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# Living beyond the Seminary classroom

Hannah Gallant

Andrews University, [hannahg@andrews.edu](mailto:hannahg@andrews.edu)

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Cristina Gryz

▲ Associates and family members at Adventist Medical Center Bolingbrook recently helped a patient and his wife celebrate their 50th anniversary.

## Going above and beyond

Inherent in the work of a hospital chaplain is the element of surprise. On any given day, one has the chance to witness the work of the Holy Spirit in completely unexpected and exciting ways. Chaplain Cristina Gryz, lead chaplain at Adventist Medical Center Bolingbrook, has gotten used to seeing God do the amazing in hearts and lives. Yet recently, she was part of an event that she will never forget.

As she made her rounds, Gryz encountered an elderly patient who had been admitted to the hospital, his wife lovingly attentive by his side. As she began to speak with the patient's nurse and then his wife, Gryz learned that not only was the wife upset about his illness, she was grieving the loss of the 50th wedding anniversary celebration that their children had planned for the following day. Gryz immediately suggested that she bring in wedding photos that they could place around the room as a testament to their relationship.

When Gryz returned to the nurses' station and asked what else they should do for the couple, one nurse suggested throwing a party. "Everyone started pitching in ideas," said Gryz. "The more people I talked to, the more people wanted to be involved or lend their support." The unit decided that they would host an anniversary celebration the next day, complete with a renewal of wedding vows ceremony and a "reception."

Gryz sprang into action. She made sure that the children and grandchildren would be in attendance. She headed to the nearest party store and purchased 50th anniversary decorations. She also found a veil and a silk flower bouquet. Since she knew the wife's favorite song, she downloaded it to her phone and got speakers that would play it during the ceremony. Gryz then notified the dietary department and asked what they could provide, and recruited Chaplain Jared Jennette to participate.

As the wife wore the veil and held flowers in one hand and her husband's hand in the other, children, grandchildren and staff members surrounded the bed. Jennette offered a blessing of marriage and renewal of vows ceremony, and afterwards the group sang "Amazing Grace" together. Kitchen staff brought beautifully decorated carts with flowers, a display of finger foods and a 50th anniversary cake, and everyone offered blessings to the couple and enjoyed sharing memories. There were very few dry eyes in the room.

"Everyone involved was walking on clouds the entire weekend," said Gryz. "It reminded us of why we are here. We care for our patients with everything we have, but when we can go above and beyond to honor life and marriage with dignity, we have to take that opportunity. It is what God calls us to do." ■

*Julie Busch, associate vice president, Communications, AMITA Health*

## Living beyond the Seminary classroom

While attending the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Master of Divinity (MDiv) students spend a semester completing a Theological Field Education (TFE) requirement. Fernando Ortiz, MDiv program director, says, "TFE is built around the relationship between a ministry context mentor and an individual seminarian in area churches or community ministry settings. It bridges theory and praxis as we provide a field context for our seminarians."

The TFE program provides practical opportunities for seminarians to develop ministry competencies and measure readiness for ministry. It also creates an opportunity to engage each seminarian, at times with their spouse and children, in the realities of ministry. For some MDiv students, the TFE program allows exploration of what type of ministry to pursue after leaving the Seminary.

Mervin Cathian is a second-year MDiv student completing his TFE requirements as a student chaplain at University Towers, an on-campus facility comprised of two residence halls. Mervin's MDiv program focuses on youth and young adults, as well as chaplaincy. He says, "By being a chaplain, you are able to address the challenges that students are experiencing — challenges that students might not share with parents or teachers. I see my position as a student chaplain as a privilege that God has given me."

Although Mervin is not completely sure where God will lead him in the future, he believes that fulfilling these TFE requirements helps him to understand the dynamics and challenges of being a pastor. "It allows the student to grow and to have freedom to experiment in ministry areas

they are interested in. I also like that the TFE program requires accountability."

Sarah Hill, also a second-year MDiv student and student chaplain at University Towers, shares Mervin's sentiments. She feels called to ministry, but is not sure of her specific path after leaving the Seminary. Sarah was a biology undergraduate student at Andrews University when she began to question her decision to continue with biology in graduate school. After seeking advice, she made a decision to instead pursue an MDiv. "I know I'm only here because this is the career path God wanted for me. I know God didn't call me here to be jobless," she says.

For Sarah, the TFE program has been a way for her to broaden her experiences and determine what kinds of ministry in which she wants to be involved in the future. "I see it kind of like our internship. It gives us a chance to network and develop relationships with our mentors. It's also a good way to apply what we have been learning in the classroom and learn our ministry style."

The TFE program is not only beneficial to its enrolled students. David Iwasa, director/dean for University Towers, says, "Our TFE student chaplains provide extra care and programming that would not exist otherwise." Programming includes Monday evening's "Life after AU," designed to help student residents transition to their professional lives, and small groups examining topics like the Sabbath and releasing stress. TFE student chaplains also have visited residents in their rooms and in the hospital, when necessary.

David says, "The student chaplains' care for residents and leadership in small groups impacts lives and helps our residents prepare for their futures."

For more information about the TFE program requirements and the Master of Divinity program, visit [andrews.edu/sem/mdiv/tfe/](http://andrews.edu/sem/mdiv/tfe/) or email [mdiv@andrews.edu](mailto:mdiv@andrews.edu). You also can call the MDiv office at 269-471-3538. ■

*Hannah Gallant, IMC student writer*



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▲ Sarah Hill and Mervin Cathian serve as student chaplains at University Towers.