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Elected to Serve

Gillian Panigot
Andrews University

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AS SOMEONE WHO WAS BORN AND RAISED IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, I don’t have a dramatic “come-to-Jesus” story. In elementary and middle school, church was a place that I went to largely because my parents did. I enjoyed the youth events that included vesperals, mid week dodgeball tournaments and even weekend surf trips. In short, church was a place that I could have fun with my friends.

However, as with all lifelong churchgoers, I’ve undergone a transition in which I’ve had to decide for myself if staying in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is right for me. As I plan to graduate from Andrews University this December, I realize that while the church isn’t perfect, the community it provides and values it teaches, such as a healthy lifestyle and Sabbath rest, form a foundation that I want both for myself and my future family.

In Mark 2:7, during one of the many occasions in which the Pharisees (laughingly) attempted to catch Jesus “violating” one of their many arduous statues, Jesus emphatically replied that The Sabbath was made for me, not man for the Sabbath. While many sermons have been written on this verse’s implications as to how Seventh-day Adventists should keep the Sabbath, I would argue that a simpler truth surfaces from these words — humans need the Sabbath, not only for rest but also for fellowship and community. We are social beings, and leading solitary, work-driven lives would result in widespread feelings of unfulfillment and outright depression in many cases. As a college student, balancing a full course load while simultaneously participating in extracurriculars and holding down a job leaves precious little time to hang out with friends in a non-stressful context. As I’ve progressed in my academic and faith journeys, I’ve come to appreciate the church not only as a place of worship but as an institution providing much-needed community and an outlet from my responsibilities during the week. Like a large portion of my generation, our world church’s recent decisions on issues such as women’s ordination frustrate and dishearten me. Many of my peers have a dramatic “come-to-Jesus” story. In elementary years in elementary school. “Before this, I knew was that, if I was to be elected class president, I would have a personal relationship with me and the joy I found resulted in an openness to God’s plan for my life.”

When John started his freshman year at Andrews Academy, he wanted to become involved in the school’s extracurricular activities. He considered running for class office but, coming from a small school, John only knew two or three people in his Academy class. He wasn’t sure he would receive enough votes to win any election. He felt impressed, though, to take a leap of faith and run for class pastor. “On the day of elections, I remember trembling as I sat down with the whole class,” he says. “All I knew was that, if I was to be elected class pastor, it was up to God. He was the only way I would win the election.” John was elected.

That year John was repeatedly pushed out of his comfort zone as he spoke for multiple vesperals programs and helped plan events and worships. People expressed how they felt compelled to follow Jesus more closely after hearing John speak. He also was able to pray individually with a number of students.

John continued to serve as the Student Association pastor for two years and the National Honor Society pastor his senior year.

“It’s all about a relationship with God,” John comments. “I have found that Jesus wants us to give up abundant life, like He says in John 10:28. When God calls us to step out in faith and follow His leading, He is calling us on an adventure with Him. View your call to service as a good gift from God, a gift that will give you abundant life in a relationship with Him.”

By Gillian Panigot

By Austin Rodgers