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The Cookie Man Baked Goods and Prayer

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God's work in me was removed, and now I know that God has been with me ever since I was born. Because of him, I soar like an eagle. He allowed me to come to a university I never dreamed I could attend, and gave me a new meaning in life through faith in God.

I'm not sure what he holds for my future, but I am looking forward to it because if he did it before, he will do it again.

Maranatha Odong is a sophomore biology pre-med major at Andrews University with a minor in chemistry.

The Cookie Man

BAKED GOODS AND PRAYER

BY MELODIE ROSCHMAN

It's Thursday night, and in Meier Hall a freshman is studying for his first Foundations of Biology exam when he hears a knock at the door. Opening it, he sees not a friend or a dean, but a smiling man wearing glasses and a bowtie. "It's Dr. Shepherd," the man says, holding out a plastic container. "Try one of my wife's world-famous chocolate chip cookies."

To Seminary faculty and students, Tom Shepherd is director of the Ph.D. in religion and Th.D. programs and professor of New Testament interpretation. To the young men who live in Meier and Burman halls, however, he is simply "The Cookie Man." Every Thursday during fall and spring semesters, Tom's wife, Sherry, bakes four dozen chocolate chip cookies, and he takes them to campus, working his way through the dorms, floor by floor, throughout the semester.

"I ask how things are going, what they did for the summer, what classes they are taking, about some project they're working on — just take an interest in them," he says. "And I always end the same way: 'So, who should we pray for tonight?'"

Tom's cookie ministry began 17 years ago when he was teaching undergraduate religion at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. "I was concerned for the young men," he



Seminary professor Tom Shepherd makes time regularly to visit students in the residence halls with fresh-baked cookies and a friendly smile.

explains. "They seemed like ships without rudders. One day, I was talking with a theology major about this, and he confronted me, 'You don't know what our life is like,' he said. 'You've never even been to the dorm.' He was right, I hadn't."

Tom says he didn't have any great master plan, but thought he could go to the dorm and pray with the young men. Sherry happily

said she would make cookies for Tom to take along.

"In all the years since, I can probably count on one or two hands the number of times someone has said, 'No, don't pray for me.'"

When Tom came to the Seminary at Andrews in 2008, he decided to continue his cookies-and-prayer tradition. It was a simple thing to do, he says, and it's an unexpected way to show students that the faculty and staff of Andrews care about them.

“I’ll ask them to show me their photos or portfolio if they are a photographer, or that little house they have to build if they are architecture majors. If they are musicians, we talk about that because I’m a cellist. I’ve given little Greek lessons, given tips on how to study for exams. I have had students ask theological questions, and have given impromptu Bible studies on some topic.”

Tom often finds that the ministry actually refreshes and blesses him as much as the men he is serving, if not more.

“We have some very fine young men that come to our schools,” he says. “I am encouraged for the future of this Church as I see these young people preparing for a life of service.”

Sherry’s cookies have become legendary in Andrews dorms, and the ministry has inspired others to start doing something similar in other places. Tom’s daughter, Amy, a professor of biology, has begun making cookies for the young women at Southwestern Adventist University. A former student began passing out treats in the dorm at an academy. The idea is a simple one, Tom admits, but it’s something he’d love to see grow — even if only because the students in the women’s dorms at Andrews want cookies, too.

“It is my intention,” Tom says, “to continue this ministry as long as I teach at Andrews. Who knows, maybe even past that when I retire. It is part of who I am, and it is refreshing. Some people laud this as some great thing. I don’t know if it is some great thing, but I feel like I am the one most blessed.”

Melodie Roschman is a writing intern in the Division of Integrated Marketing



Darren Heslop

After munching on cookies and chatting about what’s on their plates, students are blessed by a bit of prayer with Seminary professor Tom Shepherd.



Sherry Shepherd’s Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 cup butter (two sticks)
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 large eggs (not medium, not extra large)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. cinnamon (heaping)
- 1 12-oz. bag semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup oats (scant)

Directions

- Preheat oven to 375°.
- Cream butter and sugars together, then add eggs and vanilla. Beat well.
- In separate bowl, mix together flour, salt, soda and cinnamon, stirring well.
- Gradually, add dry ingredients to sugar mixture, then stir in chocolate chips, walnuts and oats.
- Scoop by rounded teaspoons onto ungreased baking sheets.
- Bake 10–12 minutes.