



Building Safe Places

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Newsletter

July 2016

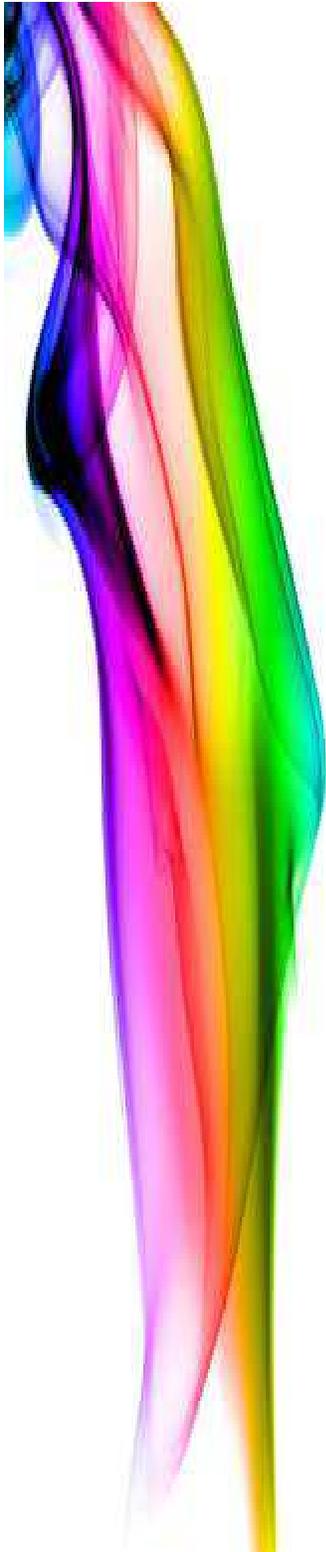
Ellen G. White,
Desire of Ages
page 353

Christ himself did not suppress one word of truth but He spoke it always in love.

He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful kind attention in His intercourse with the people.

He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul.

He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in his voice.



Dear Colleagues

In February and March, we participated in three Building Safe Places—for Everyone meetings: one in the western United States and two in Europe. This year the requests from both continents included a study of the Bible and theology around LGBTI issues and the development of tools for building bridges with our Adventist congregational and educational communities..

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The team support group in Europe is comprised primarily of present and former conference and union leaders. This year our meeting was essentially a biblical–theological *think tank*. Instead of presenting papers or Powerpoint© presentations and receiving responses, this group spent two days, using a narrative-based discussion, sharing their developing understandings of the character of God, the nature of humanity, our qualities as a community, and the lenses through which we understand the Bible.

Reinder Bruinsma shared two biblical and theological presentations with the Local Wisdom group later in the week. They used this information and a training on bridge building to build models for working with congregations and communities based on understandings of grief during transition times, human development, communication patterns, and Jesus’ way of working with others.

We were reminded during the meetings that we humans get confused about the differences between sex, gender, and orientation. As a possible help, we’ve included a description of those continua in our Resource section. You can find other information on our website.

Because many LGBTI youth from religious backgrounds experience times of self-harm and suicidality, we’ve included a fact list and

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refer you to the Trevor Project (Trevorproject.org) and It Gets Better (itgetsbetter.org).

In **Voices of God and the Church**, John McLarty and Kent Hansen have shared their views of leadership.

We're continuing our series of "Alphabetical" **Research** around brain and biology as it relates to sex, gender, and orientation. We've also included some recent research on health issues in the LGBTI community.

In **Voices of the Heart**, we are continuing Jerry McKay's story of his journey.

As always, you are most welcome to share this newsletter with anyone you think would enjoy and/or benefit from it. If you have questions or comments, we look forward to hearing from you. Our address is info@buildingsafeplaces.org.

We wish you many blessings,

Catherine Taylor

and the Building Safe Places Team:
Frieder Schmid, Ingrid Schmid, Dave Ferguson,
Floyd Pönitz, and Ruud Kieboom.



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In this month's issue

There is Hope **Page 6**

AWA (Adventistischer Wissenschaftlicher Arbeitskreis e.V.) met March 18-20, 2016, for its spring meeting in the Frankfurt/Main Seventh-day Adventist Church. AWA (<http://www.awa-info.eu>), much like *Adventist Forum*, covers a variety of subjects that are of interest to the church in Germany. The topic and focus of this year's conference were "Homosexuality: A subject for the Adventist church? Is our church a safe place for all people?"

My People **Page 10**

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Authentic Authority **Page 14**

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Recent Research **Page 20**

Under Western law, doctors glance at the genitals of a newborn and pronounce it either male or female. Transsexual men and women then are stuck with the label of the sex they were assigned at birth whether or not it matches their brain function.

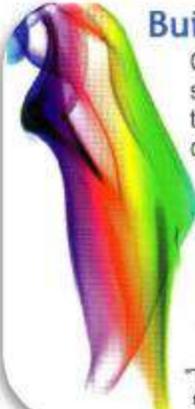
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Resources
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Biological sex includes external genitalia, internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex characteristics such as breasts, facial and body hair, and fat distribution. These characteristics are objective in that they can be seen and measured (with appropriate technology). Although the majority of human beings likely cluster somewhere near one of the two ends of this continuum, humans are represented across the entire continuum.

My Journey (VI)
Awareness of My
Orientation
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My orientation continued to manifest on a daily basis, and there were times when it intruded noticeably. As in high school, it sometimes caused me to modify my behavior. Four examples have stayed with me all these years.



Building Safe Places—For Everyone
Creating conversations to help us better understand and care for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in our congregations, our communities, and our lives.

Educational newsletter, small-group meetings, multidisciplinary trainings, multimedia resources.

For questions, requests, concerns, and contacts:
Info@buildingsafeplaces.org

"The last message to this world is a message of God's love, a revelation of His love." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 415

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Visions of God and the Church [1]

Title



By Floyd Pönitz

**A Report of
the AWA Meeting in
Frankfurt, Germany**

AWA (Adventistischer Wissenschaftlicher Arbeitskreis e.V.) met March 18-20, 2016, for its spring meeting in the Frankfurt/Main Seventh-day Adventist Church. AWA (<http://www.awa-info.eu>), much like *Adventist Forum*, covers a variety of subjects that are of interest to the church in Germany. The topic and focus of this year's conference were "Homosexuality: A subject for the Adventist church? Is our church a safe place for all people?"

The week before, I had been a co-facilitator at a similar conference called *Building Safe Places (BSP)* (<http://www.buildingsafeplaces.org>), which was held just a few kilometers south of Frankfurt and is sponsored by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. BSP is designed for Seventh-day Adventist pastors and leaders to discuss how to make their churches a safe place for LGBTI+ as well as other members who are seen as on the margins of the church.

Frieder Schmid (retired pastor and conference president, also an AWA board member) invited me to be a part of the AWA conference and to share my story with the conference attendees as well as to tell a bit more about Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, an organization that has provided a safe community for LGBT+ Adventists since 1976. I happily agreed.

On Friday night, the conference was opened and the Sabbath was greeted by Walter Bromba, the president of AWA. Frieder Schmid gave an overview of the subject that was going to be examined; and Dr. Rolf Pöhler from Friedensau University presented the topic, *Between Quoting Scripture and Zeitgeist*.

On Sabbath morning, the Frankfurt Seventh-day Adventist Church was filled to capacity and extra chairs were added to accommodate more seating. Dr. Rolf Pöhler brought the

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Walter Bromba
AWA President



Pastor Frieder Schmid
AWA board member



Dr. Rolf J. Pöhler
Friendensau University

powerful message, “The Radical Jesus,” bringing home the message that Jesus proclaimed a theology of inclusion. It was interesting that this conference was taking place on the heels of the General Conference President Ted Wilson’s visit to Frankfurt just the week before to get the German unions to declare that they were on board with the church’s official statements, especially regarding women’s ordination. This AWA meeting was such a dichotomy to what Elder Ted Wilson was seeking to accomplish—free thinking as opposed to the uniformity that Elder Wilson was asking for. In contrast to the Cape Town conference a few years ago, this was a chance for the AWA members to dialog **with** those who identify as LGBT+ instead of only dialoging **about** them.

Sabbath afternoon, Dr. Michael Pearson, retired Newbold professor, presented *An Historical Look Back* on the subject of homosexuality in society and the challenges the Seventh-day Adventist church has had on this subject, including the formation of the supportive organization, Seventh-day Adventist Kinship, the change ministry of Colin Cook and his exposure, to present-day challenges facing the church, including same-sex marriage.

Afterward, Tanja Koppers and René Tuchtenhagen, local Kinship Germany members, told their stories of how they were rejected by their former local congregations once it was found out that they were gay and had a same-sex partner. These were very emotional accounts to listen to; but, fortunately, they both had positive endings and they are both still members of the local Frankfurt congregation and very much accepted and integrated into the church family.

Then I had a chance to relate my own story of growing up in a God-loving, conservative German Adventist family in south Texas, about realizing that I was “different,” and my challenge to discover what that actually meant and my quest to take God at His word. This included my marriage and divorce and journey to learn to accept myself as a gay

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Dr. Michael Pearson

man and an Adventist Christian. Fortunately, my story, too, has a positive ending, with me now married to my soulmate and still able to attend my local church.

These three stories were very touching and had an impact on the audience. Afterward, there was time for the audience to talk to us and to ask more questions to clarify what they had just heard about instances of pastors not handling the situation of being presented with these circumstances very well at all. Everyone hoped that a pastor would handle such situations much more compassionately.

On Sunday morning, Dr. Michael Pearson again spoke and presented the attendees with *Church as a Safe Place*. Some of his main points were:

Faith, Truth, and Gifts Are to Be Found on the Margins; Strangers Bring the Gifts We Need, Not The Ones We Want; and, finally, If the Church Is Not a Safe Place for Homosexuals, It Is Not a Safe Place for Anyone.

Dr. Pearson suggested that we abandon the old concepts of conservative and liberal and strive for **truthfulness**. We create a flourishing community of faith when we have a diversity of gifts. Is our church courageous enough to have these needed conversations or will it continue to break the 9th commandment?

Afterward, there was a panel discussion where the attendees were able to ask questions of those who had presented over the weekend. It was quite obvious that this is a topic that folks want to discuss openly and are seeking honest answers. It is a topic that can no longer be swept under the carpet and ignored in any part of the world if the church intends to remain relevant.

As a side note, the Sabbath morning AWA Conference offering was equally divided between the local host church and Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International to support the mission of the organization to be a safe place for those members who are LGBT+ and are being marginalized.

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I am very proud that AWA choose this subject as its focus for this conference, and I truly see that things are slowly changing for the better from the grass roots and local congregation levels. There is hope for our church.



Adventist Church & Office Frankfurt/Main



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Visions of God and the Church [2]

My People



By John McLarty –

**Pastor John McLarty pastors
the Green Lake Church in
Seattle, Washington, USA**

No. I will not. Don't bother asking. I will not do it. I know what the rule book says. I know about tradition. I know all the Bible texts. I know those who are urging me to do it speak from long-standing, venerable conviction. I understand all that. But I will not do it. I will not shut the door on my kids. I will not say to any of them, "not my people."

Over the decades, my parish has included adults who never left diapers, never mastered language, and were never baptized. Still, they are my children. If they go to hell, I'll go with them. If heaven has no place for them, I have no interest in heaven. How could any place be paradise if my children were excluded because they could not master the required tasks, could not obtain the required credentials?

My parish has included people who were abused beneath religious art hanging on the wall and in the kitchens of people employed by the church. The lingering effects of that abuse created barriers to the kind of faith we rightly celebrate. These victims of abuse are not "model Christians." But surely you do not imagine that I would add the final word of abuse: "not my people." "Not welcome here."

I have also known in the wide circle of the holy family called church, abusers. Men and women who grievously mistreated children, sexually and otherwise. Some have rightly gone to prison. They break my heart, these misshapen sons and daughters of God who damaged youngsters. I sometimes wish I did not know them, had not seen their faces knowing their deeds. You might imagine that I could justify disowning these abusers because I know and love their victims, but I refuse. They are all mine.

My circle includes physicians who have lost their licenses and maybe their minds and certainly the religion of their childhood. And would you have me disown them now?

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Now, when they most need a home they cannot lose? Now, when they need to be carried after decades of carrying? They may not be safe for patients, so their licenses had to go. I get that. But really, do you think I would add that last damning word: You are not one of us? Don't ask me to say it. I won't.

My congregation includes biblical scholars, theologians, and scientists who are compelled by their study to dissent from some point or another of the Adventist creed. Their childhoods, educations, grandparents and cousins, and core religious identities are all Adventist. When I was younger these were first my teachers, then my sisters and brothers. Now, increasingly, they are my children. Do you think that I, with my own deep roots in this community, could add my voice to the shrill denunciations? Can you imagine that I would join the chorus of ostracism? You know I won't. I can't.

If you've tracked with me this far, come a little farther. What about my children who wrestle with questions of gender identity and sexual orientation? I will speak of men because I know their stories better. When one of my sons is born gay, would you have me pronounce the word of excommunication or disfellowshipment: Not my people?



Have you listened to his story? Have you heard of his relentless, desperate search for a cure? Have you felt the pain of fasting and visits to psychiatrists and Christian “change specialists”? Have you felt their desperate hope after being anointed, surely this time, finally, God will say yes to their lifelong prayer and make them like other men? Have you sat with them in that moment of suspense, at the apex of the arc of hope, afraid to wonder if it's up or down from here? Cured? Then the crushing, withering realization. God said no. Maybe hearing all the details of these stories, after you have cried with them, you will still be able to summon the religious zeal to pronounce the verdict of excommunication. I cannot. I won't.

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The official policy of our denomination requires us to welcome homosexuals on the condition they pledge celibacy or come among us only as visitors. The requirement of eternal celibacy is a prescription almost as cruel as the now discredited prescriptions for “change.” There are individuals for whom this is possible. There are individuals, heterosexual and homosexual, for whom this is God's calling. But the denominational policy was voted by groups of old men who have been married for decades. They were voting to impose on others a burden they would have never contemplated for even a minute carrying themselves. For most of us a prescription of lifelong celibacy is as realistic as running barefoot up Mt. Rainier in shorts and a T-shirt. We won't deny that it's possible, just that the possibility excludes us and all our friends and children.



So I will not say it. I will not exclude from the welcome table of Jesus, my children who are gay. I will not impose on them a burden that I would never even consider carrying myself. I am personally committed to warmly welcoming my gay children, requiring of them the same kind of sexual continence we expect of one another—faithfulness.

I invite the members of this congregation to come stand with me in welcoming those whose sexual and gender identities are irregular.

We celebrate the human ideal pictured in the Genesis creation stories: a man and a woman forever together in a happy union that produces children. In a perfect world, this is how people would live. We also join God compassionate accommodation to the realities of this world. Already in Genesis, not every union of man and woman is happy. Not every union is monogamous. And so it is in our world. Not every couple has children. Not every adult marries. We do not ostracize the people who experience these departures from the ideal. We bend to less-than-ideal practical solutions for the human problems. Some relationships become so toxic divorce is better than marriage. In ancient

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times, this kind of practicality was expressed in laws regarding polygamy and levirate marriage as a way to make sure no woman was left without support and protection.

In our world, we even make allowances for single people—a category of human existence that appears nowhere in the Bible story. Everyone in the Bible was part of a household. Some of the households are crazily dysfunctional. Jacob and his four women and twelve sons and one daughter come to mind. But no one was single, not in the modern sense. No one had an apartment by himself or herself. In Seattle, forty percent of households are comprised of a single person living alone. And we welcome these single folk in the life of our church.

Still, according to the denomination's rule book, if a man is not suited for marriage in the traditional sense, we must say to that man, “pledge eternal celibacy or hear our word of excommunication: Not our people.”

I cannot do it. I will not do it.

We are an Adventist congregation. Congregations do not make doctrine; the international denominational body does that. But we do make decisions about membership. We can offer membership to our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters who are called by God to be part of the Adventist Church without demanding they meet some theoretical standard of model humanity. We can learn and grow together.

I ask you to stand with me and say to all of the children of God, **“My people. My brothers and sisters. My children. All of them.”**



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Visions of God and the Church [3]

Authentic Authority



By **Kent Hansen**

**General Counsel at Loma
Linda University Adventist
Health Sciences Center**

Readers are hungry for the truth to be spoken in their workplaces, congregations, denominational assemblies, and political institutions. They are disappointed that an opaque fog of self-interest and self-protection has descended over tangled fences of theological and political barbed wire, estranging people from their leaders and institutions.

Authority which depends on the attractiveness of our values, the authenticity of our example, the credibility of our commitments, our willingness to work with and stand by others is on the wane in a culture that prizes quick results, expedience, instant gratification, selfishness, and moral ambiguity and eschews the existence of absolute truth and moral obligation.

In such a culture, power is the cheap and easy substitute for authority. “Might” takes on moral suasion in the service of what the political and religious elites deem to be “correct,” and the rest of us are compelled, often by force of law, to change what we believe or forgo its expression except in private.

The authority vs. power conflict in the Christian community always involves a tension between the need for order and leadership (1 Cor 14:40; 1 Tim 3) and love “which does not insist on its own way” (1 Cor 13:5). Jesus instructed his followers to deal with the temptations of power by regarding leadership as a servant role, putting others first in care and support (Luke 22:26).

Servant leadership is much more than an attitude. A leader engaged in service is in the model of Christ who came to serve, not to coerce or lord his power over the people (Luke 22:27). The servant leader must remain constantly in prayer, seeking to maintain discerning authority in the balance between truth and love.

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Achieving that balance proved difficult in the church at Ephesus. False teachers plagued that congregation with what Paul described as “myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith” (Eph 1:4). The Ephesian believers struggled to attain order in worship and to receive sound gospel teaching. The aging Paul asked his protégé Timothy to remain in Ephesus to help the church community to attain stability (1 Tim 1:3).

Community, a social condition in which people are bonded by common interests, is something to which people of faith aspire. The second chapter of Acts describes the early Christian church as a community where believers spent much time together, sharing their possessions, caring for those in need, praising God, and dining together “with glad and generous hearts” (Verses 44-47).

Christians speak longingly and positively about community, but few wish to sacrifice the personal independence and possessions necessary to achieve it. Those who do are often despised as “communists” and radicals.



What did Jesus mean when he told his followers, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35)? The identifying mark of Christ-followers is the essential element of community—*agape love*—the kind of Spirit-inspired deep affection that puts the interests and well-being of others first.

Paul told Timothy that the Ephesians needed “the divine training that is known by faith” to counter the false teachers’ manipulative fables and insistence on purity of ancestry that left the people with far more questions about God than answers (1 Tim 1:4). In other words, the important point was Who one believes, rather than what one believes.

“The aim of such instruction,” wrote Paul, “is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith” (1 Tim 1:5). The love emphasized by Paul is the same

deep and caring love that Jesus said would identify his disciples.

A pure heart is a devoted heart gifted to us by God (Ps 51:10). It is a heart instructed by God and focused on worship of God (Ps 86:11). It is a heart filled with gratitude to God (Ps 86:12). The 19th Century theologian Soren Kierkegaard said, "Purity of heart is to will one thing...to know God."

The more we look at God, and place our hope in him, his purity purifies us (1 John 3:3-4). When we look at God and nothing but God, we become changed into God's likeness (2 Cor 3:18).

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt 22:36-37). He went on to say the second greatest commandment is "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:38-39). The love of God leads to the love of God's children as love for the parent leads to love for the child (1 John 4:21-5:1). And thus, community is formed in the likeness and love of God.

Paul said a good conscience was another element of agape love. Conscience is the inner voice helping us distinguish right from wrong. It was God's intention at creation he would be the voice leading us to distinguish good from evil (Gen 2:17). Adam and Eve sinned when they chose to be their own conscience rather than depend upon God's voice in matters of good and evil (Gen 3:1-7).

Jesus came to earth to lead us back to reliance on the voice of God for our salvation and life (John 10:1-18). He said to know him was to know his voice and to follow his commands (v.14). In fact, the very definition of eternal life is "to know the Father and Jesus Christ whom he sent" (John 17:3).

The glory of the cross is Jesus dying to remove any reason and any obstacle of guilt and shame between God and us so we could live a new life supplied by him (Rom 6:4-11,

Gal 2:19-20). To live that God-life is to live in peace and mercy (Gal 6:14-16).

The good conscience is the fruit of a pure heart which is a heart focused on God and filled with God. “Only God is good,” Jesus told a young leader who was looking for a formula for living that would qualify him to inherit eternal life (Luke 18:19). It makes sense then that a good conscience is one informed by God.

And if guilt and shame continue to lurk in the crevices of the heart, we need to turn toward God and not away from him “whenever our hearts condemn us, for God is greater than our hearts” and he loves us (1 John 3:20-21). He commands us to believe in Jesus Christ for our salvation and love one another (1 John 3:23). That is his antidote for condemnation—believe that Jesus has us covered and love each other without fear.

But there are many temptations of comparison and envy threatening to destroy love within the community. Paul's third element of agape love—a sincere faith—redirects our hearts away from those temptations.

Faith is famously defined in Scripture as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). An honest faith involves a realistic assessment of a fallen, broken world with conflict, doubt, and pain caused by humans, every one of us, who choose evil, doing things our own way, rather than obeying God.

There is a choice to be made, a question to be answered, after that assessment—Is exploiting each other for survival, competing for the finite resources of this earth, and struggling and failing to transcend the physical and moral weaknesses of the human condition, all there is for us? Or is there someone or something more for us beyond the confines of this earth? You can hear this question in Paul's anguished wail, “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom 7:24).

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Those who follow their longing for something more and accept with honesty that it isn't to be found on this earth are nearer than they realize to our God who is looking for us as revealed in Scripture, in Jesus, the Living Word, and in the voice of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (*See e.g.*, Luke 15).

As I am fond of quoting, "We love because God first loved us" (1 John 4:16). Looking for that God of love is what faith is all about and our faith will lead us to love.

I walk through Christian bookstore aisles filled with books on how to lead others and how to build the community within congregations and hear sermons on how to prepare to leave earth when Christ returns. I see, read, and hear precious little on Paul's point that the kingdom of God is manifest in a community whose members love one another with the kind of love only God can supply.

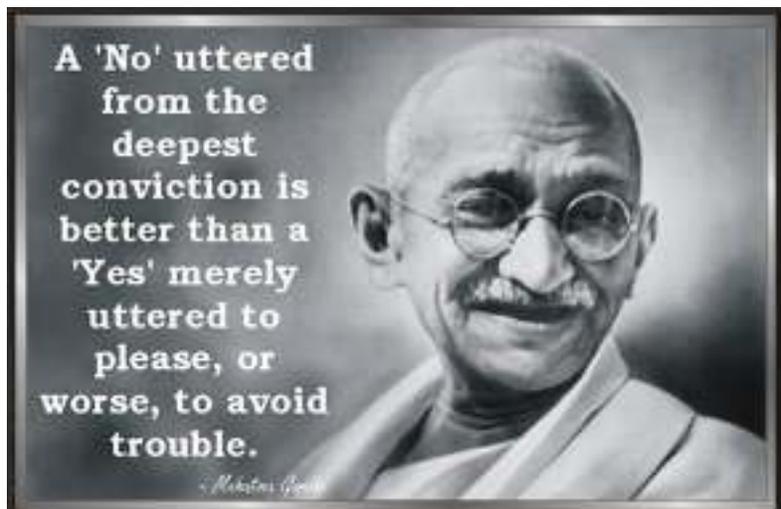
Community starts with me and you as we look to our God in devotion and worship, letting nothing of selfishness come between God and us, and looking to God for strength and wisdom to make it through today and for hope for tomorrow and eternity. A loving relationship with our God will yield a loving relationship with one another.

This takes trust and faith because we can see each other but we can't see God. John, who recognized the love of Jesus in a very unique and precious way, wrote, "No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:12).

Last week's message observed our problem of lacking honesty with each other in the places where we serve, worship and live regarding what matters most. Of course, we are disappointed with ourselves and each other in the shabby way we treat the truth and each other. But the cure is to stop trying to fix each other and ask God to have his way with us completely, trusting him to inspire our thoughts and our actions with love.

“We have met the enemy and he is us” is the famous quip of the cartoon character, Pogo. Let’s let our loving God heal our broken hearts and reconcile ourselves to him. People who know they are loved find it possible and easy to love. Please allow the Lord to love you and let his voice alone be heard in your heart. You’ll be amazed at what he can do to transform you and your relationships.

“O taste and see that the Lord is good. Happy are those who take refuge in him” (Ps 34:8).



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Recent Research

Assignment of Sex

Under Western law, doctors glance at the genitals of a newborn and pronounce it either male or female. Transsexual men and women then are stuck with the label of the sex they were assigned at birth whether or not it matches their brain function. (Feinberg, Leslie. *Transgender Warriors—Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*. p x-xii. NY: Beacon Press, 1997.)

Attraction

A female may be attracted to females if her brain's mating center was masculinized with male hormones during gestation. The female will remain feminine in behavior if the behavior center was converted by male hormones, more masculine or butch if the behavior center was not converted. (Pease, Barbara and Allan. *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps*. p 183-186. NY: Broadway Books, 1998.)

Male attraction to the female is programmed during sexual differentiation of the brain. There is now little doubt that same-sex preference may be rooted in a process that occurs during the 16th to the 26th weeks of pregnancy. (Joy, Donald M., Ph.D. *Bonding*. p 95. TX: Word Books, 1985.)

Birth order

The more older brothers a boy has, the more likely he is to be gay, thought to stem from prenatal influences such as androgen levels in the womb. (*All in the Family*. Scientific American Mind," October/November 2007. www.sciammind.com)

Bisexual

The term bisexual describes the disposition to be attracted to both sexes. The presence of bisexuality is higher among females. (LeVay, Simon and Janice Baldwin. *Human Sexuality*. p 166-180. MA: Sinauer Associates, Inc., Third Edition, 2009.)

A bisexual individual has the potential to be sexually/romantically attracted to more than one sex, but not necessarily at

the same time or to the same degree. (Baumgardner, Jennifer. *Look Both Ways—Bisexual Politics*. p 41-60. NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 2008.)

Bisexual men are often married and engage in casual sex with other males for variety. Bisexual women seek long-term relationships with members of either gender and are more likely to alternate partners. (Wilson, Glenn. *The Great Sex Divide*. p 86-87. England: Peter Owen Publishers, 1989.)

Brain

Brain imaging: Gay males and women responded to two odors (thought to be involved in sexual arousal) in the same way. Heterosexual males responded differently. (Dowd, Maureen. *Are Men Necessary?* p 152-156. NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2005.)

The preoptic anterior nucleus seems to regulate masculine brain functions (e.g., mounting in response to female signals). In humans, this area of the hypothalamus is about twice as large in males as in females. (Wilson, Glenn. *The Great Sex Divide*. p 35-36. England: Peter Owen Publishers, 1989.)

Homosexual males tend to have fewer neurons in the 3rd interstitial nuclei of the anterior hypothalamus (INAH-3) as compared to the straight male brain (but more than in the female brain). (Blum, Deborah. *Sex on the Brain*. p 42-48. NY: Penguin Books, 1997.)



The hypothalamus is the sex center. Less than an ounce in weight and about the size of a cherry, it is larger in the male brain than in the female brain or in the brains of homosexuals or transsexuals. (Pease, Barbara and Allan. *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps*. p 190-200. NY: Broadway Books, 1998.)

The anterior commissure (one of the three main bridges between the hemispheres) is 10%-12% larger in the female brain and in the brains of homosexual males. (Blum, Deborah. *Sex on the Brain*. p 45-47. NY: Penguin Books, 1997.)

The third interstitial nucleus of the anterior hypothalamus is of similar size in the brains of females and homosexual males; twice as large in heterosexual males. (Howard, Pierce J., PhD. *The Owner's Manual for the Brain*. p 223-226. GA: Bard Press, 1994, 2000.)

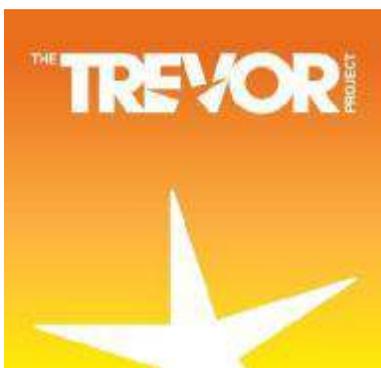
The brain areas of males and females related to sex differ. Genes create the basic template, primarily during gestation, that is acted upon by hormones. (Carter, Rita, Ed. *Mapping the Mind*. p 73. CA: University of California Press, 1998.)

The female brain is less arousable than the male brain and responds differently to visual/auditory arousal stimuli. Study: levels were higher in males than females after viewing an erotic film. Influenced by testosterone, norepinephrine tends to rise with hyperactivity, euphoria, self-assertion, and aggressiveness. (Durden-Smith, Jo, and Diane deSimone. *Sex and the Brain*. p 243-254. NY: Arbor House Publishing, 1983.)

Homosexual males: the anterior commissure is larger (than in heterosexual males) and is about the size of that in the brains of heterosexual females. (Baron-Cohen, Simon, Dr. *The Essential Difference: The Truth About the Male and Female Brain*. p 111. NY: Basic Books, 2003.)

Facts about Suicide – The Trevor Project

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24. [1]
- LGB youth are 4 times more likely, and questioning youth are 3 times more likely, to attempt suicide as their straight peers. [2]
- Suicide attempts by LGB youth and questioning youth are 4 to 6 times more likely to result in injury, poisoning, or overdose that requires treatment from a doctor or nurse, compared to their straight peers. [3]
- Nearly half of young transgender people have seriously thought about taking their lives, and one-quarter report having made a suicide attempt. [4]



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- LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection. [5]
- 1 out of 6 students nationwide (grades 9-12) seriously considered suicide in the past year. [6]
- Each episode of LGBT victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior by 2.5 times on average. [7]

Sources

[1] CDC, NCIPC. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2010) {2013 Aug. 1}. Available from: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars.

[2] CDC. (2011). Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[3] CDC. (2011). Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[4] Grossman, A.H. & D'Augelli, A.R. (2007). Transgender Youth and Life-Threatening Behaviors. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviors*.37(5), 527-37.

[5] Family Acceptance Project™. (2009). Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults. *Pediatrics*. 123(1), 346-52.

[6] CDC. (2011). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2011. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[7] IMPACT. (2010). Mental health disorders, psychological distress, and suicidality in a diverse sample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths. *American Journal of Public Health*. 100(12), 2426-3.



Resources

Four Sex-Gender Continuums

This portrays some of the current terminology and continuum illustrations that presently exist.

It is foundational information and not designed to exhibit a theological or religious perspective.

1. Biological Sex



Biological sex includes external genitalia, internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex characteristics such as breasts, facial and body hair, and fat distribution. These characteristics are objective in that they can be seen and measured (with appropriate technology). Although the majority of human beings likely cluster somewhere near one of the two ends of this continuum, humans are represented across the entire continuum.

For example, the more central points represent intersex individuals (formerly labeled as hermaphrodites), who have combinations of both typical male and female characteristics. These individuals may have both a testis and an ovary, or have XY chromosomes (the usual male pattern) along with a vagina, or exhibit features that are not completely male or completely female (e.g., possess a body organ that could be thought of as a small penis or as a large clitoris, or have an XXY or XXXY or XXXXY chromosomal pattern).

2. Gender Identity



Gender identity encompasses the way in which human beings think of and identify themselves. Unlike biological

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sex, gender identity is a psychological perception. It cannot be observed or measured—at least by current means—and must be self-identified and reported by the individual. Like biological sex, it consists of more than two categories. Those who identify as a third gender, both, or neither, fall in the middle range of the continuum.

Language is lacking for the more central points of the continuum because all individuals are expected to identify unequivocally with one of the two extremes. Using empathizing (equated with the female brain) and systemizing (equated with the male brain) terminology, no one is 100% of either. Even the extreme female brain has some systemizing abilities and the extreme male brain has some empathizing abilities. However, some individuals, fearing that having both masculine and feminine aspects of their psyches is abnormal, seek to purge themselves of one or the other aspect by acting in exaggerated and sex-stereotypical ways.

3. Gender Expression



Gender expression involves everything that human beings do to communicate their sex or gender to others: clothing, hair styles, mannerisms, way of speaking, roles taken in interactions, et cetera. This communication may be conscious and purposeful or subconscious and accidental. It could also be called *social gender* because it relates to interactions between people. Trappings of one gender or the other may be forced on individuals as children or by dress codes at school/church or through guidelines and expectations in the workplace.

Gender expression is also a continuum, with so-called feminine characteristics at one end and masculine characteristics at the other. Individuals who are androgynous (neither masculine nor feminine) and those that combine elements of the two (sometimes called gender-bending) are plotted along the central range. Although

gender expression can vary for an individual from day to day or in differing situations, most people can identify with a point on the continuum where they sense they belong innately and feel most comfortable. It is also acknowledged that some individuals appear comfortable exhibiting a wider range of gender expression than others.

4. Sexual Orientation

Attracted to Females	Bisexual Asexual	Attracted to Males
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Sexual orientation describes the types of individuals to whom one is attracted romantically, erotically, and perhaps emotionally. The ends of this continuum are labeled “attracted to females” and “attracted to males,” rather than “homosexual” and “heterosexual,” to avoid confusion in discussing the concepts of sex and gender. Bisexuality (attracted to both males and females) and asexuality (attracted to neither males nor females) fall somewhere in the middle of this continuum.

The concept that individuals fall into one of the two extreme categories (whether they are straight or gay), with only a tiny minority being plotted across the continuum, appears to be invalid. Kinsey’s work showed that most human beings are not at one extreme or the other. Rather, they occupy points along the continuum (although there are clusters at either end). Studies have also shown that depending on environmental circumstances (e.g., available options, the partner is pregnant, cultural or religious expectations of being a “virgin” at the time of marriage or of celibacy, incarceration), at least, some individuals seem able to move back and forth along the continuum quite easily. Others cannot.

Additional Comments

The four continuums are independent illustrations. The cultural expectation is that males occupy the right extremes of all four continuums (male, masculine, attracted to females) while females occupy the left extreme (female, feminine, attracted to males). But an individual with male anatomy might be attracted to males (gay male) rather than

to females, or could have a gender identity of female (transsexual) or could have a feminine gender expression on occasion (cross dresser). And an individual with female anatomy might identify as a female but have a somewhat masculine gender expression and be attracted to females (butch lesbian). It's a mix-and-match world and there are as many combinations as there are individuals on the planet.

For each continuum, the popular notion that there are two distinct categories, with everyone falling neatly into one or the other, is a social construct. The real world (*nature*, if you will) does not observe these boundaries. Looking at what actually exists, while there are clusters near each end of the continuum, few people are actually at either extreme end, and individuals are represented at every point along the continuum.

Gender identity and sexual orientation have been found resistant to change. Although there are not yet definitive answers to whether these are due to genetics, epigenetics, or a combination of both, they are established very early in life, possibly during gestation, and there are no reliable methods that have been proven effective for changing either identity or orientation. Some factors that compose biological sex can be changed, with more or less difficulty. These changes are not limited to people who change their sex. Many females undergo breast enlargement, which moves them toward the extreme female end of the continuum while some males opt for penile implants or enlargement to enhance their maleness. Gender expression is quite flexible for some people and more rigid for others. Most people feel strongly about having the freedom to express themselves in ways that are consistent with their inner gender identity and experience some discomfort when prevented from doing so.

Because every brain on the planet is unique, these continuums cannot reflect the complexity of absolute "reality," but likely they are closer than the old two-box

system. Each of the four continuums could be divided into several smaller representations. For instance, **Biological Sex** could be separated into representations for external genitalia, internal reproductive organs, hormone levels, chromosome patterns, and so forth. An individual would probably not fall on the same place on each of these because **Biological Sex** is a summary of scores for several variables.

Additional Note

Chromosomal combinations exist that don't fit anywhere on a continuum. Some people have neither the XX (typical female) chromosomal pattern nor the XY pattern typical of males. But it is unclear whether or not other patterns (e.g., X or XO, XXY or XXXY) belong on the continuum between XX and XY or require separate continuums. Furthermore, although portrayed as independent, continuums may not be entirely separate. For example, if a biological component for gender identity and sexual orientation is identified, then identity and orientation may overlap with the biological sex continuum.

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Stories of the Heart

Journey Part VI Awareness of My Orientation



Jerry McKay

My orientation continued to manifest on a daily basis, and there were times when it intruded noticeably. As in high school, it sometimes caused me to modify my behavior. Four examples have stayed with me all these years.

But before I continue, I feel it's important to reiterate that, even though I can now write about these situations with a high degree of awareness, at the time I still had not named my experience. I did not identify as homosexual or gay. I was, however, growing increasingly aware of how differently I experienced the world compared to my male friends.

My first example, although a simple one, involved my living arrangements and my roommate whom I will call Rick.

Although our apartment was spacious, we shared one small bedroom with two small beds. Throughout the year, I was as discreet and stealthy about dressing and undressing as I could be. It helped that I could use the washroom and shower in private. I think Rick was surprised at how quickly I could undress and get into bed. Often, by the time he came back from a trip to the bathroom, I was already curled up in bed and facing the wall!

Although I am a bit bashful, my motivation for being so speedy was not about ensuring my privacy but about decreasing my stress over seeing Rick in some state of undress. While that was not always possible, it worked well for me. Perhaps too well because years later, after learning of my orientation, Rick commented on how overly discreet I had been around the apartment. Again, by overcompensating because of my orientation, I had drawn attention to myself.

Before moving to my second example, I want to mention an intuitive observation on the part of my roommate. I was surprised to learn, in a recent conversation with Rick, that he felt I had mood swings during the year. Mood swings! I

had never heard anyone say that of me before. He told me that I seemed, “low for a long period during the winter and came out of it in spring.”

That he picked up on this impressed me. My orientation always took me down a notch or two emotionally. I didn’t set out to hide my mood changes, but doing so had become second nature. In truth, I was very much out of touch with my emotions. Low-level depression and sadness were always present.

My second example specifically involves bathing – this time with a Japanese twist.

However discreet I was in our apartment, fate would not let me escape being naked with others in public. I still had to contend with the occasional visit to the *sen*to -- the communal bath house. If you haven't experienced a *sen*to, check one out on YouTube. Nothing boosts stress like scrubbing down surrounded by male colleagues and strangers while being attracted to the male body.



At the *sen*to, everyone sits along the wall on little stools – naked, of course. Although you have your own faucet to work from, all bathing business is done in public. Once you've scrubbed and rinsed, you can join whomever you like in the various pools of water -- hot, warm, or cold. You have to leave your little washcloth on the rim of the pool before climbing in. As a result, naked men were continually climbing in and out of the pools in front of me. If you don't like walking about naked, you can use your washcloth to cover up. That was my preference. It was not everyone's practice, however.

On occasion, we were invited to join a student at the local bath house for this cultural experience. I didn’t mind the cultural part of the experience, but it was still awkward for me. On other occasions, when on a school-sponsored ski trip, summer camp, or teacher’s retreat, public bathing was often the only option. On those occasions, going to the *sen*to meant I would be surrounded by naked students,

naked colleagues, occasionally a naked boss, and, of course, my naked roommate.

In general, I didn't have much difficulty with the over-sixty crowd. (I can say that, now that I've arrived there myself!) Those around my age, however, were more of a challenge. Whether they were stark naked or hiding things behind their towelettes, there was still too much maleness around for me not to notice. You can avert your gaze only so often in a *sentō* before stumbling into someone or something.

As I have already said in various ways, I was attracted to the whole person not just what was behind a strategically placed washcloth. Many times, it would have been far less distracting if a bather had just put a bag over his head. I could become preoccupied with a man's eyes. A killer smile could make me weak in the knees faster than an exposed groin. Those who don't know homosexual men and women well might dismiss the power of a beautiful smile as it relates to orientation. It is no less significant for us than it is in heterosexual attraction.

As always, I didn't understand why. With every desire to look or be close came memories of Honolulu. I was afraid I might look at someone too often. It is difficult to explain how tiring it was to be attracted to people and constantly trying to look at them while looking through them.

During those moments of preoccupation with the male form, however, plotting how to secure sexual intimacies was far from my mind. All I wanted was to be closer to the one who had captured my attention. Of course, as a fair-haired foreigner, others were peeking at me, too.

Because of my hyper-awareness, I never enjoyed the *sentō* experience as I could have. Many times, as I did at school, I went to the *sentō* earlier or later than most. Doing so reduced the visual stimulation, but it also meant I was cheated out of the hottest water. Often, I wished I could have joined the women. I never became preoccupied with a woman's



**Jerry on a visit to
Japan recently**

eyes or smile, and I never had the nagging desire to visually explore their bodies. Again, I could not have explained why.

My next example, while a bit odd, illustrates the kinds of things I told myself in response to events around me.

During a pep talk at a teacher's retreat, an associate with the language schools for the Far East made it a point to remind us that, while we were surrounded by Toyotas, "the Cadillacs" were back home!

Except for the Amerocentric overtones in his comment, we got the message. He was asking us not to date. He didn't want the guys bringing Japanese girlfriends back to North America or the girls settling down with a Japanese man. My internal dialogue was revealing.

No sooner had his comment registered than I said to myself, "Don't worry. That's not going to be a problem for me." The response was so immediate and forceful that it startled me. I knew intuitively there wasn't the slightest possibility of my falling in love with a Japanese girl.

While this incident was not as jarring as when Perry made his subcutaneous-fat comment, it bothered me nonetheless. It reminded me again of what I did *not* feel and who I was *not* attracted to. Japanese women weren't going to be a problem because I was drawn to the men.

Although I tried to shrug off the implications of my response, I was haunted by them and they triggered all those why questions. All I could do was stress over them later in prayer.

Despite the angst that little event created, the pep talk had a hidden bonus. Knowing we were not expected to date for the year took the heat off that area of my life. Not surprisingly, I shone in the no-dating arena. Unlike the great Ulysses, however, some teachers did not have the option of being tied to the mast of their ship and therefore could not resist the song of a Toyota or two.

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Later in the year, an up-close-and-personal incident captured another place in my memory.

As in many Asian cultures, the public expression of affection between men is not frowned upon as it is in North America. Boys and young men, like women, can be seen showing affection—holding hands, for example. Once friendships have developed, even foreigners might experience the same expression of affection.

As was often the case, one evening after classes, students and teachers were hanging out in the school office. I was sitting on a small bench with a male student beside me. We were about the same age and had developed a good rapport. While joking and laughing with the others in the room, he matter-of-factly put his left leg over my right leg, entangled his arm around mine and rested his head on my shoulder. I froze like a deer caught in headlights.

No one else seemed to bat an eye, but I became hyper aware of my feelings – again. His expression of friendship was appreciated, but it sent that familiar rush of anxiety through my body. Because I was good at hiding my reactions, any discomfort on my part was obscured.

An event which would mean little to most people, and would have been received with an air of normality otherwise, distressed me. It touched that part of me I was trying so hard to ignore. That momentary event burned into my memory because I knew I liked his playful affection more than anyone in the room realized and that I secretly longed for more.

By more, I don't mean I wanted to manipulate him into my bed as *You and Your Health* suggested I would. At the same time, I was nineteen going on twenty and very much touched-deprived. When a male friend touched me, I became painfully aware of it. All I wanted was for my student-friend to hold my hand a little longer and feel the warmth of his body next to mine. Had a female student done the

What about Donna & Dating



same, I would have responded with similar panic but for completely different reasons.

Although some of these examples may seem insignificant, each left me feeling abnormal and defective. Even though I had done nothing wrong, I couldn't help thinking of Paul's comments in Romans about *those* people with dishonorable passions and God's wrath. I couldn't help wondering if I might be one of those sinister people described in *You and Your Health*. As always, such thinking was demoralizing.

As I mentioned, to my relief there was to be no dating—not that year, at least. Even though I was not tempted by any Toyotas, there were plenty of opportunities. Female students, young and old, did show interest. When they did, I relied on my missionary commitments to politely ignore any advance. It always felt like I was breaking the third commandment – using the Lord's name “in vain” – to avoid being honest with others and myself.

However, I wasn't without female friendship; Donna was in Japan. The year was better with Donna there even though she was 450 km south of Tokyo. She had been sent to Himeji. With 500,000 people, Himeji was a village. Its claim to fame was Himeji castle, the largest and most beautiful castle in the country. In 1993, it was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From Himeji, we stayed in touch by letter and phone.

Being able to share our experiences only deepened our friendship. Whenever possible we would visit each other in Himeji or Tokyo. During the teacher's retreat, we were inseparable. When together, we constantly talked about God and faith. We did everything together – except share any intimacy.

To say we had decided to keep our friendship platonic would have been false. Despite the numerous opportunities available to us, there was never a hint of temptation on my part to even hold Donna's hand. I'm quite sure I could have. It

wasn't for a lack of desire for intimacy that kept my intentions pure. It is just that when there is not an ounce of sexual interest seeking expression, it is easy to spend inordinate amounts of time in very private settings and have nothing happen.

If our relationship was ambiguous, it wasn't Donna's fault. She did indicate interest in subtle ways, and I knew it. I just couldn't reciprocate.

One of the ways Donna indicated interested was with a 125-page 4x6 book of poems and photographs she made for me. The first page simply says: "To Jerry: Who is my friend." Several of the poems, she had written. All of the photographs were taken during that year. Not surprisingly, I made several appearances in the book.



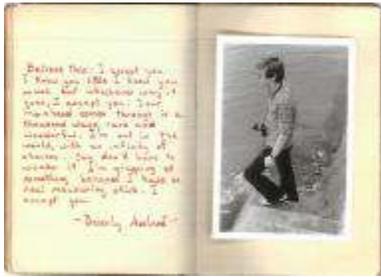
My first appearance was a picture of me taking a picture. On the accompanying page, she had copied a two-sentence poem by Martin Benson called *Photo*. It read: *The young man sat while the camera gunned him down. Now he lies in the tomb of remembrance.*

The second photo was of a letter I had written earlier in the year. While the paper and ink revealed nothing significant, the poem *Friendship of the Mind* said more.

*For days and weeks, no words have passed.
For time gone on I have not seen you.
Though this absence the gift of friendship could have died.
But for me, I need not to always speak and see
Because for you, my friend, cannot friendship grow in the mind?*

The last entry in the book was a photo of me standing at the base of a set of concrete steps leading into Japan's Inland Sea. While you can't see the sea, I was pensively looking out across the water. On the opposite page was the poem by Beverly Axelrod – **Believe this: I accept you.**

I know you little, I know you much,



*but whichever way it goes, I accept you.
Your manhood comes through in a thousand ways,
rare and wonderful.
I'm out in the world, with an infinity of choices.
You don't have to wonder if I'm grasping at something
because I have no real measuring stick. I accept you.*

When Donna gave me this gift, she knew nothing of my orientation. She could not have known how meaningful and prophetic her last entry would be.

Each photo and poem said something about Donna, me – us. Even though I acted as dumb as my uncle's gate post, I knew there was a message behind this gift. My response was just a reworked version of my habit of looking at people while pretending to look past or through them. This time, I looked past or through her gift because I did not want to see what was right in front of me. I can't imagine how exasperated she must have been at times. As a good Christian girl, however, she never initiated anything.

With respect to Donna, I have one anecdote involving her that sheds light on my mindset.

As a rule, Adventists don't, or didn't, play cards for the same reasons most conservative-leaning denominations frowned on the practice. Adventist young people did play Rook, or as it is often called, "Christian cards," It was a popular game in the men's dorm, but I seldom played. If, as I thought, "regular" card playing was a tool of the devil designed to waste my time and lead me into more serious vices, why wouldn't a substitute serve the same purpose? Even though I wasn't a stickler about playing, I would rather no one played the game.

So, when Donna and I were together over Christmas and the subject of Rook, or in our case "missionary poker," came up, we had a lengthy discussion about the practice. The outcome was that she decided to give up Rook. Fortunately, her roommate had also decided to do the same while back in the United States for Christmas.

I mention this last anecdote because it illustrates my conservative state of mind at the time. If I were so tightly wound that playing Rook troubled me, you can imagine what my *dishonorable passions* were doing to me psychologically and spiritually.

When my year was up—which felt more like a month—I understood Perry's enthusiasm for Japan. Despite all of my initial apprehensions and the shadow of my ever present orientation, I did not want to leave. I loved everything about the country and the people. And Tokyo—I thrived in that immense and intense labyrinth of a city.

I was exceedingly happy living in Japan. It was far beyond anything I could have imagined and I was thankful I had agreed to go. My initial reluctance compared to the final outcome taught me a valuable lesson about making judgments. Never again would I make a decision about a place or a person based on second-hand, uninformed or pre-conceived notions. There is just too little about “the other” that I do not know on which to form such judgments.

I did not leave Japan without one final incident that made me famous among school administrators. I was the first student missionary to miss a flight home.

When I arrived at the airport check-in counter, I opened my carry-on bag to get my passport. It wasn't there. I'd left it on a desk at the school. Although someone tried rushing it to the airport, they did not arrive soon enough. Instead of traveling with my hyper-excited fellow teachers back to North America, I watched them leave without me. Nine hours later, I was on a late night flight out of Tokyo.

The half-empty flight took off in heavy rain. It was June again and rainy season. In seconds, the lights of Tokyo vanished below the clouds. I had an entire row of seats to myself making the flight that much lonelier. It was like leaving summer camp again. I think I cried for most of the flight across the Pacific. I felt as though I was being torn from a very dear friend whom I would never see again.

さよならジャパン

(Soyanara Nippon / Farewell Japan)



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