



ONE TO ONE

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NEWSLETTER NO 8 ISSUE 4

OUR PURPOSE: Seventh Day Adventist Kinship Australia is a non-profit support organization which ministers to the spiritual, social and physical well-being of former and current SDA Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender and Intersex individuals and their friends and families. Kinship is not supported by the SDA Church. Kinship is a confidential organization which supports the advancement of human rights for all people.

Communication

Correction does much, but encouragement does more. ~ Johann von Goethe

The temptation is very great for all of us to try to correct things that we perceive to be wrong in others--something in their beliefs or their behavior. It may well be that this person needs some help but did we ever stop to think that if we offered some genuine love, acceptance and encouragement that this will open the door for that person to see whatever needs correction in his/her life?

Think about it and perhaps even work with this principle and see what happens.

Sent in by, Tom Durst. Tom can be contacted at tomdurst1@msn.com

"Record" Editorial

Beyond Assumptions.

The single most common perception is that Christianity is anti-homosexual.

I am tempted to think it is not a major issue. Most of the time I am not directly affected—and we all tend to think with less urgency about issues that don't bother us directly.

From a Christian perspective, the Bible says little about the issue of homosexuality—no more than five references, depending how you count them. And there is such a variety of explanations of these verses—urging what they "really" say—covering many shades of meaning. Belying the

noise of various Christian activists, it is difficult to argue homosexuality as a specifically-important moral issue from a biblical perspective.

Its little wonder we would prefer to avoid the difficult questions, whether by our silence or by our dogmatic and perhaps unfeeling adherence to a seemingly simple, black-and-white attitude.

But then I come across the personal stories of those who have been hurt, confused and excluded by the church. Recognising the personal trauma, loss and heartache of openly acknowledging one's homosexuality in a conservative Christian community, it seems obvious most of those who have endured such an ordeal are not homosexual by choice. If they could choose otherwise, their lives and faith would be so much simpler.

Our silence is part of the problem. When the issue is not faithfully, carefully and sensitively addressed, the unspoken pressure to conform to "normality" gives rise to deep seated personal tension, double lives and dishonest relationships. Or we simply say, by our silence and our assumptions, "You don't belong. Unless you become like us, the church has nothing and no place for you." And then there are the perceptions of Christianity in the wider community. Research behind David Kinnaman's book *UnChristian* sought outsider's views on Christianity and the church. Of all possible descriptors, the single most common perception is that Christianity is anti-homosexual: "our hostility toward gays—not just opposition to gay politics and behaviours but disdain for gay individuals—have become virtually synonymous with the Christian faith." While

we probably would not describe our faith this way, this perception held by many in our community is a significant barrier to their further interest in anything Christian.

The preface to Christianity and Homosexuality acknowledges the difficulties faced by a community of faith that seeks to remain true to the Bible as the word of God, at the same time as living, worshipping and reaching out in a diverse and complex society in which tolerance is a highly-valued virtue. On one hand, we recognise that "the Bible nowhere has anything good to say about same-sex relationships" but then we know people who are both—as these editors put it—"incurably Adventist and incurably gay."

This is the first step: recognising that homosexual people are people, human beings with loves, hopes, faiths, fears and failings—like us. They need a Saviour to the same degree as we do, and they need places to belong and communities in which they can share and grow in faith. With this realisation comes the difficult task of finding a balanced biblical faithfulness, ensuring we are not merely caving in to the amorality of society around us. We talk as a community of faith, wrestling with the texts that seem hard—not to water them down but to understand them as best we can, and seek the best in them for what it means to be human. And, of course, we need to read these verses in company with such broad and compelling commands as to "do for others what you would like them to do for you" (Matthew 7:12) and "I command you to love each other" (John 15:17).

Jesus seemed to preach and practice a scandalous inclusiveness, in ways many of us would be less than comfortable with today. As "God among us," Jesus stepped into a worst-case scenario: "Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such despicable people—even eating with them!" (Luke 15:1, 2). With Jesus' example of unconditional embrace, can we justify anything less in our churches and communities?

But what this means—what it looks like in practice and how we maintain our honesty and adherence to the Bible—are questions that require our continued and communal work, thinking and prayer.

Nathan Brown, Editor.

Foot Note:

Nathan struggles with independence, as editor of the Church weekly paper.

A letter of Support.

Hi Nathan,

What a brave man you are to ask your readers to think about such a controversial issue rather than just promoting "the party line"! Clearly a man of character!

I'm not a SDA (not even a Christian I'm afraid) but I've had the good fortune to get to know many of the members of the local SDA Church. Many of them are tradesmen who have worked on my house and I spent a wonderful time in Vanuatu with them on a SDA Fly'n'Build a few years ago. Whilst I know they share the view "love the sinner, hate the sin", I think some of them now may have grave doubts about the Church's traditional response to gays and lesbians. I think over time they have come to realise that my 17 year long relationship with my partner is characterised by the same values and behaviours as their own marriages and that perhaps the Church has somehow "got it wrong" in its attitude to people like me. However, I am also in no doubt that if I did attend their Church and seek to become actively involved in Church activities, others would be quick to apply the SDA teachings to "the letter of the law". One only has to read the stories of gay and lesbian SDAs which appear on the Kinship site to be aware how SDA teachings have been applied to the disadvantage of this group.

Thanks for encouraging thought and discussion on the matter. I read the H & C book (it came to me free via Kinship) reviewed in the same Record. My "sparky" (SDA) mentioned the Record article over morning tea the other day and has now borrowed the book to read! I understand from Noel (Kinship) that positive feedback has been a bit thin on the ground so wanted to give you a hug and let you know your efforts are appreciated!

Kind regards, P

Kampmeeting 2008.

“Rejuvenation”

The annual SDA Kinship Australia Kampmeeting took place over the weekend of 3-5 October 2008 at Lismore, in northern New South Wales, a city of about 25,000 people located 700 km north of Sydney. Our meeting place was Invercauld House, the conference centre attached to the Southern Cross University, set in beautiful bushland on the outskirts of Lismore. There were a number of us who met for the weekend and included Kinship members from Melbourne in the south, Sydney in the centre and the Sunshine Coast north of Brisbane. We all stayed in one large apartment near the university and enjoyed the fellowship created by a common spiritual heritage.

The tone was set on Friday evening when David Coltheart presented a devotional on the closing scenes in the life of Christ, taking lessons from the last three converts Jesus made on this way to the cross: Simon of Cyrene, the dying thief and the Roman centurion. Each person was given a large, rusty nail, representing our sin and guilt, which they then symbolically laid at the foot of the cross to represent the forgiveness provided by God's grace.

On Sabbath morning, Dr Arthur Patrick, a retired lecturer from Avondale College, was our guest speaker. Though not part of Kinship, he expressed his personal desire to reach out to our community in an attempt to minister to the needs of GLBTI individuals. He reviewed the history of the church over the last 2000 years with regard to attitudes towards women, sexuality in general and Homosexuality in particular. In looking at SDA history, he suggested that the same attitudes prevail about the ordination of women, as do the attitudes towards GLBTI relationships. The same presuppositions and often the same Bible texts are used in both cases, and the people who oppose the one are generally also the same people who oppose the other. He reviewed the SDA literature in on GLBTI issues and also indicated some trends for the present and future.

After a splendid lunch in the dining room overlooking the swimming pool and the bush, Ian, a representative from ACON come to speak with us. ACON used to stand for "AIDS Council of New South Wales" but Ian explained that since

AIDS is no longer the focus, the name has been changed and ACON just stands alone now. The organisation offers a much broader range of services including health education, counseling and lifestyle issues. He was due to talk for only half an hour, but after he warmed to us, and we warmed to him, he stayed for nearly 2 hours talking. He opened up his own personal experience and we gained a better insight into the work of ACON.

To close the day, we watched the DVD "The Bible Tells Me So." Using interviews and location shooting, the documentary follows the story of 5 families from conservative Christian backgrounds and explores their respective problems and issues raised when one of their family members reveals their orientation. Not all the stories were happy, but that of Bishop Gene Robinson was particularly inspiring.

On Sunday we drove about 50 km into the Nightcap Range National Park located behind Lismore. We visited the spectacular Minyon Falls that plunge over the 100-metre (300 feet) escarpment into a deep gorge surrounded by lush rainforest. We walked along the track at the top of the waterfall and followed the creek into the dense bush. We ate a picnic lunch near the falls and enjoyed chatting before it was time to say goodbye and head for home.

David Coltheart.

Kampmeeting 2008





HOPE+... A Positive Documentary Click on the link here to view the trailer for a documentary called 'HOPE+: Surviving The Sentence of HIV / AIDS'. Shot on location in Russia, South Africa, Jamaica, and Chicago, this new documentary follows the lives of 4 HIV Positive individuals and their stories of hope.



Do you know?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. There are more than 30 million people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS. More than half of these people are women and children. HIV/AIDS affects everyone regardless of age, skin colour, cultural background or religion. There is no cure for AIDS. Using condoms during sex, and not sharing needles or other injecting equipment remain the most effective ways to protect yourself from HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Worldwide, sex between men and women is the main route of HIV transmission.

In Australia there are currently about 21,000 people living with HIV/AIDS.

HIV can not be transmitted by:

Insect bites

Sharing plates or cups

Ordinary daily contact with people with HIV

Kissing or hugging a HIV positive person.

How can I avoid becoming infected with HIV?

Sexual Intercourse

HIV can enter through the delicate linings of the genitals or tiny cuts and scrapes during unprotected sex with a HIV positive person.

To avoid transmission of HIV, practice

SAFER SEX:

Using a new condom and water based lubricant (eg. KY Jelly or Wetstuff) every time you have sex. This will also protect you from most other sexually transmitted infections.



What is Christmas?

It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future. It is a fervent wish that every cup overflow with blessings rich and eternal, and that every path may lead to peace. ~

Agnes M. Pharo

Metropolitan Community Church.

Please be aware of these churches in Australia. They are on the East Coast of Australia and are welcoming of all peoples. People who attend MCC often come from widely diverse Faith backgrounds as well as from no identified faith tradition.

All are Welcome.

Church's AIDS response a long struggle.

Dr Arthur Patrick Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

A Seventh-day Adventist academic has criticised the church for its inconsistent response to AIDS as he continues a worldwide 24-year study of the denomination. "The church is learning to respond to the needs of heterosexual Africans who transmit AIDS through multiple partners as it realises the extent to which Adventists are infected," said **Dr Ronald Lawson** during a colloquium at Avondale College on September 11. "However, it continues to do next to nothing about the disease in the United States because AIDS started as a male homosexual disease there." He added, "The church continues to reject both gay Adventists who put themselves at risk of contracting AIDS, as well as those who live in committed relationships, as equally promiscuous."

One of 3500 Adventist interviews **Dr Lawson** has conducted in 59 countries since 1984 was in 1990, with the president of one of the African-based divisions of the worldwide church. The resident stated that, "AIDS is not an Adventist issue," believing it was sufficient for the church to forbid sexual promiscuity. **Dr Lawson** describes the division's Adventist hospitals--which he visited in the late 1980s--as having a "cavalier" attitude to the risk of spreading the contagion by using untested blood supplies and reusing needles. He says he has no doubts the president's lack of interest contributed to this attitude. The president "also ignored the fact that thousands of new members were pouring into the church there, and he could not speak of their sexual habits before their baptism."

That same year in Washington, DC, at the first Adventist conference focused on AIDS, **Dr Fritz Guy** observed that responding to AIDS would be a natural reaction for Adventists, "because we claim that healing and caring are part of our mission, and because a sexually transmitted disease is immediately relevant to our understanding of the wholeness of man."

AIDS was first diagnosed in 1981. **Dr Lawson** described Adventism's long struggle, in the United States and Africa, since that time to develop coherent responses. At first AIDS appeared to be a male homosexual disease, so some church leaders suggested it was "God's judgment on willful sinners and a sign that the end of the world is imminent." Even the medical

centre at the church's Loma Linda University (California, USA) was loath to treat AIDS patients because of the "fear of infection, moral disgust with the patients and risk of financial problems attendant on providing care for patients who often lacked medical insurance."

Dr Lawson recounted the difficulties encountered by the worldwide church's AIDS Committee, formed in 1987, and Adventist AIDS activists such as Eunice Diaz and **Dr Harvey Elder**. "An Adventist AIDS conference in Harare in 2003 represented a turning point, at least in acknowledging that Adventism had been slow to respond to the epidemic, that many Adventists were infected, and that those who had contracted the disease frequently faced stigmatisation in their churches," **Dr Lawson** noted.

Dr Lawson helped found the Queensland University Seventh-day Adventist Students Society (QUSDAS) and returned to Australia in August this year for a QUSDAS reunion, to conduct additional interviews and to fill speaking appointments. Other topics he covered during his visit reflected his studies of Adventist mission in animist societies, the pastoral care of homosexual Adventists, and the growth patterns of three North American religious groups that are now world religions--Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.

Dr Lawson graduated from the University of Queensland (PhD, history and sociology, 1970). Since 1977, he has been a professor of sociology in Queens College, City University of New York.

Tag: **Dr Arthur Patrick** is an honorary senior research fellow at Avondale College.

Kinship Australia Wishes all People a Blessed

Christmas Season.



The Book of the decade is out.

Kampmeeting

Australian Kampmeeting will be September 2009 in Sydney, NSW. The theme for Our conference is "Incurably Gay and SDA." Check our events page for the details.

WE think you will be surprised at the level of speakers for this year 2009. So come and be part of it.

Fair Days. Sydney and Brisbane respectfully.

My Son, Beloved Stranger

By Carrol Grady

This excellent book has been reprinted with an added epilogue. This is a great book to have in your library and to have extra copies to give to parents, pastors, friends and anyone else who deals with having a loved one come out to them.

Open Heart, Open Hand

Three conversations about homosexuality and the family—a life and death matter. Introduced by Dr David Larson, a professor with the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University, this new resource features interviews with Adventist parents of gay and lesbian people.

Support for the Parents of Gay/Lesbian Adventists

Someone to Talk to.... Carrol Grady (Aka Kate McLaughlin My Son, Beloved Stranger),
Coordinator.

Web-Site <http://www.someone-to-talk-to.net>

P-flag Australia For parents and friends of GLBT people
Web site: www.pflag.org.au

Associations of Kinship around the World
SDA KINSHIP INTERNATIONAL
www.sdakinship.org

SDA KINSHIP AUSTRALIA - Principal Office:
P O Box 8097
Maroochydore DC 4558, Queensland Australia.
www.sdakinshipaustralia.org

MEMBERSHIP FOR KINSHIP IN AUSTRALIA IS WELCOME.

Membership is **FREE** in Australia, but relies on donations, to reach out to other people within the GLBTI community.

Finally: Should enlightenment be easy? It is not! We have spent the whole of time that ever was, upon the way.

Articles in this News Letter are not necessarily Kinships view: Contributions to this news letter are welcomed and encouraged. (The Newsletter One to One has been prepared by N Thorpe --- Coordinator.)