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### Valuing the Familiar

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# Valuing the Familiar

**Andrea Luxton**, *president*

HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW WHAT IS NEW and “amazing” soon becomes customary and taken for granted? I know this ages me, but I still remember the days when I could sign a cell phone out of my office when I went on a trip “for safety.” And then came the first time I owned my own. Or what about those of us who grew up not just without the internet but without computers. Can you remember back to that first computer, probably with challenging coding to get anything done? Or the first time you accessed the world wide web and had knowledge (and misinformation) at your fingertips? Now of course if we leave our cell phone at home and don't have it for a few hours, or the internet crashes, we complain and are at a loss. Then there is that sense of happiness and relief when the cell phone is back in our hands or the internet is reset and starts working again.

I have become acutely aware of this pattern of taking for granted, loss and then experiencing joy at the return to “normal” over the last few months. Have you found yourself loitering a bit longer than you used to in a store that you enjoy, valuing the smell and color in the display of fresh fruit and vegetables? Maybe you have re-found a friendship that you took for granted as you meet again in person. Perhaps it is the joy of breathing in the fresh air and walking alongside others again. Certainly when we were able to have Homecoming on our campus in September 2021 there was a general agreement that this was one of the best ever! There appeared to just be more gratitude, more smiles, more warmth. I know that our team came out of the event tired, yes, but also rejuvenated because of that apparent rediscovery of joy.

This brings me to a point of reflection. How can we remind ourselves of what is good and truly value it, even if it is customary and always there? Do we always have to rediscover in

order to value? I want to talk here about Adventist education, as an example. I firmly believe that Seventh-day Adventist education is a unique gift God gave to this church. I also believe that the strength and depth of the church is directly proportional to the strength of its education program. Yet sometimes it seems that this gift has somehow become so familiar, so much part of what is “there” that we focus on what is “wrong” (or at least what may not be perfect) far more than we value the gift. We hear something we don't like and decide to metaphorically hide the gift in the attic. I know what sacrifices my parents made to give me an Adventist education. And, no, it wasn't always perfect. But I have absolutely no doubt that without that sacrifice I would not be where I am now. So yes, I find it very disappointing to see the contempt that familiarity might bring, impacting our acceptance of this great gift. And not just that but impacting the opportunity of the next generation to experience the gift themselves.

I do hope that one thing we learn from this pandemic is the importance of valuing and taking advantage of all the gifts God has given us, even if they have become only too familiar. To me, Seventh-day Adventist education is one of those gifts.



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