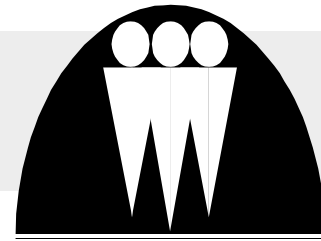


Reunion

Spring 2000

The Family Fellowship Newsletter



Issue 19

Reflecting on Diversity

John Gadd

Once in a while as we take this journey through mortality, there are events that once they are over, have you wondering: "what does it all mean?" Such a year for me was 1996. As the second semester started at school, I found Adam in my class. 1996 was the year of the East High fiasco in trying to form a gay/lesbian club. If my school had had such a club, Adam would have been the overwhelming choice for President. He was openly gay, very involved with the school and active in as many activities as he could be.

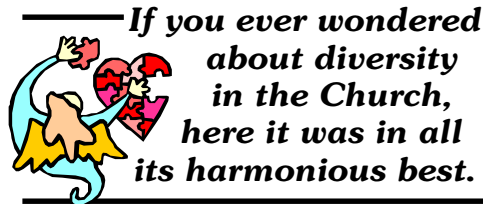
Throughout the year, Adam and I had many opportunities to discuss his standing at school. He asked me for advice on whether or not he should take his partner to the senior prom. Why, he asked, when he wanted to speak to his Bishop, did this ecclesiastical leader tell him that he did not want to see him. Adam told me that he had not left the church, but he felt that the church had left him. And why did so many people discriminate against him because he was only doing that which to him was natural for as long as he could remember. I look back on those discussions now and wonder what happened to Adam since he graduated and went to the University on a full scholarship.

Just a couple of weeks after school was over for the summer, my wife and I went to Texas to see our daughter. Once there, I had the opportunity to go home teaching with my son-in-law who was the Elders Quorum President. We went to homes of people of a different race. They were poor, lived in what we would call "projects," some could not afford a telephone and had just the bare necessities of life, and yet were trying as best they could to live the Gospel. I wondered as we visited, why were they in their circumstances, and why was I in mine. The differences were obvious and different though we might be, we all believed in the same principles and the same Gospel. In church that Sunday, the wide variety of diversity not usually found in Utah wards became obvious. All colors were there, and several languages. There were black and white families, black and yellow, brown and black, and white and brown. If you ever wondered about diversity in the Church, here it was in all its harmonious best.

We returned to Salt Lake and two days later my second daughter and I left and about twelve hours later were in England. We stayed with people whom I first met on my mission back in the late '50s, and the love and friendship, the trust and warmth was just as alive. They had

an informal party in their home that night and all the members that remembered me came over to renew friendships and talk about old times. I went to sleep that night thinking wouldn't it be wonderful if all mankind had the same experiences I had had over the past few days – all kinds of people from all backgrounds sharing one thing in common: Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

After a few days, we left our friends and took the train to London where we went to the Temple. Visiting with several missionaries who were there, we learned that it was very easy to "convert" people to the church, but these converts were not British. They were from the Caribbean Islands, India, Pakistan, etc. One of the problems the missionaries had was assimilating those new members from different countries into the church. These new members had a different accent than the standard British member, they had a different color and



background, and those obvious differences soon left them inactive and no longer feeling part of the new life they thought they had found.

Even a visit to my childhood home revealed a town taken over by other races and with that, the problems associated with someone "different" moving in to what the older, established people still considered "theirs."

It came time to fly home – London to Los Angeles. I reflected and marveled at the experiences of the past few months, what an incredible world we live in, what opportunities are ours, and what problems still are out there that need to be overcome by the human race. After all, are we not all brothers and sisters of the same Father?

Right after the American Civil War, the Republican controlled Congress with the Democratic South barred from membership, passed the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution. Their goal was to provide equal rights for a group who were "different." Because of the politics of the period, it was not long until they were worse off than before the War. It would take until Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 to right those wrongs. In the meantime, one group in particular noted for white cloaks and hoods and burning crosses, did all they could to deny basic

constitutional rights to people who may not have had any choices as to what body their spirit was placed in. And have things changed? There are still groups, with considerable financial resources who seem to be spreading the same sort of message. They give \$20,000 to \$30,000 for earthquake relief in Turkey and Taiwan, but spend millions in Hawaii and Alaska trying to impose their standards on everyone, or denying some people the freedom to choose.

It took twenty years after *Brown vs. the Board* for this same organization to allow equal membership for that group that had been fighting for basic rights certainly since 1866. I loved the letter to the editor in TIME Magazine the week after the "Mormons Inc." article. "...if God guides the Mormon church, why did it take Him so long to tell the Mormons what the rest of us already knew – that racism is wrong..." (*Time*, August 11, 1997)

I've been taught that when we die, we leave behind our earthly body with all its frailties and imperfections. With our body gone, will we recognize each other from what we look like on earth, or from what our spirits look like? Will Martin Luther King look like he did here, or will he look like what his spirit looked like before taking up its body? When we meet some of those people that we might have discriminated against on earth, in the spirit world, what will our reaction be?

It seems to me that some of those that profess to be in authority over us, need to have some experiences like I had a few years back. The world is a wonderful place, full of people who are different, who come from varied backgrounds. Our genetic background may be vastly different, and one day all this will be worked out in harmony by He who set the whole thing into motion.

My students at school wear "WWJD" bracelets (What Would Jesus Do) – and what would He do? Do people in leadership positions still have free agency? Or are they told how to do everything? I'd like to think that they, like most of us, do what they think is best and sometimes they get it wrong. It would be good for such financially blessed organizations to expend those resources furthering brotherly love, cooperation and understanding amongst all the children of our Father in Heaven instead of promoting peace and unity and love, on the one hand, and then funding projects that tell a few of God's children, "We're sorry, but we don't like you, and we don't want you to have anything in the Constitution, or Gospel that might be legally and rightfully yours."

One day when "every knee bows and every heart confesses" maybe all of us who have sins, that need repenting of, might find ourselves right along side those who currently know that they are "in the right" (and on the right), and how surprised all of us may be. 🙏

Family Fellowship is a volunteer service organization, a diverse collection of Mormon families engaged in the cause of strengthening families with homosexual members. We share our witness that gay and lesbian Mormons can be great blessings in the lives of their families, and that families can be great blessings in the lives of their gay and lesbian members. We strive to become more understanding and appreciative of each other while staying out of society's debate over homosexuality. We seek to put behind us all attitudes which are anti-family, which threaten loving relationships, and which drive family members apart. All who can support these goals are welcome to contribute to this newsletter. However, the views expressed here belong only to the individuals who express them.



Board of Directors

CHAIR

MILDRED & GARY WATTS - PROVO: 801-374-1447

VICE CHAIRS

MARV & GENEVA PETERSON - FARMINGTON: 801-451-7955

SECRETARY

JANIE BENNETT - UT

LEGAL ADVISOR

JEFF ORR

TREASURER

KEITH FROGLEY - SLC: 801-227-6720

BOARD MEMBERS

MAX & JANET BERRYESSA - UT
STEVE DUNN - UT
GLEN CALL - UT

FORMER BOARD MEMBERS

WANDA & FRED KARFORD - ID FALLS: 208-523-3786
KATHRYN STEFFENSEN - SLC: 801-485-1833
MORGAN SMITH - UT

Advisory

DUANE & KAYE JEFFERY - UT
GERRY JOHNSTON - UT
LYNETTE MALMSTROM - UT
MARYBETH RAYNES - UT
WAYNE & SANDRA SCHOW - ID

Publications

JAY BELL - UT

Newsletter Staff

TYLER YATES - UT
RICKY LOYND - WA
GRANT & EVELYN JOHNSON - ID
CLAIRE MALMSTROM - UT

Website & Mailing Lists

KIRT BECK - AK
ROGER CRANDY - AK

Regional Family Affiliates

JOAN & BILL ATKINSON - LOS ANGELES: 310-378-3938
MAC AND DIANA NIELSEN - SAN DIEGO: 619-470-7184
RENÉE & RICHARD VAN WAGONER - NORTH OGDEN:
801-786-1322
WENDY REYNOLDS - TWIN CITIES, MINNESOTA:
612-315-4360
ROBERT & LYNETTE GRAVES - WASHINGTON D.C./
NORTHERN VIRGINIA: 703-222-6608

Additional Family Affiliates

WAYNE & ARLENE COOPER - ID
ALLISON DUNN - UT
JEANINE & DELOY NELSON - ID



Love Undetectable

by Andrew Sullivan

Published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1998 ©

Andrew Sullivan is Senior editor of the *New Republic*. He addresses the AIDS epidemic, "hate the sin," gay marriage, reparative therapy, love and friendship and his own feelings of having AIDS. He takes to task both gays and Reparative therapists with skillful logic. His subtle approach and elegant style makes this an unusual and satisfying adventure. His writing about friendship is truly profound. The following excerpt while abbreviated hopefully demonstrates his smooth style.

Hate the Sin

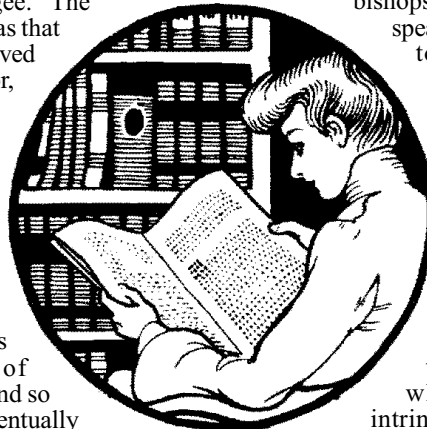
In adulthood, we found out something more complicated about the teachings of the Church. We were introduced to the formula now recited as the immediate defense to charges of cruelty or exclusion: love the sinner, hate the sin. In the 1970s and '80s the churches began to articulate a more nuance approach to homosexuality, and by the 1990s this process reached its apogee. The teaching, in a nutshell, was that homosexual persons deserved respect and love and honor, but that what they "did" could never be countenanced. Fundamentalist Protestants, the formula was to embrace the sinner and passionately attempt to rescue him from what was called the "lifestyle," which was defined as one of promiscuous sodomy. And so the ethical silence was eventually broken; the vacuum filled with a whisper of air.

But the question lingered: Was there oxygen in that air? And what could it possibly mean to love the sinner but hate the sin? In the first place, it had to mean that homosexuality was essentially about sex. If homosexuality was defined as an "innate" inclination to commit a sin, then that sin had to be defined as an act of genital contact with a person of the same sex. So, of course, this isolated and, to many, repulsive activity was easily separated from the human person who performed it. It was "sexual activity behind closed doors," in the words of the leader of the Christian Coalition. It was a temporary lapse from an otherwise dignified life, a discrete and separable activity that could be condemned without in any way diminishing the sacred worth of a person who performed it. In fact, its very strangeness and repugnance only intensified the sense that rescuing someone from its carnal allure was essential to respecting that person in the first place.

But what if homosexuality was, in fact, more

profoundly about love than about sex? What if it contained, like heterosexuality, all the nobility and failure of the search for intimacy and the need for affection? And what if sex was merely one, albeit profound, way of expressing that intimacy? How was it then possible to separate homosexuality from the dignity of the person? How was it possible to love someone and yet deny him the capacity for love himself? And for Christians?

For some Protestants and old-style Catholics, the response was simple. Homosexuals were incapable of love; they were sick and compulsive; their "love" was, in fact, a form of neurosis and needed to be cured, not mollified. ... in any case, it was not the official position of the Catholic Church. That Church could not have been clearer in rejecting such a demeaning characterization of the nature of homosexuality. In the 1980s, Rome had taught unequivocally the inherent dignity of homosexual persons, and the importance of respecting them in a way that did not reduce their identity to mere sex. The church never denied that an important component to homosexual life, as to the heterosexual life, was the human capacity and need for love. And in the late 1990s, in a striking development, the American Catholic



bishops had gone one step further, speaking, in moving and historic tones, of the need for the parents of homosexual children to accept and love their child "as a gift of God: and [to accept] the full truth of God's revelation about the dignity of the human person and the meaning of human sexuality." If homosexuals were gifts of God, then how exactly were they incapable of love? And why was their sexuality intrinsically separable from the capacity for intimacy?

The answer could not be related to homosexuals' involuntary inability to procreate, because non-procreative sex had already been sanctioned, indeed celebrated, for the infertile. So what could it be about? The truth was: nothing coherent. When you begin to see homosexuality not as some bizarre and willful attempt to practice a specific sexual act, but as a deep and complex part of a human person, a person who needs as much love and as much divine love as any other person, then it becomes clear how it is, in fact, impossible to hate the "sin" and love the "sinner." Or how the very formulation is, in fact, a way of denigrating homosexual people, denying their humanity, erasing their integrity. It is as if we were to say that we loved Jews, so long as they never went to a synagogue; or that we welcomed immigrants, so long as they never tried to learn English. It is a rejection masquerading as an acceptance, and it perpetuates, in the guise of alleviating, the very ethical conflict from which homosexuals are doggedly trying to escape. 🏠

Steve and Allison Dunn

Part Two

Allison The year after our LDSSA experience, Steve was asked to chair an Institute Committee. He asked me to be his assistant, so we worked together intermittently till that next academic year. In college, I thrived on university life and dated a great deal. In fact, I felt I had truly shopped around when Steve and I started dating, and I remember congratulating myself on being so sensible. I knew this relationship worked and suddenly, amazingly, there was a romantic element. Steve was becoming my Lancelot. He loved to dance, he loved music, he loved poetry, and I thought he was starting to love me. I thought to myself, "This is going to be perfect. We have done it just right!"

Steve I had so much in common with Allison that I thought she would be a perfect date. Marriage was too remote to consider, and dating seemed ideal. But something amazing happened. Allison was turning my heart. I started to fall in love with her. She was perfect; she had everything I thought was important in a wife. She was bright and fit, healthy, kind, spiritual, pretty, wise and caring. Notice, sexy was not on the list. It wasn't that Allison wasn't sexy; she was. That was just not a priority for me, or at least, I deluded myself into thinking it wasn't.

Allison I never suspected anything was amiss in Steve's affection for me during our dating and engagement. He was physical and pressed me sexually for the first time in my life. I had never even come close to having sex with anyone before. But our understanding was that we were headed to the temple. We were careful and I thought everything was in place for the beginning of my perfect life.

Steve I was approaching 25 years of age and I started to think about my future after college. I truly wanted a family more than anything. I needed a wife for that, and as I thought about my prospects, there was only one person I thought marriage could work with. I loved Allison more than anyone I had dated. It seemed logical to marry her. So I asked her to marry me, and she accepted.

My family loved Allison as much as I did. They were thrilled. I was happy. And I was convinced that sex with her would finally put an end to my miserable dilemma. We eventually married and I was right: sex was good, but not great. After our honeymoon, I could not have Allison touching me when I was ready to sleep; that meant no cuddling, no feet touching, no legs draped, no spoon position. I was tormented knowing she wanted and needed to be held and touched, but I felt suffocated, claustrophobic, and I had to sleep on my side of the bed, separated from her. I had never reacted like that with Karl, so I knew that the problem was mine. I just did not know how to fix me. I would hold Allison when she asked, but our embraces were always short-lived.

Allison Our first few years of married life were predominately busy and happy. We began our careers, took turns going to graduate school, and started our family. The only tragedy that marred our early married life was the death of our first child. It was a horrible trauma, and Steve and I clung together and comforted each other through the intense pain. This was the first time in my spiritual experience that I felt that the heavens were bolted against me. Both our families fasted and prayed. We looked for a miracle. Steve gave our boy priesthood blessings. We went to the temple. We put his name on the prayer roll. We pleaded and hoped and were faithful. The answer was 'no'. He died when he was five months old. This event changed my perception of my relationship with God. I knew I could offer everything I had and be turned down. Lack of faith was not the problem. I began to think of tragedies in a different way. They were something you went through, not something you circumvent. Things didn't work out for the best just because you were doing your best. And God didn't always answer the prayers of the faithful in the affirmative.

Steve When our first-born son died I was bereft. It was the first time in my life that I seriously questioned God, the teachings of the church, and my own worthiness. I had tried to be as pure as I knew how. I had kept the commitments I had made on my mission and in the Temple. But it seemed I was just not faithful enough to receive a blessing from God. My prayerful, faith-filled priesthood blessings of healing accomplished nothing. After I watched him die a slow, agonizing death, I never felt comfortable giving priesthood blessings again. Throughout our marriage Allison would ask for blessings for herself or the children, and I would stall because I felt inadequate. Allison didn't understand, and I couldn't explain why I felt the way I did, because that would lead to a discussion I couldn't have with her: a discussion about my sexuality. Sadly, many serious issues in our relationship were never discussed, because I knew where the conversations would eventually lead. I became a master of evasion, of changing the subject, of putting up walls that no one could penetrate. And the self-loathing continued.

Allison For many of the early years I was pregnant, or nursing, or busy with a new baby. I seldom thought about how infrequent Steve's sexual interest was. When I did, it always sent me into a self-loathing tail spin, so I avoided thinking about it as much as I could. I spent years making up excuses for both of us. I ran and exercised and worked out as much as I could with little children to attend to, but it never got better no matter how organized, romantic, or thin I was.

Steve Allison was amazingly supportive while we lived in the Midwest. People loved her. She was involved with university women, garden club, church, and community activities. I was proud of her social graces, and I thought she was the perfect mother. But I could tell that she was concerned about our intimacy.

After weeks of no sexual contact, she would say, "I know what would make you feel better. We should have sex!" She planned nearly every loving-making session. I was beginning to wish they wouldn't happen at all. But I would comply, get myself aroused, then engage in quick, perfunctory sex. I didn't know how to tell Allison what I was feeling. I knew she was trying hard to be loving and supportive, but I could see the effects this irregular, dispassionate love-making were having on her. At this point I couldn't say the words, "I am gay," not even to myself. I told myself to continue doing what I was doing, and that eventually I would turn the corner and things would get better. They had to.

I was called to be the Bishop of our small Midwestern ward when I was 32. I was overwhelmed but excited. I truly loved the members, and I worked as diligently as I knew how to be a devoted, kind, and effective bishop. However, as time went on I became horrified with myself. There were some graduate students, faculty members, and community members that I found attractive. I continued my mantra in earnest. Discouragingly, neither the mantra nor the mantle of Bishop, neither my faithfulness nor my devotion to family and Christ were protecting me. Nothing about my desires was changing. I was beginning to doubt that my feelings would ever change. Nothing worked that I had been told would work for me; not sex with my wife, not faith and prayers, not thought control, not diligent church service.

Allison Our physical intimacy dwindled to nothing, and I alternately blamed it on Steve's concern about his professional life and my own lack of physical attractiveness. This is where the truly tragic and difficult part of the story begins. Because I assumed that I was the problem and because Steve could not bring himself to talk to me about his feelings, we both began a long and slow descent into our own private hells.

Sex is only one piece of life and the rest of our lives went on. Steve was still my best friend. The other important elements of our marriage worked. We were still wonderful partners and Steve was still the only person with whom I shared my emotional life. The only subject we could not address was sex. Every time I was upset enough to even mentally process the subject, the experience made me feel depressed and damaged. I went on tirades of mental self abuse.

The look on Steve's face when we discussed our physical relationship was pure, unadulterated pain. His reply was always, "It's me and not you." I don't know how many times I have heard that phrase. It is funny that the first time this phrase gave me an adrenaline shock was much later, after Steve had come out. The wife of a friend repeated those same words to me. She had been crying all morning. We were sitting in my car, talking. She was telling me how desperately unhappy she was with her husband. "He is cool with me physically," she said softly. "We are friends but he doesn't hold me as if he really wants me there. He says it is his problem and not mine." At that moment I remember feeling adrenaline slide down my spine like an ice cube.

To Be Continued.

Family Fellowship Profile

Janie Bennett

Board Member and Secretary

Janie Bennett, the secretary of Family Fellowship for the past five years, is a remarkably spiritual person. She feels that working in the adoption field may fulfill her destiny of "why am I here and what is my purpose?"

Janie was born and raised in the Provo, Utah area and attended BYU for one year. She intends to further her education in the future either through law school or social work, where she hopes to somehow help those children who so desperately need homes.

Serving an LDS mission in Korea, Janie spent her preparation days visiting the many orphanages in the area to touch and offer love and support to the infants she came in contact with. This strengthened her desire to do something with her life that would further adoptions of the many unwanted children on this earth.

Janie and her partner Kim, who also served a mission, are no longer active in the Mormon religion. However, Janie feels that the leaders



are doing the best they can.

She is full of forgiveness and love for her fellow man. She feels like she was put on this earth for a purpose. "Even Jesus was hated by many and yet continued to love." Her love of people shows in her enthusiasm and belief that maybe she was placed here for others to get to know her and love her for what she is, a homosexual *and* a special loving person.

Janie helped lead a Reconciliation group of young LDS gays for about three years. She volunteered her home and time to help many

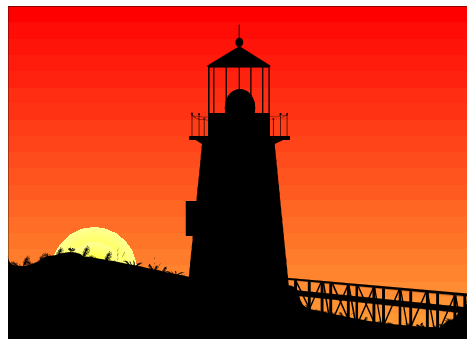
Utah County homosexuals to love and accept themselves. Her service, to many, was a tremendous example of charity. Now that she and her partner live in Salt Lake County, she no longer attends that organization.

Her love of people is shown through her interest in others. She also enjoys camping, movies and tapes of books of a spiritual nature or when she is in the

mood, pure fantasy. Her heroes are Rosie O'Donnell and Gary and Millie Watts, the co-chairs of Family Fellowship.

Family Fellowship is blessed to have Janie serve on the Board of Directors and hopes she will continue for many more years. 🏠

For more information about
Family Fellowship write to:
P.O. Box 9451
Salt Lake City, UT 84109
Phone: (801) 374-1447



Affirmation

by Carol Lynn Pearson

Some
Heaven-sought answers
Come in sound -
A voice, perhaps.
But I have found
Mine always come
In utter silence.

My heart,
A swollen sea,
Stops tearing
At its shores
And gradually stills.

The whipping
Of the wind,
The gull's sharp cry -
All sounds
Cease.

I listen
To the answer.

Silence
Speaks clearly:
It speaks peace.

Family Service

The entries below list some ways that families and family members are reaching out to each other, sharing their experiences, and holding their families together. This space is provided for anyone to report on and advertise activities that share the goal of strengthening Mormon families dealing with this issue, regardless of what organization the activity may be sponsored by.

Family Fellowship Forum February 27, 2000

— Max and Janet Berryessa, Provo

The quarterly meeting of Family Fellowship was held on Sunday, February 27 at the Graduate School of Social Work Auditorium on the University of Utah Campus in Salt Lake City. The speaker for the session was Robert A. Rees, Ph.D. His talk was entitled, "In a Dark Time the Eye Begins to See: Personal Reflections on Homosexuality and The Mormon Church at the Beginning of the New Millennium." Dr. Rees was a Professor at UCLA for twenty-five years before taking an early retirement in 1992. He served as an L. D. S. Bishop in the Los Angeles Singles Ward for a period of five years, during which time he counseled many gay and lesbian members of his Ward concerning the problems

which they faced because of their sexual orientation.

His talk has been published by Family Fellowship in pamphlet form and is now available. The cost is \$5.00. If you would like place an order, please send a check payable to Family Fellowship, 1763 North, 1500 East, Provo, UT 84604.

UN-Conference Gay-La May 12, 2000

Family Fellowship's "UN-Conference Gay-La" is scheduled Friday, May 12 in the Arizona Room of the Little America Hotel at 7:00 p.m. The cost is \$25.00 per person and includes dinner and entertainment. Contact Gerry Johnston 568-1141 in Salt Lake City or Millie Watts 374-1447 in Provo for details and reservations.

Volunteers Who Wish to Help Family Fellowship

Several folks have contacted Family Fellowship wondering what they can do to help. We continue to feel the most helpful thing you can do right now is to make a family history of your experiences with gay and lesbian family members. This could be an in depth account of the type published in our booklet series or a shorter account which could be included in the newsletter. As in any publication, articles may be edited for length, grammar, and content. However, every attempt is made to preserve the originality of each article. Please send all items to Claire Malmstrom at 962 North 1040 East, Lehi UT 84043 (Phone: 768-9112) or to Tyler Yates at 497 East 300 South, Lehi UT 84043 (Phone: 768-1836) or by e-mail: tyates@novell.com.