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Following God's Leading

DALE HODGES
DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE
OF CAMPUS SAFETY

After spending more than a decade as a homicide detective in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Dale Hodges didn't need much prodding from his wife to start looking for a job that would provide a change of pace for their family. But even after submitting to God's leading and accepting the position of director of the Office of Campus Safety at Andrews University, it took the morning headlines to reassure him that he had made the right choice. —Author

“If you would have told me in 2007, ‘You will be working for Andrews University in Michigan,’ I would have argued with you,” said Dale Hodges.

But it's been more than four years since Dale, his wife, Christi, their two sons and Christi's parents packed up their homes and traveled north to the southwest corner of Michigan. “I have never worked in an environment where before every meeting — of any nature — there is prayer. I came from an environment where I had to intervene to prevent co-workers from fist-fighting with each other. It is quite a blessing to go from that extreme to this.”

Dale's career as a homicide detective in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, spanned 12 years. It came with a lot of emotional baggage that was difficult to “leave at the office.” “I was involved in two

different serial killer investigations that were active at the same time in Baton Rouge,” said Dale of his last several months on the job.

The ill effects of crime also were seeping into their children’s lives. With the closest Adventist school 45 minutes away, Dale and Christi made the decision to put their boys into the city’s public school system, but that brought its share of challenges. “They were coming home with stories that would obviously get a parent’s attention,” says Dale. Each night, around the dinner table, his son Cooper, then 14, reported on how many fights happened that day or how many people were arrested at school.

“I worked for the Sheriff’s Department but also for the schools as the assistant in charge of the security program. Working in that capacity, I knew what was going on. On any given day, there were 25 deputies working in the schools.”

The Hodges family reached a point where they recognized the need to make a significant change. In the summer of 2007, while on vacation, Dale started chatting with an officer from Tennessee who said there had never been a homicide in his town. “On the way home from that trip, we were discussing, ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to live in a place like that?’” remembered Dale.

That was all the inspiration Christi needed to hear, that her husband was receptive to moving. She showed Dale a job advertisement from Andrews University for the director of the Office of Campus Safety. “I was interested until I heard ‘Michigan.’ For me, being from south Louisiana, Michigan seemed like some far-off place in the Arctic Circle,” said Dale. Several weeks later, following more bad days at work, Christi gave Dale a gentle reminder: The opening at Andrews University was still there. Dale said, “At that moment, I went online and applied.”

Shortly thereafter, Dale got a phone call. He was being considered for the position, and Andrews wanted him to come for an interview. They came, Dale interviewed and then the decision-making time arrived. On the last night of their brief trip, Dale bundled up and headed out in the

blustery January cold for a walk and some time in prayer. “I said to God, ‘If the dominoes fall and this is where I am supposed to go, I will submit to it and come.’” The next day, he accepted the position.

The night they returned home from Andrews, the phone rang with a pre-recorded message from their older son’s principal. “The message said, ‘Don’t be alarmed but, the day before, there was a child arrested at the school with a loaded handgun,’” said Dale. The next morning, the local newspaper’s front-page article read “116 murders in 2007.” “When I brought the paper in and showed it to my wife, we both interpreted it as, ‘Take this with reassurance. You’ve made the right choice.’”

Dale had the front-page article framed to hang on his office wall as a constant reminder of God’s leading. “If I ever have those moments of doubt as to whether or not I made the right decision, I wanted to have that as a reminder of why I left.”

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