

Alumnus of the Year Award

Andy McDonald, '73

Andy McDonald's Georgia roots are deep. His family's history is intertwined with the history of Atlanta and of the Adventist Church there. Andy joined the GCA Class of 1973 his junior year after completing 10th grade at Cascade Road Junior Academy. At GCA he quickly found his place as a leader, and was voted student association president his senior year.



Following graduation from GCA, Andy went to Southern Missionary College and majored in theology. After SMC, Andy was sponsored by the Georgia-Cumberland Conference and attended the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, graduating in December 1979. Andy would also complete a doctor of ministry degree from Andrews University in 1999.

Andy's first four years were spent in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference (actually living on the GCA campus while interning in Calhoun) then serving the Brunswick and Cohutta districts. In 1984 he accepted a call to be Youth Pastor at the Florida Hospital Church (now WholeLife Church). Before the year was out, at age 29, he took the leadership reins as senior pastor of the church and began a multi-decade transformation process that took it from a mono-cultural, mono-generational congregation to a multi-cultural, multi-generational faith community that was responsive to member needs and aligned with its mission. Andy never veered from his calling as a pastor, and he retired 41 years later as a pastor with 37 of those years in one church.

In retirement Andy is now spending time traveling, studying, enjoying his family, and continuing to grow as a person. Having always found nature to be personally restorative, Andy recently became a certified Forest Therapy Guide so he can guide others as they improve their physical and mental health through contact with the natural world.

Andy has been married to Vicki Johnson McDonald since 1978 and the couple are the proud parents of two grown children, Whitney (married to Jeff Carlson) and Zachary (married to Riley Cochran). Andy and Vicki find great delight in their three grandchildren, Paxton, Andie Jo, and Holden and are looking forward to sharing more time with them.