Conversation and Community

Gillian Panigot
Andrews University
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By Gillian Panigot

Initially, Fresh Brewed met in the Campus Ministries office. Tariro found additional ways to incorporate tea into the meetings, serving the hot drink and inviting people to bring their own unique mugs. Tea-themed cards, including peppermint and chamomile, noted questions for the day’s study. All of these pieces added to the relaxed setting.

Tariro facilitated and directed conversation but let the students take it from there. “They really like that they can talk amongst themselves,” she says. “Sometimes they wanted to focus on prayer for the month or on confidence.” Tariro would research the topic, then share personal stories or Bible stories to excite people about the Word of God.

Students quickly caught on. “Sometimes they wanted to talk about,” she says. “I’m the one leading the discussion but, at the same time, I don’t feel like I am. A lot of times a student will ask a question and another student will answer.”

At first, two or three attended. Then Tariro told three Fresh Brewed participants about the low response to advertising and they said they would invite their friends. After that, Fresh Brewed grew to six people, sometimes even nine or 10. They moved to the Student Life office for more space. “I was so happy for the students to see the value and for them to enjoy it and share the joy with their friends,” she says.

Tariro is now in her second year at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and plans to complete her MDiv. Her classes, particularly Hebrew and Greek, have allowed her to go deeper in her study of Scripture, and she often brings perspectives to Fresh Brewed that the other attendees may not see. She also has grown because of the group. “Students have come and said it was exactly what they needed because they’ve been struggling to get into the Bible. It’s been a struggle for me, too. I’m so used to being told to read the Bible for school. But being able to study, just to study — that has helped a lot in my own spiritual walk because it’s like, ‘I really enjoy doing this!’ I often tell the group they have really helped me out a lot. We’re in the same boat.”

AS INCOMING STUDENT CHAPLAIN of Discipleship in Campus Ministries, Tariro Mutindori understood her job involved giving Bible studies. She was new to the Andrews University campus and fully anticipated a list of work expectations. Instead, she was asked a question: “How would you like to do discipleship?”

Prior to attending Andrews, Tariro had started an Instagram account and blog called TeaTime where, on Tuesdays, she would post videos. “I would ask the community what they wanted to talk about,” she says. “Sometimes they wanted to focus on prayer for the month or on confidence.” Tariro would research the topic, then share personal stories or Bible stories to excite people about the Word of God.

Tariro decided to follow a similar, feedback-based format — in person — for her Andrews Bible study, which she named Fresh Brewed. She says, “We developed a mission statement: ‘We exist to help collegians gain a personal connection with God through His Holy Word, and we strive to introduce fresh perspectives on the Bible for school. But being able to study, just to study — that has helped a lot in my own spiritual walk because it’s like, ‘I really enjoy doing this!’ I often tell the group they have really helped me out a lot. We’re in the same boat.’

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