



Issue 36

SEC Family

Connecting Lives for Eternal Living

A Publication of the South England Conference Family Ministry Department

In this issue:

The Transgender Dilemma

Upcoming Events

Calendar of Events

Recommended Reading

Useful Links

The Transgender Dilemma

Pr Les Ackie

When I considered writing this article, every instinct within me said, "Leave it alone!" However, the transgender issue will not disappear by ignoring it. It's here to stay, and if Evangelism, Everyone, Everywhere is as successful as we plan for it to be, it will be an issue we have to face. Last year former Olympic decathlete, Bruce Jenner's transformation into Caitlyn Jenner put the issue up front and centre in Western media. Featuring Emmy Award winning transgender actress Laverne Cox on its cover, Time Magazine described transgender as "America's next civil rights frontier". Former Adventist presidential candidate Ben Carson, caused a stir when he referred to transgender individuals as "abnormal" and said they should not be given "extra rights." He even suggested that separate toilet facilities should be provided for trans people to prevent others feeling uncomfortable.

However, what has really set the cat amongst the pigeons within Adventism has been the ordination of Rhonda Dinwiddie, a transgender elder in the Hollywood SDA Church. When news broke in December 2015 via a video interview posted on the Internet, it predictably released a storm of protest, particularly among conservative Adventists, and also caused much confusion for many church members who have held views on transgender influenced more by gut reaction than informed consideration. When I saw the Hollywood interview, like many, I was shocked at the image of someone with obvious male features wearing a wig, make-up and women's clothes and yet occupying the position of an elder in an Adventist church. I then became intensely curious to know what thought processes gave rise to this unprecedented decision and where the General Conference stood on the matter.

I found that as a church, we do not have an "official position" on transgender. In October 2014, the Biblical Research Institute's (BRI) Ethics Committee published a paper entitled "Sex-Change Surgery: A Current Position". Addressing members who choose gender reassignment surgery, the document stated, "We recognise the uniqueness of their existential situation and the limitation of our knowledge in such issues." The lack of an official position is an indication of the complexities of the issue and it is right that we do not publish an official position until we know what we are dealing with from a biblical, scientific, medical and psychosocial standpoint. That necessitates careful prayerful research and engagement with all parties who wrestle with this challenge. While acknowledging that the psychological disturbance of gender confusion is a symptom of a fallen human condition, the BRI statement also acknowledged that those who wrestle with the condition are "human beings who are experiencing deep emotional distress as they try to grapple with their personal gender identity. These people need our love, prayers, support, and guidance"

A person is considered transgender if they identify with or express a gender identity that differs from

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35

SEC FAMILY

the one which corresponds to their sex at birth. Neuropsychologists and mental health professionals associate transgender with a condition known as gender dysphoria in which an individual suffers emotional distress due to an inability to reconcile their physical anatomy with their psychological gender identity. It is argued that anomalies in the process of growth on a chromosomal level, results



in a disconnection between brain and body development. In an anatomical context, there are documented cases of babies born with a condition known as ambiguous genitalia in which the outer genitals do not have the typical appearance of either a boy or a girl. In rare instances, the physical appearance of an individual may be fully developed as the opposite of the genetic sex. In 2009 this issue came to public notice when South African, Caster Semenya, the Women's 800 Metres World Athletics Champion, was tested and subsequently cleared by the International Amateur Athletics Federation, having been suspected of having an unfair advantage as a result of elevated levels of testosterone. Investigations revealed that Semenya was born with female genitalia but without ovaries or a uterus and also possessed undescended testes - a condition known as intersex where an individual cannot be defined as clearly male or female.

If such ambiguity can occur on an anatomical/physiological level, is it possible that similar ambiguity can occur on a neurological level? Advances in neurobiology demonstrate that male and female brains differ in significant ways. Among medical professionals, there is a growing shift toward the view that gender dysphoria is a biological rather than a psychological condition. However, this still remains in the realm of speculation and may be the result of bowing to pressure from the LGBTQ! lobby for acceptance, rather than the accumulation of scientific evidence. Even if it were the case, it would still not justify immoral behaviour any more than a homosexual orientation would justify homosexual practice. When considering the question of morality, it is important to stress that the transgender issue is not about same-sex attraction or behaviour. It is about how an individual perceives their personal gender identity. The purpose of my speculation here is not to normalise transgender, but to seek to understand the challenges faced by those who often wrestle for years with confusion and depression that in some instances may result in suicidal thoughts and attempts. Our response needs to be considered, compassionate, proportionate and consistent with the principle of love.

In preparation for writing this article I wanted to get a wide span of opinions on the issues, so I watched a video presentation from a source I would usually give a wide berth. It was a response to the situation at the Hollywood SDA church from the standpoint of the "fulfillment of end-time prophecy". It constituted a diatribe against Rhonda Dinwiddie, the local pastor and leadership, the Local Conference and the General Conference for "supporting the lifestyle of the LGBT movement." What struck me was how easily the presenters we were able to cast transgender people in with militant practicing homosexuals. Once we assume an attitude of open rebellion to God's will, it becomes all too easy to line up our biblical proof texts and fire them off one by one. Yet, we cannot come up with a coherent response to the transgender dilemma unless we move beyond the vitriolic rhetoric. To dismiss transgender people as misfits, freaks and perverts is not only inaccurate, it is cruel. Transgender people are just that, people. Abuse, whether it is perpetrated by godless psychopaths or Bible-believing Christians, first requires dehumanization of the people who are the objects of attack. What was conspicuous by its absence in that video rant was any kind of considerate care for the wellbeing of transgender people. There was no suggestion as to how we should minister to people in pain to whom we have a duty of care. Whether we view the issues around gender



By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35

dysphoria in terms of moral choices or biological/neurological abnormalities, can make the difference between condemnation or supportive care.

Please do not misunderstand the point I am making. I am neither seeking to defend or support what the Hollywood SDA Church has done. Nor am I sitting on the fence on the issue. This article is just a part of my own process of inquiry to establish a position that sits comfortably with biblical principle and respects the dignity of all people created in God's image. We must be careful that we do not fall into the same trap as the prophet Jonah whose reluctance to preach to the Ninevites stemmed from his belief that they were not worthy of salvation. The Message Bible renders Jonah 4:1-2, "Jonah was furious. He lost his temper. He yelled at God, 'God! I knew it - when I was back home, I knew this was going to happen! That's why I ran off to Tarshish! I knew you were sheer grace and mercy, not easily angered, rich in love, and ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!'" Until we see trans people as fellow objects of God's grace, we will continue to see view them as deviant influences to be kept out rather than precious souls to be drawn in. We must be careful that our prejudices and discomfort do not harden our hearts toward souls in need of a Saviour.



and respects the dignity of all people created in God's image. We must be careful that we do not fall into the same trap as the prophet Jonah whose reluctance to preach to the Ninevites stemmed from his belief that they were not worthy of salvation. The Message Bible renders Jonah 4:1-2, "Jonah was furious. He lost his temper. He yelled at God, 'God! I knew it - when I was back home, I knew this was going to happen! That's why I ran off to Tarshish! I knew you were sheer grace and mercy, not easily angered, rich in love, and ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!'" Until we see trans people as fellow objects of God's grace, we will continue to see view them as deviant influences to be kept out rather than precious souls to be drawn in. We must be careful that our prejudices and discomfort do not harden our hearts toward souls in need of a Saviour.

rich in love, and ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!'" Until we see trans people as fellow objects of God's grace, we will continue to see view them as deviant influences to be kept out rather than precious souls to be drawn in. We must be careful that our prejudices and discomfort do not harden our hearts toward souls in need of a Saviour.

We must honestly ask ourselves, "Does our view of transgender people urge us to call down fire or call down grace?" We can defend the castle of Adventist orthodoxy by pulling up the drawbridge, firing off our arrows and pouring boiling oil on those who are deemed to be seeking to bring corruption into our midst by their very presence. But is it possible that there are those who are seeking to gain entry that have no desire to tear down the pillars, but just want a seat at the welcome table? Evangelism, Everyone, Everywhere is what it says. We have no ministry to transgendered people unless we are willing to engage with them and listen to their stories, not so that we can stand in judgment over them, but so that we can share the love of Jesus with fellow strugglers on life's journey, who wrestle with challenges we will never face.



As a part of my research, I watched a film made by the same team who produced the movie *Seventh-Gay Adventists*. The movie "Room at the Table" follows a weekend discussion among 12 participants who included conservative heterosexual, gay and lesbian, transgender, a mother whose son is transgender, pastors and educators. These individuals, coming from diverse theological and experiential backgrounds engaged in a thought-provoking discussion that was refreshing in its authenticity and willingness to explore these challenging issues from a grace perspective. Obviously, we must remain true to the requirements of biblical values and principles. Grace does not necessitate compromising biblical convictions. It does not require us to shy away from passages like Deuteronomy 22:5 that prohibits men from wearing women's garments and vice versa. We need not side-step Moses' warnings about "emasculatation" (Deuteronomy 23:1) or Paul's condemnation of "effeminacy" (1 Corinthians 6:9). However, grace does require us to approach the Word with integrity bringing to bear all the tools at our disposal to ascertain what the Bible means by what it says. I wait with interest to see what will emerge from our church's theological deliberations on this challenging issue.

IT'S
GOOD
TO
TALK

In the meantime, we all have a role to play. Dialogues of the "Room at the Table" kind require courage. Loving people requires us to step out of our comfort zones and if need be, re-examine our cherished opinions. We have nothing to lose and much to gain by such engagement. If we stand on solid ground in our beliefs and opinions, then "sound arguments . . . will bear the closest and most searching scrutiny (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 39). However, if our values are founded on the shifting sand of misunderstanding and ignorance, then we can only benefit from an honest re-evaluation of the views we hold. Let's have the discussion!


By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35

SEC FAMILY

 **The SEC Family Ministry Marriage Retreat** 

Blended Hearts

An exploration of biblical principles to nurture love, trust and emotional bonding

 **Presenters: Irma & Les Ackie**

18th - 20th March 2016

Venue: Wokefield Park, Goodboys Lane, Mortimer, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 3AE

Cost: £250 per couple (subsidies and split payments available for early booking)

Register at sec.adventist.org.uk/events

Final Call Productions Present 

AND THERE WAS WAR

Written & Directed by Jermaine Wong


WHOSE SIDE WILL YOU CHOOSE?

EASTER 2016 - 26TH - 28TH MARCH
STRATFORD CIRCUS ARTS CENTRE
THEATRE SQUARE, LONDON E15 1BX


DOORS OPEN: 7PM SAT. MON. 7:30PM SUN
SUN 4PM MATINEE

ADMISSION £15 CONCESSION £12
BOX OFFICE: 0844 357 2625

www.finalcallproductions.com

 Adventist Family Ministries

SEC FAMILY MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TRAINING



CONNECTING LIVES FOR ETERNAL LIVING

Venues: THE STANBOROUGH CENTRE,
609 St Albans Road WD25 9JL.
BRITISH UNION CONFERENCE,
St Albans Road, Garston, Watford Hertfordshire WD25 9JZ

CERTIFICATE IN FAMILY LIFE LEADERSHIP

Modules covered:

- Leading Family Ministry
- Biblical Foundations
- Human Development
- Spiritual Parenting
- Families as Systems
- Communication
- Anger & Conflict
- Strengthening Marriage
- Family Evangelism

Attendees receive all seminar materials and more to facilitate effective ministry

Modules are presented on a cyclical basis to allow access at any point in the programme

SEC FAMILY MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT
25 St John's Road, Watford Hertfordshire, WD17 1PZ
Phone: 01923 23 27 28
Email: fm@secadventist.org.uk

Register with Ligia at lbuzac@secadventist.org.uk or call 01923 232 728

Asna ANNUAL Family RESPITE & TRAINING WEEKEND

STRONGER TOGETHER

Connecting People, Changing Lives

8-10 April 2016
SUNNINGDALE HOTEL, LARCH AVE
ASCOT BERKSHIRE. SL5 0QE

£120 Double Occupancy Rooms (£100 ASNA Members)
£140 Single Occupancy Rooms (£120 ASNA Members)

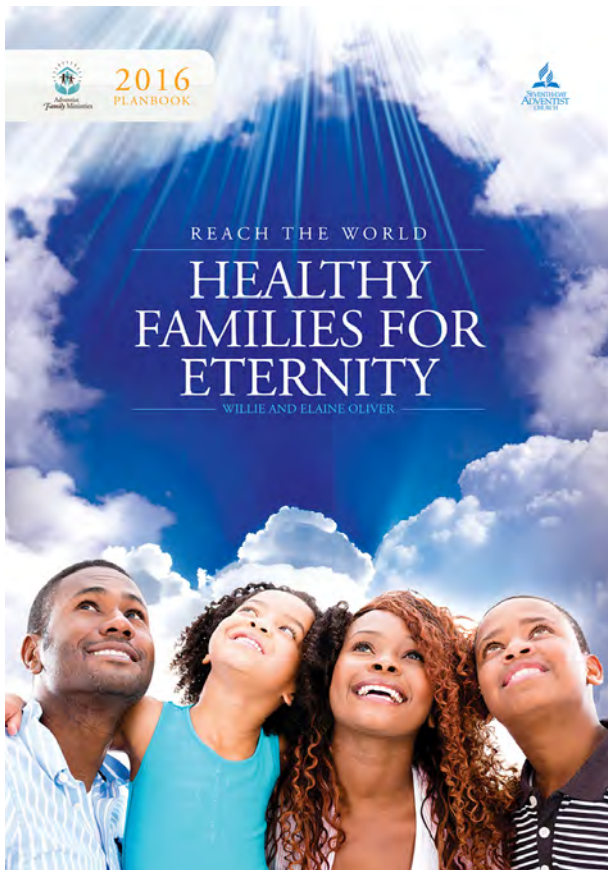
£40 - Children
FREE - Children Under 5
FREE - Children with disabilities up to 18 years
£50 - Day Delegate Per Person
£40 - ASNA Day Delegate Per Person

Contact Sophia Nicholls/Helen Batten on 07768 298 297 / info@asna.info or www.asna.info

ASNA - SUPPORTING PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Inspirational workshops for spiritual, physical, emotional and social development. This event has been heavily subsidised by ASNA thanks to funds raised from donations and grant from ADRA UK. ASNA Reg. Charity Number 1100447

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35



Click on the link to download the Family Ministry Planbook at <http://family.adventist.org/family-ministry-planbook.html>

SINGLES RETREAT 2016

15th-17th July 2016

Cultivate Purpose & Let God

Finding peace, happiness and spiritual fulfilment with yourself & how to create space for another person

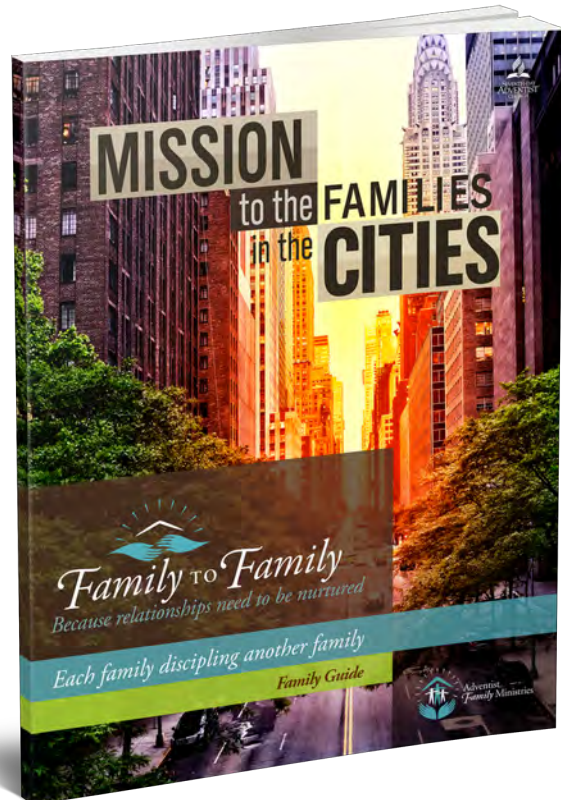
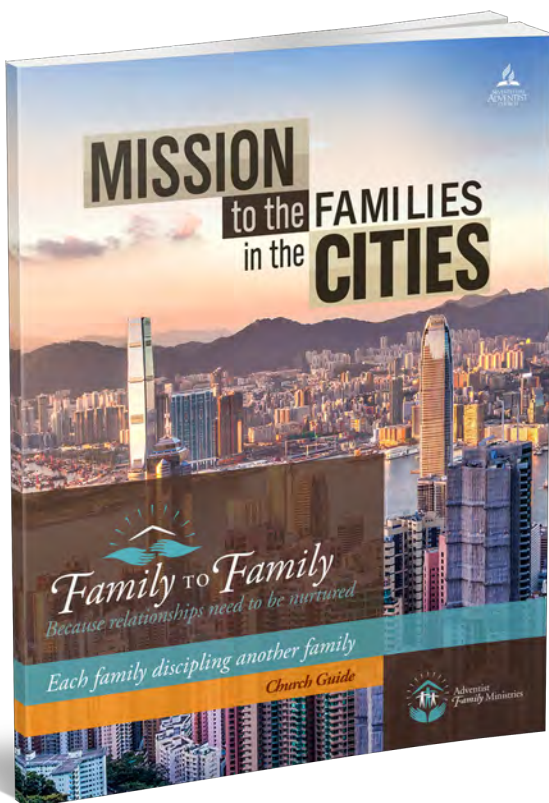


Guest Speaker:
Pastor
Dewaine Frazer

Venue: De Vere Venues | Wokefield Park | Goodboys Lane | Reading | RG7 3AH
Price: £149/person (double occupancy) & £159 (single occupancy)
Limited spaces.....book your space now for this empowering event, you will surely be blessed and uplifted.

A non refundable deposit of £50 is required to secure your place by 30 January 2016 and the full amount should be paid in by 31 March 2016.
We accept payment in instalments.
Bank Details: Lloyds Bank. Sort Code: 306676. Account no' 60146660
Please put TSR as reference

For enquiries, please contact:
Christina Mthombeni: 07926 102 187 or Sister Patience: 07908 713 561



Click on the link to download the Mission to the Families guides at <http://family.adventist.org/mission-to-the-families-in-the-cities-family-to-family.html>

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35



Revival
SEC CAMP MEETING

6 -12th JUNE 2016

Pontin's Camber Sands Holiday Park
New Lydd Rd, Camber Sands, Sussex TN31 7RL

Pastor Debleaire K. Snell
COMMITMENT SPEAKER

Pastor Jaime Kowless
YOUTH SPEAKER

Michael Liliakakis
YOUTH/TEENS SPEAKER

Dr. Alan Walshe
FAMILY LIFE SPEAKER

Dr. Chidi Ngwaba
HEALTH & WELLNESS SPEAKER

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

EVANGELISM EVERYONE EVERYWHERE



If you have something to say on family matters, relational themes, emotional wellbeing, or would just like to let others know about what's happening in your church or community for families, why not put it in writing and submit it for publication? Email fm@secadventist.org.uk



ABOUT **MAD MARRIAGE**

www.madaboutmarriage.com

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

SEC Family Ministries Department Calendar of Events 2016

DATE	EVENT	VENUE
Sunday 7 February	Family Ministry Training SEC Certificate in Family Life Education Pt 1	Stanborough Centre
Saturday 6 February - Saturday 13 February	Christian Home & Marriage Week (see GC Plan Book downloadable from SEC Website)	All Churches
Sunday 13 March	Family Ministry Training SEC Certificate in Family Life Education Pt 2	Stanborough Centre
Friday 18 March - Sunday 20 March	SEC Blended Hearts Marriage Retreat	Wokefield Park, Reading
Sunday 17 April	Family Ministry Training SEC Certificate in Family Life Education Pt 2	Stanborough Centre
Sunday 8 May	Family Ministry Training SEC Certificate in Family Life Education Pt 3	Stanborough Centre
Monday 6 June - Sunday 12 June	SEC Camp Meeting (Guest Family Life Speaker Dr Allan Walsh for Andrews University)	Camber Sands, Sussex
Sunday June 26	Family Ministry Training SEC Certificate in Family Life Education Pt 4	Stanborough Centre
Saturday 6 August	Solofest - Singles' Day of Fellowship	Balham
Friday 15 July Sunday 17 July	Singles' Weekend Retreat - Cultivate Purpose & Let God (This is not an SEC FM event - see poster for details)	Wokefield Park
Sunday 7 August - Sunday 14 August	SEC Family Camp	Chapel Porth, Cornwall
Sunday 14 August - Sunday 21 August	SEC Lone Parent Camp	Chapel Porth, Cornwall
Saturday 3 September - Saturday 10 September	Family Togetherness Week (see GC Plan Book downloadable from SEC Website)	All Churches
Friday 14 October - Sunday 16 October	SEC Blended Hearts Marriage Retreat	Denham Grove, Uxbridge
Sunday 2 October	Family Ministries Training Divorce Recovery Ministry	Stanborough Centre
Sunday 13 November	Family Ministries Training Supporting People Coping With Loss	Stanborough Centre

For more information about any of the listed events please contact:

SEC Family Ministries Department, 25 St John's Road. Watford, WD17 1PZ

tel: 01923 232 728 fax: 01923 250 582 email: fm@secadventist.org.uk

web: sec.adventist.org.uk

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35

Useful Links

AdventSource -
www.adventsource.org/

Association of Christian
Counsellors - www.acc-uk.org/

Barna Research -
www.barna.org/

Care for the Family -
www.careforthefamily.org.uk/

Family & Parenting Institute -
www.familyandparenting.org/

Family Friendly Church Trust -
www.familyfriendlychurches.org.uk/NewSite/ffc.php

Focus on the Family
www.family.org

In Discipleship -
www.indiscipleship.org

Prepare Enrich -
www.prepare-enrich.co.uk/

Through the Roof (Disability
outreach) -
www.throughtheroof.org

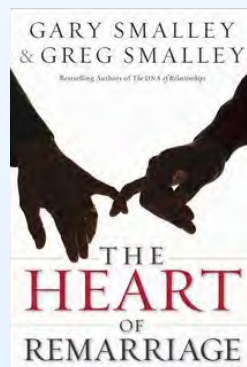
Women's Aid -
www.womensaid.org.uk/

Recommended Reading



Forty Days to Life Changing Family Worship. By bringing your household together for about fifteen minutes each day in meaningful family worship could potentially change your family's life. This book is not based on a trendy gimmick, but a tried and true biblical principle that has been buried under the rat-race of our busy lives.

In *Girls Uncovered* Drs McIlhane and Bush address the challenges girls face in a sexually permissive age. They provide fundamental wisdom and practical advice to help parents, counsellors, and church leaders to guide young girls safely through the challenges they will face so they can achieve their potential and enjoy full health, hope and happiness.

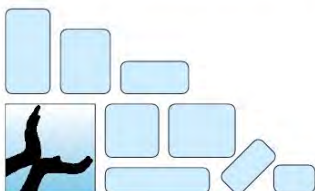


Too often, couples enter remarriage unaware of potential problems and unprepared for the challenges stepfamily life will bring. *The Heart of Remarriage* takes a unique approach to success in remarriage by going straight to the heart, helping couples heal from the inside out rather than offering surface suggestions that may change circumstances but not the lives of couples and their families.

Cornerstone Counselling Service

0207 723 8050
ccs@secadventist.org.uk
sec.adventist.org.uk/counselling

Contact us to speak with a counsellor about issues that trouble you, or to make an appointment.



CONTACT US

SEC Family Ministry



Pr Les Ackie
Director:
01923 656 510
lackie@secadventist.org.uk



Ligia Buzac
Secretary:
01923 656 533
lbuzac@secadventist.org.uk

Postal Address: 25 St John's Road, Watford WD17 1PZ

Email: fm@secadventist.org.uk

SEC Website: sec.adventist.org.uk