



In Search of the Beautiful | BY BONNIE DWYER

*It's the art of sitting down to create with intention
—to practice creativity and view the world creatively—
that makes all the difference.*

—Aaron Beaumont

What does it mean to practice creativity? You can read Aaron Beaumont's take on the process of creating music in this issue. You can also practice your creativity by coloring the cover and illustrations herein. Coloring books are the latest way for adults to relieve stress, it seems. Recently I have been inspired to look creatively at Adventist history and community, and I invite you to join me in that intentional act of creativity, too.

My inspiration came in Atlanta at the annual meetings of religion and Biblical scholars where everyone from Adventists and atheists to Wiccans and Zoroastrians gathered to exchange papers, network, and buy books. Theological talk filled the air, the restaurants, the hotels, the city. Famous authors were honored. Two huge exhibit halls were filled with the wares of book publishers hoping to interest university professors in requiring their texts for classes.

As an observer rather than scholar, I find these sessions to be a wonderful time to listen to major voices. This year it was the comments by Marilynne Robinson that helped me look at Adventist history and community in a new way.

Having just picked up Robinson's latest book of essays *The Giverness of Things* and spent the plane ride to Atlanta

reading them, I was happy to see the American Academy of Religion present her with its "Religion and the Arts Award." At a special session, one of the panel of questioners put this one to her: "How do we turn around the story of religion in our culture?"

"That's a hard question," she responded, noting that one of the things that we have done is to engage in anti-reading, cynicism. Known as an admirer of John Calvin, she said that when she began reading his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, she looked for the beautiful passages and found a celebration of humankind.

In our culture, media seek out the negative and give it as much attention as possible. Robinson thinks that the thing that should sustain religious people is the beautiful, and that we should forgive that which is less beautiful. "Give people a positive access to what is theirs," she said. "Undercutting impoverishes the narrative."

Looking for the beautiful in a fractured community has its challenges. It does take practice. But the process creates an openness for joy and hope that is pure serendipity. We hope that you will find some of that Adventist beauty in this issue, and that you will create some, too. Send us copies of what you color, stories of good news within the community to share. Let's intentionally practice creativity together, looking for the beautiful in the people we meet, the community we share. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

