



Thirty-Five and Counting... on Hope | BY BONNIE DWYER

WITH A NEWLY UPDATED LOOK, a lively companion Web site, and promises of great discussions to come, *Spectrum* begins volume thirty-five thinking of itself as new media. Well, let's be honest, all media today has to be new media, because of the constant technological changes taking place, modifying and expanding our ways of gathering and sharing information. Postmodernity is not a choice.

Nonetheless, the challenges of technology have, at times, seemed insurmountable—where in the world would we find ten thousand dollars for better software to manage our subscription database? Answer—from loyal supporters who gave us the resources to do a better job. Through the years, with gifts large and small came bundles of hope for the future. Hope was the thing with feathers that gave us courage to take flight. And with each gift, hope also became in my mind what good friends give to each other.

Hope also arrived with new young writers, artists, and scholars, some of whom are included in this issue—Julius Nam, Kendra Haloviak, Heather Isaacs, Alita Byrd, Alex Carpenter. They and numerous others have made hope rise like a river at flood stage.

What was the best way to showcase the creative work of the twenty-somethings? Should we dedicate a special issue just for them? No, they told us. They wanted to be part of the mix, not singled out. They wanted to sit at the table with everyone else.

Come to think of it, large family holiday dinners with a children's table in the kitchen may be where the separation of conversations between generations begins. But whether it's the teenagers gathered at the end of the table, or the grandparents with hearing challenges who sit silently, everyone wants to be heard and understood.

Trouble is, we talk differently. In "My Satirical Self," an article that appeared September 17, 2006, in the *New*

York Times Magazine, Wyatt Mason described the difficulties that he and his father experienced in discussing the news. Whereas Mason's father often expressed anger about "the latest folly in the corridors of power," he felt mirth. When his father called to chew over some maddening morsel of news, Wyatt had found a way not to be angry at all. "I have taken shelter in the ridiculous," he said. And whereas his father took his anger to the opinion pages of the nation's finest newspapers, he went to *The Onion*, which he called America's Finest News Source.

And what was it that he found so attractive about stories from *The Onion*? "Comedic tone—a smart blend of parody and hyperbole and mockery," a tone that he suggested has been resonating through every echelon of American culture, a shift affecting and informing every storytelling medium, whether factual or fictional." With satire, conversation becomes, as Ambrose Bierce ironically defined it in his *Devil's Dictionary*, "a fair for the display of the minor mental commodities, each exhibitor being too intent upon the arrangement of his own wares to observe those of his neighbor."

So given the changes in tone and technology, what chances do cross-generational conversations have of ever taking place in Adventism? What hope is there for a magazine that is more than thirty-five years old? Plenty. Our webmaster has talked eighty-year olds through the process of posting comments on our Web site. Blogs have brought more twenty-somethings to the conversation. That's the wonderful thing about new media. It creates a place that can be comfortable for all ages to get together and share. In the sharing lies the hope.

For me, the great Advent hope encompasses more than just the second coming of Christ, it resides in the body of Christ sharing not only the good news of the gospel, but also love for one another through listening and talking to each other. ■