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## To Listen is to Love

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# To Listen is to Love

By Jessica Yoong



Pieter Damsteeg

▲ Jessica Yoong

**I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND** the NAD Year-end meetings, as the Student Association president from Andrews University, along with the Student Association presidents from our sister universities. I anticipated that the next several days of meetings would be a valuable learning experience; however, I underestimated the amount of participation that we young adults would have in the meetings. I found it meaningful that NAD President Dan Jackson specifically requested that three young adults offer the initial prayer for the assembled body because it established a welcoming spirit of acceptance for the week. Our voices were valued far beyond our expectations in an environment where we could have easily been made to feel intimidated.

At the conclusion of these meetings, I and my fellow student leaders were inspired to learn of all the work that was going on within the church to further the gospel. It's not that the work wasn't being done before; it was just that none of us really knew much about it. As we actively participated in the motions and discussions, there was an energy that ignited within us as we began to passionately engage and contribute to the dialogue. I believe young adults leave

the church because they are not involved and there is a gap in intentionally connecting with the collegiate and post-college age group that lies between high school and young married couples with children. One reason that young adults believe the church is irrelevant is because we do not often hear of the work that our church is doing in regards to current issues, such as social justice and community care. It was inspiring to see the passion and dedication that many of our church leaders have towards such causes.

Participating in the NAD Year-end meetings has ignited my belief that effective communication of vision between all tiers of the church is essential. As young adults who are searching for community and purpose, we want to be a part of a movement that is greater than ourselves. We need to be connected to resources and be informed. If more young adults could see the passion in their church leaders that we did, and experience the act of participating in dialogue and conversations where their voice is valued, I believe fewer young adults would leave the church.

As young adults, it's important that we meet our church leaders halfway. Rather than leaving the church due to disagreements, it's important that we stay and work together to make it better. Our energy, ideas and skills are needed. There is so much suffering and injustice in this world, such a need for Jesus, that we cannot afford to be passive.

I encourage our church leaders and my fellow young adults to continue to listen and learn from each other. I hope young adults everywhere are given the opportunity to participate in their church in a meaningful way. The message that our church espouses is a message of love, and what better way to be a light to our world than to foster a spirit of love by intentionally listening to each other? ■

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*Jessica Yoong is the Student Association president at Andrews University. A business administration major, she is passionate about communication, an active lifestyle, healthcare and leadership development.*