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A YEAR AND A HALF AGO, A GROUP OF ANDREWS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS APPROACHED JOSÉ BOURGET, UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN AND ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR FAITH ENGAGEMENT, WITH AN IDEA. “THEY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE REALLY GREAT TO HAVE A FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE THAT SERVES LATINO STUDENTS,” SAYS BOURGET.

“We had that first conversation and then last spring, we had a second conversation. The thing I share with students all the time is that if you have an idea, if you have a desire, you feel like the Spirit is moving in your life, come and talk to one of the chaplains. Let’s see how we can make it happen here at CFE [Center for Faith Engagement].”

These same students had previously participated in an on-campus Hispanic ministry called Makarios, which had been serving Hispanic churches in the area through spiritually uplifting music, drama and poetry. In the height of the COVID pandemic, Makarios’ ministry was paused. But rather than cause students to stop their pursuit of God, the temporary pause strengthened their passion.

Bourget says students told Pedro Navia, the chair of the Department of International Languages & Global Studies and sponsor of Makarios, that “they really needed to do something to continue to find ways to use their skills and their talents on Sabbath morning—it’s how their faith would grow. So, during COVID, we were able to have that group of students meet every other week. And as they met every other week and as

COVID restrictions relaxed, the students really began enjoying this space to experience faith and community in the experiences that they understand and grew up with.”

At the beginning of the 2022–2023 school year, students at Andrews University began Genesis Fellowship: “Where new beginnings with God become a reality in a community of cariño (caring connection).”

The first service took place on Sabbath, Sept. 3, in the University Towers auditorium. Genesis Fellowship now meets biweekly on Sabbath mornings, celebrating the Latino Seventh-day Adventist faith experience, and holds services in Spanish, Portuguese, and English.

Genesis Fellowship extended the idea of “cariño” to small groups and potlucks on Friday evenings, a “Santa Cena” (communion) service during the Christmas season, and a Sabbath service with Makarios during Alumni Homecoming weekend. In January, Genesis began exploring the formation of a community worship choir.

After more than a semester of Genesis Fellowship, many students have been able to relate to and learn from the fellowship’s inclusive environment. “Genesis makes



me feel like anything is possible when you put your plans in God’s hands,” says Loren Manrique, a senior and Genesis Fellowship organizer. “A project never seen before was put in our hands and even when it started, we still didn’t believe it could work out. But now, after a semester of meeting and our team growing, we can see God’s hand every step of the way. Genesis is a blessing for those of us who have committed to work on it, and we want it to be a blessing on campus as well.”

For more information on Genesis Fellowship, follow them on Instagram at @auegenesis.

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