

What Time Is It? | BY BONNIE DWYER

How did we get from the dinosaur times, to Bible times, to cowboy times to the *now* times?" The question came from the back seat of the car on a road trip. My (then) twelve-year-old son, Mark, had a ready answer for his friend Andrew's question. Mark summarized his recent lessons in world history, adding the Greeks and Romans to the periods, also stopping by the Middle Ages, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. To this day, we tease Andrew about the question. The story has attained myth status in the family canon. I think of it whenever I try to bring order to chunks of time, be they personal like the number of years since I graduated from high school, or prophetic, like the number of years since 1844.

Prophecy charts in hand, Adventists have been very specific about future events for 164 years. (It certainly seems that we should have come to the end of those charts.) And, yes, Andrew, good question, what about the *now* times? We're always so focused on future events. What about *now*? Do we understand time differently now, then Ellen White did in the 1800s? As we have become a globalized church, have we added the other parts of the world to our understanding of prophecy? Where do China, India, and Africa fit into the picture? Should we just talk about other things? It is a quandary for us on so many levels, not the least of which is when talking to our children.

A motivating quandary, you might say. In this issue of *Spectrum* several authors address End Times and Now Times in new ways: a grandmother, a retired evangelist, and a General Conference vice president sort through our understanding and explanations or lack of them. Lowell Cooper, a General Conference vice president, compiled his thoughts for the 2008 Adventist Society for Religious Studies meeting in Boston. Captivated by

the conference theme, "Re-Envisioning Adventism," he put ideas on paper and preached them in inspiring style.

Adventism is not the only aspect of Christianity being re-envisioned these days. In Phyllis Tickle's book, *The Great Emergence*, she explains how Christianity is changing and why. A review of her book by Brenton Reading appeared on our Web site in November. We reprise it in the Web section of this issue, along with chosen highlights from the ensuing comments, a Web thread discussion that gave me new perspective and hope for the now times.

Roger Dudley provides insights into the college generation of Adventists with his analysis of the recent election. Nick Miller and Michael Peabody provide lessons in religious freedom in a point/counterpoint discussion of the divisive proposition from the California ballot on gay marriage. Sigve Tonstad and Daniel Giang, two physicians from Loma Linda University, help us unpack the neurological realities of now.

"Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country," is a phrase I remember typing over and over in high school typing class (yes, before the days of keyboarding). As I search for the words to conclude, "Now is the time for all good Adventists to come to the aid of their church," falls easily on the page—my fingers type it astonishingly fast. Amidst all the positive talk of new political directions for the United States, and "Yes, we can" becoming a new form of Amen, I'd like to add Now is the time—the time to be the Church, the change, the community service, the loving hands of Christ that we always talked and criticized and dreamed the Church could be. ■

