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### Prayers, Blessings and Baptisms

Steven Atkins

*Andrews Academy*, [satkins@andrews.edu](mailto:satkins@andrews.edu)

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## Prayers, Blessings and Baptisms

BY STEVEN ATKINS

**A**ndrews Academy, like other schools in the Lake Union, is blessed to have parents, students and teachers praying for the spiritual journey of the school. Many people often see school programs, drive by their church school or hear about weeks of prayer, but not many people are able to see the spiritual journey happening behind the walls of an Adventist school. Let's take a peek behind the walls of Andrews Academy to see the spiritual journey of a school year.

At Andrews Academy, numerous parents have developed prayer groups that regularly meet to pray for the teachers and students of the school. One of the parent groups meets once a week in the conference room to pray for the students. They pray for all students and specifically pray for a number of students and teachers by name. They pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives. When the prayer session is over the parents place a little card in the students' lockers letting them know they were prayed for in a special way. Throughout the entire year they made sure each of the students received this special prayer. The parent group also placed a prayer box by the office door so students could leave special prayer requests for the parents to pray for.

The teachers also are actively praying for the students—not only praying during morning devotions and at the beginning of many class periods, but throughout the day. As a group, the teachers set aside some time during each faculty meeting to pray for individual students and groups of students. As teachers interact with the students, opportune times develop when teachers can pray with individual students in a meaningful way. It may be during a time when a teacher is praising a student for an accomplishment or in the midst of resolving a discipline issue that may have just occurred.

The students are also very involved in praying for the spiritual journey of their peers, and last year Andrews Academy was blessed by the spiritual leadership of so many

students. This year there is a special room set aside as “sacred space” called the Prayer Room. Darchelle Worley, religion teacher and outreach coordinator, got the idea from a book she read last year, entitled *Red Moon Rising*, written by a man whose ministry has been to start prayer rooms all over the world. Since the Adventist church's focus is prayer this year, it seemed a perfect time to try the concept here at the academy.

Located in what used to be storage and work space in Darchelle's Bible classroom, the Prayer Room is now uncluttered, has softer lights and colors, and an inspirational décor. There are comfortable chairs, Bibles and a journal in which students can write prayer requests. Students use the Prayer Room before or after school, and sometimes during their lunch break. In fact, each morning a group of students meets to pray and read the Bible. This past year they were reading through the book of Acts and praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our student body. Sometimes, when a student faces an extremely trying circumstance, he or she slips into the Prayer Room for a few moments to lift the problem to God. Some faculty and staff also use the Prayer Room as a place where they can pray for each other or for a particular student's need. It is a quiet place dedicated to God for students who want to step out of the daily routine and refocus their life through a few moments with God.

A number of students initiated DEEP (Drop Everything Except Prayer) as part of the afternoon experience. The

# Returning to our core principles...

student leaders requested that a brief moment be set aside in the middle of the afternoon so that students could pray together, or by themselves, to once again reconnect with God. Each morning the school day begins with morning devotions for the entire school family, a program of group singing, prayer and the spoken word. The DEEP experience provided another opportunity to pray, this time in small groups.

Each of the student organizations at Andrews Academy has a pastor as one of the officers. The student pastors of the various organizations regularly meet throughout the year to plan for spiritual programs at Andrews Academy. In May, they had a special meeting so they could be led by God as they planned an altar call for one of the morning devotions. They prayed together, discussed ideas, prayed some more, and planned the special morning devotion for later that week.

After prayerful consideration it was decided to have each of the organizational pastors present a short testimony to the students. Following an inspiring song service they each took their turn presenting their testimony, and personally made an appeal to their friends to come forward as a statement of their decision to be baptized or re-baptized. It was inspiring to see the Holy Spirit work on the lives of the students as 20 students came forward responding to the call from their peers.

On Sabbath, May 17, two weekends after the altar call, there was a baptism held for the first time in the Andrews Academy chapel. This chapel was strategically placed in the center of the school as a physical representation of the spiritual focus central to Andrews Academy. We were so pleased to have so many students decide to be baptized. In the past, students would often decide to be baptized while



in school; the purchase of the new baptistry allowed the students to make the public expression of baptism while at Andrews Academy.

The program began with singing led by the worship team, followed by a special music by Andrews Academy *Silhouettes*. A drama was presented illustrating God's love for us, followed by Ivan

Ruiz presenting the theme, "Joy." Victoria Brown presented a song, "My Life, My All." Three pastors conducted the baptisms: Oliver Archer, Fa'asoa Fa'asoa and Alvin Glassford. We are thankful for the decisions the students made to be baptized. Eleven students were baptized and became members of the Adventist church family. It was inspiring to watch the student pastors lead through the entire altar call and baptismal services as they ministered to their peers.

More baptisms were held during the consecration service of graduation weekend. Consecration service is the seniors' opportunity to commit and consecrate their lives to Christ as they leave childhood and begin their place in society as an adult. Following the special music, prayer and homily, a baptism service occurred for four members of the graduating class. David Hall, former Bible teacher, was so pleased to be able to baptize four seniors. He encouraged each senior and each in the audience to be close to Him so we can all "graduate" into our heavenly home. The baptisms were followed by special music and a closing prayer.

Numerous other academy students were baptized in their home churches. Please pray for a continued blessing on those who have been baptized. Please also continue to pray not only for Andrews Academy students, but all students of the Lake Union, that each would choose God and decide to be baptized and remain close to Him.

Steven Atkins is a science and mathematics teacher at Andrews Academy.