towards the front of the restaurant where all our friends and family were gathered on the terrace under the shade of a large umbrella.

We didn’t have a celebrant. John and I made a joint speech. I spoke first about the place we chose to marry, this rainforest park where we walked the second time we were together, a week after we met. John spoke about the significance of the time we chose to marry, 11:00 a.m. on 11/11/11. For us, the occasion was all about the “ones.” We are one in each other’s lives. God is Number One for both of us. Then I spoke about the significance of the occasion, the importance of building strong relationships, and the reason why two people fall in love and choose to spend the rest of their lives together.

We turned and read our vows to each other. When we had finished, John’s great-nephew shyly walked up to us with the lapel pins that we were using instead of rings. I pinned one lapel pin onto John. He did the same for me. Each pin is a tiny white dove surrounded by gold edging. A friend from church offered the prayer and we both embraced and kissed—the first time in public—and certainly the first time in front of family!

After everyone congratulated us, we walked up into the rainforest for photos. We took shots on a rock overlooking the creek. We took shots as we crossed over the bridge and walked along the paths. Finally our photographers were satisfied that they had enough photos, and we returned to the restaurant.

Everyone was inside when we got back, and our MC announced us. As the duo played Handel’s “Hornpipe” from the Water Music Suite, we marched into the restaurant. Our 33 guests were all seated in the main room of a 130-year-old house that is beautifully restored in period style. At one end of the room on either side of the old fireplace were two tall flower arrangements of white roses, lilies, and orchids set off by dark green foliage: the result was stunning! Each table was decorated with bowls of brilliant red bougainvillea flowers. Over the mantelpiece was John’s old clock, a family heirloom as old as the house.

After grace, given by a former pastor of my church, the meal was served while the duo continued playing. Between courses, we were entertained with a short recital of the most romantic music. After the meal, John’s niece gave a beautiful speech welcoming me to the family and toasted us. My son gave his humorous speech about life with Dad. Their speeches were short, but we had agreed that my speech would be on behalf of both of us. It was literally the speech of my life: my early life, John’s life, our coming out, the new life we have found here, our work, my church, our family, and our friends. It was the kind of speech that I have been waiting to make to my family, friends, work colleagues—indeed everyone—for 50 years! It was the kind of speech you only get one chance to make and I made the most of the opportunity to say things like, “There are some things you do not choose, and cannot change” and “It really does
We cut the chocolate-mud layer cake topped with two ceramic white doves, the same ones on our lapel pins. Our guests received an identical lapel pin as a thank-you gift and a symbol of the peace we have both found. While the cake was being cut, we showed a PowerPoint® slide program of our lives. The first part was my life story, accompanied by I Don't Want to Say Goodbye, from Brokeback Mountain. The second part was John's story, accompanied by Ronan Keating singing When You Say Nothing At All. The third part consisted of pictures of our life together over the last four and a half years, accompanied by Elton John singing Your Song. We opened gifts. Though we had asked for none, some of our guests brought them anyway. Friends helped us get everything packed up and back to our home.

The entire day was utterly perfect: preparation, food, music, ceremony, weather, flowers, transport arrangements, speeches. Everything was just as we had planned. During the days that followed, we both felt quite strange; we agreed that nothing had changed, but that everything had changed! And it was just so much better than we could have ever dreamed!

Our wedding was much more than a romantic milestone. It was an important step in establishing our identity as a couple with our respective families. The event served as a means of publicizing our relationship to work colleagues and friends. Most of all, it has sealed bonds of loyalty and love between us that nothing can break.

Footnote: Only a few weeks after this event, the Queensland State Parliament voted to give same-sex couples the right to register their relationship and have that relationship recognized in law. The Australian Federal Parliament is slated to debate the issue on a national scale in February 2012 with a view to changing the Marriage Act to grant same-sex couples equal rights to marry.

Biographical note: David and his partner John live on the Sunshine Coast, 100 km north of Brisbane, Queensland. David is a project manager for a private training company, and John is a disability support worker with a large charitable foundation.

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Surprised by Love

Rom Wilder

We’ve all seen them: the older couples, the people who have gotten married so they have someone to help with the dishes or to change the sheets. They probably have twin beds.

That’s sort of what I ignorantly thought—until I became half of one of those couples. As you read this, I’ve just turned 69 (what a nice age!), and Ellen is looking forward to 74 in April.

At the dinner table last week I said, “I feel like there wasn’t a ‘beginning’ of us. I feel like we always were.”

She does the cooking. A foodie. I do the dishes. She does the laundry; I fold it. But that isn’t why we are together. We don’t have twin beds. On New Year’s Eve we fell asleep holding hands. Just remembering it makes my heart warm and calm.

Over and over we finish each other’s sentences in our heads or aloud. It helps that we both remember where we were when President Kennedy was shot, when they landed on the moon, and which presidential candidate had a hole in his shoe. It helps that we both remember when 1949 became 1950. And it probably helps that we both like foreign films, Simon & Garfunkel, Kathleen Battle, Mannheim Steamroller, and...
Brahms.

I had no idea I could feel like this, loving and being loved. Just seeing her smile makes my heart go thumpy thump. I didn't know my old heart could go thumpy thump.

You’re never too old to fall in love. I told her our angels arranged it. She, a retired Methodist minister, thinks it was their Boss.

Gay marriage, and especially gay parenting, has been in the cross hairs in recent days.

On Jan. 6, Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum told a New Hampshire audience that children are better off with a father in prison than being raised in a home with lesbian parents and no father at all. And last Monday [Jan. 9], Pope Benedict called gay marriage a threat “to the future of humanity itself,” citing the need for children to have heterosexual homes.

But research on families headed by gays and lesbians doesn’t back up these dire assertions. In fact, in some ways, gay parents may bring talents to the table that straight parents don’t.

Gay parents “tend to be more motivated, more committed than heterosexual parents on average, because they chose to be parents,” said Abbie Goldberg, a psychologist at Clark University in Massachusetts who researches gay and lesbian parenting. Gays and lesbians rarely become parents by accident, compared with an almost 50 percent accidental pregnancy rate among heterosexuals, Goldberg said. “That translates to greater commitment on average and more involvement.”

And while research indicates that kids of gay parents show few differences in achievement, mental health, social functioning, and other measures, these kids may have the advantage of open-mindedness, tolerance, and role models for equitable relationships, according to some research. Not only that, but gays and lesbians are likely to provide homes for difficult-to-place children in the foster system, studies show. (Of course, this isn't to say that heterosexual parents can't bring these same qualities to the parenting table.)

Adopting the neediest

Gay adoption recently caused controversy in Illinois, where Catholic Charities adoption services decided in November to cease offering services because the state refused funding unless the groups agreed not to discriminate against gays and lesbians. Rather than comply, Catholic Charities closed up shop.

Catholic opposition aside, research suggests that gay and lesbian parents are actually a powerful resource for kids in need of adoption. According to a 2007 report by the Williams Institute and the Urban Institute, 65,000 kids were living with adoptive gay parents between 2000 and 2002, with another 14,000 in foster homes headed by gays and lesbians. (There are currently more than 100,000 kids in foster care in the U.S.)

An October 2011 report by Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute found that, of gay and lesbian adoptions at more than 300 agencies, ten percent of the kids placed were older than 6—typically a very difficult age to adopt out. About 25 percent were older than 3. Sixty percent of gay and lesbian couples adopted across races, which is important given that minority children in the foster system tend to linger. More than half of the kids adopted by gays and lesbians had special needs.

The report didn’t compare the adoption preferences of gay couples directly with those of heterosexual couples, said author David Brodzinsky, research director at the Institute and co-editor of “Adoption By Lesbians and Gay Men: A New Dimension of Family Diversity” (Oxford University Press, 2011). But research suggests that gays and lesbians are more likely than heterosexuals to adopt older, special-needs, and minority children, he said. Part of that could be their own preferences, and part could be because of discrimination by adoption agencies that puts more difficult children with what caseworkers see as “less desirable” parents.

No matter how you slice it, Brodzinsky told LiveScience, gays and lesbians are highly interested in
adoption as a group. The 2007 report by the Urban Institute also found that more than half of gay men and 41 percent of lesbians in the U.S. would like to adopt. That adds up to an estimated 2 million gay people who are interested in adoption. It’s a huge reservoir of potential parents who could get kids out of the instability of the foster system, Brodzinsky said.

“When you think about the 114,000 children who are freed for adoption who continue to live in foster care and who are not being readily adopted, the goal is to increase the pool of available, interested, and well-trained individuals to parent these children,” Brodzinsky said.

In addition, Brodzinsky said, there’s evidence to suggest that gays and lesbians are especially accepting of open adoptions, where the child retains some contact with his or her birth parents. And the statistics bear out that birth parents often have no problem with their kids being raised by same-sex couples, he added.

“Interestingly, we find that a small percentage, but enough to be noteworthy, [of birth mothers] make a conscious decision to place with gay men, so they can be the only mother in their child’s life,” Brodzinsky said.

Research has shown that the kids of same-sex couples—both adopted and biological kids—fare no worse than the kids of straight couples on mental health, social functioning, school performance, and a variety of other life-success measures.

In a 2010 review of virtually every study on gay parenting, New York University sociologist Judith Stacey and University of Southern California sociologist Tim Biblarz found no differences between children raised in homes with two heterosexual parents and children raised with lesbian parents.

“There’s no doubt whatsoever from the research that children with two lesbian parents are growing up to be just as well-adjusted and successful as children with a male and a female parent,” Stacey told LiveScience.

There is very little research on the children of gay men, so Stacey and Biblarz couldn’t draw conclusions on those families. But Stacey suspects that gay men “will be the best parents on average,” she said.

That’s a speculation, she said, but if lesbian parents have to really plan to have a child, it’s even harder for gay men. Those who decide to do it are thus likely to be extremely committed, Stacey said. Gay men may also experience fewer parenting conflicts, she added. Most lesbians use donor sperm to have a child, so one mother is biological and the other is not, which could create conflict because one mother may feel closer to the kid.

“With gay men, you don’t have that factor,” she said. “Neither of them gets pregnant, neither of them breast-feeds, so you don’t have that asymmetry built into the relationship.”

The bottom line, Stacey said, is that people who say children need both a father and a mother in the home are misrepresenting the research, most of which compares children of single parents to children of married couples. Two good parents are better than one good parent, Stacey said, but one good parent is better than two bad parents. And gender seems to make no difference. While you do find broad differences between how men and women parent on average, she said, there is much more diversity within the genders than between them.

“Two heterosexual parents of the same educational background, class, race and religion are more like each other in the way they parent than one is like all other women and one is like all other men,” she said. [6 Gender Myths Busted]

**Good parenting**

In fact, the only consistent places you find differences between how kids of gay parents and kids of straight parents turn out are in issues of tolerance and open-mindedness, according to Goldberg. In a paper published in 2007 in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Goldberg conducted in-depth interviews with 46 adults with at least one gay parent. Twenty-eight of them spontaneously offered that they felt more open-minded and empathetic than people not raised in their situation.

“These individuals feel like their perspectives on family, on gender, on sexuality have largely been enhanced by growing up with gay parents,” Goldberg said.

One 33-year-old man with a lesbian mother told Goldberg, “I feel I’m a more open, well-rounded person for having been raised in a nontraditional family, and I think those that know me would agree. My mom opened me up to the positive impact of differences in people.”

Children of gay parents also reported feeling less stymied by gender stereotypes than they would have been if raised in straight households. That’s likely because gays and lesbians tend to have more egalitarian relationships than straight couples, Goldberg said. They’re also less wedded to rigid gender stereotypes themselves.

“Men and women felt like they were free to pursue a wide range of interests,” Goldberg said. “Nobody was telling them, ‘Oh, you can’t do that, that’s a boy thing,’ or ‘That’s a girl thing.’”
If same-sex marriage does disadvantage kids in any way, it has nothing to do with their parents’ gender and everything to do with society’s reaction toward the families, said Indiana University sociologist Brian Powell, the author of “Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans’ Definitions of Family” (Russell Sage Foundation, 2010).

“Imagine being a child living in a state with two parents in which, legally, only one parent is allowed to be their parent,” Powell told LiveScience. “In that situation, the family is not seen as authentic or real by others. That would be the disadvantage.”

In her research, Goldberg has found that many children of gay and lesbian parents say that more acceptance of gay and lesbian families, not less, would help solve this problem.

In a study published online Jan. 11, 2012, in the Journal of Marriage and Family, Goldberg interviewed another group of 49 teenagers and young adults with gay parents and found that not one of them rejected the right of gays and lesbians to marry. Most cited legal benefits as well as social acceptance.

“I was just thinking about this with a couple of friends and just was in tears thinking about how different my childhood might have been had same-sex marriage been legalized 25 years ago,” a 23-year-old man raised by a lesbian couple told Goldberg. “The cultural, legal status of same-sex couples impacts the family narratives of same-sex families—how we see ourselves in relation to the larger culture, whether we see ourselves as accepted or outsiders.”

You can follow LiveScience senior writer Stephanie Pappas on Twitter @sipappas. The above article was published on http://www.livescience.com/17913-advantages-gay-parents.html

Welcome to the European Kinship Meeting in Darmstadt, Germany!
August 30 – September 2

More information in the March Connection!

Rehoboth Beach Mini-Kampmeeting!

Come One! Come in Groups! Come all!

We invite you to join us April 26-29 in beautiful Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. We have a beach house that sleeps you in comfort and nearby hotels for those of you who might want to stay offsite. The weekend offers thought-provoking worship and Bible study opportunities, great meals, time to play on the beach, and nearby shopping.

Our guest speaker is Ellen Rowan, new love and partner of our beloved Rom Wilder. Ellen is an ordained United Methodist minister. She spent most of her career in California where one of her primary foci was to bring lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, and transgender people in to full participation in the life of the church, interfaith fellowship, and worship. Her travels include mission work in Calcutta and Chile. She retired in 2003 to move back to her native West Virginia. There she enjoys reading, movies, cooking, and travel.

For more information, you can contact Yolanda at president@sdakinship.org. To register you can access our website at http://sdakinship.org/en/rehobothminikm/rehobothminikm2011.html.
Aching Joints. “Every mile is two in winter,” said poet George Herbert. This is particularly true of those with arthritis or joint pain. A survey said 42 percent of those suffering blamed cold weather. The scientific evidence is conflicting. Some studies find a strong relationship between short, cold, damp days and arthritis flare-ups. Research from Tufts University suggests changes in barometric pressure worsen knee pain in people with arthritis, while colder temps can cause painful changes in joint fluid thickness. Other studies have found little or no link between weather and joint pain.

Whether your aches are sparked by the weather or something else, these three steps can help you feel better. Load up on foods rich in: Omega-3 fatty acids. Think salmon and nuts to curb inflammation. Vitamin K. Make meals that feature greens, such as spinach, kale, and cabbage, for their pain-soothing properties. Vitamin C. Add color to your diet with juicy oranges, sweet red peppers and tomatoes, and other C-rich foods to halt cartilage loss (and resulting pain) that comes with arthritis. Avoid foods high in omega-6 fatty acids, such as corn oil, which may trigger painful inflammation. Also swap refined grains for whole grains. Early research suggests refined grains have an inflammatory effect, whereas high-fiber whole grains may help reduce inflammation.

Glucosamine sulfate and chondroitin may help by nourishing cartilage and increasing lubrication in your joints. A large-scale study funded by the National Institutes of Health found that a daily combo of 1,500 milligrams of glucosamine and 1,200 milligrams of chondroitin might help ease symptoms in people with moderate-to-severe joint pain. Also make sure you’re getting plenty of vitamin D to help keep your bones strong and prevent joint pain. Look for a supplement with 1,000 milligrams of D3 (the kind your body manufactures from sunlight), but check with your doctor first because some supplements can interact with prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

One reason cold weather is linked to joint pain is people are less likely to work out when it’s chilly and damp. Being a couch potato is bad news for your joints because exercise helps lubricate them to prevent pain. Too cold out? Bring your workout indoors—and don’t overdo it! Choose low-impact aerobic moves that are easy on joints, such as walking, and yoga or tai chi, which enhance your range of motion. Lifting weights can also help because it builds joint-supporting muscles.

Improving Sleep. Doing the toss-and-turn samba in bed lately? Nix these 7 sleep-stealing habits to help you snooze peacefully instead. Caffeine lingers in your system for up to 12 hours, so that after-lunch coffee can leave you wide-eyed at bedtime. Switch to decaf after midmorning, and try chamomile tea or warm milk in the evening. Both will help you get your ZZZs. Large dinners take hours to digest, making it hard to fall asleep. Make lunch your main meal of the day, and limit dinner to fewer than 500 calories. While you’re at it, skip spicy foods and MSG for less heartburn, indigestion, and too-vivid dreams. Regular workouts can help you sleep better, but exercising within 3 to 4 hours of bedtime can actually mess with sleep. Shoot for morning, afternoon, or early evening workouts. Booze pulls a bait-and-switch when it comes to sleep. It makes you drowsy so you nod off, then it makes you wakeful and restless throughout the night. Skip alcohol within 2 hours of bedtime. Glowing screens from electronics, such as TV, computers, and even your e-reader, signal your brain to stay alert. Power down an hour before bed. Like caffeine and alcohol, nicotine is a stimulant. What, you need another reason? The stress of going over spreadsheets and other work-related tasks makes it hard to fall asleep. If you work on your laptop, you’re getting a double-whammy of stimulation because you’re in bed and in front of a glowing screen. Use the bedroom for sex and sleep only.
Marital Happiness in a Cup of Tea

Researchers from the University of Virginia’s National Marriage Project studied the role of generosity in the marriages of 870 women and men. In this study, generosity was defined as “the virtue of giving good things to one’s spouse freely and abundantly.” In our house, going to the basement to replace a fuse, blown from the overuse of appliances, is a good example. For several of our friends, it means making a cup of tea in the morning and taking it up to bed for their partner.

As the researchers found, those couples who scored highest on the generosity scale were far more likely to report that they were very happy in their marriages. This relationship was particularly strong for people who had children at home. Although parents may have agreements about what their fair share of caretaking is, going beyond one’s duties with regard to family activities is much appreciated. In a related study of 3-year-old twins, Israeli researchers found that children whose parents were generous with them were also more likely to be generous with other kids as well. It is nice to think that acts of generosity spread outward.

Other researchers have also indicated that commitment and good communication styles are important for creating the grounds for a happy marriage. John Gottman, one of the major researchers in this area, has suggested that if one partner makes a negative comment about the other, it must be offset by 5 positive ones for a successful relationship to be sustained. As for sex, if marital sexual satisfaction is rated below average, only 6.5% say they have happy marriages. Is it possible that generosity is a more powerful contributor to a happy marriage than good sex?

You are my Valentine.