



**ABOVE:** An exhibition soccer game between a student team and a faculty/staff team was held on November 5

powerfully reflected in her response to the charge she received from the Church by stressing her willingness to learn and make AU a warm welcoming place even more than now. Her goal is to be a spiritual leader with strong Adventist identity to make a difference for the whole campus and activities here and around the world. Her spiritual leadership is personal, contagious, innovative, humble and creative.”

“I have been impressed over the past year how smoothly the transition to President Luxton has taken place,” comments Terry Robertson, associate dean of libraries at Andrews University. “The inauguration today put a strong exclamation mark on that process. The program was inspiring, encouraging, motivating. I especially appreciated Dr. Luxton’s response toward the end of the program, and look forward to her leadership, sharing the story of Andrews University.”

Following the benediction by R. Clifford Jones, president of the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the entire congregation recited the J.N. Andrews Benediction, quoted from a letter J.N. Andrews wrote dated September 15, 1874:

“And now, as we set forth, we commit ourselves to the merciful protection of God, and we especially ask the prayers of the people of God that his blessing may attend us in this sacred work.”

 To see more photos and videos from the inauguration events, please visit [andrews.edu/president](http://andrews.edu/president)

# The Campus of the Constant Banquet

*President Andrea Luxton’s Address*

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING present at this event today. I’d like to thank you for the last few months, which seems to have been a constant flow of congratulations and good wishes from everybody, both here and further away. I have felt very welcomed and you have encouraged me. The inauguration committee who has planned this event has done an amazing job. I want to thank them.

It is particularly important and memorable for me today and over the last few days to have individuals here who have made a difference in my life and my story. Many of you here have helped me form the values that will impact the way the next chapter unfolds for this University. So in a very real way today is about all of us. I would not be here without the support, vision, mentoring and encouragement of many. And I will not be successful, and Andrews University will not be successful, without the continued engagement of your voices and actions. So thank you for the past and thank you in advance for the future.

As I thought of how to respond to today’s events, I decided I would focus more on principles, rather than specifics—what I believe as a community we need to be in order to move forward as a University. Our character if you like, the character that is going to be needed as our story unfolds. The current higher education environment is fraught with challenges: from increasing costs, to challenging expectations, to free (cheap) community college and the list goes on. To be successful in the future Andrews University will have to be creative, responsive, deepen its strengths, and create new opportunities. However, whatever our specific strategies are, and we do have many of those unfolding, they will not be successful alone.

A couple of you have heard this statement and I’m going to quote it again. It’s written by Nilofer Merchant in Harvard Business Review (2011):

“We are stronger as we engage together and understand the potential for the future that lies in our joint experiences.”

“After working on strategy for 20 years, I can say this: culture will trump strategy, every time. The best strategic idea is nothing in isolation. If a strategy conflicts with how a group of people already believe, behave or make decisions it will fail. Conversely, a culturally robust team can turn a so-so strategy into a winner.”

So the right culture is vital for successful strategy, and culture is about character, who we are, and that is where I want to spend my time today.

I want to start with the basics and my first example is not going to be a very academic one. I’m going to call it the Mowgli Principle. This is not the Mowgli of Jungle Book fame. This is the Mowgli that’s there in my house right now. As I arrive home ... and move toward my door, there is a pounding on the floor. And as I open the door, a 20-pound bundle throws itself at me. Mowgli is the puppy that lives at my house. It doesn’t matter who arrives at that door, he is there—jumping, twirling, happy to receive you, welcoming you as if you were the most important person in the world.



So the Mowgli Principle is about the value that every individual has, whoever they are, and the experience of welcome that each should feel on this campus. I have personally experienced that value and welcome at times in my life when I most needed it, and from some who are here today. Not only is this the right thing to do from the biblical perspective because we all have dignity and value, but it's also vital to the fabric of a vibrant community of learners and believers. And that welcome has to be intentional, genuine and given generously. As I get close to my home over the past couple of weeks I find myself smiling, because I know I'm going to be greeted. Wouldn't it be nice if everyone, as they entered Andrews University, smiles as they drive onto the campus, knowing what a community we are?

But if I move a step deeper now, past the welcome, we arrive at something you've been hearing today and I have been talking about recently. I'm going to call it the Authority of Story. What does a story do? It deepens our joint experiences, it encourages ideas and nurtures new possibilities as we share things together. You've heard some facts about me, some from people who know me reasonably well. But a story is more than facts, it's about me being British and Canadian; it's about the teachers and mentors that I've had. My story is about how you've intersected with my life and helped me experience passion for life, generosity of spirit. And I could go on.

Recently one of my colleagues decided I needed to have an American experience and took me to the Motown museum in Detroit. It was a fascinating tour. But what stayed in my mind most was that nearly all the Motown artists actually grew up within streets of each other and went to the same school. Was it that at this one particular time in one particular way multiple musical geniuses just happened to be born? I don't think so. I would suggest that at least part of this was the synergy that came from the shared story of these individuals, along with some amazing mentoring and made opportunities. We are stronger as we engage together and understand the potential for the future that lies in our joint experiences.

Well, since you've heard it twice today, my third principle is The Milton Effect. We heard a poem, it's called "On Milton's Blindness." Certainly Milton was blind, and if you read his poetry, particularly his long epic poem "Paradise Lost" that I wrote about, there are many things to be amazed about. The intricacy of his language, the beauty of his imagery, brilliance of his mind—the way he knows the Bible backwards and forward, the way he knows his classical literature. That's impressive.

But I could never get away from the reality

as I studied Milton, that much of this poetry was written when he was blind. It gives considerable meaning to the phrase we heard at the end from Dr. Johnsson, "Those also serve who stand and wait." Things don't go quite as you always imagine them. Then what do you do?

How do you find a way past the incomprehensible, the impossible? I'd like to suggest that it's partly at least The Milton Effect. Milton was a man of God. He prayed, but he never saw a barrier as a point to stop. It was always the time to be more creative. So A doesn't work, we try B. B doesn't work, we try C. A and B are in conflict? Let's find D, E and F. We need that. We need that attitude and approach as a campus and as individuals that says we are going to be unstoppable. Yes, budgets, budgets, yes, challenges here, challenges there, but that's not the end. We need to find the C, the D, the E. We need to be creative.

One of my favorite biblical stories is that of Elijah. You know Elijah has all these amazing successes. It seems that everything he wants God does for him, and then a threat from Jezebel and he goes running and hides under a broom tree and it seems as if the world is at its end. And God leads him very, very gently to a cave, and after all the noise and all the whirlwinds and all the floods, there comes the still, small voice. That is where God is speaking.

It's easy when we talk about God leading us when everything is going right, but I believe that our story, our campus, who we are as a community is enriched also when times are even more difficult we are able to listen clearly enough to hear the still, small voice. This to me is about what makes this University, the Christian, Adventist environment different. Without this, all I have said before is good but lacking in ultimate depth. The still, small voice.

Finally, I would suggest all that I have said today could be summarized in one last point and I'm going to call it The Banquet Invitation. Last night was a banquet for those of you who were there. Not in the amount of food we had, but it was an evensong. Amazing music, readings, Scripture, very powerful. And then we went outside and there were students with big baskets of breads from many different countries and grapes. Very simple. Very beautiful. Very powerful. It was in its own way a banquet. I've often preached about the

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biblical image of the banquet that God offers to us. Metaphorically, I'd like to suggest that Andrews University will be successful if our attitude is to prepare a banquet, every day. The best and most attractive about Seventh-day Adventist education; the best and most attractive about the gospel; the best and most attractive of learning as a whole and I could go on. Why would someone choose to go anywhere else but Andrews University if what Andrews University offers is a banquet every day? We will become, in a word I've come to like recently, *irresistible*.

So as I look to the future I see us continuing to expand with less traditional forms of learning and delivery to make our education more accessible. I see us deepening our resources in areas of expansion, such as engineering, computer science and nursing, or in areas of strength, such as music and architecture. I see us being known nationally for our success in high impact activities such as undergraduate research. I see us as the place of choice for students that want a competitive, strong academic experience, along with an environment that lives according to biblical principles. I see us making a significant difference in the local community and in the church, and finding increasing ways to partner with others.

There is more, but as I said, culture trumps strategy. So my commitments today are first of all commitments to a journey: a journey towards making Andrews a place of genuine welcome so you smile when you think of being here. A home that values your story as part of the fabric of this school, a university known for creativity and innovation in the face of both opportunities and challenges. And then a personal commitment: to ensuring I regularly stop, take time and listen to the still, small voice of God. And filled with that strength, I am committed to making Andrews the campus of the constant banquet. I hope that my commitments can be those of all of us who are part of the present and future of Andrews University. We have a great story to continue writing together.

*Thank you for inviting me to be one of the authors.*