



Spilling Coke on the Server | BY BONNIE DWYER

**We are
counting on
you to do
your part in
making this
a place of
welcome.**

The television advertisement for Coca-Cola that premiered during the Superbowl in 2015 begins with images of anger. “I hate u” types out across a phone screen in a text message. Then at 12 seconds in, a worker in a room filled with computer server equipment spills his bottle of Coca-Cola on the machine, and the sugary drink is shown flowing through the cables, working miracles in reconciling and changing angry people into laughing, smiling souls. Another text message on the phone in the hand of a young boy morphs from “No one likes U” to “There’s no one like U,” and his face changes from hurt to self-assured.

Would that the solution to a happy, friendly Internet were so simple. I’d love to think that spilling a Caffeine-Free Diet Coke could have the same effect on the *Spectrum* server.

In another series of ads by Coca-Cola, teenagers talk about cyber-bullying. One girl tells about her personal campaign to be a change agent. She wants to stop cyber-bullying among her peers before it happens. On a computer screen within the ad, a popup ad blinks “Rethink Alert.” Another says, “Negative-free Zone.” More teen comments are shown before the ad closes with the message, “The Internet is what we make it” crawling across the screen, and then “Make it happy.”

These ad images come to mind as I read the messages in my e-mail inbox from the members of the Adventist Forum board discussing the commenting on our website, its supposed negativity, and what it is doing to our reputation. And I bemoan the need for this repeated con-

versation. The list of people insulted by the *Spectrum* commenting section just seems to get longer all the time. There are the guardians of Adventism who are offended by anything that does not match their experience or definition of the Adventist Church. There are those who have walked out the door of the church, wounded, and who want to make sure that everyone knows it. There are those who find the negativity of both these groups off-putting, and so they complain about the website itself, as though we are responsible for the comments of all who happen by. The list of those who are capable of finding something to offend themselves seems never-ending.

My first reaction is to say, this is not just a *Spectrum* problem. If Coca-Cola is addressing the issue of Internet negativity in an ad campaign, it is an Internet society problem. So you can be sure the issue requires more than just a software fix that allows for us to move the comments, or regulate how or where the *Spectrum* comments are located. But that does not change the fact that we still want it fixed here on our site, in our community. What can we do about our problem?

Meanwhile, I pick up Anne Lamott’s newest book, *Small Victories: Spotting Improbable Moments of Grace*. The first chapter is about the “The Book of Welcome,” which, she surmises, must have been “way down there in the slush pile of manuscripts—that somehow slipped out of the final draft of the Bible . . . [and] went missing.” She says that we have to write that book ourselves, adding that she has needed such a book for a

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For decades in North America, Adventists were distinctly known for not eating meat. But we weren't giving up sugar or utilizing healthy fats. We ate a lot of processed imitation meats, and our preparation of vegetables was not particularly healthy or appetizing. Nowadays, a lot of celebrity chefs are making a name for themselves with their fabulous vegetarian presentations, and we no longer own the vegetarian zone.

Q. What is your new favorite dish or dishes that you are cooking in 2015?

I love learning to cook from global food ways as inspiration to expand my repertoire. I was looking to use spices more freely in my cooking. So my son and I cooked together with friends an Indian-inspired dinner. We made chana dal sundal for an appetizer to eat as we cooked together for several hours before sitting down to a fabulous dinner. It is now on my list as a "keeper." It is a street food from Southern India made with chickpeas, spiced with black mustard seeds, chiles, and grated coconut.

My favorite comfort food to prepare is an avocado taco with cilantro, white onion garnish, and homemade green tomatillo salsa. Once you've made the salsa, you can whip up these tacos in minutes.

Seasonal variations are always fun to do. I make a winter panzanella salad with sherry vinaigrette. Butternut squash stands in for the tomatoes. Pomegranate seeds, goat cheese, and walnuts accompany the arugula and red onion. This helps hold me until I can make the summer version of panzanella salad with luscious ripe tomatoes! ■

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References

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long time, because she "didn't know how to let go of judging people so quickly, on how they look, or dress, or speak," and so she couldn't stop judging herself.

Ah, judging. That does seem to be a major problem. No matter where we find ourselves in the conversation about the Internet, judging others' actions as inappropriate seems to be what we all do. Myself included. Acknowledging our own judgmentalism is so-o-o-o-o difficult, because it means that we might have to think of things differently, and that is always tough.

Lamott's proposed solution to this judgment problem is to offer welcome to someone else. It helps a lot, she says, "especially to the deeply unpleasant or weird. The offer heals you both. What works best is to target people in the community whom no one else seems to want. Voilá: now welcome exists in you."

So today I want to spill that Diet Coke on the *Spectrum* community and extend welcome to all. If you are reading these words, you are part of the community. Whatever your criticism of the words and positions put forth on our site, you are part of the community. Whether or not you have membership in a Seventh-day Adventist church, whether or not you like or dislike the people who comment, you are part of the community. We are counting on you to do your part in making this a place of welcome. We invite you to help us write the book of welcome within the Seventh-day Adventist community. Doing so should heal us all. We have a wonderful message to share, and heritage to cherish.

Let's make the Internet and Adventism a happy, welcoming place. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

