Beyond the Status Quo

Andrea Luxton, Andrews University
Over the last few months, since my appointment as president at Andrews University, I have had letters, emails, texts, phone calls, conversations in the parking lot, conversations online, and each one has ended with, “I am praying for you.”

Those prayers are hugely encouraging to me as I begin work in my new role at Andrews. They mean far more than even the wonderful edible fruits, chocolates and flowers I have received. It is good to know that in the middle of change at Andrews University and as we face new challenges and opportunities, that we are surrounded and supported by a community of praying believers.

As you know, over the last few months here in North America and around the world there has been an urgent need of prayer. What answer is there other than prayer in the face of terrorism, senseless violence, racial profiling and loss of life? I cannot believe God’s response is anything other than the one Jesus had when looking over the city of Jerusalem: He looked into the future—the sins, the destruction of this beautiful city—and he was moved to tears. How can created beings, each with their unique value, devalue others who are similarly created in God’s image? How can we perpetrate violence and engage in unthinking prejudice? Sometimes it seems our best response can only be prayer and tears.

I would suggest though that we have a responsibility as Christians, and as a Christian university, to go one step further than to pray and weep. I would suggest our prayers and tears must be unified with words and supported by actions that show there is a different way.

My academic background is in English literature and so I believe in the power of story. The Scriptures themselves also powerfully talk to us through story and I think this is one way we can begin.

At Andrews University in particular, and wherever we are in the world, as I listen to your story, as you speak to me transparently about your journey, maybe we can meet in a place that allows us to model the wonderful synergy that comes from our combined strengths and experiences.

I believe that Andrews University is in a unique position to fashion this type of community—again, not just on our Berrien Springs campus, but through the alumni who are spread across this nation and the world. We have not always done this right—we, as others, have taken the path of least resistance, and focused on ourselves, assuming safety is in the world we know.

Yet, Christ actively engaged in a world where service was more important than safety, where the values of the kingdom always trumped the values of the world. What would it look like if we, as a community, instead consistently lived the values of grace, compassion and forgiveness while we seek to find ever increasingly innovative ways to bring positive change to the world around us?

I very much look forward to my opportunity to serve as president at Andrews University. I look forward to finding answers to difficult questions with my colleagues, to listening to the alumni and constituency of this University, to engaging with the energy of our students. We want to and must make a difference in the stories of the lives of our students, of all who come in contact with Andrews University. We shall not accept the status quo. Let us build on our foundation of prayer a community rededicated to changing the world through word and action.

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