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Andrews University Fellowships Foster Student-Led Worship

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Andrews University Fellowships Foster Student- Led Worship

Andrews University was founded as a faith-based institution in 1874 and has continued to uphold that foundation for the past 150 years. As the campus has grown, so have worship options. On Sabbaths during the school year students have multiple choices of where to attend church on campus.



Three of those are student-led groups called fellowships: Genesis, New Life and One Place. These student worship experiences are guided by faculty who serve as teaching pastors, but most of the planning and implementation is student-driven. A few students, mainly seminarians or undergraduate religion majors, act in pastoral roles, but that is not a requirement. Student pastors earn a small stipend with a larger majority of students serving as volunteers, very similar to church operations.

These student fellowships might be a reason for some interesting results found in the 2022–2023 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a survey that asks for student feedback on the undergraduate experience. Andrews University students reported they are 64% more committed to the beliefs and values of the Seventh-day Adventist Church compared to 48% from other Adventist institutions. Another NSSE spiritual finding is that 57% of Andrews students say they speak often or very often about spiritual values with fellow University students outside of class. It appears that these student-led fellowships help cultivate strong spiritual values as well as conversations.

According to the 2023 data, Generation Z, ages 12–27, is wrestling with “mental health, questions and doubts about

God, identity and purpose, social justice, environmental issues, and many more” (ChurchTracblog 2023). On the Andrews University campus, fellowships are an answer to what Generation Z is seeking.

GENESIS FELLOWSHIP

The newest worship fellowship is Genesis, offering a student-led worship for Hispanic, Latino and Brazilian students. Rogelio Paquini, DMin, assistant professor of youth and young adult ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and Genesis teaching pastor, says Genesis worships every other Sabbath in the University Towers Auditorium. He adds that Genesis is a “place you can find ‘carino.’ Carino means care, love, tenderness, and hugs from grandma.” Genesis is intentional about the carino experience as well as presenting Jesus in a family atmosphere.

Loren Manrique, a 2024 graduate who earned a BS in animal science, BA in art and minor in Spanish, lives in San Francisco, California, and is one of the founding members of Genesis. She says they wanted the services at Genesis to feel like a community, so they created “a stage with a couch and two chairs, like home.” The worship service starts at 11 a.m. and offers food, like One Place. They welcome everyone in both Portuguese and Spanish and hold a check-in for wellbeing and mental health. Manrique says sharing mental health is often taboo in the Hispanic community, so this is important. The

song service is in Portuguese, Spanish and English followed by a 20-minute sermon. After the sermon announcements are shared and everyone is asked to give hugs to seven different people and bless each other with prayer for the needs of the following week.

As a pastor’s kid, Manrique says her life revolves around church. While speaking with her dad, Luis Fernando Manrique, pastor of the Oakland Hispanic Church, she said she wasn’t feeling connected with Andrews’ area churches due to traveling as the drama director for Makarios. Makarios is an outreach ministry of Andrews’ students who provide Sabbath programming for Hispanic churches in the area. Her father advised, “Never say no to something God is calling you to.” Manrique puts God first and does everything to honor Him and during Covid, Makarios could not travel with Makarios. This led to a conversation with José Bourget, the University chaplain, which resulted in the formation of Genesis. Manrique says that Genesis grounded her as she followed God’s lead, and it would not have been possible without guidance from Bourget.

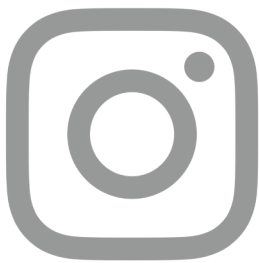
Now, Manrique says, “Genesis gives me a family church.” During the 2023–2024 school year, Manrique also served as president of the Andrews University Student Association.

► *Caleb Beatty prays during New Life Fellowship’s church service held at the Howard Performing Arts Center every Sabbath during the school year.*



◀ *Kayla Goodman speaks during One Place Fellowship*





Instagram: find them there
 Genesis, @auwegenesis
 New Life, @newlifeau
 One Place, @aoneplace

NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP

The longest standing fellowship at Andrews is New Life Fellowship. New Life began in 1991 as a University initiative to meet the needs of a diverse student body. Rodney Palmer, PhD, chair of the Department of Religion & Biblical Languages, served as the teaching pastor for the 2023–2024 school year. He says four to five pastoral students lead in the areas of administration, worship, discipleship and music. College years are short so students often mentor other individuals to replace themselves. This is the case for all fellowships, and Palmer says he recognized this with New Life administrative pastor Christa Horton. “She has already mentored someone who will take over as the admin pastor. So, it’s beautiful,” he says. New Life meets every Sabbath during the school year in the Howard Performing Arts Center. Their services are also streamed on YouTube.

Nathaniel Powell, a junior religion major from Miami, Florida, began as the New Life volunteer stage manager and recently was asked to be the music pastor, a stipend position. Powell says music is a big part of the worship experience, especially for Black culture, and he loves that students can worship how they choose. New Life has praise groups that can have up to seven singers along with a band. The praise teams often rotate between fellowships and perform a variety of music

including hymns. The Andrews campus has several music praise groups so, for example, during Black History Month, New Life will offer “one week with African worship, another Afro Latin, then African American, and then Caribbean,” says Powell, adding this “highlights some of the beauty and diversity.” A unique aspect to New Life is the Deliverance Mass Choir (DMC). Students audition at the beginning of the school year and put in a lot of practice for their New Life performances. The choir can have 25–30 students or more.

Powell enjoys the challenges of his position, “I’m now very comfortable, not just singing, but also speaking in public. The church service is top notch and New Life gives everyone a good opportunity to build community.” Powell wants New Life to continue because everyone needs a place where they can worship God where they feel comfortable.

ONE PLACE FELLOWSHIP

Kenley D. Hall, DMin, is professor of homiletics and youth/young adult ministries, the concentration coordinator for intercultural mission and ministry, and director of homiletics at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. He also serves as a teaching pastor for One Place and is a founding member of the fellowship. Hall and other colleagues started One Place intentionally to be student-led, offering a church service for what students and their community need. “We all have a passion for young adults and connecting young adults to a passionate relationship with Jesus Christ,” he says. The One Place teaching staff includes Hall, Susan Zork, MA, assistant professor emerita of religion, Denis Fortin, PhD, professor of historical theology at the Seminary, and Keila Carmona, MA, assistant dean for student intervention.

Carmona says her role is to preach, attend meetings, and make everyone feel welcome and safe. As a working dean, Carmona’s church was One Place and when she was asked to serve as a teaching pastor, she was “shocked to my core.” She loves the organic experience of watching God show up and



◀ *Guitarist Joe Amaya performs for One Place Fellowship held on Sabbaths in Buller Hall’s Newbold Auditorium.*

“move people into growth” and “watching students tap each other” for service. She even prayed for a baptism and God delivered. She says One Place provides a “unique opportunity to serve in an area that you are passionate about.” Carmona was recently called to serve as the youth and young adult pastor at Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, and was sad to leave One Place at the end of the 2023–2024 school year.

There are three primary elements to the One Place experience: powerful worship and music, a creative moment, and a teaching moment. Originally, only the founders preached but this evolved to include student pastors. Hall knows parents pray for their children, just like he does. He hopes One Place is part of the solution to keeping youth and young adults engaged in church to answer the prayers of those parents.

Hall personally feels an “incredible blessing watching young adults become passionate about Jesus.” He says anyone can attend but to remember One Place is created by and for students. “The more opportunities there are for students to get engaged in a dynamic

relationship with Jesus in places that can connect them to Jesus in ways that other places can’t, isn’t that what we’re about? Just connecting students to a dynamic relationship with Jesus? And I don’t care where it’s done. I just care that it’s being done,” says Hall.

Zack Surovec, a Master of Divinity student from Scottsdale, Arizona, also feels deeply connected to One Place and serves as the administrative pastor. One Place meets year-round in Buller Hall’s Newbold Auditorium.

“One Place is a safe place for students to engage their faith,” says Surovec, whose former dean Donnie Keele said to remember that “school is really like a playground.” He took this to heart and found an interest in church administration. His hands-on serving helps him make friends, get involved, and connect with students. He loves shaping vision and serving with some of his former students from Thunderbird Academy where he worked as chaplain before coming to the seminary. One Place has teams for AV, administration, discipleship and worship, where pastoral leaders earn a stipend. After

graduating, Surovec and his wife, Alicia, will serve in Arizona, where he has a pastoral position.

Sonja Cartwright, also a Master of Divinity student, is from Sacramento, California, and serves as the One Place discipleship pastor. This role pulls together the creative aspects of the service, at times a skit or short testimony before the sermon which studies the Bible. Cartwright says discipleship pastors “come alongside someone to teach about Jesus, giving tools that make disciples of Christ.” She mentored a group of six to nine students and loves connecting with people and being creative, a role she says should be more celebrated. She loves watching the Holy Spirit work, especially when the creative aspect inadvertently perfectly matches the sermon.

Each fellowship’s goal is to teach students the skills to do and be church. The main goal is to offer a worship service on campus for those in their late teens and 20s where there is worship and Bible study, says Fortin. “At the end of the day, Genesis, New Life and One Place are all connecting students to Jesus Christ,” says Hall. Praise God. ■

Tamara Wolcott Watson is an assistant professor of communication at Andrews University.



◀ Kyra Ombao and Ashley Availa-Caldera sing at the joint service of New Life, One Place and Genesis held at Andrews Academy during spring semester 2024.