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The Student Movement v. 108 (2023-2024)

Student Movement

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### **The Student Movement Volume 108 Issue 10: VP or Not VP?: That is the Question**

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*See next page for additional authors*

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## VP or Not VP?

THAT IS THE QUESTION



Photo by Darren Heslop

# Humans

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## HUMANS

# Interview with Dr. Ponce-Rodas: Change within the Church

Grace No [12.01.23](#)



Photo by Ponce Rodas

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*This week I talked to Dr. Ponce-Rodas from the Andrews Psychology department about her career and work surrounding the topic of domestic violence in the church. She shares steps for learning more about this important issue and being better supporters for victims and survivors of abuse. Most important is the overlying message of hope that must be remembered in order to be advocates for those in our community.*

### **Please introduce yourself to us and tell us what kind of work you do!**

I'm Melissa Ponce-Rodas, I'm an Assistant Professor of Psychology. I've been here at Andrews for, I want to say, thirteen years now. And I'm actually trained as a community psychologist, so I work not with individual people, but with groups to help groups function better. And so the kind of research that I did for my

dissertation is I looked at the way that religion, spirituality and beliefs about domestic violence intersect within Hispanic churches in the Lake Union Conference, to try and see if we could find some patterns to better understand what people think about this topic. I also look at where we might be able to intervene to lower rates of abuse and perpetration and increase overall wellness in the church.

### **What kind of work did you do in the community psychology field?**

I got interested in this topic when I was at UIC University of Illinois at Chicago, which is where I did my graduate work. There were a lot of people who did violence against women work, so I worked with professors whose areas of expertise were domestic violence. And I ended up becoming a licensed domestic violence counselor in Illinois. That's when I first got into the sciency stuff, and the real life advocacy work, but I never did any of that full time. I've always been more on the research end of it. The way I got into this to begin with was when there was a person at one of my previous churches who apparently had gone to the pastor, and after more than 25 years of marriage, she realized that her situation wasn't safe and she needed to make changes. So the pastor said, you're a psychologist, you talk to people! I do, but not not really. He said he didn't know what to do with domestic violence. We started looking in the church to see if there were any resources and there were some, but the big problem was they were all in English so it wasn't really helping the Hispanic churches. In the process of looking for information for that pastor, I started to see the church has resources that most people don't know about, and it's not accessible to all. I started to wonder how I can bring that to Hispanic churches and that's where a lot of my research and work focused. I would volunteer to translate documents, and at this point there are translated materials in at least three or four languages each year for enditnow, and they're freely available on the [website](#). And people always say, oh, that's a topic I may not know a lot about, but the great thing is that it comes with a sermon, a children's story, a Sabbath school activity, all of these resources and it's easy for anybody to use.

### **What are some of the biggest takeaways that you've gotten from your work in this field?**

I would say my biggest takeaways are from the survivors who I've had the privilege of working with. This is a topic that can get really depressing and really challenges your hope very quickly. But the stories of resilience from survivors are meaningful, the way they've survived in the face of extreme adversity and challenges. They

found a way to keep their faith and many of them even talk about how their faith has helped them through it and then use that to share with others. In part what gives them the courage to tell their story is that it could potentially help other victims. When I talk to them, there's this amazing desire to not stay in the place of hurt but to use it to propel them forward into sharing God's love and God's hope and God's vision for what healthy homes and healthy relationships should look like.

**What are some ways that you think we can all be better advocates and be more aware of these issues?**

So number one is acknowledging that it happens. Dr. Renee Drum is a researcher who has done the most work in the church, and between her research and mine and a few others that are out there. Unfortunately, what we know is that rates of abuse and perpetration are about the same in the church as they are outside of the church. But if more people were aware that it is happening, and it's happening in the church, that the statistic is still about one out of four women will at some point experience sexual assault, and one in six men. This is an issue we have to address in our churches, so first awareness, and then education. What do we really know about this? Because domestic violence is a pattern of abuse, it's not just a one time thing. It's not just one way, it can happen in so many different ways. There's financial abuse, spiritual abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, verbal abuse, immigration abuse, etc. and if we each got some education about the subject from good sources that's a great start. The second step is to educate yourself, and then three is to share it with others. That'll put us in a good place to transform and look at our church policies and the way that we treat people with the resources we provide so that we can see changes in our own churches and congregations and communities. We can then use that to really be the light of the world which is what we're called to be, and take the way we've worked through this and share it with others to give them hope. We need to be able to show how things can be overcome with the love of Jesus. And again, I say that I've lost hope often and my survivors are usually the ones that bring it back.

HUMANS

# Dean Spotlight Interview: Alyssa Palmer

Lauren Kim 12.01.23



Photo by Alyssa Palmer

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*This week, I sat down with Alyssa Palmer (Office of Campus and Student Life) to talk about her interests, hobbies, and experience at Andrews. She explains some of the motivations and how she has ended up where she is today.*

## **Tell us about yourself! (Hobbies, interests, facts, etc.)**

You wouldn't be able to tell by my accent, but I was born in Jamaica and lived there for the first eight years of my life. My family later migrated to the Cayman Islands, where we lived for two years before settling in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I love gardening, taking long walks, and watching British period dramas.

**Why did you decide to study law in your undergrad years? What were some of your incentives/motivations?**

I have a passion for public health policy, which drove me to pursue a law degree. I was motivated to increase access to healthcare for children and wanted to effect change through legislative advocacy. I did that as a program manager for three years with the Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin before coming to Andrews.

**What are some of the things you are involved with on campus?**

I wear a dual hat here at Andrews. As the Assistant Vice President for Campus and Student Life, I serve as the vice chair for the Student Life Conduct Council, the parent and supporter liaison, and the supervisor for the Office of Student Involvement, Leadership, and Activities (SILA). As Title IX Coordinator, I coordinate the institution's compliance with Title IX legislation, including receiving notices of sex-based harassment and overseeing formal grievance processes.

**What are your plans for the future from here?**

I would like to continue supporting students through my work as a Dean and Title IX Coordinator. I have enjoyed my time growing and developing in this field. There is always something new to learn and that keeps me on my toes.

**How did you decide to come to Andrews? What do you like/dislike about AU?**

My husband, Dr. Rodney Palmer, was invited to join the faculty of the Department of Religion and Biblical Languages. We felt God opening this door, so we made the decision to come to Andrews. It was at Andrews that I fell in love with the field of Title IX. I appreciate that at Andrews, I have been encouraged to grow professionally in this area. As a city girl, I sometimes wish AU was closer to the city, but Berrien Springs does grow on you. I like to remind myself that I get the best of both worlds an hour and a half away from Grand Rapids or Chicago but without the traffic.

**Do you have any advice for the current AU students?**

When I was in college, someone once said I should enjoy this time because I was living the best time of my life. I brushed it off then, but in hindsight, there was wisdom in those words. Enjoy your college experience: travel, meet new people, learn new things. You won't regret it.



## HUMANS

# Maya Sukumaran's Exploration: Unraveling the Neurobiology of Cricket Behavior

Nick Bishop 12.01.23

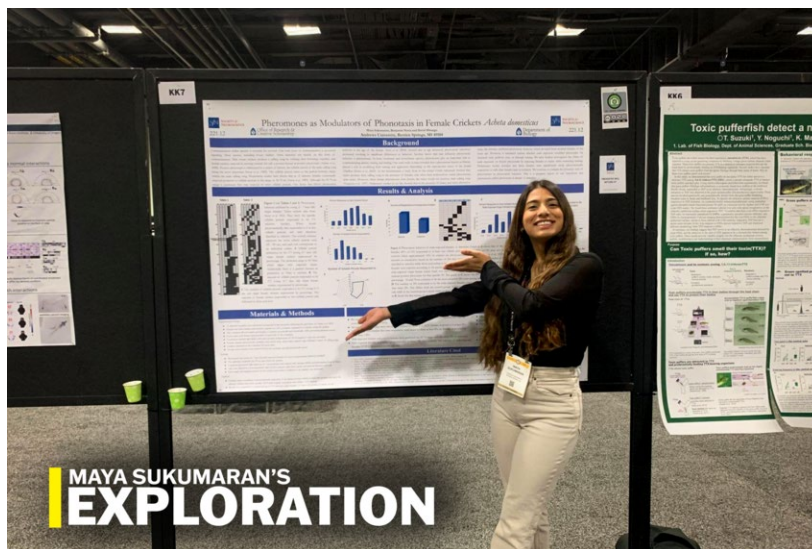


Photo by Maya Sukumaran

*Maya Sukumaran (senior, biology) emerges as a beacon of scientific inquiry and dedication to neurobiology exploration. Nestled within the neurobiology cricket lab and under the guidance of Dr. Navia and Dr. Mbungu, Maya's research reflects a saga of persistence, unexpected revelations, and a hunger for knowledge. Her odyssey is a testament to scientific curiosity, delving into the complexities of cricket behavior—from investigating the impact of pheromones to navigating the challenges inherent in scientific pursuit.*

*As we delve deeper into Maya Sukumaran's journey, this article channels her relentless pursuit of understanding, shedding light on neurobiology's intricacies while charting new frontiers in scientific exploration. While personal sentiments might incline me to claim a*

*beautiful brilliance, the observations of Maya's contributions to the realm of science resonate profoundly. Join us on this expedition through Maya Sukumaran's venture into the mesmerizing world of cricket neurobiology.*

### **Can you introduce yourself and your area of study?**

I am Maya Sukumaran, a member of the neurobiology cricket lab overseen by Dr. Navia and Dr. Mbungu.

### **Could you provide an overview of your research project?**

Within this lab, my project builds upon prior research endeavors, aiming to unravel the impact of male pheromones on female cricket behavior. Initially, we undertake a comprehensive behavioral analysis, paving the way for subsequent exploration using electrophysiology to map the neuronal pathways associated with this behavior. My role revolves around confirming the influence of pheromones on behavior before embarking on the process of electrophysiology.

### **What inspired or motivated you to pursue this particular research topic?**

My motivation to pursue this research stems from a deep love for neuroscience, which has guided my academic journey. With a dedicated concentration in neuroscience within my biology degree, the lab I chose aligned seamlessly with my educational background, making it a perfect fit for my interests.

Additionally, pheromones and their behavioral effects have always fascinated me. As current research continues to unveil how pheromones impact mammals, including humans, I recognized an exciting avenue for exploration. The intricate nature of these chemical signals and their profound impact on behavior significantly affect our comprehension of fundamental neuroscience principles and human interactions. Employing a model organism like the cricket offers a unique opportunity to unearth crucial insights that transcend mere insect biology.

### **How did you initiate your research project? What was your starting point?**

When I joined the lab, Dr. Navia gave me tons of research papers to read. These papers allowed me to get familiar with what the world of neuroscience knows about crickets as a model organism. One article intrigued me; it was the honors thesis of a recent Andrews graduate. This student did a behavioral study on female crickets, and her results were promising; however, it was only preliminary research, and her sample size was small. Additionally, there needed to be more in the experimental setup. After speaking to my advisor about the paper, I proposed

to re-run this study to verify the results by adding tighter restrictions on the experimental analysis. Together, we worked on a new approach to the study, and then I was on my way!

### **What methodologies or approaches did you employ in your research?**

A week before conducting trials on my crickets, they are carefully housed in a divided container, enabling exposure of female crickets to males while preventing mating. This setup preserves intact chemical communication, eliminating any potential interfering factors.

We utilize a specialized non-compensating spherical treadmill equipped with a front-facing speaker to assess cricket behavior within our laboratory. Female crickets are affixed to the treadmill, and an array of male calling songs is played through the speaker. Subsequently, we meticulously track the crickets' responses to these calls using the sophisticated computer system known as Optical Krugal. This cutting-edge technology allows us to monitor the cricket's movements precisely and ascertain its reaction to male calls. Subsequently, my crickets are juxtaposed against a control group to discern disparities in their responses to male calls.

### **What were the significant challenges you faced during your research journey?**

One of the most formidable challenges I faced during my research journey was the disheartening sense of stagnation. Spending extensive hours in the lab, I encountered instances where my efforts seemed fruitless – my crickets either displayed no response or unexpectedly escaped midway through experiments. These moments left me with an overwhelming sense of frustration and doubt, as it felt like a perpetual struggle to obtain meaningful results or valid data. Even when I did get results, they frequently contradicted my expectations, leaving me perplexed and questioning the efficacy of my approach. These challenges tested my resilience and pushed me to persist in uncertainty, fostering adaptability and perseverance in my research endeavors.

### **How did you overcome these challenges or adapt your approach?**

I persisted by maintaining my dedication, consistently testing my crickets week after week, and steadily accumulating data, albeit at a gradual pace. Adapting my approach required a shift in mindset – acknowledging that even instances with no discernible results were, in essence, valuable outcomes in themselves. Embracing

this perspective shift allowed me to recognize that every experiment, regardless of the outcome, contributed to the overarching progress of my research.

**What have been the most significant lessons or insights gained from this project?**

I underwent a crucial learning curve during my research journey, realizing that expectations rarely align with outcomes in scientific exploration. Often, I anticipated specific results only to uncover the unexpected, propelling me toward entirely new inquiries. My narrow focus on seeking predetermined outcomes obscured the reality that each finding, even if divergent from my expectations, unearthed novel and captivating discoveries. This experience emphasized the necessity of relinquishing rigid expectations in research, as they often lead to disappointment. Instead, implementing an open-minded approach became paramount, enabling me to embrace the broader context and significance of peculiar or unconventional data.

**What aspects of your research do you find most engaging or exciting?**

The most captivating aspect of my research is attributing meaning to my results. As I examine the data, a process that involves asking numerous questions, conducting statistical analyses, and creating visual representations. I am on the journey of deciphering what I am observing and why. This process represents the culmination of extensive data collection efforts. It is the critical point where I discover answers to my research questions. What makes this part of my research particularly engaging is the sense of accomplishment it brings. After investing hours in data collection, I finally witnessed the transformation of raw data into meaningful insights. It's crazy to see how a compilation of seemingly simple data can be used to explain profound processes and unveil new discoveries.

**What advice would you give to other students starting their research projects?**

Take advantage of your resources. Do not be afraid of your research advisors; ask them questions! Let them help you figure out the struggles you may be facing in your research. On the other hand, if you have new ideas or solutions, feel free to suggest changes. You have a common goal, and communication will allow you to work together cohesively. Another piece of advice is to be patient. Research is not something that is done quickly or without trial and error. Follow through with your ideas, and keep going because answers may be right around the corner!

## **What are your future plans, or how do you envision this research contributing to your academic or professional journey?**

This research experience is integral to my future as I strive to become a missionary doctor advocating for the underserved. The skills I've cultivated, such as resilience and problem-solving, will be vital in navigating resource limitations often encountered in missionary work. I aim to utilize these abilities to provide better healthcare in underserved regions. I plan to leverage my skills to mentor and inspire women globally to embrace STEM fields.

## **Arts & Entertainment**

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### ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## **AUSO's Vienna Classics Concert**

Nate Miller [12.01.23](#)



Photo by Darren Heslop

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*On November 18, the Andrews University Symphony Orchestra (AUSO) performed “Vienna Classics,” a concert with a lovely selection of classical music. The concert featured Mailyn Iribar (sophomore, violin performance), who performed all three movements of Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219. Here are some thoughts on the concert and on performing in general. from musically-involved students who participated in and watched the concert.*

*Students’ favorite things about the Vienna Classics concert:*

**Addison Randall (freshman, speech pathology, music with cello concentration, Spanish)**

My favorite thing about the concert was how Jesús [Parra (junior, viola performance)] conducted the entire Beethoven overture by memory. You could tell that he was really passionate about the music and he was making eye contact with the musicians, and it was a really exciting piece to play. Also, Beethoven is incredible, so there’s that.

**Ellie Sauser (freshman, music)**

I really liked playing the Egmont symphony and playing with a new conductor (Jesús Parra). Jesus is a very talented young conductor who just won a conducting competition in Denver, where he got to conduct the Denver Symphony Orchestra. It’s always an exciting experience to collaborate with up-and-coming young artists.

**Jon Clough (freshman, voice performance)**

My favorite thing about the concert would probably be Mailyn’s awesome Mozart concerto. She just plays Mozart really really well. She really captures the delicate nature of Mozart’s composition and plays with such elegance, but also, when you got to the third movement, she was able to pull that off really, really well. There was just a high level of musicianship. There was Beethoven, too and I love me some Beethoven.

**Mailyn Iribar (sophomore, violin performance)**

My favorite part was actually sharing what I was feeling with the audience. Every time that I perform, I feel like I can share God’s presence with who is listening to me. I try to look for God through the music, and I think that sharing that with the audience so they can also feel God’s presence is my favorite part of it.

*Students’ thoughts on the difference between performing onstage and listening to a performance*

## **Addison Randall**

I think performing gives you a different point of view, and it's way more fun to be up on stage and to hear the music coming from where you're sitting than to be out in the audience. I personally think it's more fun, at least.

I think as a performer, we also tend to find all the things that went wrong in a concert, but if you're in the audience, you don't really hear what went wrong, unless it's super obvious. It's important for performers to remember that the mistakes that we make on stage that only we're going to notice are not as important as the impact that we're making on our audience members.

## **Ellie Sauser**

One, you get to look at the audiences' reactions, those are always fun. But there's also, even in praise music and CCM (contemporary Christian music) and whatnot, I feel like you get a lot more from the music when you're playing it. I feel like you can always sit back and listen to the music, but when you're performing it, you are the music, you're producing it. It's a positive experience and everyone should join the orchestra.

## **Jon Clough**

I think, when I am onstage, it's very very easy for me to be very critical and pick a performance apart to shreds. I don't think I've ever been fully satisfied with a performance when I'm onstage, but when I'm in the audience I'm more removed and can more fully see the artwork in it. I'm much less drawn to the mistakes and much more drawn to the overall musicality of it. As an audience member, I am much more able to just let the music speak and not pick it apart for technical errors.

## **Mailyn Iribar**

Of course there's a difference, because in both ways you are either sharing or receiving music. When you're in the audience, you receive what the performer is trying to share, and when you are performing, you are sharing that. So in both parts, you gain something.

*Andrews University is lucky to have so many talented music students on campus, and the Vienna Classics concert was just one of the many ways that students and community*

members got to appreciate them. For a full list of upcoming Andrews University music ensemble performances, visit <https://howard.andrews.edu/>.

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

# Discovering the Fine Arts Program

Amelia Stefanescu 12.01.23



Photo by Daian Gan

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Andrews University provides a nice array of choices when it comes to choosing an undergraduate degree. From the myriad of different programs offered, it is high time for us to highlight the [Fine Arts](#) program. Anyone interested in physical art of any kind, especially oils, acrylic, watercolor, graphite, and pastel, can benefit from this fun and creative program.

The Fine Arts program is offered either as a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) or a BA (Bachelor of Arts). A BFA is better suited for “students who want to combine intensive studio art practice with a liberal arts education.” This means that classes will focus more on the technicalities of art and will include plenty of studio work. An Art BA, on the other hand, is better suited for students who want to layer other studies with their Fine Arts program, so double majors are encouraged to take it. It



can easily be combined with pre-professional programs such as pre-art therapy, pre-medicine, and pre-dentistry.

The types of classes offered in the Fine Arts program range from Art History classes such as “Renaissance to Modern Art” (ART326) to Studio Electives such as “Printmaking I” (ART106) and “Ceramics I” (ART107). Many of these classes involve a hands-on approach to art and aim to provide students with extensive knowledge and skills in many different art mediums while also teaching them the theory behind it all. One of the key strengths of the program lies in its emphasis on experimentation and personal expression. Yejin Seo (senior, art) described the program as “basically stress-free other than heavy studio hours.” Students are encouraged to push boundaries, think critically, and develop a unique artistic voice. This hands-on approach fosters a dynamic learning environment where creativity flourishes.

So, what can one do with a degree in Fine Arts?

Options are plentiful, but they do require work and dedication! With a BFA, graduates can go on to become professional artists, university professors (MFA required), museum or gallery curators, exhibition designers, and medical illustrators, among others. A BA opens the doors to art historians (PhD required), archaeologists (PhD required), and art therapists (MA/PhD required). Obviously, higher education is needed for a professional career in the field of art, with many of these jobs requiring masters and PhDs.

In conclusion, Andrews University's comprehensive selection of undergraduate degrees includes a gem in the form of the Fine Arts program. Aspiring artists will find a vibrant and enriching educational experience within this creative haven.

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

# What Do Murder and Law School Have in Common?

Amelia Stefanescu 12.01.23



Photo by ABC

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Like with everybody on this campus, Thanksgiving break was the week I decided to get work done. Did I? Definitely not. What did I do instead? I went on a “How To Get Away With Murder” spree.

As the classroom floods with first-year law students, the professor, Dr. Keating, begins the class period ominously, saying, “This is Criminal Law 100. Or, as I prefer to call it, ‘How To Get Away With Murder.’” Little did some of those students know that that class would quite literally become their guide to getting away with murder.

The first episode had me on the edge of my seat, constantly switching from the present to the future, leaving me wondering how in the world we would get from point A to point B. We start the show off with four law students deciding how to cover their tracks after they assisted in the murder of an unknown victim. Just a few moments later, we meet those same students months before that event, just as they start law school at Middleton University. The show is quite fast-paced, with every episode leaving you with more questions than you had the previous one.

Besides the obvious focus on the students and their journey toward the inevitable oncoming murder, each episode deals with a different criminal case. Dr. Keating leads the students through the process, advising them and helping them figure out how to gather information and argue their points in court. She places a lot of importance on giving her students a hands-on approach to learning, so she

launches them into life as a criminal lawyer by involving them in her cases. It was quite interesting to witness Dr. Keating turning cases around through her cleverness and talent at argumentation in court.

The most riveting character by far was Dr. Annalise Keating. Her layered personality makes it impossible to guess her next move, especially as we see her get more and more involved with the oncoming murder. Viola Davis plays the character beautifully, radiating power and confidence in Keating's complicated role.

While this show is nowhere near law school-accurate, it was still a great opportunity to learn about the various legal processes involved in criminal cases and to put your detective eye to use. The twists and turns would keep me on my toes, and I can't say that I got bored (at least during the first season; we'll have to see about the rest). If you are ready to be thrown into the complicated story of not only how a group of law students got away with murder but also how they got to that point in the first place, then you should definitely give "How To Get Away With Murder" a try.

# News

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## NEWS

# AU Abroad

Katie Davis 12.01.23



Photo by Aaron Moushon

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Traveling and studying abroad is one of the best experiences that you can have. Andrews University offers many travel abroad opportunities, such as Adventist College Abroad (ACA), departmental study tours to Europe, South America, and the Middle East, and an archaeological field school with the Behavioral Science department and Seminary to Jordan. This year, Andrews University is offering a short study abroad program. I contacted Aaron Moushon, the organizer of this program. This article will explore more about this program and how to get involved if you are interested in studying and want to integrate into another culture.

Aaron Moushon describes how “the tour is interdisciplinary and offers six different courses.” You can visit [here](#) if you would like to learn more about the courses that

are offered. Professor Moushon discussed how “this program has two separate locations, [the] United Kingdom and France.” “Our tour is not designed to be a traveling tour,” he said. “Instead, we stay in the same location for three weeks to really immerse ourselves within the community and culture. Since the colleges are near the communities, we get a chance to bond with the locals. At our Newbold location in the UK, we live in a small village, and our students can hang out at the local coffee shops and food vendors, as well as do several community projects. However, our France location offers a more intimate connection with the locals that allows students to participate in various activities. Some of them include performing concerts in the town square, working with local artists in their studios, and doing a community gardening project. What makes this tour unique is that we get to spend more time with the locals and make relationships with them.”

As mentioned above, the study tour is mostly about local engagement and cultural exchange. Professor Moushon describes how “students will live in a community and have a lot more flexibility and free time than other tours that are constantly traveling. It’s less tour and more field school. You will have class in the morning and have your afternoon free to take off to London with friends. Any student can participate in this tour. Most of the courses offered are general education courses, and we even offer topics courses to assist Juniors and Seniors. Since this program is only a three-credit hour tour, it is about half of the cost of any other tour. Students who receive denominational subsidy can receive that for tours. We did a similar tour last year, and our students had a great experience!”

If you have any questions or if you are interested in going you can contact Mr. Moushon at [moushona@andrews.edu](mailto:moushona@andrews.edu) and you can register and see more details and information about the study at this [link](#).

## NEWS

# Context, Changes, Reactions, What's Coming: VP to Assistant to the President

Lily Burke 12.01.23



Photo by Darren Heslop

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Andrews University is tied for the [most](#) ethnically diverse national university campus. Diversity has long been an integral part of the Andrews University community and conversations, and recent changes have brought that conversation to the forefront yet again. A review of the history of the chief diversity officer position and an exploration of the change that is happening can situate readers as they make sense of some of the reactions that have happened recently, and wonder what may happen next.

To understand the changes that are happening now, it is important to be familiar with the historical context. The position of Vice President (VP) of Diversity and

Inclusion was first established in 2017, after years of the [Diversity Council](#), founded in 2003-2004, calling for an establishment of a role like it.

A series of events in the spring of 2017 [precipitated](#) the creation of this position. For Black History Weekend (February 9 -11, 2017), a guest speaker came to present for chapel. In his talk, he made comments that some students found to be divisive, and these students complained to the administration. The next week, February 16, at chapel, Provost Christon Arthur apologized for the speaker's sermon. Many students were disturbed by this apology, as they felt that the chapel speaker had brought up important points that the apology was dismissing. A group of these students organized, and on Sabbath afternoon, February 18, they released a video called #ItIsTimeAU, which was a PSA expressing the concerns and experiences of Black students at Andrews University. That video can be watched here: [#ItIsTimeAU](#). This video rapidly went viral, garnering many views, shares, and comments.

On February 23, 2017, Andrews posted an official response [video](#) to the It Is Time video, where members of the administration thanked the students for voicing their concerns, and apologized for Andrews' history of racial bias, mentioning specific acts that have happened at Andrews. In the video, members of Andrews administration pledged to make specific changes, the first of which was to begin a search for a full-time senior level administrator of diversity.

This search was a collaborative and open [process](#), with a search committee "made up of 13 members, all Andrews University administration, faculty, staff and students, and chaired by President Luxton." The process also included public presentations to the campus community of the applicants' vision. The process resulted in Michael Nixon being hired as the inaugural Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, starting on August 1, 2017. During his time as VP, he worked with the administration to develop his position. In August 2021, the job title was changed to Vice President for University Culture and Inclusion, as the first step in a broader vision to expand the office and bring diversity into all the aspects of the university's mission.

On Tuesday, March 7, 2023, it was [announced](#) that Dr. John Wesley Taylor V would be the new Andrews University president following Dr. Andrea Luxton's retirement. There was a substantial amount of conversation surrounding the presidential election. On March 6, a day before the voting would take place, an [article](#) began circulating on social media, prompting [discussions](#) on campus

about the then president-elect's potential view on the values of diversity and inclusion, "specifically as it relates to various cultural expressions by individuals of various races and nationalities."

On April 17, 2023, President Luxton sent out an email announcing that VP Nixon would be leaving Andrews to be the director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Beacon Health System. On May 3, 2023, President Luxton sent an email telling the campus that she and President-elect (at the time) Taylor had worked together, and that "once he is in place, he will start a formal search process to fill the important responsibilities of our Chief Diversity Officer (CDO)/vice president for University Culture & Inclusion that together make up Michael's portfolio. The current goal is to have a new CDO/VP in place by the end of this calendar year." Further, Dr. Danielle Pilgrim (known to many as Chap D) was asked to serve as the full-time interim Chief Diversity Officer.

President Taylor has released a [statement](#) on diversity, exploring diversity through Biblical references, and stating that "we have made progress here at Andrews University, but there is still more to do." He concludes the letter with some general commitments regarding intercultural relations, student resources, and representation of diversity, promising that *"together, we will use the incredible diversity of our University to inspire and build an exemplary community—united in mission, committed to truth as it is in Jesus, and reflecting the qualities of the family of God."*

On Wednesday, November 22, 2023 around 5 pm—during Thanksgiving break—President Taylor sent out an email providing an "Update on Diversity Officer Search & Thanksgiving Greetings." Before this email was sent out, a [job posting](#) appeared on the Andrews website. In this email, President Taylor asserted his commitment to "affirming and deepening a university community and campus culture that will value and actively support diversity within the context of the [mission](#) and [values](#) of the University and the Seventh-day Adventist Church." He announced that the diversity officer of Andrews University would now be an Assistant to the President for University Mission and Culture, rather than the Vice President position that has been the diversity officer since 2017.

This comparison between the job description for the current Assistant to the President position versus the job description for the VP of Diversity and Inclusion (the original name of the VP of University Culture and Inclusion position) shows that there are several striking changes.



A graphic that has been circulating shows a [comparison](#), with the Assistant to the President position in red, slashed text showing what is absent from the new position that was present in the Vice President position, and black text showing what is consistent between the two.

Some have [pointed out](#) that “Replacing the title of ‘Vice President’ with ‘Assistant’ has increased fears that there will be a shift in empowerment and autonomy for the diversity and inclusion effort, creating a less influential position that is not institutionalized,” and highlighted that, in the new position, “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) experience/leadership is not required, there are no supervisory responsibilities in chairing the existing Diversity Council, and there is no mention within the position of continuing the [Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Center](#) work on campus,” along with no mention of “the stewardship and continuation of a \$38,800 grant that Andrews received in 2022.”

There have been many responses to the announcement. On Friday, November 24, the Faculty Senate Executive Officers sent out a form where faculty could submit questions. On the morning of Monday, November 27, a group of students emailed President Taylor requesting a meeting with him to discuss these changes as soon as possible, and obtained a meeting for the middle of next week. On Monday, November 27, a faculty meeting was held, where there was a question and answer session with President Taylor. Beyond these campus discussions, the conversation has widened to various media outlets that have published content on the change, from Adventist Today’s [article](#) to Fulcrum7’s [work](#).

Many Andrews students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members are taking action to express their concerns regarding this change. Some alumni are pushing for social media [campaigns](#) to voice their thoughts to the Andrews administration. On November 28, a group of Andrews students published a [petition](#) to ‘save the VP of Diversity and Inclusion officer position,’ aiming to make the petition a site for gathering the thoughts of those concerned in one place.

For Andrews students, there is a senate-sponsored Town Hall scheduled on Wednesday, December 6 at 7 - 8:30 pm in Newbold Auditorium, where students can ask questions of the Administrative Team at this [link](#). As this Town Hall will take place the week before finals week, a very busy time for students, many students are deeply concerned that they will not be able to adequately express their thoughts to administration, and hope for more Town Halls or other events or

spaces after the break to communicate with administration. Other reflections on the timing of the announcement are concerned that the holiday season and winter break will disrupt meaningful conversations about this change.

Knowing the historical context of the VP for Diversity and Inclusion position helps facilitate understanding of the current changes, and sheds light on the kinds of responses coming from various members of the Andrews community. In his first [message](#) to the Andrews campus after his election, President Taylor promised to be “accessible and approachable,” and to “listen to your concerns, engage in open dialogue, and work together to address the challenges that may face our community.” Many members of the Andrews community look forward to enjoying this promised open dialogue with President Taylor and his team.

### **Update:**

The following is a link prepared and provided to us by the Office of the President after our original publication. It is entitled “An Update on our Current Search Process for the Mission & Culture Position.” <https://www.andrews.edu/agenda/64520>

## NEWS

# Founding of Andrews University

Kiheon Chung 12.01.23

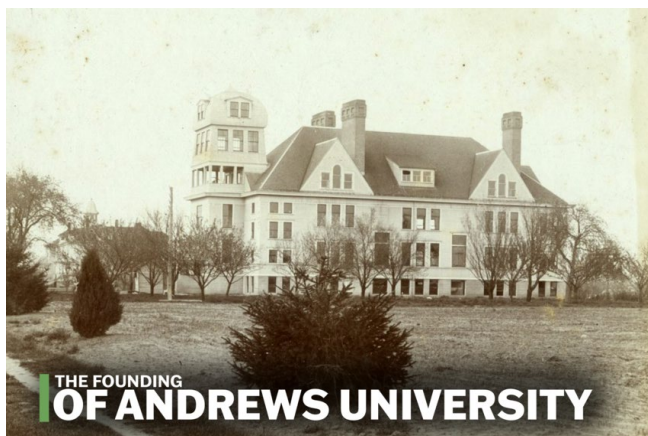


Photo by Center for Adventist Research

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## **Introduction**

As we approach the end of the year, Andrews University is on the brink of entering 2024, commemorating the 150th anniversary of its establishment. While celebrating its enduring legacy is important, it is equally crucial to reflect on the institution's history. Understanding the past not only allows us to appreciate our longstanding journey but also serves as a guide for the future, helping us refocus on our original goals and navigate the path ahead. In this article, it will look into the history behind the university's founding, tracing its roots from the Millerite movement to the establishment of Battle Creek College in 1874.

### **Early Influences on Education: 1840s ~ 1850s**

During the infant stages of organizational and institutional development of the Seventh-day Adventist church, there was a notable lack of emphasis on education. Many Adventists regarded education as useless, hindering work for the Kingdom of God. This perspective originated from the Millerites, who believed in the imminent Second coming of Christ. After all, what is the need for an education if Christ is coming soon? Consequently, many early Adventists failed to recognize the importance of education (Knight, 75).

In the 1850s, Adventists slowly shifted their perspective on the need for education (Schwarz, 120). This change in attitude was spurred as the church refined its doctrine on the second coming of Christ. While emphasizing the soon return of Christ, the church made a deliberate decision not to fixate on a specific date but rather anticipate His coming in a near, unknown future. On the issue of the second coming, Ellen White wrote, “the fact that Christ is very soon coming is no reason why the mind should not be improved” (RH, Dec. 23, 1862). As a result, Adventists shifted their focus to life on earth, including education, leading to the development of educational institutions.

### **Early Development of Educational Institution: 1850s ~ 1870s**

#### 1) Home Schools – early 1850s

During the initial phase, the educational system within the SDA church primarily centered around home schools, where parents taught fundamental knowledge and practical skills. Many Adventists held negative opinions about public schools due to concerns such as vulgar language and incidents of fighting. Thus, parents felt

the responsibility to shield their children from secular influences. However, the limitations of home schooling soon became apparent as many parents lacked the necessary skills and methods to effectively instruct their children (Schwarz 120).

## 2) Early SDA School – late 1850s

Towards the end of the 1850s, individual Adventists initiated efforts to establish schools for children. In 1858, James White invited John Byington to open a school in Battle Creek for children in areas where homeschooling was not accessible. The tuition was set at \$2.25 per student for a 12-week term. Unfortunately, this early effort to provide education for children was eventually abandoned due to insufficient support for the teacher (Schwarz, 121).

## 3) Bell's Select School – 1872

In 1867, Goodloe Harper Bell, a public school teacher, initiated lessons in grammar and writing for young men employed at the Review & Herald publishing house. Initially, most of Bell's classes operated as private lessons, as the Battle Creek church hesitated to sponsor a teacher. However, with the increasing settlement of young Adventists in the Battle Creek area, the denomination began to actively consider establishing a school for the youth (Schwarz, 121-122).

By May of 1872, the General Conference committee made a decision to take the financial and administrative responsibilities for the school, which started in June of the same year (Schwarz 125). The General Conference stated the purpose of this school was to equip students "with the teachings of the Bible in reference to those great truths which pertain to this time" (RH, May 7, 1872). Thus, the Battle Creek School of 1872, with Bell and the 12 students, became the first school in the Seventh-day Adventist church to receive denominational support (Knight, 77).

## 4) Battle Creek College - 1874

In 1874, the Seventh-day Adventist Educational Society became a legal organization, becoming the Battle Creek College. Under the leadership of principal Sidney Brownsberger, Battle Creek College emerged as a pivotal institution in Adventist education, setting a standard for other Adventist schools in terms of what the school should accomplish (Schwarz, 127-128). George Knight, SDA church historian, wrote, "Butler and the school committee stressed that the purpose of the school was to teach the Bible... They wanted a school centered on the Word of God" (Knight, 77).

## **Final Statement**

As we reflect on the historical journey of Andrews University, we see a story of transformation and dedication. From the early days of skepticism about education to the establishment of Battle Creek College, it has shown a steadfast commitment to change, improvement, and learning. Today, as we approach the 150th anniversary, let us remember our history and the purpose for which Battle Creek College was founded: to shield young minds from worldly influence and to teach the word of God.

Sources:

- “A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists” - 3rd edition, George R. Knight
- “Light Bearers to the Remnant” - R. W. Schwarz

For Extra Reading:

- "As We Set Forth" - Meredith Jones-Gray

## NEWS

# Israel-Gaza Follow Up

Robert Zhang [12.01.23](#)

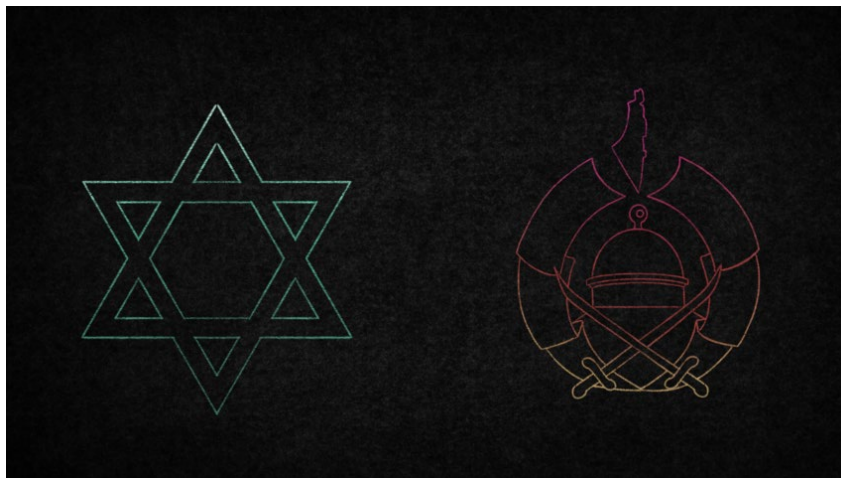


Photo by Alyssa Joo

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The resolution calling for a 'humanitarian truce' in the [United Nations General Assembly](#) was passed (with 121 in favor, 14 against, and 44 abstentions) on October 27, along the United Nations Security Council subsequently passed it under the gaze of the whole world. The [Security Council](#) adopted a resolution on November 15, calling for the immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas and the urgent extension of humanitarian corridors throughout the enclave to save and protect civilian lives. This resolution was adopted after 4 unsuccessful attempts to take action last month, with 12 members voting in favor, none against, 3 abstentions (Russia, UK, USA); this is also the first draft on the Palestinian-Israeli issue passed by the Security Council since [2016](#) (since the Trump Presidency began).

The four rejected agreements were provided by [Brazil](#), [Russia](#) (twice), and the [United States](#). The biggest disagreements among them are as follows: whether Hamas's attack is a terrorist attack (that is, whether Israel's counterattack is a just act of counter-terrorism), whether it condemns attacks on all civilians (or only attacks on Israeli civilians), and whether a humanitarian ceasefire (or pause) should be urged. The adopted draft resolution is more unfavorable to Israel than Brazil's rejected draft agreement because it does not clearly identify Hamas as a terrorist organization nor condemn its action as terrorist acts, but only "moderately" demands that both parties agree to 'a humanitarian pause' rather than a ceasefire. After the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution, all parties in the Security Council made a lot of compromises in order to pass a resolution as soon as possible. As the last speaker at the meeting, Israel's Deputy Permanent Representative [Brett Jonathan Miller](#) said that the resolution was "out of touch with reality." Yet, he also indicates that if Hamas chooses to lay down its weapons, surrender, and hand over the hostages unharmed, the war will end immediately.

With the adoption of the Security Council's resolution, and with Hamas's successive release of hostages; on [November](#) 24, a truce was achieved in Gaza. On the Friday when the truce was implemented (the 24th), 200 trucks departed from the Israeli town of Nizana and headed for the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reception points in Gaza unloaded the cargo of 137 trucks from there, which is the largest humanitarian convoy received since the start of hostilities on October 7. Additionally, 129,000 liters of fuel and four truckloads of

natural gas entered Gaza, and 21 critically ill patients were evacuated from the northern part of the enclave in a massive medical operation.

On the eve of the start of the truce at 7 am on Friday, the United Nations Office for the [Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA) noted an increase in bombings and violent clashes, saying Israeli attacks from the air, land, and sea had intensified across much of Gaza; at the same time, ground fighting broke out between Israel Defense Force and Palestinian armed groups in the northern Gaza, particularly in Jabaliya area, with many casualties reported. Of the 24 hospitals in the pre-war northern region, 22 were out of service or unable to admit new patients, while 8 of the 11 medical facilities in the southern region were still functioning. The [WHO](#) said only one of them has the capacity to treat severe trauma cases or perform complex surgeries. It is estimated that more than 1.7 million people are internally displaced in Gaza, with approximately [1 million](#) of them living in more than 150 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) shelters in the Gaza Strip.

It is regrettable to see the antagonism of the Security Council becoming more and more apparent. At least it is gratifying that this mechanism is still working and has brought a slightly belated solution. Such peace is hard-won, and it is unknown how long it will last. As of November 21, a total of [104](#) UNRWA staff had died on the front line, and at least 40 percent have been killed south of Wadi Gaza. Let us pay tribute to the United Nations personnel who are fighting on the front line for their lives, and rejoice in the hard-won peace.

NEWS

# Second Annual AU Shark Tank Features Intriguing Proposals

Andrew Francis [12.01.23](#)



Photo by Nathaniel Reid

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Andrews University's own Provost, Dr Christon Arthur, hosted the Second Annual Shark Tank competition on Friday, November 17. Dr. Arthur began the program by introducing the two contestant groups after sending out various invites in prior weeks for students and staff to attend the co-curricular event in Buller Hall's Newbold Auditorium. Two groups composed of faculty and staff members of Andrews University, the James White Library Department and Mathematics Department, presented to the audience.

The James White Library Department presented first with the title "Expanding Access and Facilitating Academic Success." The representatives of the initiative that gave the PowerPoint presentation and answered questions from the panel of judges, or "Sharks," were Margaret Adeogun, a Professor of Library Science, and Paulette McLean Johnson, the Dean of Libraries. They were also accompanied by



Seminary Librarian and Associate Dean Terry Robertson, who provided moral support. Their initiative seeks to provide a stipend and professional development support to faculty who develop Open Education Resources (OERs), literature for classes that are made publicly available, making them available to students online anytime. OERs help reduce costs for textbooks and other class resources from approximately \$300 (via a cited report by Florida Virtual Campus in 2022) a semester to being close to or completely free. OERs are often of as good quality or better than traditionally rented or bought textbooks.

This project, were it to be successful, comes into direct confrontation with Andrews University's Bookstore's partnership with Barnes and Noble and their "First Day Complete" system. When asked about this confrontation, Johnson shared that OERs can provide "an alternative" instead of completely doing away with First Day Complete. Dr. Arthur added that "the effectiveness of both systems would be evaluated," and future steps would be taken to address what would be most practical and beneficial for the university. Another question that was brought up by one of the Shark panelists is how the development of OERs would take away from tuition costs and possibly hurt Andrews' bottom line. However, Adeogun argued that the reduction in tuition costs for students would lead to "a greater enrollment and also retention [of students] as well." Bridging the economic gap that keeps many from starting and/or finishing higher education was a key goal of the OER initiative.

The Mathematics Department gave the second presentation, which was entitled "Access to Math and Higher Education." Department Chair Lynelle M. Weldon and Assistant Professor of Mathematics Instruction Amanda Umlauf represented the initiative and delivered a passionate PowerPoint presentation. Weldon and Umlauf began the presentation by pointing out how there seems to be a common plague of struggles for students across the United States in mathematics and its subtopics. Some racial and geographic demographics face inequitable circumstances due to either institutionalized issues or various unfortunate scenarios. Many college students are delayed or prevented from graduating because math is a requirement that they cannot meet. The potential solution that the Mathematics Department wants to pursue with the Sharks' grant money is building a partnership with the Student Success Center and the Counseling and Testing Center on Andrews' campus to provide various extra resources to students, free of charge. These resources include aligned options for developmental courses, tutoring by trained

peer tutors, counseling and coaching support, a math concierge, and ongoing improvements in content and pedagogy.

The presentation ended with the Mathematics Department asking the audience to take a survey via QR code in their slides, as well as answering a few of the questions the Sharks had. One question from the Sharks asked strongly why the practices that Weldon and Umlauf sought to adopt had not been enacted in the past. Umlauf answered that although she was unsure why certain things had not been practiced in the department before, she was sure that with them being practiced now, the department will see “increased success rates, increased graduation rates, and more positive attitudes.” Weldon also added that the department would “likely be modifying existing programs [with their proposed initiative], but we’re open to adding new ones.”

While the judges deliberated, Dr. Curtis VanderWaal, a professor and Chair of the Department of Social Work, and Gunnar Lovhoiden, a professor and Chair of the School of Engineering, gave updates on how their projects from last year’s Shark Tank had fared after winning some of the award grant money. Dr. VanderWaal shared how infusing trauma education in faculty training and curriculum has been taking place and shared a three-year plan to keep this initiative going strong in his department. Lovhoiden detailed briefly how the grant money his department received went to adding more to the Engineering curriculum and modifying and upgrading the student work space for those in the program.

The James White Library Department came into the event seeking \$50,000 for their initiative and ended up being awarded \$25,000 by the sharks. With significant growth and development with OER access and usage, Dr. Arthur stated that Johnson, Adeogun, and their team may be eligible for a full \$100,000 grant for next year’s Shark Tank. The Math Department and their presentation ended up the biggest victor of the event, being awarded a full grant of \$100,000 for their initiative.

# Ideas

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## IDEAS

# Coming Out Ministries in Berrien Springs

Erin Beers 12.01.23



Photo by Google Maps (Logos by Andrews University and Coming Out Ministries)

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*We are excited about having a facility near the campus from which we can work closely with the university faculty, staff, administration, and students who are interested in what we*

*have to offer. For some time now there has been a support group on campus working from one point of view. It should not be a problem to have another point of view close by, especially in this day and age of “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.” And I’m curious as to how a difference of opinion “causes fear for safety of students mental, physical and spiritual health.” What ever happened to “agree to disagree?” The gospel should not be blamed for causing fear for safety. That paints the gospel in a negative light.*

*– Pastor Ron Woolsey, in response to an inquiry from the author.*

There is a Seventh-day Adventist “ministry” group known as Coming Out Ministries (COM) who are under contract to purchase a building across from Andrews University. This ministry is not supported by Andrews University or the official Seventh-day Adventist Church. It believes that anyone can be converted out of a life of homosexuality and into a closer relationship with God. Their many [website videos](#) and stories of “redemption” from gay temptation are reminiscent of those found in conversion therapy groups like the denounced “Homosexuals Anonymous” (supported by the Seventh-day Adventist Church [until 1986](#)) and “Exodus International,” an ex-Gay Christian organization that was dissolved in 2012 after its own president [renounced conversion therapy](#). Now, as conversion therapy in the classic sense has been debunked and disparaged by religious, medical, and healthcare professionals—along with survivors of conversion therapy—it is being replaced with a new form that instead focuses on a change in behavior. [H. Meyer from the Williams Institute](#) describes conversion therapy in the context of religions as, “Rather than being therapy, so-called ‘conversion therapy’ is a minority stressor that reinforces stigma and conveys that being LGB is abnormal, sinful, and should be rejected.” This viewpoint is what aligns with Coming Out Ministries’ goals. They insinuate that those in the LGBTQ+ community are placing their identity before God. Beyond this in their [mission statement](#), they condemn those who “do not understand gay/homosexual deceptions” and “provide affirmation and sympathy **rather than** the hope and healing that God would have us share with this natural, yet sinful inclination.”

Now, before moving forward, I want to share with you what Pastor Ron Woolsey - Senior Speaker and Co-Founder of Coming Out Ministries - had to say when I reached out to him:

We are excited about having a facility near the campus from which we can work closely with the university faculty, staff, administration, and students [underlines added by Student Movement] who are interested in what we have to offer. For some

time now there has been a support group on campus working from one point of view. It should not be a problem to have another point of view close by, especially in this day and age of “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.”[underlines added by Student Movement]. And I’m curious as to how a difference of opinion "causes fear for safety of students mental, physical and spiritual health." What ever happened to “agree to disagree?” The gospel should not be blamed for causing fear for safety. That paints the gospel in a negative light.

According to their [website](#), “No greater joy has been experienced in our lives than that which has freed us from the chains of homosexuality.” The two co-founders of this ministry are Ron Woolsey and Michael Carducci, who both claim to have been saved from their gay lifestyle. They say they can do the same for others by “sharing their personal journeys, compassion, and the truth of God," as is promised in their mission statement. This ministry says they do not, in any way, participate in change therapy or reparative therapy, despite the many rumors saying that they do. Examples of these rumors can be found in [this article](#) by Adventist Today, [this video](#) by former SDA pastor Alicia Johnston, and [this article](#) by Kinship International. The Coming Out Ministries website contains numerous news articles, testimonies and blogs which discuss various issues they see in the church and with the LGBTQ+ community. But are they really refraining from using the tactics found in reparative or conversion therapy?

Reparative therapy is used to try and convert someone out of homosexuality and into heterosexuality through various unethical techniques. In fact, “every major medical and mental health organization in the United States has issued a statement condemning the use of conversion therapy,” according to the [Human Rights Campaign](#). Not a single mental health organization has found validity in the practice of conversion therapy. In fact, multiple [organizations](#) found that significant harm is inflicted on those who go through it. Youth rely on the guidance of therapists, mentors and spiritual leaders for various issues they go through, including their sexuality. If the guidance is not from an unbiased and educated perspective, then there is an act of persuasion involved in every conversation. A [study](#) reported by the Stonewall Staff in the UK found that 51% of those who had gone through reparative therapy were there because their religious affiliations were conducting it. [One mother wrote](#), in response to the lack of educational qualifications in leaders of Coming Out Ministries in an article for Spectrum Magazine, “even if they are well-meaning, these untrained individuals have the potential to inflict massive damage. These young people are highly vulnerable and,

in my opinion, should be connected with people who are not only experts in these topics but also subject to a code of ethics.”

A [study](#) by an orthopsychiatrist (someone who specializes in preventing mental health or behavioral disorders) which looked into how religion affects the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth found that, “In all likelihood, the causal relationship between religious affiliation and internalized homophobia begins early in life and is reiterated through continued participation in non-affirming religious settings throughout life.” In other words, because the members of COM are not “affirming,” – with “affirming” referring to believing that existing as LGBTQ+ is not wrong or sinful – they are using forms of conversion therapy to get people to reject the queer part of who they are. As a result, mental, physical, and emotional health declines, and a sense of isolation can take over that person's life.

COM repeatedly states that they do not approve of conversion therapy or its practices and that they do not wish to change someone from being homosexual to heterosexual. They state in their [first newsletter](#) from 2016 that, “‘Coming Out’ Ministries has never promised to change a person from gay to straight; into a gender confident heterosexual.” They claim to only want to spread the word of God in a “holistic manner.” But if their goal was to just minister about God to people, then why are all its leaders claiming to have been freed from homosexuality? Why would an organization title itself “Coming Out Ministries” if not to minister to specifically queer people? If the target audience is queer people and all the leaders of the organization are ex-gay, then it only makes sense that they want people to change who they are based on their ministry. This is what makes them part of the harmful conversion therapy practice.

In their most recent newsletter, titled [A Time For Thanksgiving](#), COM mentions a new development in their ministry. They are under contract to buy the law office that is just across the street from the Andrews University entrance. They make note of this location saying, “It is located right at the main entrance to Andrews University and with very prominent signage, as it is right on the main road through Berrien Springs.” They describe it as a much-needed location that has been a long time coming. In the same paragraph they say,

“It would afford space for small conferences, private visitations, a library of resources and room for storage. The building would be highly visible and easily accessible to faculty, staff, students, and visitors coming to and going from Andrews University on a daily basis. It would offer us the opportunity to work

closely with the University in addressing the many issues surrounding the LGBT+ ideology and agenda, from a redemptive perspective.”

This does not sound like a ministry with no agenda attached to the spreading of the gospel. They clearly state that they wish to be visible to anyone in Berrien Springs, especially anyone affiliated with the University, on a *daily* basis. [Studies](#) conducted by the Family Acceptance Project in collaboration with SAMHSA show that students who identify as LGBTQ have “disproportionally high levels of bullying, harassment and discrimination,” putting those students “at a higher risk of depression anxiety, suicidal ideation and attempt, substance abuse, and other mental health problems, in addition to negative educational outcomes.” COM wishes to target queer students who are potentially already unsafe on an Adventist campus so that they can minister to them. They want the best signage so as to promote their own ideologies. They wish to involve the University and they want to approach the issue from a “redemptive perspective.” The term “redemptive perspective” implies an inherent evil is present and causing harm. This concept is closely intertwined with the term reparative therapy, a form of conversion therapy. To “repair” is to fix something that has been broken, whether physically or spiritually. According to the [Movement Advancement Project](#), conversion therapy is illegal for minors in 22 states when being conducted by a psychologist. This past July, [Governor Whitmer signed a bill](#) that protects LGBTQ+ youth from conversion therapy, adding Michigan to the list mentioned above. This does not include any religious leaders like pastors, or the leaders of COM, which means that religious leaders can get away with things like “redemptive” ministry and fly under the radar of the law. COM denies their association with conversion therapy and instead states in their [article](#) outlining what the ministry’s goals are: “We simply share the stories of our own personal journeys, and what we have learned along the way.” They seem to think that sharing their stories will not actively harm numerous people in the process, or that it is justified because it is in the name of God. This is not the kind of turmoil that needs to be forced upon students and faculty members every day when they come to campus.

This ministry may want to interact with students, but they are not allowed to pose unwelcome statements about gender or sexual identity on campus, according to the university’s policy on [Hostile Environment Harassment](#). The COM statement on their goals for this new office clearly portray an intent to minister to students on Andrews University campus. It is concerning that they want such prominent signage and easy access to the campus, especially given the rumors that surround

this ministry. It is also important to note that the University's handbook under [Access and Privacy of Student Educational Records](#) states, “Andrews University has the right to disclose “directory information” without the written consent of the student unless the student has informed the University Registrar in writing of his/her refusal to permit the dissemination of directory information.” In other words, unless students have specifically requested to not have their information shared, the University holds the right to do so. They list various characteristics which fall under the “directory information,” but for the sake of brevity, these are the ones which cause particular concern: participation in officially recognized activities, gender, age, email, local address and local phone number. Andrews can also withhold this information from third parties should they choose to do so, but this still leaves students vulnerable should COM request this information and the university grant it. For example, if COM got access to the list of students in the Haven organization on campus, they would also have all the information listed above, which is concerning. Though COM claims they will not be reaching out to just queer students, as is mentioned on their main webpage linked above, they have the opportunity to specifically target these students and attempt to evangelize to them, putting them at risk of being “outed.” When someone is “outed,” their sexual or gender identity is disclosed without consent. Even if it is not the intention of COM to “out” a student, this could easily disrupt family dynamics, friendships and the students’ ability to perform well academically, as is described in [this article](#) by the National LGBTQ Task Force.

For this last section I would like to speak as a concerned student of Andrews University to Coming Out Ministries directly. I urge you to reconsider your decision to buy this office and instead think of the people that you *will* harm regularly with just your presence. Right outside of campus is *not* the place to start a new branch of ministry. If you must obtain an office in Berrien Springs, then let it be somewhere else where students can still access the office if they choose to. Don’t force this ministry on people, especially those who are vulnerable. Ultimately, this does not come down to agreeing or disagreeing with the ministry itself. It comes down to the harm that this purchase will cause, the lives of students who will, on a daily basis, be impacted, and the lengths that your group will go to spread your own ideologies.



## IDEAS

# How to Spread Holiday Cheer on a Budget!

Reagan Westerman 12.01.23



Photo by Pixabay

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Ah, yes, Christmas time is here! People will now be spending hours of their days, weeks in advance, in and out of stores enjoying the steady stroll through aisles of possible presents for their loved ones. Lots of gifts with lots of cash and spending galore!

Wrong. As a broke college student, you are worried about your two-hundred assignments that pile up faster than your laundry, paying for housing next semester, and being prepared for your finals which seem to land all on the same day. Presents? With what money? And with what time? Unless you want to make a day trip out of Berrien Springs to look for the perfect gift, you may need a plan. If this story sounds familiar to you, then here are some great ideas for you to consider for December 25th.

Focus on the value of the gift. Just because you overspend on a gift does not mean that it is more valuable. Get creative and make your own gifts. This will be more valuable to the person, and costs less. If you are not crafty at heart, that's okay too! You can find apps or websites online that can help you out. For example, [Rakuten](#) is a large cash-back website that can help you shop and get money back! A gift card may seem impersonal, but it shouldn't be looked down upon! Get your person a specific gift card for a place that they love the most, whether that be a restaurant, store, or store online. Check out [raise.com](#) where you can buy (or sell) your gift cards! For the people in your life who do not keep anything and are hard to shop for – stop shopping! Give them the gift of an experience. Golfing, cooking classes, road trips, concerts, escape rooms, theater, etc. Experiences allow for memories which last longer than a tangible gift could. To get deals on these experiences that may be pricey, check out [Groupon](#).

To help you further, I have made a list down below to spark ideas. Take a look!

*Photo album:* This is a more personal gift where you can print out tons of photos, put them in chronological order, and write little notes on the bottom if you want! It's a heartfelt and inexpensive gift that is good for anyone in the family. The price depends on how much you want to spend on the album itself.

*Automatic Pan Stirrer With Timer:* This is a unique Amazon find. Just set it in your pan and let it stir away! You can come back when the food is ready. This is a perfect gift for anyone who loves cooking.

*Lighted Vanity Makeup Mirror:* 16 LED lights, 180-degree rotation, and a brightness adjuster. It's the perfect gift for any makeup lover, and it can be found on Amazon for \$20.

*AirPods case cover:* An AirPods case cover seems expensive, but really is manageable for your wallet. Customize or select a cover that is personal to the individual. This is an excellent gift for anyone who owns AirPods!

*Soundbot Bluetooth Shower Speaker:* This hands-free speaker is perfect for filling the shower with your favorite songs! It can easily be put on and taken off the wall.

*Mini Waffle Maker:* Incredibly inexpensive and super adorable. This gift is perfect for college students in the dorm, or just on the go. Friends and family will both love this gift!

*Face masks:* More of a girly gift, but it's a relaxing and satisfying present that improves your skin. In the same category, an ice roller for the face and eyes feels amazing and is only \$19 on Amazon!

*Bracelet keychain:* This is more than an accessory but is stylish and works just as a key chain.

*Subscription boxes:* Quite literally the gift that keeps on giving. Can be personalized, and sent to their house throughout the year. Depending on the box you get, they can be sent once a month with items and themes of your choosing. They are little surprises that show up at your doorstep regularly. Whether they're into snacks, books, beauty products, or even socks, there's probably a subscription box out there with their name on it. It's like a curated present to them each month! They can be as expensive or as cheap as you'd like.

## IDEAS

# Rabbit Rabbit

Katie Davis 12.01.23



Photo by Anna Shvets

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Rabbits are cute fuzzy creatures that seem to have good luck attached to them. For over [2,000](#) years, rabbits have been a symbol of fortune. This charm dates back to [600 B.C.](#) when the Celts used rabbits as a good luck charm. And the ancient [Aztecs](#) had a pantheon featuring four hundred rabbit gods renowned for hosting lively celebrations and including gods of drunkenness. These traditions have been changed and adapted throughout the centuries and to this day, some people carry around a rabbit's foot as a lucky token. However, rabbits do not only represent luck but fertility and life, and in some religious symbols, rabbits are a sign of renewal and spring. But the saying *rabbit rabbit* has its own origin and meaning.

This long-held tradition of saying *rabbit rabbit* on the first day of each month has [several](#) twists. Some individuals repeat the word "rabbit" three times, while others opt for the phrase "white rabbit." Uttering these words the first day of the month supposedly helps luck come your way. But these must be the first words that come out of your mouth on the day.

The [origin](#) of this tradition is unclear. However, the earliest documented mention of saying "rabbit rabbit" is found in a 1909 edition of the British journal *Notes and Queries*, where a parent noted that certain children uttered the word "rabbits" on the first day of each month for good luck. After this occurrence, the reference to this superstition only showed up occasionally until 1935. The British *Nottingham Evening Post* reported some gossip saying that "Mr. Roosevelt, the President of the United States, has confessed to a friend that he says 'Rabbits' on the first of every month – and, what is more, he would not think of omitting the utterance on any account." The belief also made an appearance in Trixie Belden's "The Mystery of the Emeralds," a book from the children's mystery series published in 1962, as well as on Nickelodeon in the 1990s.

There are [many](#) other superstitions like *rabbit rabbit* that people have participated in for centuries. "Knocking on wood" is very familiar to us and is widespread. Like the *rabbit rabbit* origin, this superstition was used in various cultures. Some suggest that it started in Indo-European or Celtic land. Celts believed that good and bad spirits reside in trees. By knocking on the wood, these spirits could be called upon for protection or to chase away enemies. And some people, especially Christians, linked this superstition to the magical power of the cross.

Another superstitious tradition is Friday the 13th. There are many numbers that are considered lucky or have significance in various cultures and religions such as the numbers seven and twelve. However, the number thirteen is unlucky because of the Last Supper. Judas Iscariot, the betrayer, was the 13th member of the dinner party that led to Christ's crucifixion. Because of this, on Friday the 13th in October 1307, King Philip IV of France detained and executed numerous members of the Templar Knights. But nowadays, we do not go to that extreme. We might just watch scary movies or make sure that we don't plan an important event on that day.

These old-age traditions, such as saying "rabbit rabbit," "knock on wood" and "Friday the 13th" have various interpretations and significance for each person. These superstitions should be taken lightheartedly, just like crossing your fingers and finding a four-leaf clover. We just need to make sure that we do not take it to extremes, as seen in the cautionary tales of King Philip IV and the Templar Knights.

## IDEAS

# What is Truth? My Personal Exploration into Moral Relativism

Bella Hamann 12.01.23



Photo by Mathew Browne

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We fear the things we don't understand.

Do we fear the existence of gravity, the process of photosynthesis, or the periodic table of the elements? No, because we know those to be sure and true. What about things such as political sentiment, religious dogma, or the perfect way to toast a bagel? Are they as "true" as the first three? They are, admittedly, more likely to cause disagreement and discomfort, and because of this, they require an understanding of personal perception.

In order to understand perception, there must be an understanding of truth. [Truth](#) is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "the property of being in accord with fact or reality." We would say that if something is one hundred percent true, it would be an *objective truth*, such as the statement, "Andrews University is located in the state of Michigan." The way in which we perceive objective truths is almost instantaneous, because it involves little to no thought behind it. Example: green is a color. We see grass with that color, that grass is green; thought done. However, when something is *not* inherently absolute, we would say that it is *subjective*, or based on how the individual interprets their environment in relation to their thoughts. In this case, perception of things such as the best ice cream flavor are all based on unique thoughts and how we perceive our world. Hence, personal perception that must be contemplated upon embodies subjectivity; taking away its essence leads to indoctrination.

Now, although the last sentence sounds quite harsh, it makes total sense once applied. If King Charles III publicly told all of the UK's residents that the best ice cream flavor is chocolate and anyone who didn't think so is just wrong, then it sounds like lunacy. However, replace that with "my religious beliefs are right, and anyone who doesn't think so is wrong," and it becomes clear that a claim in absolute subjectivity is in fact indoctrination.

Some, however, don't consider such claims to be so. Many (but not all) who believe that certain theological beliefs are objectively correct would tend to disagree with a concept called *moral relativism*. This concept is [defined](#) as having "no absolute rules to determine whether something is right or wrong," and that the ideas of good and bad are relative to one's experience. Those in disagreement with the theological implementation of moral relativism say that it undermines any concrete moral standard within a belief system, and that by "everyone having their own truth," it calls into play the authority of a higher power.

However, this begs the question as to why opponents are even defensive about religious disagreements in the first place. I believe defending any concept means that you are, by default, connoting it as subjective. If one tries to defend an objective fact (such as how many minutes are in an hour), most reasonable people would wonder why they are taking the time to even argue so; it just *is*. So, we only tend to defend and debate about *subjective* things. This, when applied to conceptual viewpoints such as religion, could suggest that the simple act of defending a god reveals an unbelief in their ultimacy.

The fact of the matter is, if something objectively exists, then it just *is*. There would be no reason to become upset over disagreements, because it just *is*, and any sort of debate is simply a waste of time. That's not to say that subjective things are automatically more or less complicated than objective truths, though. Objectively stating that "the temperature outside is 29 degrees Fahrenheit" is more complicated than subjectively saying "it's cold outside;" conversely, subjectively saying "the events of the Holocaust were atrocious" is far more complicated than objectively stating that "6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust."

The difference isn't one of a tier of concept reliability, but simply a different category of concept. Because of the perceived ridiculousness of debating objective truths, this—for some—may raise concern regarding moral relativism's implications on Christianity.

Often referring to moral relativism as "postmodernism" by religious critics (Adventism included), it is [argued](#) that this way of thinking is detrimental, because nothing can be true; thus, it rejects divine authority. By rejecting divine authority, Christianity as a religion crumbles, because church doctrine is based on it. What is peculiar, however, is that postmodernism as a sociological theory makes no distinction between subjective and objective statements. Critics take this sociological definition, apply it to moral relativism (which deals with, well—morals), and deems them to be the same: they are not. While the former holds *everything* to be uncertain, the latter only deals with subjectivities. In fact, if we want to be meticulously technical on why considering moral relativism a detriment to Christianity is absurd, it could be effectively argued that Jesus Christ Himself held moral relativist stances.

A quick look at Matthew 22:37-39 demonstrates the sum of the crux of the Christian faith. "Love the Lord your God," Jesus says, and then "Love your neighbor as yourself." Is this commission not subjective by nature? You love your

neighbor in reference to how you love yourself. Everyone loves in different ways; hence, there is no absolute outcome. It could be argued that since God is love, the way in which that love would be portrayed would be close to the same. However, that claim strips away free will, which is, admittedly, a whole other argument.

Nevertheless, religion is only one out of countless subjective applications. By recognizing that moral relativism does not deal with objective statements or claims, the ideology can be better distinguished and more understandable in any subjective context. Looking at all the contexts in which moral relativism is rightfully applicable, it would not be in good faith to say that another's life choices are wrong just because we say so. Can we not trust people to be accurate translators of their own experiences?

We know this much: in our quest to know all, we discover that we know nothing. That may be –or may not be– the truth that will set us free.



# Pulse

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PULSE

## A Taste of Goodness

Can we really have good taste?

Anna Rybachek [12.01.23](#)



Photo by Nathaniel Reid

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When you were a kid, do you remember picking out an outfit and being so proud of it, only to have your mother or older sibling tell you it does not look good? As you got older, you were educated to understand that certain things went well together and others, not so much. This understanding has now become known as taste. In other words, if you had good taste, you understood which items paired well together. If you have bad taste, you do not understand what works well together.

At first glance, the idea of “taste” seems subjective in that the idea of “good taste” is different for every person. Some people view wearing bright neon green pants and a mustard yellow top as bad taste, while others would applaud the bold color scheme. Certain aspects of taste seem universal initially, but most differ depending on the culture. For instance, we may think we know what foods pair well with one another, yet those rules may vary by culture and personal preference. Also, most understand what colors enhance each other to create a beautiful and appealing image. We have these intuitive cues, which were shaped by culture, upbringing, experience, education, nature, and personal preferences, that work together to create a mosaic of our own unique understanding of what is appealing, beautiful, and aesthetically pleasing. As we acquire a sense of what items are considered a good pair and what combinations need to be discarded in favor of other things, that taste becomes suited to our societal model. There begin to be items, ideas, and pairings that appeal to us that might be a bit difficult to comprehend for other people. Yet when we see ramen paired with, say, bananas, we can obviously (at least I hope) agree that the banana and ramen just do not go together.

Certain things may be learned and acquired by education in good taste, but there will always be a bit of ambiguity concerning good taste in all spheres of life. The understanding of good taste differs depending on your culture, and most in the same culture can agree on what bad taste is. So when it comes to good taste in music, movies, art, fashion, food, etc., most of it will be influenced by your unique experiences and education. And since that experience and education are often very similar for other people in your area, most have a similar understanding of good taste. Thus, many of us living in the same area and having experienced similar environments have a shared sense of good taste, which we then pass on to others.

So, are polka-dots and stripes a no-go? Does burgundy and cool gray interior pair well? Should you listen to Beethoven's 5th Symphony or Mozart's Symphony No. 40? The answers to those questions will partly depend on whether or not you have good taste, as it seems that taste is a socially constructed idea in which your environment helps shape you. But if you do not have good taste, fear not! This can be remedied by reading, learning, and exposing yourself to what your culture believes to be good taste, and soon, you, too, will begin to have a sense of what good taste is. Why? Because taste, while it can be subjective, is, in the end, a social construction. We acquire it by learning the norms and ideas upheld by our culture

and society. Many can agree on what good taste is not, so from there, we can begin to learn what good taste is. It will be a process, but then again, most things are.

## PULSE

# Countdown to Finals: Tips for Test-Taking

Sumin Lee [12.01.23](#)

Andrews University Exam Schedule

If your class meets at	Your examination is scheduled for			
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
7:30-8:20 MWF	8:00-10:00			
7:30-8:20 TR	8:00-10:00 or arranged			
8:30-9:20 MWF			8:00-10:00	
8:30-9:20 TR				8:00-10:00
9:30-10:20 MWF	10:30-12:30			
9:30-10:20 TR		8:00-10:00		
10:00-11:15 TR				10:30-12:30
10:30-11:20 MWF			10:30-12:30	
10:30-11:20 TR				10:30-12:30
11:30-12:20 MWF		10:30-12:30		
11:30-12:20 TR				10:30-12:30
12:30-13:45 MW	13:30-15:30			
12:30-13:45 TR		13:30-15:30		
14:00-15:15 MW			13:30-15:30	
14:00-15:15 TR				13:30-15:30
15:30-16:45 MW or 15:30-18:15 M	16:00-18:00			
15:30-16:45 TR or 15:30-18:15 T		16:00-18:00		
17:00-18:15 MW or 15:30-18:15 W			16:00-18:00	
7:00-11:30-11:15				16:00-18:00

Photo by Andrews University

With December just getting started, there are no more pages on the calendar to flip through, and the end of the year is drawing near. This also means the end of the fall semester. Counting down from today, there are less than two weeks left of classes, and finals are quickly approaching. Don't be stressed out, however! Look below to find ways to end the semester and year ever so happily and merrily.

## Dead Friday

For many, Dead Friday may be a familiar concept. Yet, for others (such as the freshman class), it may be something new. So what is Dead Friday, you ask? Basically, it is the Friday before finals week, and there are no classes. It is a day to help you rest and prepare for the upcoming finals week. For Andrews this year, it is the 8th of December. Yet, unlike its name, it isn't a day to be wasted. Instead, plan to spend it wisely in whatever way that best suits you: getting some sleep, studying, etc.

### **Study Plan**

Many college students are not new to the idea of procrastination and cramming. In fact, most, if not all, have had days when cramming was simply the only way to get through class. However, studies have shown that it is actually ineffective and could backfire on you. According to [Stanford University](#), cramming causes “ongoing stress to the brain,” causing “a mental block in recalling information.” This, in turn, will lead to lower test scores. Procrastination also causes greater stress as students try to get more done in a shorter period of time. So, as we look about a week into finals week, try setting up a study schedule and finding time to study a little bit each day. If this seems to be challenging to do on your own, the Andrews University [Student Success Center](#) is always available for help. They provide counseling, tutoring, and other resources to ensure success for all students on campus. They are located in Nethery Hall, Suite 210, or can be reached at [success@andrews.edu](mailto:success@andrews.edu) or 269-471-6096. Don't hesitate to find help!

### **Sauna**

Studies show that using saunas has serious [“beneficial cognitive and psychological effects.”](#) They not only relieve stress and anxiety but also improve one's mood. Other studies show that saunas encourage myelin growth – white insulating sheaths around nerve fibers that speed up nerve impulses. This, in turn, allows for faster information recovery and promotes optimal brain functioning. The Andreasen Center for Wellness offers three types of saunas: dry sauna, steambath, and infrared light cove. Each has its benefits, but all have commonalities in reducing stress and tension and promoting better sleep and relaxation. Aftercare, however, such as proper hydration, is highly recommended.

\*Please note and take caution about the time and frequency of each treatment. 15 minutes is recommended. (Consult with your physician for individual health conditions.)

## Water

Talking about hydration, one of the basic needs of life is water. However, water doesn't just allow us to live; it actually relates to academic performance. In fact, a [study](#) indicated that students who were hydrated during exams scored “an average of 5% higher” than students who didn't drink water. Water also has further benefits, such as alleviating stress and improving nutrition absorption. It is important, however, that hydration comes from pure water. Other drinks, such as juice, smoothies, and energy drinks, won't do. Ellen G. White states that “pure water is one of Heaven's choicest blessings...It is the beverage which God provided to quench the thirst of animals and man. Drunk freely, it helps to supply the necessities of the system and assists nature to resist disease” (“The Ministry of Healing” 237.1). As our bodies reflect God's sanctuary, as those with Seventh-day Adventist backgrounds, we must consider what we drink and eat. So, as you walk around campus, carry a water bottle and refill at the various water fountains.

May God's wisdom guide you through finals week. Let's end the semester strong. Good luck!

## PULSE

# Why Andrews?

Alyssa Caruthers [12.01.23](#)



Photo by Darren Heslop

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Each person that you see walking the sidewalks of Andrews University has a different reason for being here. Some might live nearby, some might receive a subsidy, some might have siblings and family here, and others might have felt called to be here or all of the above. In interviewing a few students on campus, I have found just how diverse our campus is, in reasons for attendance.

**Q.1: Why did you decide to attend Andrews University?**

**1:** Growing up I attended public schools and I did not really have friends that had the same belief as me. I came here to get closer to God and connect with other people that have the same belief as me. Andrews also had a good program for my major.

*Ashley Daluz (junior, speech-language pathology and audiology)*

**2:** Pastor. Russell. He preached during my sophomore year [of high school], and I was so touched by what he said that I decided to get baptized and told God that it could only be done by no one other than him so I came to finish what I started.

*Kato Golooba-Mutebi (sophomore, finance)*

**3:** I decided to come here because of my scholarship and my dad who went here.

*Gabrielle Cote (sophomore, marketing)*

**4:** My brother goes here, and it isn't too far from home.

*Grace Lutterodt (freshman, elementary education)*

**5:** I'll be fully honest here: I didn't have a choice...it was the only school I applied for and the only school my mom wanted me to go to.

*Aleeke David (senior, agriculture and business)*

**Q.2: Whose choice was it for you to attend the university?**

**1:** It was mostly my choice, but my parents were happy that I decided to come here.

*Ashley Daluz*

**2:** It was part mine and part my parents. Though they were more bent on Ivy League to follow in the footsteps of my other siblings, we still came to an agreement.

*Kato Golooba-Mutebi*

**3:** It was my choice but my parents said they wouldn't help me financially if it wasn't an SDA university.

*Gabrielle Cote*

**4:** It was my choice to attend Andrews.

*Grace Lutterodt*

**5:** It was definitely my mom's choice.

*Aleeke David*

**Q.3: Are you happy about your college decision?**

**1:** Yes, I am happy with my decision because this school has given me many friends, and it allowed me to get closer to God in many ways. I also enjoy my department.

*Ashley Daluz*

**2:** Yes, very.

*Kato Golooba-Mutebi*

**3:** I'm content, but if I could choose again, I would choose differently.

*Gabrielle Cote*

**4:** I am happy about my decision.

*Grace Lutterodt*

**5:** I am happy with the decision. Andrews University has treated me well.

*Aleeke David*

**Q.4: Do you believe there is anything lacking from your college experience being at this school? If so, what?**

**1:** I am not sure yet.

*Ashley Daluz*

**2:** I can only think of things like being limited by transport as an international student and a bit of a shortage of “school spirit” like you’d see at some bigger schools. Those two of which I can contribute towards fulfilling.

*Kato Golooba-Mutebi*

**3:** The dorms and the one meal of Saturday are huge concerns. If we are paying \$2000+ and not getting a refund, there should at least be three meals a day.

*Gabrielle Cote*

**4:** I honestly wouldn’t say anything is lacking from my college experience. I would just say I wish Andrews wasn’t in the middle of nowhere.

*Grace Lutterodt*

#### **Q.5: In what ways has Andrews changed/impacted your life?**

**1:** Andrews has allowed me to not be afraid to take risks and get out of my comfort zone.

*Ashley Daluz*

**2:** It’s given me a diverse amount of new friends and experiences that have pushed me to learn and gain perspective—something I’m very grateful for.

*Kato Golooba-Mutebi*

**3:** I feel that some teachers have influenced me to become closer with God.

*Gabrielle Cote*

**4:** I would say it helped me meet a lot of people that I’m grateful to have met.

*Grace Lutterodt*

**5:** Andrews has given me the opportunity to meet many people. Also, it has helped me build a network with professionals in my sector.

*Aleke David*



# Last Word

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LAST WORD

## My Semester of Touching Grass and Smelling the Roses

Grace No [12.01.23](#)



Photo by Grace No

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To be completely honest, I'm not the biggest fan of trees—or even just plants in general. Maybe it's the fact that I've lived in Oregon my whole life and my eyes have become too accustomed to greenery to really appreciate a good patch of foliage, or maybe I'm another unfortunate member of a generation conditioned to prefer indoors internet time over a stroll in the woods. I can admit that my screen time is probably a large factor in my general disinterest for nature. It's just so much more comfortable to explore beautiful scenery through an episode of "Planet Earth" (accompanied by David Attenborough's soothing commentary) on my laptop than

it is to actually get out of bed and go on a walk. However, I have enough self-awareness to know that this is probably not the healthiest mindset to have towards the environment, and I don't enjoy the backlash I get from friends when I reveal this indifference either. So, this year, instead of my usual mix of English and psychology classes, I decided to "branch" out and add on a horticulture class on plant identification.

The format of the Woody Identification class is relatively simple: we go on weekly walks, collect plant samples, and memorize the common and Latin names of the plants so that we can know them by sight by the next week. And it would be nice to say that after getting a proper introduction to the local shrubs, pines, and bushes of our university campus, I developed an immediate affinity for the plant world. However, that is not what happened. I failed my first test and was left to question everything. It was a bit of a shock to my system to realize that I couldn't even recognize ten plants that I had been passing by every day for the past four years. What was I doing with my life? That's maybe a little too dramatic, but it did make me consider the fact that maybe I was too unaware of my surroundings.

After that first test, I decided that it was in my best interest to take advantage of this class and make a more serious attempt at touching grass. On all of our plant collection walks, I held on to the knowledge that at the very least I was getting my vitamin D intake for the day, and that it was probably helping my mental health in one way or the other. Although it makes me a little angry at how many similar-looking plants there are with such unnecessarily long names, I also got a close look at colorful flowers and unique leaves that I had never bothered to look twice at before the class. I also learned that there are many edible (but rarely delicious) plants and berries on campus, which I've been having fun exploring.

Even though it was a bit of a learning curve, I'm very happy to say that I have now become much more familiar with our local foliage and might even be open to taking a hike sometime far in the future. There's a sense of accomplishment that comes from being able to name a plant to a friend on the way to class. Of course, most of my friends were pretty unimpressed and I can't blame them, but I still feel a small amount of satisfaction at being able to rattle off varieties of hydrangeas and oak trees when prompted.

I'm hoping that if I ever encounter a life or death situation that hinges entirely on my ability to differentiate between a knockout rose and a double knockout rose, I'll be able to breathe a sigh of relief. Overall though, I'm surprised but pleased to

report that nature is not as overrated as I have assumed for much of my life. I'm sure that most people already feel this way and I'm a little late to the tree appreciation party, but for anyone on the fence about taking a little stroll in the woods: it's really not a bad way to pass the time!