On a very blustery day, the Student Association Officers along with many of the parents and PPI members helped put in place a magnificent Christmas banquet. The event happened at 6:00 pm on Sunday the 12th of December in the academy commons. There were hors d’oeuvres on one of the paper plates for the meal followed by a square plate used at the salad bar. The main entree was soup in a bun. There were several types of soup which made the meal very nutritious and delightful. Along with the great meal were the 175 nicely dressed participants who socialized with one another for a beautiful and magnificent evening.

The program was comprised of several special musical numbers including a vocal solo by Sofia Tsatalbasidis accompanied at the piano by Jonathan Constantine. Also participating musically were Simone Weithers, Yankun Li, Elaine Kamvazaana, Michael Thompson, Chelsey Coleman and Sarah Baxter. The final event in the program was a search by two brothers, Mody and Cichael for Candy Land. Ray Ulrich played evil Lord Licorice as they were sent to this person and that person seeking to know where they could find Candy Land. It seemed as though no one really was able to point them in the right direction until they lucked out and located just the exact place as a result of their search. They were so happy along with all of the students who were able to feast on a variety of different types of candy as a conclusion to their wonderful meal and experience for the evening.

At the time of the SA Christmas banquet, students were asking if there was to be a snow day tomorrow – meaning Monday, the 13th. As it turned out we did have a day off of school because of the blowing wind and drifting snow. At Andrews Academy we generally follow the same bad weather closure guidelines as those of the local Berrien Springs Public School system. Because we did not get notification about the closure until after 6:15 am in the morning, it was not until later that we were able to get the word out to our faculty, parents and students. So, we apologize for getting the word out so late, but we are doing everything possible to get it out just as quickly as we can.

The morning devotions for the week of December 13-17 were under the direction of Ms. Rebecca Wright. She often asks a variety of people to have their favorite Christmas thought for one of our devotions during the week. On Tuesday, Pastor Michael Goetz from PMC told the story of the Christmas Truce during WWI. This experience took place on Christmas day as well as the day preceding Christmas 1914. The English and Germans had dug in their trenches and were in it for the long haul when the holidays approached. The trenches, which in some places were as near as 30 or 40 yards apart, stretched all of the way from Lorraine in the south to the English Channel in the north. It seemed that neither side was gaining any territory and because of the cold, it could be a considerable length of time before movement would take place.

At times after a particularly heavy barrage of enemy fire, the other side would shout across the no man’s land – “Hey you missed” or “Left a bit”. That black humor along with poor weather hastened the onset of a Christmas truce. Eventually the shouting across the line became singing of Christmas carols until both sides were trying to out sing the other. Trees out in the no man’s land were decorated and animosity arose when any one would fire their guns on those trees. It was reported, with some apprehension, that in some places along the line there was a Christmas truce where they began to frolic together in games of soccer or football. Some even prepared a meal for the Christmas day where they could eat together. They even got into the spirit of giving where they exchanged small gifts that they had with men on the other side. If beginning the Christmas truce was hard, then ending the truce a day or two later was even harder. How could you rifle down people who just hours before you had exchanged gifts with and joked with – it was very difficult.

Then on Wednesday, the 15th, Dr. Andrea Luxton, Provost of Andrews University, shared with us some interesting moment of her life when she was playing the clarinet in a concert. It seemed as though one of the instrumentalist lost a sense of where they were in the piece, Little Donkey, that they were performing at the time. As a result, he was off playing his own little section of the piece when others including the speaker also thought that they too were not playing at the right place and so it became evident after a period of time that only a few were playing the piece correctly. The good part of the entire episode was that everyone ended on the same note and only a few really realized the difference. She mentioned how 20 years later she had heard a recording of what had happened and it brought back to her memory how important it was to follow God’s leadership if we are ever to make a positive impact in this life.

She also told the story of how a young man called Lewegi and his wife had a new baby. The unfortunate part of it was that the baby was born blind. That made Lewegi so mad at a God that would do that to him and his baby that he gave up Christianity and even forbade his wife and little girl to attend church. This went on for months as the man grew more and more frustrated with God. Being interested in carving, he began to carve from a block of ivory the form of his little girl. He had it nearly completed and was preparing to give it to his daughter for the Christmas season when his wife got the special urge to go to the Christmas services at the nearby church. She took the baby and the carving made by her husband and proceeded to the church that was now being pastored by a new friar. Upon arriving at the church the new pastor became so impressed by the situation that he changed his whole presentation and centered the service around the blind baby and the carving by her father. When the father came home that day and found both his daughter, his wife and the carving missing he became enraged. Realizing that it was the holiday season in his anger he rushed down to the church to find his wife, daughter and the carving as the centerpiece of the message being delivered that
day. His heart melted, he returned to Christianity and they lived happily ever after.

On that day, Katie DeWind was awarded $75 in chapel for bringing in the most money from the letter writing campaign. During that campaign there was over $2,000 that was raised for lighting and sound in the chapel area as well as funding for worthy students. If you had received a letter and did not have an opportunity to participate, we would invite you to give your gift to the academy so that it can be counted as a tax deductible gift for the 2010 calendar year. Thank you to each and everyone who has so heavily contributed to the academy program through the gift of your son or daughter and the tuition expenses that you faithfully care for on a monthly basis.

Then on Thursday, Ms. Wright told us the story that she has told for so many years. That is the Tale of three trees. It is a precious story of what the trees desired to be when they grew up. It turned out that they were used as in the stories recorded in Luke 2, Matthew 8 and Matthew 27. Very special thanks goes to Ms. Rebecca Wright for the coordination she gave in providing us with the speakers and these stories for that important week leading up to our Christmas break.

On Friday, Pastor Michael Goetz consecrated and dedicated the students who were traveling as our SOW ambassadors to Mexico. They included: Chelsey Cameron, Brian Davison, Reginald Desrosiers, Alyson Drew, Jeremy Faehner, Sergio Francisco, Alex Gaytan, Amante Gonzalez, April Habenicht, Gabrielle Hamilton, Jessica Helm, Givan Hinds, Janessa Howell, Philip Jardine, Elaine Kamvazaana, Yejin Kim, Ha Yan Lee, Jeong Bin Lee, Ji Yeon Lee, Julie Logan, Laura Miller, Adam Mondak, Joses Ngugi, Kimberly Park, Emilie Pichot, Mihael Plantak, Lydia Quaye, Ashley Reichert, Zachary Reichert, Yuna Seo, Tiffany Thordarson, Raymond Ulrich, Michael VanderWaal, Cody Wales, and Simone Weithers. In addition to these, there were 5 other students who went with Pastor Glenn Russell to Honduras to visit the children’s orphanage operated by Reach International. They included: Christiana Atkins, Rachell Lynne Brantley, Emory Dent, Konnor Dent, and Livvy Knott.

“A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds.” – Francis Bacon

There is a poem called Keeping Christmas by Henry Van Dyke that is read in family gatherings on a yearly basis emphasizing the importance of this wonderful season.

There is a better thing than the observance of Christmas day, and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing...

• to put your rights in the background, and your duties in the middle distance, and your chances to do a little more than your duty in the foreground;
• to see that men and women are just as real as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy;
• to own up to the fact that probably the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give to life;
• to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe, and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness.

Are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing...

• to stoop down and consider the needs and desires of little children;
• to remember the weakness and loneliness of people growing old;
• to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough;
• to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear in their hearts;
• to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you;
• to make a grave for your ugly thoughts, and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open—

Are you willing to do these things, even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing...

• to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world—
• stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death—
• and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love?

Then you can keep Christmas. And if you can keep it for a day, why not always? But you can never keep it alone.

There will not be an AAWeekly published for the week of December 26-January 1. The next AA Weekly planned is for the first full week in January. In the meantime, have a very happy Christmas and a wonderful new year. May God bless you in all that you set out to do.