

"A Certain Kind of Light"

Adjunct professor Keith Wakefield produces award-winning film

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By: Sam Fry

Keith Wakefield, adjunct faculty for the Andrews University Department of Public Health, Nutrition & Wellness, has produced his first short form documentary film, “A Certain Kind of Light,” to critical acclaim. He worked alongside Carla Gober-Park, producer and executive producer for the project. Directed by renowned Hollywood filmmaker Brandon Vedder (“La Source,” “In Pursuit of Silence”), the film deals with the concept of whole person care in a healthcare setting.

Wakefield joined Vedder to make his debut as producer. The documentary, which premiered this fall, has been accepted into 11 film festivals both in the United States and abroad. Wakefield, who is also a chaplain at Lakeland Health in St. Joseph, Michigan, has been overwhelmed by the positive response to “A Certain Kind of Light.”

“It’s been amazing to see the response to this film,” he says. “For people to connect with the film emotionally and take the ideas presented back with them to their particular context is really more than I could have ever hoped to accomplish with this project.”

In addition to premiering at a host of film festivals internationally, “A Certain Kind of Light” has won several prestigious awards, including the “Gold Award” in the Best Documentary category

at the Christian Life International Film Festival (CLIFF) in Ontario, Canada, and the “Olive Tree Storyteller Festival,” in New York City.

The documentary, funded by Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California) and LLU's Center for Spiritual Life and Wholeness, explores the history of the idea of “whole person care,” beginning with the life and work of Wil Alexander, founder of the Center, and concludes with the Center's ongoing work. Alexander taught religion at Andrews University in the 60s. Additionally, the film features contributions of scholars, clinicians, students and administrators at Loma Linda University Health who have contributed to implementing the idea of whole person care.

“A Certain Kind of Light” is the first of its kind to get authentic access into hospital rooms and interview actual patients. This posed a unique challenge.

“It took us over a year and a half to shoot and produce this documentary,” says Wakefield. “There were definitely a lot of unique location-based challenges we had to overcome. To bring a whole bunch of people into a hospital room, to surround the bed of a patient and ask them personal questions is already difficult. Then, to add a camera on top of that just made it a larger mountain to climb.”

Over the course of filming, 31 patients were interviewed, all of who shared their individual stories.

“Being a patient in the hospital is one of the most vulnerable positions in which one can find themselves,” says Wakefield. “In light of that, we were very cautious to not take advantage of anyone in their position. We shot the entire film ‘live’ so to speak. We never asked anyone, ‘Can you repeat that for the camera?’ If we missed it, then we missed it.”

Wakefield, an accomplished storyteller who was recently selected as a semifinalist for the Vandermeij Nonfiction Prize for his written story, “Something Within Us,” has many more projects in mind for the future.

“Right now I am privileged to be working with the Christian Ministry department in the Seminary at Andrews University and with the Department of Religion & Biblical Languages at the undergraduate level,” says Wakefield. “There are a few other projects I have rattling around my brain. Everyone has a story that *is*, and *will always be* entirely unique. It’s amazing what can happen when we take the time to sit and just listen to people.”

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