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We Hold the Future in Our Hands



▲ Andrea Luxton

One repeated biblical theme we may not discuss often, or even recognize, is that of succession planning! The Bible doesn't use those words, of course, but the thread runs throughout the Old and New Testaments and provides a critical framework for understanding God's purpose for ensuring the future of His church.

We see it in those often-ignored biblical genealogies, where responsibility and fulfillment of prophecy is seen through generational lines. We see it when God speaks to Elijah on the Mount of Horeb. Elijah sees himself as the only one true follower left, but God tells him he is wrong and that God has chosen many followers. Elijah is sent to find his successor: Elisha. We see it when, against all that is expected from a human perspective, God chooses David to be anointed as Saul's successor. We see it in the way Jesus works tirelessly to prepare His disciples to lead the early church. No, they can't replace Him, but they are being set up to be the leaders of the beginnings of the Christian church. And we could go on.

Of course, the path of succession planning in the Bible, just as today, does not always go smoothly. God had plans for Jacob, but parental favoritism confused the situation and caused fraternal rivalry. David may have been chosen to replace Saul, but Saul had other plans. The disciples, chosen as they were, with the best Teacher there could be, made significant mistakes (jealousy, denials, in-fighting) before launching into their roles. I suppose, in effect, that means those who lived in Bible times were not much different than us.

I am constantly humbled and amazed by both younger colleagues and students at Andrews University and their talent, commitment to service and faith, and desire to engage in the church. That is what I meant

when I called this editorial, “We Hold the Future in Our Hands.” I did not mean we are going to decide the future. I meant that when at Andrews University we interface with up to 5,000 students annually, we are literally holding the future of the church, of our communities, of the world in our hands. These are the individuals that will decide that future. These are the men and women, World Changers, who will make decisions about even those things most precious to those of us who are a little grayer. When I write these words, I do not write them with fear and misgiving but with a smile on my face. Why? Because I see every day the passion and engagement of the younger generations, and I know God has a great future planned for all of us with these future leaders on the front lines.

Many years ago, a mentor of mine talked about his responsibility to younger colleagues in this way. He said it was like holding a butterfly in your hand. Hold it too tightly and it crushes the life out of it. But if you recognize the butterfly’s beauty and its potential and let it fly, it will bring beauty to many. I like that analogy.

As you read the articles coming from Andrews University in this issue of the *Lake Union Herald*, you will see amazing commitment, talent and vision. We could multiply these stories twentyfold and still not be close to sharing everything with you. How do I, how do we as Andrews University, how do we as the wider church family allow God to work in our midst and with our support set up the positive future for our church? How do we hold the butterfly in our hand and not crush it, but set it free to fly?

I would like to suggest a few ideas.

Humility. It is easy for those of us in positions of authority (whether in an institution, the organized Church or a local church) to make the mistaken assumption



▲ Students pose in the newly refurbished Andrews Botanical Conservatory on the roof of the Science Complex.

that the success we may see around us is premised on us through the calling God has given us. New ideas can make us fearful. Individuals from different backgrounds and experiences come into the frame, and we unconsciously push them to the fringes. God calls us all in different ways, but I believe He calls us all to humility. I believe humility recognizes the power of God and the potential for the future in those around us.

Trust. I have no doubt that with all our foibles and humanity, Andrews University and the Seventh-day Adventist Church would be nothing if not for the reality that God’s eye is on us. He does not let us out of His sight. He trusted us with the sacred responsibility to care for our University, our Church, our world. He asks us to join Him in having that same trust for those who come after us.

Patience. Jesus is my example here. Just look at the mistakes the disciples made and Jesus’ willingness to still see the future of His church in them. Even when their mistakes resulted in personal hurt to Jesus,

He did not let them go. Patience, guidance, patience, guidance.

Faith. And, finally, but most essentially, we must have faith that God’s purposes will be fulfilled on this earth. God chose us to do what we do. That may amaze us; it does me. But God does not choose wrongly. We may not understand His choices, may even disagree, may be certain that this person, surely, is not going to be my future, the future of my church. But amazingly, yes, maybe he or she is.

André, Joseph, Kamila, Marcel, Caryn, Delilah, Tyler and so many more: these are the individuals of the future. When we hold them, we hold the future in our hands. That is a sacred trust. A trust God has given us to nurture, to love, to guide, to encourage, to dignify, to value and to celebrate all those who He has chosen and will choose.

World Changers are in our hands. What an amazing gift. ■

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