

4-2008

# The Fabric of Faith

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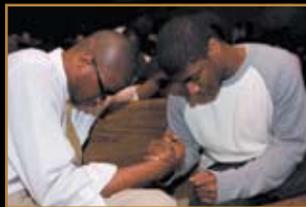
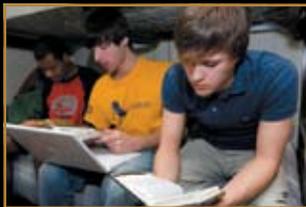
## Recommended Citation

Stout, Beverly, "The Fabric of Faith" (2008). *Lake Union Herald*. 535.  
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Andrews  University

*The*  
**FABRIC**  
*of* **FAITH**  
BY BEVERLY STOUT





## WEAVING THE FABRIC OF FAITH AT ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

**W**hat makes up the fabric of your faith? Perhaps a few blue threads of morning devotion, some green strands of Christian fellowship, mixed with purple strings of weekly church attendance? Add to that the yellow threads of blessing you receive from feeding the homeless or helping a child with their homework and the silver ones from those moments spent in prayer. Put them all together, along with so many other colorful experiences and moments, and you will have a tapestry that tells your individual story of faith.

Andrews University also has a fabric of faith that is uniquely woven with the threads of ideas, experiences and faith-building opportunities brought to campus by each individual who makes this their place of study or work. With students, faculty and staff hailing from almost 100 different countries and from across the nation, the result is a colorful campus culture filled with a myriad of methods and opportunities for crafting rich spiritual moments, memories and experiences.

Whether you enjoy in-depth Sabbath morning Bible study, are blessed by week-day morning devotions with your colleagues, or are energized by collecting canned goods for the hungry, the Andrews campus is a place where you can find the “threads” to help create your own unique fabric of faith.

Following are some examples of the “threads” that help weave Andrews University’s fabric of faith, on Sabbath

morning, in the classroom and the workplace, or in the students’ “homes away from home,” the dorms and apartments.

### **SABBATH MORNING Encounter**

Three years ago, Jane Thayer, recently retired professor of religious education, felt a burden for the graduate students and young adults who lived on campus and the surrounding community. At the time there really wasn’t much in the form of spiritual enrichment that ministered specifically to the post-college age group. She and her husband Jerome, professor emeritus of research and statistical methodology, decided to invite a group of 20- and 30-somethings to their home one Friday night to discuss the idea of starting a new Sabbath school. What began as an evening of discussion has since bloomed into Encounter, an active group of young

adults passionate about Bible study, community service and Christian fellowship.

Rosemary Bailey, who teaches at Ruth Murdoch Elementary School, and her husband Karl, assistant professor of psychology, have attended Encounter Sabbath school since it began.

“Encounter has played a very important role in helping me find a community of faith on campus,” Rosemary shared. “For me, having a place where I feel accepted, needed and loved is just as important as being able to be surrounded by thoughtful, spiritual people. I have found all this in Encounter.”

“When I came here my husband and I couldn’t find a place for Sabbath school that really made me want to come back week after week, nothing that made us *want* to get out of bed. Then my husband and I saw the *Agenda* item for this new group that was starting called Encounter. We went, and we are still attending three years later!”

Each Sabbath at 9:45 a.m., even during times when the

university may be on break, Encounter meets for a time of worship and Bible study. A variety of teachers with different perspectives lead out every week. Besides just Sabbath morning Bible study, the group regularly meets for potluck lunches, vesper programs or fun group activities. They also firmly believe in putting their faith into action and actively seek out community service projects and volunteer activities that members can participate in.

“Encounter encourages me on my spiritual walk,” Rosemary continued. “I learn to understand God and my Bible more deeply. I know that there is a community, a family, behind me to help me grow, to support me when I stumble, to rejoice with me in times of blessing, and comfort me in times of despair, and I know that they would do the same for any other member.”

### **Seminary Sabbath School**

Some Sabbath morning traditions stretch deep into the tapestry of Andrews’ story of faith. One of those traditions is the Seminary Sabbath school. Each week Dwain Ford,



*Graduate students and young adults appreciate the opportunity for study that Encounter offers.*

Brad Austin



*The Seminary Sabbath school class listens intently as Raoul Dederen teaches.*

professor emeritus of chemistry, organizes a group to teach a class at the Seminary. Commonly known as Seminary Sabbath school, this group has been officially meeting since 1982 when Raoul Dederen organized the group and asked Dwain to help him teach.

This popular Sabbath school now draws a regular attendance of between 60 and 65 people each week. Those who attend know they will be blessed with an in-depth study filled with rich spiritual insights.

Dwain no longer teaches the class himself, but organizes a group of teachers that include Peter Van Bemmelen, Roy Gane, Russell Burrill and Larry Schalk. Each teacher brings a unique perspective and their own method to the class. Dwain particularly notes the unique method of Roy: “Of all of the excellent teachers, Roy Gane has the most unusual method of teaching. He usually projects onto the screen the verses in both English and Hebrew. If there is any question regarding the meaning of the passage, he translates it from the Hebrew and shares the various ways that passage could be translated.”

Sallie Alger used to attend the Seminary Sabbath school regularly before she and her husband became sponsors of Encounter. “I did appreciate the diversity of presentations—anything from Andrews Academy students and Glenn

Russell sharing slides and testimonies about mission trips they had participated in, to special Mother’s Day presentations, to faculty members sharing something about their research on a religious or social topic. I do miss going because I always took something away from the service that I didn’t know before.”

### **Faculty Lounge Sabbath School**

Another Andrews Sabbath morning tradition dates back to the early 1970s, when a small group of faculty and staff sought a place where they could sit in a circle and discuss the

week’s Sabbath school lesson. They found that place in a room not often visited in the Campus Center, the Faculty Lounge. Members of what has come to be known as the Faculty Lounge Sabbath school have been coming together ever since.

Faculty Lounge Sabbath school is a place where faculty, staff and students comfortably share their thoughts and questions on the lesson in a free-flowing format, while providing a sense of community for its members. Members meet monthly at different homes or on campus for a potluck lunch. A group of coordinators take turns finding teachers for each week’s lesson who share their personal



*Mosaic is a Friday evening vesper program held in various locations on campus. Students come together to worship the Lord through music, prayer and creative interaction.*

perspective before opening up the floor for group discussion.

Many members have faithfully attended for decades. Meredith Jones Gray, professor of English, whose parents were charter members, has attended the Faculty Lounge Sabbath school since high school. "My dad was attending there, and I began going with him when I finished academy," she shares. "I was drawn in by the freedom of discussion and the stimulating ideas that I encountered



*Students gather under the big tent at the beginning of each year. They kick off the new school year with enthusiastic worship and joyful songs.*



*Once a month, the Department of Music's student organization, AUMA, gathers with their instruments to create a melodic atmosphere of praise.*

there. But the group also became a close-knit community that has been part of my life ever since."

"This group has provided an important link in the spiritual life of our campus community, and some who have left have fed themselves and others by starting similar groups in the areas where they have moved," notes charter member Harold James.

"It's a place that's supportive, a place where like minds appreciate varieties of spiritual quest," said long-time member and English Department chair Douglas Jones.

## **CLASSROOM AND WORKPLACE**

Worship and fellowship isn't just relegated to Sabbath morning services. In many departments and offices across campus, students and staff alike are finding ways to worship God together as part of their daily routines in the workplace or the classroom.

### **Lithotech**

Lithotech, Andrews' in-house printing service, is just one example of an office on campus that prays as well as works

together. Each morning before Lithotech's doors open for business, the employees gather together for a short prayer and devotion.

"Years ago, as a student worker at Andrews, I worked in the Grounds Department under the management of Ed Roy," explains Rod Church, manager. "It was his practice to have worship before we started the day, and when I came back to work here 13 years ago, I decided it was a practice that I would like to continue. You see, after working for other companies I felt it was a true privilege to be able to sit together with my staff on the loading dock (or inside when cold) and start the day with the 'right perspective' and ask for God's presence."

"It has meant a lot to me," notes Fred Guerrero, production supervisor. "Some mornings I am struggling with my spiritual life, and we seem to read just what I need to hear; it seems that it happens more often than not."

### **Eigen\***

The Math and Physics Departments' joint club, Eigen\*, provides a wonderful opportunity for teachers and students to integrate their education with their faith. Eigen\*, taken from a German word that means "peculiarity," is a term used in both the fields of physics and mathematics and is therefore the perfect name for a club consisting of both majors.

The group is extremely active, meeting every Friday afternoon in a colloquium where members hear presentations from their peers, teachers or guest speakers from other universities and colleges, such as the University of Notre Dame and University of Ohio, and companies such as Amoco and Logistic Research and Training.



(Above and below) A revival vespers held in the Science Complex provided an exciting opportunity for small group breakout sessions with in-depth discussion.

Outside of weekly meetings, Eigen\* members enjoy activities such as camping and other field trips. Three times each semester, Eigen\* holds a vesper program at the home of a faculty member. This provides an opportunity for students to worship and fellowship together, while enjoying a home-cooked meal, a rare commodity for the college dorm student. Guest speakers often include faculty members from other disciplines on campus, giving students a chance to hear from a variety of voices.

“The combined spiritual and intellectual atmosphere at Eigen\* vespers encourages me to be a rational, objective thinker about my faith and my beliefs,” says Erin McLean, a sophomore double major in math and English. “Going to Andrews University gives me the unique opportunity to allow my love of science to complement my faith instead of working against it, and Eigen\* vespers facilitates



this process and promotes the development of strong faith coupled with intellectual achievement in my life. Listening to faculty members testify how God has showed them His power through the wonders of physics or math only increases my love of learning—both scholastically and spiritually.”

#### **AUMA**

Andrews University Music Association (AUMA), the Department of Music’s official student organization, is a newer club on campus, only in its second year, with a strong emphasis on bettering their members’ relationships with God.

“Our main goal for AUMA is to create a family-orientated atmosphere within [the] Department of Music and to incorporate Christ in all that we do on a daily basis,” explains AUMA president Zoviel Bowen.



*Flamekeepers are student-led Bible study groups that meet informally in the residence halls. Through this fellowship, students experience support, develop friendships and share different perspectives with one another.*

The group holds a monthly vesper program; the location and theme varies from month to month. Most students bring their musical instruments, and they play together for praise and worship, which is followed by a worship thought and time for fellowship.

AUMA isn't only focused on fellowshiping with each other, but enjoys sharing their love of music and love for Christ with others. Last semester, the group joined up with Outreach, Andrews' outreach ministry to the residents of downtown Benton Harbor. The students took their instruments and went door to door playing music and praying with the residents. Another time, they visited a local nursing home in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and prayed and shared their music with the residents.

"It's such a rewarding experience to share Christ with others through music," says Zoviel. "Music is a very powerful tool that I know God has given us to bless others, and

that is also our goal when we do our outreach activities. ... As the leader of AUMA, it's a true blessing to be able to get together with my team as we not only plan events for the department, but also try to create a home away from home for our students here at Andrews."

## **AT 'HOME'**

### **Lamson and Meier Halls**

Anyone who has ever lived in an academy or residence hall in an Adventist college is familiar with the usually required dorm worships, and knows that making these worship experiences meaningful can often be a challenge. The deans at Lamson and Meier Halls at Andrews University have taken this challenge to heart and provide faith-building opportunities for their residents that go beyond the requisite worships.

Lamson Hall, the women's residence, has been very successful in integrating a strong service component into their programming. Lamson's student-run Breakthrough Com-

mittee has planned and executed several very successful projects in the past two years. The committee's first project was a "Girls Night In" for pre-teen and teen girls at the New Plant Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benton Harbor, Michigan. The night's goal was to teach the girls about self-esteem. In conjunction with Meier Hall's Sigma Phi, the two residences collected a total of 1,086 canned goods in a Thanksgiving food drive. The food collected was then donated to the Niles (Michigan) Salvation Army. Other projects have included praying with Andrews' faculty and staff in their offices, as well as an event appreciating the work of the pastoral team of Pioneer Memorial Church in honor of clergy appreciation month.

Throughout the school year, the Breakthrough Committee assists the deans in the worship services, conducts random acts of kindness, and leads out in small group worships and Lamson Hall's book club.

"Being a part of the committee has given me a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment," shares committee member Cleigha Millin. "I am constantly blessed when we go door to door in the residence hall and pray with our sisters. So many people are hurting, and I am blessed by being able to share Christ with them."

In both the men's and women's residences, an independent, student-led Bible study group has emerged called Flamekeepers. The group originated with freshmen from Great Lakes Adventist Academy who started the original Flamekeepers study after a special Week of Prayer in 2004. Currently, two groups of girls meet in Lamson and one group of guys meet in Meier, all of whom are freshmen.

"We take prayer requests and pray together. It's nice to know that I have a support group for spiritual accountability and that people are praying for me," notes Sara Olakowski, who started the Andrews branch of Flamekeepers. "My favorite thing about Flamekeepers is the relationships that develop with people and the input that comes from sharing different perspectives—it's something you don't get studying on your own."

Meier Hall's assistant dean of men, Zachary Juniper, is impressed with his students' individual drives to have closer walks with God. "One thing that sticks out to me the most is the residents who come to me requesting assistance in starting a Bible study or small group on their own, not for worship credit, but for their own spiritual benefit."



*Black Student Christian Forum (BSCF), a worship option on campus, meets weekly in Burman Hall. BSCF desires to present worship programs that challenge others to strengthen their relationship with God.*

### Family and Graduate Housing

The residence halls aren't the only "homes away from home" on campus that are making an effort to reach their students through fellowship and worship. Andrews is a university with a thriving graduate and Seminary student population who often live on campus in the university's apartment complex. Though there are no required worships, Housing Department director Alfredo Ruiz and his team have made an effort to build community among the students that call the apartments home.

At the start of the year, the Housing Department puts on a special Friday evening vespers and supper, which provides an opportunity for the residents to get acquainted with each other. This past September the university's president, Neils-Erik Andreasen, shared a devotional and his experience living in the apartments when he was a student.

Throughout the year, those in the Housing Department pray for the students and their families in the apartments, and e-mails them for prayer requests. Each morning, the staff meets for worship and prays for these requests. "It has been a rewarding experience to be able to pray for the tenants," says Alfredo. "Students have expressed how much they appreciate knowing that someone is praying for them."

Whether it's a small study group, student-led Sabbath school, faculty devotional or outreach ministry, there's a colorful tapestry of spiritually enriching opportunities at Andrews University for students, faculty and staff alike to build relationships with each other and with God.

Beverly Stout, an alum of the English department, served as media relations coordinator at Andrews University for three years. She now works in Central Illinois as an organizational development analyst with State Farm Insurance.