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### The Power of Listening

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## The Power of Listening

RECENTLY I WAS GOING THROUGH MY personal books, some that went back even to my teenage years. As I was sorting and reorganizing them, I noticed a recurrent theme that I hadn't been expecting to notice: listening. I don't know now whether at the time I was buying these books because I felt I wasn't being listened to or whether I was seeking to learn how to listen better! But as I flicked through the pages, I was reminded again of the huge power of that one word: listen.

When I used to teach communication, one of the key practices I wanted to teach my students was active listening. As we know, we speak at a rate much slower than we can listen. That reality results in a potential gap. I can listen to you, but my mind can be planning what I am going to eat for dinner. While you speak, I can listen with one ear and then with the other ear be hearing all the voices that are ready to judge you immediately. Active listening requires a different approach: listening, focusing on what I hear and reflecting about it actively and thoughtfully. That doesn't mean

agreeing, but it does mean engaging fully and honestly with the perspectives and words of another.

So as I flicked through some of my books once again, I reminded myself how much easier it is to speak, react, "be right" than it is to stop, listen, think, engage. However, if education is done well, and I believe that at Andrews University we mostly do education well, we teach our students to listen and with that listening to reflect and, where appropriate, to act. We could say we teach them to become "thinkers" and "not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts" ("Education," page 17). Our reflections are deeper and our conclusions stronger when we have really learned to honestly listen.

As an example, I am writing this article during Black History Month, and just yesterday I read the Student Movement's Black History Month edition. What powerful, thoughtful, balanced and human, yet spiritual, articles! Thank you to the students who wrote them. I hope I have listened well because my own experience cannot possibly provide the perspectives you have shared, and I feel enriched by listening to you.

And so I come to FOCUS and particularly this edition: our annual report. I want you to know that we write this for you with genuine love: our love for Andrews, our love for our wider Andrews community, including yourself, our love for the wider church and communities of which we are a part, and our love for God. I hope as you read this, as you listen, you can hear our heart speaking. I hope you can enjoy and engage. If you are able to do this, I am sure you will be uplifted and blessed by the passion, commitment, faithfulness and energy that has throbbled through this campus every day of the last year.

Enjoy!

Andrea Luxton, president



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