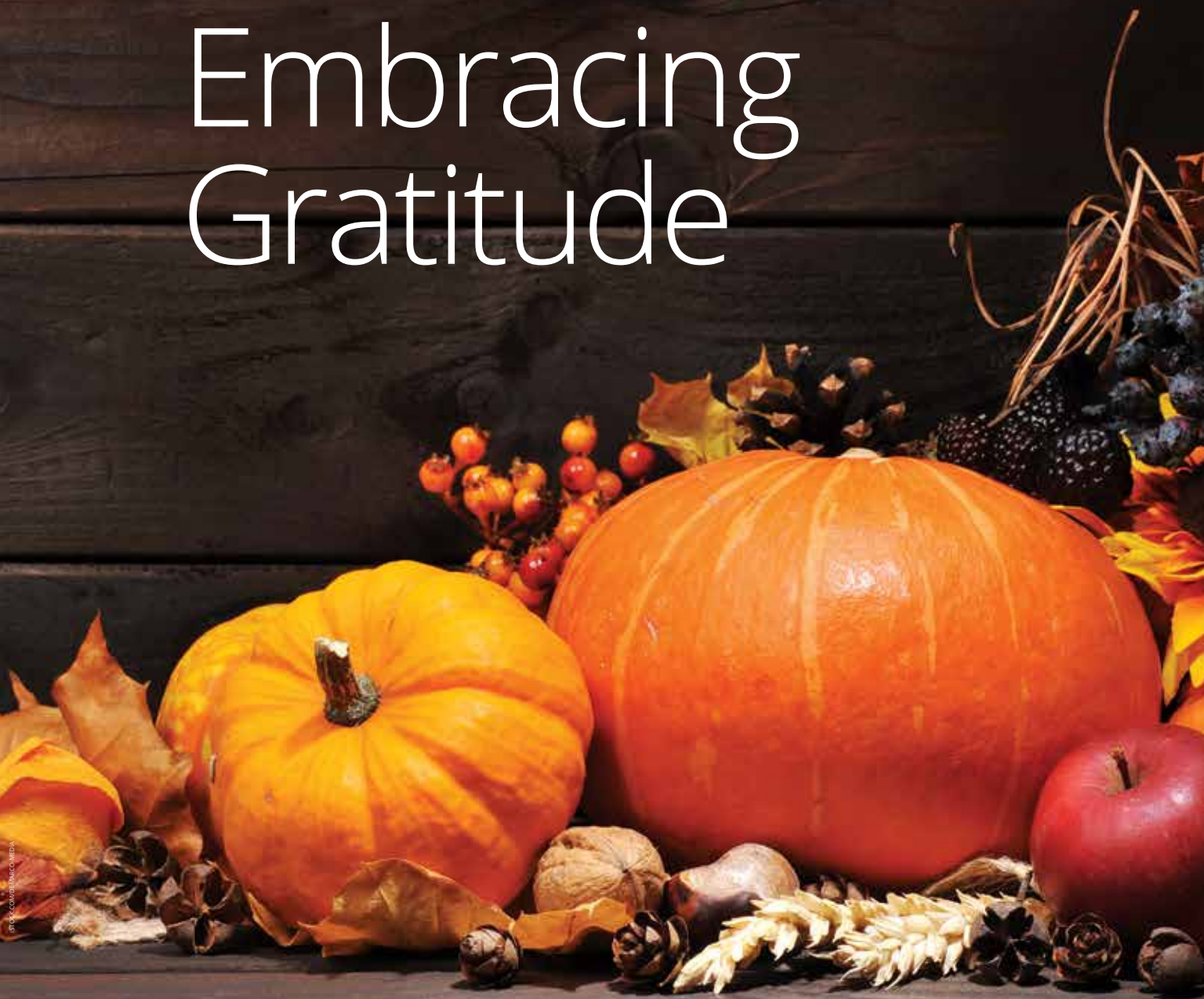
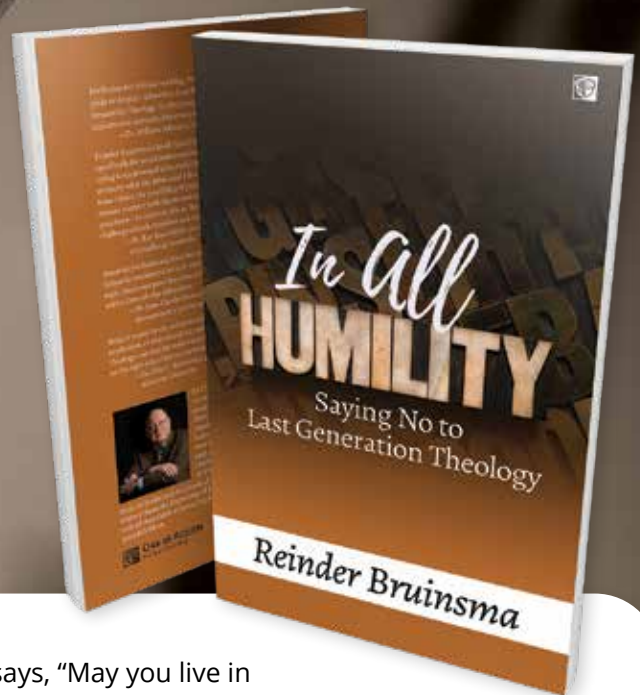


Recorder

Embracing Gratitude



"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good."
—Psalms 107:1



There is an old expression that says, “May you live in interesting times!” The times in which Christianity—and particularly Seventh-day Adventism—exists today can certainly be called “interesting.”

The theological situation in which we find ourselves is becoming increasingly diverse, polarized, and tense. Not that it has never been this way before; frequently throughout its relatively short history, Adventism has had intense theological divisions. But I wonder if they have been this severe, with at least the possibility of the future fracturing of the denomination.

Into this already “interesting” timeframe comes Dr. Reinder Bruinsma with a book that is both challenging and thoughtful: *In All Humility: Saying No to Last Generation Theology*—food for thought that every thinking Seventh-day Adventist should read.

This book is Bruinsma’s examination and analysis of some of the recurring trends of thought in Adventism. As a former pastor, retired administrator, and theologian, Bruinsma writes in a way that speaks to the heart of the current situation regarding Last Generation Theology.

Writing simply and clearly, without using theological jargon, he analyzes the current iteration of this issue. This book is an opportunity for us to learn about the dangers of Last Generation Theology, to realize the importance of humbly accepting that we cannot know everything that is going to happen, and to reaffirm our faith that Jesus will never forsake us and is sufficient.

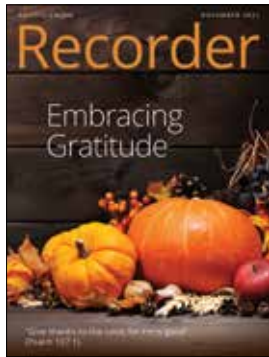


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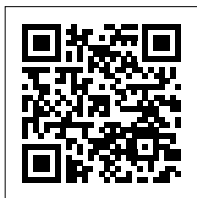
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"I think we have something to be thankful for. We ought to be glad and rejoice in God, for He has given us many mercies.... We want this Thanksgiving to be all that it implies. Do not let it be perverted, mingled with dross; but let it be what its name implies—giving thanks.

Let our voices ascend in praise."

Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, Dec. 23, 1884



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Thanks

Embracing
Gratitude

By Sandra E. Roberts



Thanksgiving has always been my favorite holiday. I love families gathering together, the fall weather, autumn colors, and the simplicity of the focus on gratitude.

I love the smells of familiar traditional foods wafting from the kitchen. In our house that includes pecan and vegeburger loaf, mushroom stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy made with Vegex (we hoarded some before they quit making it), fresh rolls, sweet potatoes, broccoli, fresh cranberry sauce, and pumpkin and pecan pies (we MUST have both). I love the process of everyone being in the kitchen working together to create the meal—through the years each of us knowing what we were to do. My younger sister complained that she always got stuck with setting the table, but she sets a beautiful one.

With the passing years, the number of people around the table grew, with brothers-in-law, a niece, and a nephew, and then got smaller as we experienced losses. We learned to hold gratitude and grief in the same space.

I love sitting around the table, holding hands and each expressing what we are most thankful for, then praying a blessing over the abundance that is before us. I love the reminder that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above (James 1:17).

I love the reminder that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above.

I love taking time to go to shelters or other ministries where volunteers work tirelessly throughout the year to feed the underserved—giving them a break on Thanksgiving Day so they can go home to their own families for a meal.



I loved hearing the story from my parents every Thanksgiving about how they brought me home after my birth on Thanksgiving Day. It always felt like it was indeed my holiday too.

I love the Thanksgiving church services and singing the songs of gratitude. I love the tradition of everyone bringing food from their own pantries and then collectively making baskets to deliver food to who those who otherwise wouldn't have a feast.

I love inviting extra people who live alone with

no family nearby to join us around our dinner table and be family with them.

I love taking time to go to shelters or other ministries where volunteers work tirelessly throughout the year to feed the underserved—giving them a break on Thanksgiving Day so they can go home to their own families for a meal.

Thanksgiving is a time for gratitude, but it is also a time to serve. Those two things go together.

A heart filled with gratitude overflows into a longing to give to others and walk along beside.

After I was an adult living away from home, my parents started a thankful journal during their morning worships together. When I would visit and have morning worship with them, I was invited to add things I was thankful for to the list. I was also on their list of things they were thankful for. Every single morning.

My mother continued this tradition even after my father died. Life had been tough for them as they aged, and they found that starting their day by verbalizing and writing down the things they were most thankful for helped them have an attitude of gratitude no matter what the day ahead held. They actually felt more grateful.

From that well of gratitude, they realized they still had much to offer and give to others. They volunteered at the school and in the ministries of the local church and community. They served the Lord with gladness (Psalm 100:2).

Gratitude compels us to serve.

I have seen it work in the reverse as well.

Engaging in tangible acts of service to others can nudge hearts toward gratitude.

Most of my ministry has been in the area of youth ministry, and through the years I have taken hundreds of high school students on short-term mission trips to some rather remote parts of the world.

Some students started these trips with a rather self-centered frame of reference, complaining about the lack of showers or familiar food or comfortable beds. They wore brand name clothes and did not want to get them dirty. But over and over again, I watched these very students begin to express gratitude as they played with the children in the places we were working. They noticed how happy and satisfied the children were, even though they had nothing. They noticed how excited the kids were with the gift of a pencil or a crayon and some paper. The students began to realize they had much to be thankful for, and that led to more generosity. They gave people their clothes, the extra money they had brought with them, the snacks they had stored

up. They would literally empty their pockets before heading home with gratitude for the resources they had, gratitude to God, and gratitude for the learning experience.

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with the wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:15–17, NIV).

As we enter this Thanksgiving season, there is much that has gone wrong in this world. There has been loss, and we are not really all OK. It has been a tough year and a half for all of humanity. And yet, we are called to be thankful. We are called to serve. We are called to be salt and light, hope and healing in this world.

Today, I carry on the tradition of my parents with a journal of thanksgiving. I find it a helpful spiritual practice when things around me are falling apart. I find that my heart bursts with gratitude when I take time to contemplate the cross and the grace extended to me once again this day.

It is that grace that makes space for gratitude, and it is that grace that invites my deeds and words to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as I give thanks. It is that grace that allows me to hold gratitude and grief, questions and hope, longing and giving all in the same space around the table of my soul.

May your heart be grateful this Thanksgiving. May that grateful heart compel you to bring some hope and light into the world through loving service this season.

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good” (Psalm 107:1).

Sandra E. Roberts is the executive secretary of the Pacific Union Conference.



By Ellen G. White

Chapters of the Heart

T rue love is not a strong, fiery, impetuous passion. On the contrary, it is calm and deep in its nature. It looks beyond mere externals and is attracted by qualities alone. It is wise and discriminating, and its devotion is real and abiding. God tests and proves us by the common occurrences of life. It is the little things which reveal the chapters of the heart. It is the little attentions, the numerous small incidents and simple courtesies of life, that make up the sum of life's happiness; and it is the neglect of kindly, encouraging, affectionate words, and the little courtesies of life, which helps compose the sum of life's wretchedness. It will be found at last that the denial of self for the good and happiness of those around us constitutes a large share of the life record in heaven. And the fact will also be revealed that the care of self, irrespective of the good and happiness of others, is not beneath the notice of our heavenly Father....

Love is power. Intellectual and moral strength are involved in this principle, and cannot be separated from it. The power of wealth has a tendency to corrupt and destroy; the power of force is strong to do hurt; but the excellence and value of pure love consist in its efficiency to do good, and to do nothing else than good. Whatsoever is done out of pure love, be it ever so little or contemptible in the sight

of men, is wholly fruitful; for God regards more with how much love one worketh than the amount he doeth. Love is of God. The unconverted heart cannot originate nor produce this plant of heavenly growth, which lives and flourishes only where Christ reigns.

Love cannot live without action, and every act increases, strengthens, and extends it. Love will gain the victory when argument and authority are powerless. Love works not for profit nor reward; yet God has ordained that great gain shall be the certain result of every labor of love. It is diffusive in its nature and quiet in its operation, yet strong and mighty in its purpose to overcome great evils. It is melting and transforming in its influence, and will take hold of the lives of the sinful and affect their hearts when every other means has proved unsuccessful. Wherever the power of intellect, of authority, or of force is employed, and love is not manifestly present, the affections and will of those whom we seek to reach assume a defensive, repelling position, and their strength of resistance is increased. Jesus was the Prince of Peace. He came into the world to bring resistance and authority into subjection to Himself. Wisdom and strength He could command, but the means He employed with which to overcome evil were the wisdom and strength of love. Suffer nothing to divide your interest from your present work until God shall



see fit to give you another piece of work in the same field. Seek not for happiness, for it is never to be found by seeking for it. Go about your duty. Let faithfulness mark all your doings, and be clothed with humility.

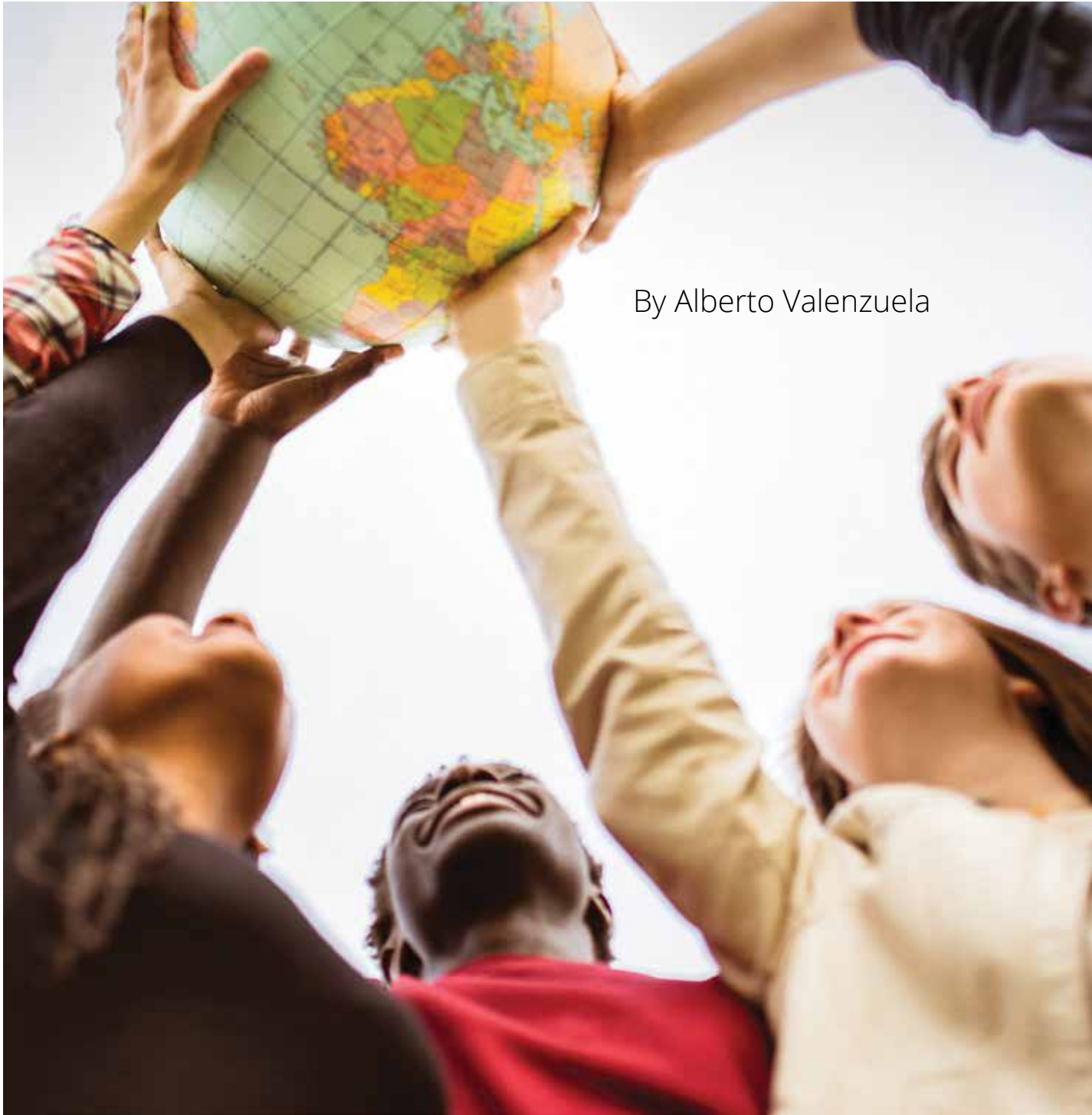
“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Blessed results would appear as the fruit of such a course. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Here are strong motives which should constrain us to love one another with a pure heart, fervently. Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions. We are not commanded to do to ourselves what we wish others to do unto us; we are to do unto others what we wish them to do to us under like circumstances. The measure we mete is always measured to us again. Pure love

is simple in its operations, and is distinct from any other principle of action. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life and frequently a blameless conversation. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions, acknowledge the present truth, and express humility and affection in an outward manner, yet the motives may be deceptive and impure; the actions that flow from such a heart may be destitute of the savor of life and the fruits of true holiness, being destitute of the principles of pure love. Love should be cherished and cultivated, for its influence is divine.

Excerpted from Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, pp. 133-136.

Love cannot live without action, and every act increases, strengthens, and extends it.

Do Unto Others? Wh



By Alberto Valenzuela

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What Does That Mean?



Serve. Service. Servile. Servant. Server.
Servitude. Serving.

It's odd, really, the wide variety of associations and reactions we can have to these very similar words. The first seems somehow positive and noble, like in "How may I serve you?" *Serve* could also be a tennis or volleyball term, which is sort of positive but perhaps less noble. The last word in the list, *servicing*, might be describing an action—or you could be talking about a portion of food. That is usually pleasant. So why do some of these related words carry negative connotations?

A century ago, the aristocracy and wealthy had servants who waited on the table and served the meals. Today we use the word *server* for those who bring us our food in restaurants; or we might call them waitress or waiter or even wait staff—more appropriate terms than *servant*.

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage" (Psalm 27:14, KJV). Has it occurred to you that "wait on the Lord" means "serve the Lord," not "be patient until He accomplishes His design"? Can you see yourself as one of God's personal servants, standing by, waiting for a request, then moving swiftly to fulfill it?

What is it that we mean when we exhort each other to serve God and humanity?

Service in the Old Testament

Strong's Concordance has pages and pages on *serve*, *servicing*, *servant*, *servanthood*, etc. In Bible times, *servant* was a widely used term. People were forever referring to themselves as "your servant" to show respect, and such notables as Abraham, Isaac,

He loved everyone He saw, and
He was always in close contact
with and led by the Holy Spirit.
We can do that.

Jacob, Sarah, David, Daniel, and Mary the mother of Jesus are called servants of God. What higher calling could there be?

In *Strong's* one sees that frequently “loved and served” or “worshiped and served” appear together. So service to God seems inextricably entwined with love and with worship. Moses delivers God’s message over and over to Pharaoh: “Let my people go, that they may serve me” (Exodus 7:16, KJV). What does this entail? Is it just to hold worship “services,” as they were called thousands of years ago (see, for example, Exodus 12:25-26; 27:19; Hebrews 9:1) and as we call them to this day?

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 defines the service God asks of us quite clearly: “What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” (NKJV). Doesn’t this passage sound similar to Micah 6:8 and to Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the famous prayer of Israel? *Serve*, it seems, means love and obey.

Service in the New Testament

Matthew 8:1-4 tells the story of Jesus healing a man with leprosy. There are several principles at work in this passage.

Jesus followed local customs and protocols. He told the man to go to the priest and make the prescribed offering “as a testimony.” This had at least three results. It gave the local priest a chance to be involved, (and perhaps turn to Jesus himself.) It

gave honor to the law, which, after all, Jesus Himself had originally given. It also gave the healed man something to do on his own behalf, which may have helped his self-confidence.

Jesus was led by the expressed needs of this man. He didn’t seek out the leper and ask him if he wanted to be cleansed. He let the leper come to Him and ask. However, He had made no secret of His ministry, so people knew where to find Him and had at least heard rumors about what He could do. How often have we put a burden on people by pressuring them to receive something (even the gospel) that they don’t think they need? Alternatively, are we clear about the ministries provided by our churches, groups, or us as individuals—are there well-defined and respectful methods for accessing them when someone does feel a need?

Jesus met more than the expressed need. He heard the request for healing, but He also





recognized an even deeper need that was felt but not expressed: the need for touch. No one touched a leper. It wasn't just dangerous—it was against the law. This man had taken a risk to even approach Jesus. His courage was rewarded not only by the miracle of healing but by the miracle, accessible to us all, of human touch. We can't hand out miraculous healings. But our loving touch can surprise us with its miraculous power to ease isolation and loneliness.

Jesus' heart was touched by a need so deep, the needy one could not even ask for help. How did He know? Well, of course, He was the Son of God, and "knew what was in man" (John 2:25). But we are looking for principles we can imitate. Jesus paid attention. He loved everyone He saw, and He was always in close contact with and led by the Holy Spirit. We can do that. We can build relationships so that we can sometimes give voice to something the

other person can't speak. If she closes up, we can back away and apologize if necessary. But frequently the response will be relief, even tears, as the person who has come to trust us realizes we have seen what she didn't dare to share, and that we are not shocked and don't love or respect her any less.

Jesus did what needed to be done. He didn't ask questions. He didn't look around to see if anyone else was going to do it. He didn't examine His soul to determine if He had the requisite skills. He saw a need, got up, set aside any doubts about risk or self-consequence, and did the job.

During the last night Jesus and the disciples were all together, some unpleasantness surfaced: "A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves'" (Luke 22:24-27, NIV).

Did this incident take place after Jesus had washed their feet? Could the disciples really get into a conflict over who was the greatest after watching Jesus take on the persona of the lowliest of servants in their society, the one who had anything to do with feet? Is it possible we can forget so easily, so quickly?

The God we love and worship and serve came to live among us, and He knelt down to serve us. What more could He possibly tell us about what He means by service? It was love that had come to this world, to serve.

Alberto Valenzuela is the associate director of communication and community engagement for the Pacific Union Conference and editor of the Recorder. This article is adapted from the iFollow curriculum produced by the Center for Creative Ministry.



Resilient Leadership

Storm Ministries is a group of student leaders who, along with campus chaplain Pastor Alexy Gatica, are responsible for the overall spiritual programming on the Thunderbird Adventist Academy (TAA) campus. In addition to weekly chapels and monthly youth church programs at the campus church, these young people are intentional about providing a variety of activities and spiritual programs to meet the diverse needs of the student body.

This year the Storm Ministries leadership chose the theme “Resilient,” which is based on the Bible text Micah 7:8: “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, The Lord will be a light to me” (NKJV). During the first chapel of the year, Pastor Alexy reminded students that, although the world looks different and we may feel discouraged, God gives each of us the power to bounce back from hard moments.

With the intention of bringing more unity to the campus, Storm Ministries launched two new mentorship programs: Senior Sisters and Brotherhood. Senior Sisters partners a senior with a freshman for the school year, helping them navigate the novelty of high school and providing a trusted person to go to with any questions. Brotherhood is led out by a few senior boys, and they use their meeting times to answer questions about being a man through Scripture. Each of these groups kicked off the program at the first lawn vespers of the year.

Another avenue of reaching and connecting with the youth is through the Storm Ministries podcast

“RealTalk.” The podcast, created by the Storm Ministries team last year with the aid of former chaplain Pastor Zack Surovec, continues this year with Season 2. The bi-monthly podcast segments hosted this year by four upperclassmen—Lana, Riley, Jordi, and Marakit—delve into serious and fun topics that are on the hearts of teens today, and they occasionally invite other guests to join the discussion.

One longtime campus tradition that Storm Ministries coordinates is school-wide Lake Day. Students and staff were especially excited to take part this year, after missing the event last year due to COVID. Loading buses and vans, they traveled about 45 minutes to Lake Pleasant for an entire day filled with swimming, tubing, paddleboarding, canoeing, and games—anything to keep cool in the 100+ degree heat of Arizona. As the sun began to set, the TAA family came together to welcome in the Sabbath with vespers, where one of their own shared her testimony about how God worked in her life. Following the touching testimony, each class gathered and took time to pray before heading back to campus.

The mission of Thunderbird Adventist Academy is for students to **EXCEL: EX**perience Jesus, **COMM**unicate Clearly and Think Critically, **EM**brace Service and Citizenship, and **LIVE** Healthfully in Body and Mind. The Storm Ministries team is a shining example of the mission in action!

By Tanna Allison

Back to a Child

“Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3, NIV).

What do Matthew 18:3, a popular Hollywood movie series, and the Tucson Esperanza Spanish church district have in common? An innovative youth ministry project entitled “Back to a Child.”

“We wanted to have an iconic theme to grab attention but also to focus on the message of Matthew 18:3 that we need to go back and recognize the childlike traits that are missing in our lives and allow Jesus to transform us,” said Adelfo Huerta, who is the coordinator and speaker for the Back to a Child Project.

Facing the challenge of finding programming that meets the needs of both youth and young adults, Tucson Esperanza Spanish Church Pastor Chan Bonnabel and Huerta worked to find something that would be appealing to the small group of young people in their church. “Every time we tried to focus on the 20-year-olds, we only have five or six, and if we focus on the younger ones, we only have a few. It is always difficult to grab something for everyone,” Huerta said.

The ministry team started looking for something different that could grab the attention of everyone and that the older group could relate to. This led them to the Back to a Child theme, which referenced the “Back to the Future” movie series while focusing on Matthew 18:3. “We need to be aware that we are not as honest as we were when we were children,” said Huerta. “Once we recognize it, then we allow Jesus to transform us back.”

The project began in April 2021 and focused on humility and honesty. The follow-up program, Back to a Child 2, took place on September 25, with the theme centering on eliminating negative thinking and promoting positivity. Instead of five or six youth, the program had over 40 young people ages 10-25 participating.

The leaders, youth, and young adults worshiped together. For Sabbath School they worked in teams rotating through a variety of “Positivity Tables” where they were faced with challenges and activities that promoted collaboration and infused positivity. One of the tables included a Jenga activity in which the teams had to provide a positive comment to remove a block.

The objective of the game was to see how many positive comments each team could say before the stack fell. Huerta’s message for the day identified Bible heroes who faced negative “mental distortions” and how God worked in their lives to transform them.

The project has also provided an opportunity for the other district churches to unite and collaborate. In addition to the Tucson Esperanza Spanish church, Pastor Chan Bonnabel also pastors the Tucson Northwest Spanish and Tucson South Spanish churches. “Every church wants to have their event, so it has been difficult [in the past] to build anything together,” said Huerta. “You have these silos, but Pastor Chan did a great job of saying ‘Let’s do an event that encompasses all three churches.’” This allowed the Back to a Child ministry team to utilize the talents and leadership from all three churches to assist with the worship, activity tables, and skits.

“Together we were able to unite and do this together. I thought that this was the first time we saw collaboration amongst the three churches,” Huerta added. The Back to a Child Project has now formed a foundation for future collaboration.

“The Pathfinders had a little campout up on Mt. Lemmon, and all three churches participated together in the same camp,” Huerta said. “That was different for us, and that was awesome.”

By Jeff Rogers





Proclaim the Praises!

TOP LEFT: Chole Hicks, fourth grader at Chowchilla Adventist School holds the trophy for her first-place finish in the Grand Finale of the CCC Spelling Bee.

TOP RIGHT: Jonathan Zepeda, with his third-place Grand Finale trophy, is surrounded by his classmates at San Francisco Adventist School, who also hold certificates and ribbons for participation in the CCC Spelling Bee.

RIGHT: The Dinuba Junior Academy celebrated when Madeleine Sundstrom, seventh-grader, placed second in the Grand Finale of the CCC Spelling Bee.



“**H**e who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God” (Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250-251).

During the last several months, our Central California Conference (CCC) articles have been about graduations, the Soquel Virtual Camp Meeting, and saying farewell to one president and welcoming a new one. Although it may have seemed that not much else was happening, it was just not possible, because of limited space, to share other stories of what God was doing through His people.

The following few stories, out of the many that could be told, cause us to join with the Apostle Peter in declaring, “you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may *proclaim the praises* of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9, NKJV; emphasis added).

A virtual spelling bee

Although a new school year has already begun, an event occurred on April 7, 2021, that was rather exciting but has not yet been reported. This event showcased the great spellers in our schools.

Due to pandemic restrictions, the CCC education department held its first virtual spelling bee, with eight schools participating. Sandra Green, CCC associate superintendent, coordinated the event and elicited the help of education department staff and several others. This included Vicki Murray, a children’s storyteller from New Mexico. In her worship talks, she urged the children to be faithful in Bible study and do their best in all their schoolwork.

After individual rounds from grades three to eight were held in each school, one student became eligible in each grade level to participate in the second round. Held on Zoom and entitled the Main Event, in this round the students were

categorized into three levels: grades three/four, five/six, and seven/eight. The Main Event produced three winners in each group. Officials for this round included Michael Lee as the word master and Jerry Corson, Donna Baerg-Entze, and Sandra Green as judges.

After the Main Event in the morning, the nine student finalists became eligible to participate in the Grand Finale that afternoon. Jean Buller from the education department at Pacific Union College was the word master for this finale. The judges were Amy Deming, Vicky Lauritzen, and Deloris Trujillo.

Although there were many winners throughout the event, it was the winners in the Grand Finale who really showed their abilities by spelling some very difficult words. Although it was close, Chloe Hicks, a fourth-grader from Chowchilla, became the first-place winner. Two seventh-graders, Madeleine Sundstrom from Dinuba and Jonathan Zepeda from San Francisco, came in second and third respectively.

There is no doubt that Adventist education, even in a small school, does everything it can to live up to its goals for academic excellence. Whether next spring's spelling bee will be virtual or in-person, CCC has some amazing spellers!

Sonora VBS

Speaking of young people, here is a story of a group of them from the Discover Life church in Sonora who volunteered to hold a Vacation Bible School (VBS) this summer from July 12 to 16. Because the church was not planning to hold a VBS, the young people asked the church to reconsider and volunteered to do it all. Under the direction of Laurel Renner, ministerial intern for the summer, they quickly organized all the details for a special week for the children in the church and community. Church members rallied with snacks and donations for expenses.

The children who attended shared all the awesome songs they had learned with the church on Sabbath, July 17. They also spent the entire week on a mission project of making homeless supply bags. Each day they brought various specified supplies, which were stockpiled and then assembled on the last day. They also included a special message of God's love that they had personally made. The bags were later passed out to the local homeless community, following pandemic guidelines.

As Nathan Renner, then pastor in Sonora, pointed out, "Our teenagers and young adults have learned to love and care for the next generation in their homes, at school, and through the church's ministry. How grateful we can be that our church has raised a team of young



Children and youth leaders demonstrate some of the songs they learned at the Discover Life VBS in Sonora.

people who care. Pray for them that they may remain committed to Jesus and His work throughout their lives. They aren't just the future of the church—they are its present!"

Abigail's music lessons

Another young person with a heart for ministry is Abigail Rodela, a 17-year-old member of the Taft church. This talented and accomplished pianist—already the music director of her church—has been giving music lessons to the children of families with limited income in the Taft area since she was 13. Rodela saw it as a way to share the joy she receives from music.



Abigail Rodela (top right) finds joy in teaching music lessons to those children who might not be able to afford them otherwise.

as an ethical leader who, "at a young age, exemplifies the traits of altruism and care through providing music lessons to low-income families and organizing health

Although the current pandemic paused the private music lessons, she continued to reach out in other ways to help migrant families in the area. As a result, the California State University, Bakersfield's Kegley Institute of Ethics recognized Abigail for her work. During the Wendy Wayne Ethics Awards Ceremony on March 27, 2019, she was acknowledged



LEFT: Many volunteers helped with the distribution of the Back-to-School Health Resource Fair for the Bakersfield community on July 31, 2021. **RIGHT:** Bakersfield City Mayor, Karen Goh, (circled), thanked some of the student volunteers at the Bakersfield community service fair.

services for the homeless.” Abigail gives credit to her parents, Daniel and Sonia Rodela, for her motivation and determination to help others. Her students will tell you that she is a very good teacher.

Bakersfield community service fair

On July 31, 1,000 cars, which probably translate to about 3,000 to 4,000 people, were served at a Back-to-School Health Resource Fair for the community, arranged by Pacific Healthcare Services in the Bakersfield area. Made up of mostly retired Adventist pastors, the event is part of their monthly “Pull-up-Pick-up” Resource Fairs. Adventist Health, the Bakersfield Police Department, and other organizations helped to sponsor the event. However, many church member

volunteers and pastors in CCC Area Five, along with students from Bakersfield Adventist Academy, also made it a success. Bakersfield City Mayor Karen Goh came to thank all those who were such a blessing to the community. Expect to hear more about this ministry in the future.

New church in San Francisco

With a growth rate of 300% from 2013 to 2016, the San Francisco Latin American church decided that perhaps a new congregation needed to be started. Seeking God’s guidance, the church board, under the direction of Pastor Pablo Maldonado, created a five-year plan to do just that. Nine families were eager to start this project, which began on March 5, 2016. Facing



The new members of the San Francisco Nuevo Pacto company at their organizational ceremony on June 19, 2021.



Pastor Jong Keun Han (right) of the Santa Maria Korean church introduces Kyong and Jeung Kim (left to right) as new members.

challenges, along with some miraculous events, the new group was officially recognized as a church company on June 19, 2021, with the new name of Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo-Día San Francisco Nuevo Pacto (San Francisco New Covenant Seventh-day Adventist Church).

Ricardo Vilorio, CCC Hispanic ministries coordinator, who officiated at the company's organization, stated, "This is an enormous victory for the glory of God. San Francisco is one of the most secular cities in all of North America. God's mighty hand has truly led this congregation in establishing this new church company."

A journey of faith

The journey began in the early 1980s when Jeung and Kyong Kim still lived in Korea. While Jeung was in the army, Kyong started attending a Baptist church because of her desire to become a Christian. That was put on hold when Jeung returned from the army. The Kims immigrated and started a small business in Santa Maria. With a hunger to know more about the Bible, Kyong took some Bible studies and discovered the Sabbath, but she did not have the courage to attend an Adventist church.

Thirty years later, and experiencing a number of adversities and difficulties,

Tim Trujillo celebrates his finish at the Ironman 70.3, which is made up of a swim, bike ride, and run, in Santa Cruz on Sept. 12, 2021. He finished 296th out of 1,723 participants.



Kyong once again was led to think about her life. Right about that time, God guided her to the Santa Maria Korean Adventist church. A year went by and Jeung finally attended with her—just two months before the pandemic of 2020 began. This now meant online small study groups, prayer meetings, and worship services. During the 200 days of prayer meetings by the pastor, Jong Keun Han, the Kims finally dedicated their lives to Jesus. On May 1, 2021, the long journey ended when they joined the church. It was a joyful day for them and all the members. Jeung now uses his musical talents to bless the church, and he is very grateful for what God has done for him.

Run the race!

Now this is something to celebrate! Tim Trujillo, first elder at the Discover Life church in Sonora and a member of the Adventist Health and Monterey Bay Academy boards, completed the Ironman 70.3 (otherwise known as the "Half Ironman") in 5 hours and 25 minutes on Sept. 12 in Santa Cruz. Now, that is an amazing way to spend a Sunday! That is probably why Ricardo Graham, former president of the Pacific Union, posted his response on Facebook as "Inspirational." We all can look forward to the biblical promise: "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31, NIV). (And if you have run any of these races, please let us know so we can celebrate with you.)

CCC Conference activities

In addition to the Soquel Virtual Camp Meeting in both English and Spanish, ministries in the conference have held additional events over the past few months. The several weekend prayer events in various localities, including the National Day of Prayer in Ceres, meant that God's people have been praying for our conference. There was also a virtual African American Convocation, from Sept. 17 to 19, 2021, that richly blessed those who attended. As this article is being submitted, the "40 Days of Listening" in each of the CCC areas are just finishing up. These are just a few of the activities by the various departments that will require a more detailed report later.

God has blessed and we can certainly "proclaim His praises" in these and so many other stories throughout the Central California Conference. Let's continue to go onward, forward, and upward.

By Deloris Trujillo



Ho'okui: Coming Back Together

The last 15 months have been interesting when it comes to planning school events. As the mainland restrictions seem to ease, restrictions here in Hawaii are still in place, giving our students leaders new challenges to deal with.

This summer, Associated Students of Hawaiian Mission Academy (ASHMA) had a great challenge before them. Could they bring back Ho'okui? Ho'okui is the retreat that is held at the beginning of the school year at Camp Waianae on the west side of O'ahu.

Ho'okui is a newer HMA tradition, originally starting in the fall of 2012, under then-ASHMA President, JJ Reynolds. The main purpose of the retreat is found in the name of the event, Ho'okui, which means "to join together." HMA had always held a retreat called Camp Erdman in the middle of the year. Why not have a retreat at the beginning of the year? This way classes, new students, and faculty could come together to start out the new school year as one—together.

During the summer, ASHMA started to plan the event, even though future restrictions were unsure and unknowable. Led by the social vice president, junior Allie Clapp, ASHMA was able to put together a schedule while also keeping in mind the current local requirements for events.

Three days before the retreat, new restrictions were added by the city and county. With these added restrictions, the possibility of bringing back Ho'okui

looked bleak. Ardent prayers were offered by the staff and students—and after checking the new restrictions, it was determined that schools were exempt from the new order as long as the activities met with the school curriculum.

Being together as God's 'ohana is one of the foundations of Hawaiian Mission Academy (HMA); therefore, it's a part of the curriculum. The retreat went forward and students were able to enjoy a wide range of activities, including a long relay race, color war, slip and slide kick ball, night basketball, and spiritual messages from Pastor Jaime Vargas of Kaua'i.

Over the three days of this year's Ho'okui, you could tell that the event was something that the students and staff were happy to welcome back. After not having Ho'okui last year, the togetherness and bonding returned, ushering in a great start to the school year. The past 15 months of uncertainty have brought challenges, but participants could tell that this Ho'okui was different. This Ho'okui not only brought everyone from HMA together, as it was planned to do, it also brought HMA back together in a sense of normality.

While restrictions for the future are unknown, things are looking positive for the staff and students of HMA, as well as the community of the Hawaiian Islands.

By Matt Webster

HMA Lady Knights Bring It Home

Sports have been challenging in Hawaii since the onset of COVID. Hawaiian Mission Academy Athletic Director Kyle Bullington worked hard to find a way to provide a shortened and abbreviated season last school year, and he was determined to provide sports seasons this new school year. Unfortunately, due to the rise of the Delta variant over the summer, plans for this new season became tenuous.

However, this didn't weaken the motivation of the Intermediate Lady Knights volleyball team. Different from an ordinary middle school team, the Intermediate Lady Knights are made up of seventh- and eighth-graders from the Ka Lama Iki and Windward campuses, as well as freshman from the main Hawaiian Mission Academy campus.

Starting practices in July, the Lady Knights were determined to make a name for themselves. Led by Head Coach Nenny Safotu, the Intermediate Lady Knights came into the season as one of the teams to beat. After finishing the regular season undefeated, they entered the playoffs as the #1 seed.

Receiving a first-round bye, the Intermediate Lady Knights faced off against Assets school, defeating them to make it to the Interscholastic League of Honolulu Championship against Christian Academy. "For many of

the ladies, this was a new experience, but they showed great composure and resilience," said Assistant Varsity Head Coach Jared Nakamura.

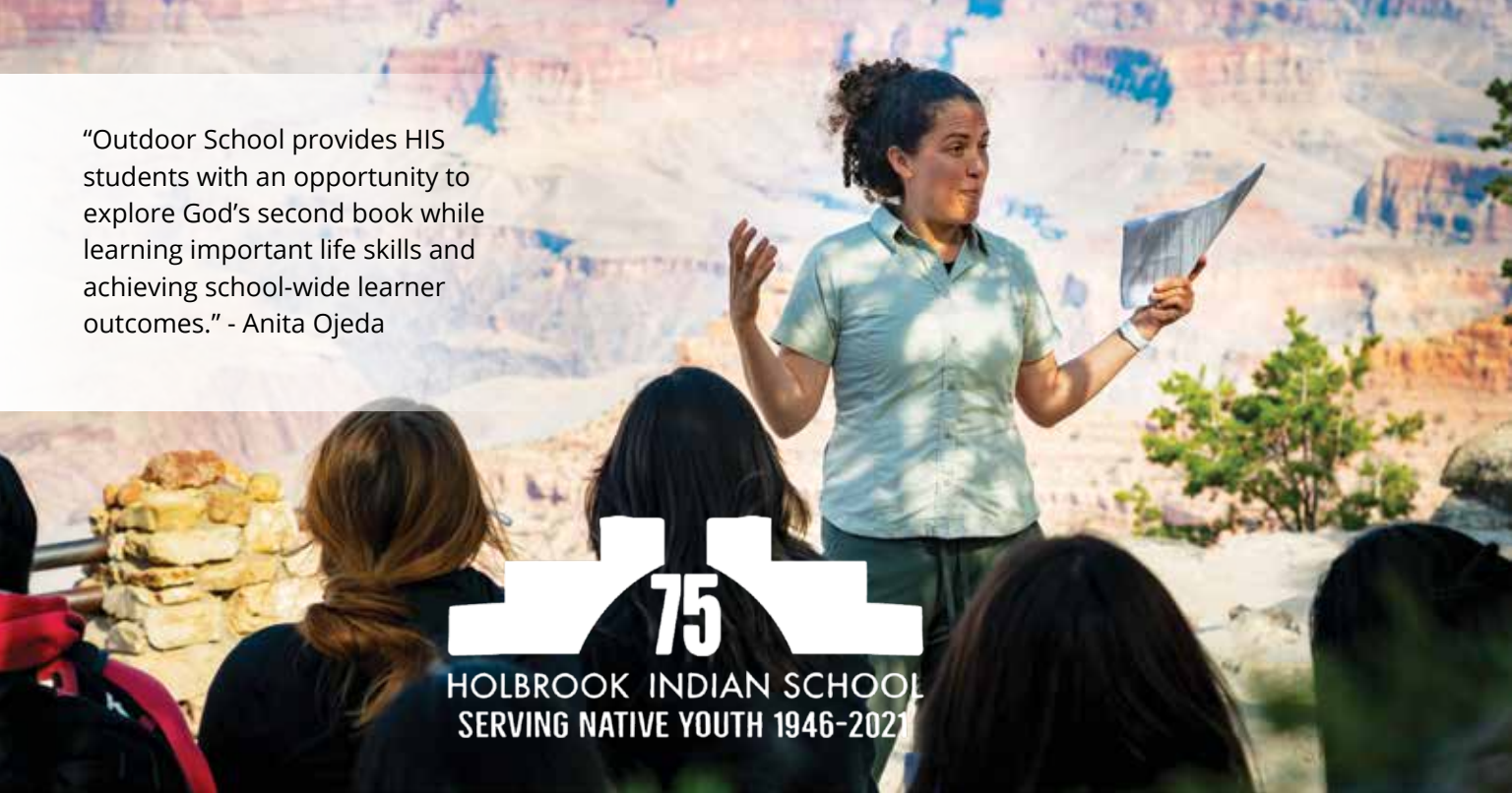
However, one element missing from the Championship game was the crowd. Due to current regulations in Hawaii, no spectators were allowed for the championship match. To help with this, Superintendent Miki Akeo-Nelson, along with Visual Arts director Matt Webster, brainstormed an idea to create a virtual crowd at the game. "It would be great to show the girls that their families are there, like the NBA did last year," said Nelson. A projector and screen were set up at the game, and parents logged in to a virtual fan room where they could cheer along with fellow parents while watching the game on YouTube. Students could see their families cheering for them on the screen during the match.

The Intermediate Lady Knight went on to win the ILH Championship and complete their undefeated season. When speaking of the many obstacles facing them, one word always popped up: resilience. And with that characteristic, the Intermediate Lady Knights were able to bring home a championship and undefeated record that showed how resilient they were.

By Matt Webster



“Outdoor School provides HIS students with an opportunity to explore God’s second book while learning important life skills and achieving school-wide learner outcomes.” - Anita Ojeda



75
HOLBROOK INDIAN SCHOOL
SERVING NATIVE YOUTH 1946-2021



Wilderness Survival:
Starting a fire.



Geology of the Park:
Canyon layers illustration.

God’s Classroom HIS Outdoor School

“Speak to the earth, and it will teach you” Job 12:8 (NIV).

Students at Holbrook Indian School (HIS) spent one week of school outside at the Grand Canyon. About 188 miles northwest of campus, HIS students from grades 8 to 12 camped out at the south rim of the Grand Canyon to experience school beyond the confines of classroom walls and textbook covers. From September 29 to October 6, the students learned important life lessons through and from nature’s lesson book. At Holbrook Indian School, this annual five- to seven-day excursion is known as Outdoor School.

What is Outdoor School?

Anita Ojeda leads the team that plans this annual event. She describes the aim of Outdoor School as an opportunity “for students to experience wholeness—mentally, academically/artistically, physically, and spiritually.” This four-pillared concept makes up the acronym known as MAPS. It is part of the school’s larger objective incorporated into all aspects of learning at HIS. Memorable experiences like Outdoor School, where students and teachers interact outside the classroom, provide the secret ingredient to the family atmosphere at HIS. Outdoor School thus serves as a perfect encounter for sharpening mental health, the arts and academics, physical wellness, and spiritual growth.

HIS rotates Outdoor School at several national and state parks across the mid-west / western region. The parks include: Zion National Park, Kodachrome Basin, Bryce Canyon National Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, and Grand Canyon National Park. There

is also one city trip to San Diego, where students learn oceanography at La Jolla Beach.

How does it work?

Outdoor School lasts five to seven days, usually taking place in late September or early October, depending on the destination and logistics. For the most part, students and staff camp the entire time when staying at national or state parks. Students participate in all-morning and all-afternoon classes that last four hours each per day, except for Sabbath. Some classes, such as wilderness hikes, go for the full eight hours.

What do students learn?

Learning through Outdoor School begins long before the students step foot on the campsite. This year, the staff involved students in the planning process in a creative and educational way. Using an application style system, teachers submitted “résumés” to the students communicating their backgrounds, preferences, and strengths. Students read through the résumés and decided on classes they wanted each teacher to teach based on those résumés. The students then wrote friendly business letters to the teachers, asking them to consider instructing a class that the students felt was a good fit.

This year’s Grand Canyon Outdoor School classes included: Camp Cooking, Navajo Culture, Fry Bread, Wilderness Survival, Birding, Photography, Animal Tracking, Map Reading, Geology of the Park, Human History of the Park, and Biomes of the Park.

In addition to deciding on the classes to be taught, students worked in small groups to plan the travel routes, a budget, menus, Sabbath activities, and campsite assignments. The groups sent proposals to the different staff members.

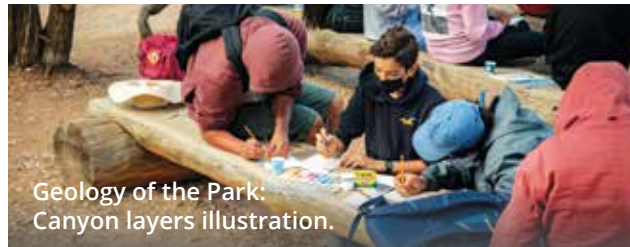
Students thus learned how to write business letters, thank you letters, and proposals leading up to Outdoor School. By the end of Outdoor School, they understood the planning needed for a large event. They acquired a sense of ownership as well as the education learned from the various classes.

Spiritual experience

The deans and counselors prepared the morning and evening worships. HIS board member Charlie Whitehorse spoke to the students during the weekend. The planning team chose “Grand Design” as the theme, and Job 12:7-10 was the theme text. Teachers incorporated this theme into their classes.



Wilderness Hike:
Hiking below the rim.



Geology of the Park:
Canyon layers illustration.

Why Outdoor School?

Outdoor School is a multifaceted tool for priming student-teacher relations for each school year. “The relationships we build with students and the shared experiences act as springboards for engaging students once we return to the classroom,” said Ojeda. “When we know our students, we can use examples from Outdoor School to engage them in subjects they might otherwise view as boring. When we know our students and what they accomplished during OS, we can build on that as examples and illustrations for other classes.” It’s a big part of why this event is planned for the beginning of the school year.

By Chevon Petgrave and Anita Ojeda

Holbrook Indian School (HIS) is a first- through twelfth-grade boarding academy operated by the Pacific Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. HIS also manages a first- through eighth-grade day school on the Navajo reservation in Chinle, Arizona. Eighty-seven percent of funding comes from individuals who have a desire to support Native American ministries and Christian education. Your generosity makes a difference in the lives of our students, their families, and the communities they serve.

Thank you for your support.

DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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La Sierra University Awarded \$3 Million Title V Grant to Train More STEM Educators

La Sierra University announced Oct. 1 its award of a \$3 million, five-year Title V grant from the U.S. Department of Education for increasing the number of students who become teachers in STEM subjects, particularly students of Hispanic descent and those from financially challenged backgrounds.

This grant will allow La Sierra's School of Education together with the Guided Pathways to Success in STEM program, which was initiated through a prior Title V grant, the opportunity to develop additional programs and support mechanisms that will increase the number of students who qualify for STEM teaching credentials. Specifically, these funds will be used to strengthen

articulation agreements with community colleges and local high schools; create additional Summer Bridge programs that help freshmen and incoming transfer students succeed; and establish yearlong internships that lead to immediate employment after graduation, among other activities.

Additional services will include the linking of La Sierra's accelerated Teacher Credentialing Pathway to instructional improvements in gateway STEM courses, including learning assistants and personalized student coaching.

Dr. Keith Drieberg, chair of Curriculum and Instruction in La Sierra's School of Education, will lead the major activities of this year's Title V grant initiative and was instrumental in conceptualizing the grant's goals and objectives. Dr. Marvin Payne, currently project director of the Guided Pathways to Success in STEM Title V Programs, led the submission team and will assist with implementation.

"This will allow La Sierra University to continue its mission and expand its outreach to underrepresented populations in STEM fields and focus on assisting them to become STEM educators," Drieberg said, noting that STEM teachers are in high demand.

According to Payne, La Sierra University has a high percentage of first generation college students who can benefit from innovative approaches to help them navigate the college landscape.

La Sierra University is designated by the U.S. Dept. of Education as an Hispanic-serving Institution and was ranked in September by the Wall Street Journal/ Times Higher Education 2022 College Rankings as No. 1 in the nation for its diverse student body and faculty. Also in September, U.S. News & World Report's 2022 Best Colleges guide placed La Sierra 11th in 15 western states for social mobility for its ability to enroll and graduate students who are recipients of federal Pell Grants. In fall 2020, the university's student body was nearly 47% Hispanic, with approximately 54% of the university's undergraduates receiving Pell Grants.

By Darla Martin Tucker



Left to right: Incoming first-year La Sierra University students Nicole Rivera, Sungyoung Choi, and Melanie Zepeda work on a soil experiment during the biology module of STEM Bridge 2021.

Adventist Health Names New Leaders for System Board of Directors

Adventist Health recently appointed two new leaders for the System Board of Directors as a result of the recent retirement of System Board of Directors Chair Ricardo B. Graham. John Freedman, president of the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, who has served as vice chair since 2016, was appointed board chair. Bradford Newton, the new president of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, has joined the board and is vice chair.

“John’s and Bradford’s expertise, leadership experience, and commitment to living God’s love will continue to strengthen the Adventist Health organization,” said Scott Reiner, Adventist Health chief executive officer.

Freedman has been president of the North Pacific Union Conference since 2016 and a pastor and administrator in the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1981.

“I am honored to be selected as the new board chair, and I look forward to continued work with my board colleagues at Adventist Health,” said Freedman. “This moment in history, during the COVID-19 pandemic, has reminded each of us of the vital role healthcare plays in our communities. I am proud of the work that Adventist Health is doing to provide excellent clinical care and, through the Blue Zones framework, to improve individual health and well-being in alignment with our Seventh-day Adventist heritage. The work of each Adventist Health associate is critical to carrying forward the healing ministry of Jesus. I am blessed to be a part of that work.”



**John Freedman,
Adventist Health
System Board chair**

Freedman also serves Adventist Health as the System Board Mission Committee chair. He has a bachelor’s degree with a major in business administration from Rutgers University and a Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University.

Newton is the new president of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He has served in pastoral and administrative roles since 1983. Newton also serves on the Community Board of Adventist Health Simi Valley and will also serve Adventist Health as the System Board Governance Committee chair. Newton has a bachelor’s degree with a major in theology, Master of Divinity degree, and Doctor of Ministry degree from Andrews University.

In addition to these changes in board leadership, Adventist Health is also celebrating the latest achievements of board member Andrew Davis.

Davis has served on the System Board since 2017 and is the Board Human Performance Committee chair. He was recently named executive vice president and global chief human resources officer for Sony Music Entertainment. In this new role, he is leading Sony Music Entertainment’s global human resource function, including talent acquisition, compensation and benefits, and organizational development. Davis has a bachelor’s degree with a major in organizational management from Washington Adventist University and a Master of Business Administration degree from Emory University.



**Bradford Newton,
Adventist Health
System Board
vice chair**



**Andrew Davis,
Adventist Health
System Board
member**

“The work of each Adventist Health associate is critical to carrying forward the healing ministry of Jesus. I am blessed to be a part of that work.”

John Freedman

By Hallie Anderson

Loma Linda University Health Deemed a Top Employer in California by Forbes

PHOTO: CHET WILLIAMS



Staff in August welcomed one of the first patients to be transferred to the new hospital during move-in day to the new facility.

Loma Linda University Health has been ranked 32nd out of the top 100 employers in California by Forbes's third annual America's Best Employers by State survey. LLUH is also the third hospital out of 10 in California that made the ranking.

Forbes collected anonymous surveys from more than 80,000 people working at companies with at least 500 employees. Responses were collected from October 2020 to June 2021 on a rolling basis.

"We are grateful our employees have reinforced that Loma Linda University Health is a rewarding place to serve," said Richard Hart, MD, DrPH, president of Loma Linda University Health. "Our goal is for each of our employees to feel valued and take pride in working as a team to serve each of our patients and students. We are committed to being a place that reflects the diversity of our community, promotes inclusion of all, and encourages a healthy balance between work and family."

Respondents were surveyed on criteria such as work conditions, salary, potential for development, company image, and telecommuting options.

See the latest news and Health & Wellness stories from Loma Linda University Health at news.llu.edu.

By Ansel Oliver

PUC Freshmen “Serve with Love” at Campus Food Packing Event

New freshmen at Pacific Union College began their school year by packing 20,088 meals for people facing food insecurity around the world. The food packing event was in partnership with Rise Against Hunger (RAH), an international hunger relief organization with whom PUC has partnered since 2013.

This year’s event brought PUC’s total to more than 80,000 meals packed and is especially critical as global hunger is again on the rise, threatening millions of lives.

“PUC appreciates the mission and vision of RAH and what they do,” said PUC Interim Vice President for Student Life J.R. Rogers. “They make it very easy to get a large number of students involved on our campus and make a huge impact. One box feeds one person for a year, and the least we can do is assist in purchasing food and packing it to help with food insecurity.”

Meals from past PUC events have been distributed to communities in Vietnam and the Philippines, and the same is likely for these meals.

The opportunity to pack food for RAH was exclusively for freshmen as part of PUC’s orientation, which they call Fusion. Fusion helps those new to campus get to



know each other and get to know what college life will be like.

“Fusion really shows students what PUC is all about, and an event like this one so clearly brings to life our goal to ‘learn with purpose, rise in faith, and serve with love,’” said Rogers. “Being able to ‘serve with love’ together like this is a great opportunity for establishing bonds with new classmates and makes the impact of the work that much more special.”

Fusion included four days of events for freshmen that introduced them to campus clubs, student life, and much more. This was followed by the campus-wide Welcome Week that celebrated the entire student body’s return to campus.

Welcoming the PUC family back to campus for the fall quarter held even more excitement than usual for faculty and staff at the college after months of remote learning and limited numbers of students on campus due to the COVID-19 crisis.

“It’s amazing to have everyone here. It was difficult for them to be away and very difficult for us to have them gone,” said Rogers. “We will keep our safety guidelines in place as long as needed to keep our campus family healthy, but the feeling on campus is positive. The minute we opened the Rita Hoshino Campus Center for students on that first Monday morning, it filled up immediately and has stayed busy nonstop since. It’s fantastic!”

By Ashley Eisele



Youth Rush Spreads the Word in the Nevada-Utah Conference

As Seventh-day Adventists, it is our mission to tell other people about Jesus in every part of the world and in every season of life. Even in difficult circumstances, followers of Jesus Christ find a way to spread the good news of His soon coming. This summer, young Adventists took up this challenge by planting the gospel seed through literature evangelism. These young people came from many different places and backgrounds across the Nevada-Utah Conference, which covers over 200,000 square miles of territory.

High school and college students aged 14 to 21 gathered in Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, and Reno to participate in a ten-week summer program known as Youth Rush. This life-changing work-study program focuses on reaching people where they are most often—in their homes.

Though this method may seem outdated to some, going door to door and meeting people directly is professed by political campaigns to be the most effective means of spreading and promoting a given message. According to Brooklynne Mosley, the coordinated campaign director for a major political party, "Basically every single study that comes out about the most meaningful conversations you can have with a [person] is going to be face to face at the door." Moving beyond politics, this particular method of personal ministry is described in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," and also in the book *Christian*



The Salt Lake City Youth Rush program participants pose for a group photo in front of the West Jordan church before they depart for the field.



Students from SOULS West, the Pacific Union's school of evangelism, train to lead young people in door-to-door evangelism in the Nevada-Utah Conference.

Service in which Ellen White states, "Our Saviour went from house to house" (p. 114).

The personal effort put forth in reaching others also transformed the lives of the students who went house to house this summer, knocking on tens of thousands of doors. "Youth Rush taught me the power of prayer, persistence, and the value of communication," said Chloe White, 17, a high school student native to Susanville, California. Joe Vic Johnson, 16, a recently baptized member of the Las Vegas Fil-Am church, said, "I am much more social now. I can physically look at a person face to face and talk about Jesus!"

Over 18,000 copies of *Steps to Christ*, *The Great Controversy*, *The Ministry of Healing*, and many other books were sown as seed for the everlasting gospel in cities across Northern California, Nevada, and Utah. In addition to the books planted in many homes, each student came away with a stronger sense of the mission that is given to each member of the body of Christ.

Jazmine Bondoc, 14, summed up her summer ministry experience by saying, "Knocking on doors—didn't think it would be so much more! #saveemsouls." In a modern age, through the most trying times, an army of youth is truly pushing forward the work of the church in the name of Jesus Christ.

By Joseph Cadiz



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Messiah's Mansion was set up on the property of the West Jordan church in preparation for the tours, which saw over 4,000 visitors. The "glorification station" is a replica of the Most Holy Place, where visitors learned that Jesus is our great and loving High Priest. Visitors listen intently to the presentation of Jesus as our perfect and unblemished substitute. Members of the West Jordan church were prepared with welcoming smiles to greet the many visitors to the Messiah's Mansion sanctuary tours.

New Big Tent Evangelism at West Jordan Church

Are big tent events still relevant in 2021? Big tent campaigns were one of the tough questions the West Jordan church (WJSDA) tackled as they considered bringing Messiah's Mansion Sanctuary Exhibit to the Salt Lake Valley.

For a while now, Adventists have questioned the effectiveness of big tent evangelism, which was instrumental to our growth in the early movement days. WJSDA knows it has been called to speak the gospel message to a hurting world. The "what" question was answered, but the "how" is often what most Adventists struggle with.

Knowing the audience in Salt Lake City is overwhelmingly receptive to religious topics, the "how" became clear to WJSDA. Messiah's Mansion did a beautiful job displaying Jesus clearly in an exhibit that is an hour and 15 minutes long. According to their website, the mission of Messiah's Mansion is to present the gospel in a simple way and to train men and women to be fluent in the sanctuary and the prophecies—showing them the practical significance of the sanctuary in their personal lives and preparing them to stand true to God in a world of compromise. Understanding the sanctuary service is a vital part of

understanding God's plan of salvation.

The attention span of today's overly stimulated population was a genuine concern. But as WJSDA witnessed in faith, as they did their part, the Holy Spirit would do His. And the Holy Spirit did His part! In nine days, 4,313 people visited the exhibit. As the days went on, thanks to social media and friends, the number of visitors just kept growing. On the last day, over 1,200 visitors were blessed by the exhibit tour.

Comments from the visitors flooded in. "I'd never connected the dots in such a clear way as was presented." "I now better understand Jesus' role in my salvation." "Jesus paid a high price for us." "I want to study more about the sanctuary." WJSDA members had the privilege of hearing even more comments and thanks, and all the effort of this campaign were worth it when they saw all the gratitude and smiling faces as visitors left.

Because of this exhibit, many new friends were made, and the wonderful truth of the sanctuary service is in the hearts and minds of thousands more. Are big tents still relevant? Absolutely! WJSDA stepped out in faith, and God blessed their efforts.

By Adriano Liessi

PHOTO: KATIE TRUJILLO



PHOTO: LAURE TRUJILLO

LEFT: Youth from the Sacramento Slavic and Sacramento Ukrainian congregations sing during the organization service. **RIGHT:** Elder Artur Bukatar, Associate Pastor Andriy Mykhaylovskyy, NCC Executive Secretary Jose Marin, Head Elder Igor Zhigaylo, NCC Treasurer John Rasmussen, Senior Pastor Roman Tsyganiuk, and NCC President Marc Woodson celebrate the church's organization.

Sacramento Ukrainian Church Officially Organizes

On Sabbath afternoon, Sept. 18, the Northern California Conference (NCC) formally organized the Sacramento Ukrainian church—the only official Ukrainian congregation in the Pacific Union. The service took place in the congregation's rented church sanctuary in Fair Oaks.

The joyful program included music from children's and young people's choirs, as well as a sermon by NCC President Marc Woodson. The congregation presented the conference with a beautiful illustrative carving of Psalm 23 created by Ivan Noshyn, church elder.

"The members are very happy! It's a big step in their lives—a miracle for a lot of Ukrainian people here," said Roman Tsyganiuk, senior pastor of the Sacramento Slavic/Sacramento Ukrainian district. He serves with Andriy Mykhaylovskyy, associate pastor of the Ukrainian church and youth pastor of the Slavic church.

The new church has its roots in the Sacramento Yugoslavian church, where a number of Russians and Ukrainians worshipped together several decades ago.

The Yugoslavian church established the Sacramento Slavic company as a "daughter" congregation led by Pastor Lune Randjelovic. It became an official church in 2004. Tsyganiuk began serving as the church pastor in 2012, and Mykhaylovskyy joined in 2018.

Soon after, the Slavic church created a "daughter" congregation of its own. The new Ukrainian group, with 116 members, held its first service in October 2018. They were organized as a company a few months later in January 2019.

About 100,000 Ukrainians live in the Sacramento metro area, and church members are eager to reach out to them. The new church has active ministries for children, youth, families, and health, as well as a vibrant media ministry. The congregation is making plans to eventually purchase a church facility of their own.

"Please pray for this church and for the pastors," said Tsyganiuk. "We believe that this church will grow and be a blessing."

By Julie Lorenz

Richmond Spanish Group Becomes a Company

PHOTO: MARLENE RODRIGUEZ



On Sabbath, Aug. 21, the NCC organized the Richmond Spanish company during a service at its "mother" church, the Richmond Beacon Light church. The new company is in a district with the Oakland Spanish and San Leandro Spanish churches, led by Senior Pastor Luis Fernando

Head Elder Venancio Luna, Senior Pastor Luis Fernando Manrique, NCC Executive Secretary Jose Marin, NCC President Marc Woodson, and NCC Hispanic Ministries Coordinator Roman Leal display the certificate of organization.

Manrique and Associate Pastor Pedro Rosillo.

Nineteen years ago, several Adventists decided to establish a new Spanish-speaking congregation in Richmond. They began by meeting in the garage of a member and soon rented a small church building. The next year, the Beacon Light church invited the group to meet in their fellowship hall. The growing congregation moved several more times and now rents a local community church facility.

A number of Hispanic and African American pastors participated in the organization service. "It is key to note that African American churches supported this small congregation since its inception, especially the Beacon Light church," said Manrique. "We give glory and honor to God for allowing the Hispanic church to grow and develop in the city of Richmond."

By Julie Lorenz

Barry van Iderstein Is New Director of Adventurer, Children's, and Family Ministries

On Sept. 1, the NCC Executive Committee voted to invite Barry van Iderstein to serve as director of Adventurer ministries, children's ministries, and family ministries. He began his new position on Nov. 1. "With his strong background in educating young children and his passion for ministry and service, we are excited to have Barry take on this new role," said President Marc Woodson.



translated for evangelistic campaigns in many countries.

He looks forward to working with parents, grandparents, and others who want to share their faith with the next generation. "We need to be intentional about all aspects of our children's spiritual lives," he said. "Everything we do should be intentionally supportive, helpful, kind, and educational—as we all grow together."

His own family has benefited from NCC programs for children and youth. "I have three sons in their 20s, as well as a nine-year-old son and a five-year-old daughter, so I have participated in many Adventurer, Pathfinder, Sabbath School, and Vacation Bible School activities over several decades," said van Iderstein. "I look forward to helping families share their spiritual journey with their own children and others."

By Julie Lorenz

Since 2006, van Iderstein has served as the assistant to the NCC superintendent of schools. "For the past 15 years, as I've been helping educators reach thousands of kids for Jesus, I realized that I enjoy planning events, conducting trainings, and providing other ministry support," he said. "I'll miss working with the teachers and principals, but I know that they are in good hands with the NCC education team."

Before coming to the conference office, van Iderstein was a teacher. Over the course of 15 years, he taught every grade level from 1 to 12, serving at White Memorial Adventist School in Los Angeles, Hilltop Christian School in Antioch, and Pleasant Hill Adventist Academy, where he also worked as the registrar. "I see this new job as an opportunity to take all the skills I've learned from my previous career and put them all into one role," he said.

Van Iderstein holds a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and a Master of Arts in education from Pacific Union College. He also spent a year studying at the Adventist college in Sagunto, Spain. Fluent in Spanish, he has worked as a Spanish teacher, preached in Spanish, and



Barry van Iderstein, NCC director of Adventurer, children's, and family ministries, enjoys an outing with his wife, Joana, and their two youngest children.

Members Feel



for NCC
Churches,
Schools,
and Ministries

As Thanksgiving approaches, we asked church members to describe what they are thankful for in the Northern California Conference.



Ben Villavicencio, Paradise church member and Paradise Adventist Academy freshman

I'm thankful for the church always being there for the community and the school during hardships and struggles—maybe not even one specific church, but the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general. After the Camp Fire destroyed most of my town, people were worried about where we would fellowship with other Christians, but the Chico church was right there to work with us and accept us in their loving community. And then COVID-19 hit. The Paradise church accommodated the California mandates, and we were able to worship outdoors “under the oaks.” It felt like we were back in church again.



Gene Sagral, All Nations church of Elk Grove member and elder

I'm thankful for my church, the All Nations church of Elk Grove, because we stayed in close contact during the pandemic. Pastor Eleazar (Eli) Famorcan quickly mastered the intricacies and various features of Zoom. Assistance from his daughter, Dani, enabled him to easily host and personalize our interactive Sabbath worship service. I am thankful that All Nations had an opportunity to establish a cyberspace relationship with the American Canyon Fil-Am church, Pastor Eli's other church. Together we even held a joint communion via Zoom! I am grateful that both churches bonded last year to jointly host online socials at Thanksgiving and Christmas, featuring musical and vocal talents given by God!





Cynthia Marin, North Highlands Spanish company member and planned giving consultant/trust officer in the NCC planned giving & trust services/property management department

I am thankful to my NCC church community because, in spite

of COVID, I have been able to connect with God and my fellow brothers and sisters through many online worship services, seminars, and Bible studies at various churches, including Roseville, North Highlands Spanish, Gracepoint, Fairfield Spanish, and Crescent City. I also participated in an online women's week of prayer with the North Highlands Spanish company. I enjoyed every service, and I felt happy and connected to God and my church. I believe that God is using social media platforms as a tool to bring the gospel to meet people where they are.

Kevin Hardesty, Rio Lindo Adventist Academy vice principal and athletic director



I'm very thankful to be a part of the NCC education team. We all know how trying the last 18 months have been, and it has been even more difficult as an educator. With the leadership of Superintendent of Schools Albert Miller, the teachers

worked tirelessly to get acquainted with new methods of instruction and communication. Our teachers went above and beyond. I know my colleagues at Rio Lindo Adventist Academy spent a lot of their precious summer of 2020 learning as many tools as possible to make last school year the best it could be. They would hold evening classes so international students could join them live. They spent hours getting resources together and driving them to students' houses. I'm sure teachers from other schools across our union have similar stories. We continue to see His educators working to teach His students.



Jenni Glass, Carmichael church member and Sacramento Adventist Academy school board chair

I am thankful for Sacramento Adventist Academy. Principal Matthew Jakobsons leads an amazing team of teachers,

I am thankful that Jesus is the central focus of the school, and this is reflected in every aspect from academics to music to athletics.

staff, and volunteers who minister to the students and their families. I am thankful that Jesus is the central focus of the school, and this is reflected in every aspect from academics to music to athletics. The Sacramento area is blessed to have this amazing ministry to reach families throughout the region. Every time I set foot on campus, I am blessed to be surrounded by an amazing group of people who love Jesus.



Brenda Brandy, Pleasant Hill church member and head NCC area Pathfinder coordinator

I am thankful that the Lord has given my husband and me the ability to help youth. We have been a part of the youth movement in our country for over 50 years. We like working

with them because most of them are "real." They let you know how they truly feel about an issue and suggest ways we can solve issues. We are so thankful that the youth trust us to know that we are with them and understand them wherever they are in their walk of life. We pray that the Lord will continue to use us as His witness to help others.



Jon Cicle, Orangevale church pastor

I'm thankful for our church's audio/visual team. They put in extra hours and go to great lengths to make sure that our systems and equipment are functioning—helping us to minister to and worship with

those who are unable to be at church in person. The team shows up to livestream, and they schedule extra recording sessions for music. During the pandemic, they figured out how to set up church outdoors so we could get together as often as possible. Their love for God and our church family and community is evident by their passionate commitment to service.

By the Grace of God: Patricia Marruffo Elected as Executive Secretary

On September 30, the Southeastern California Conference (SECC) Executive Committee elected Patricia Marruffo as executive secretary, making her the first Hispanic woman to serve as conference secretary.

Marruffo is the daughter of migrant farm workers. She grew up in Oxnard, Calif., with her devout Catholic family. It was at Christ the King Catholic church that Marruffo learned about God. Before church, the family would listen to *La Voz de La Esperanza* on the radio. They were so excited to attend a *La Voz de La Esperanza* meeting in Oxnard. Those meetings began their journey into Adventism.

Marruffo's early experiences helped shape her passion for God, people, and activism. She graduated from the University of California, Riverside with a double major in Business Administration and Chicano Studies. After college, she got a job in insurance with the State of California, where she worked for 26 years.

Shortly after starting her job with the state, she met and married her life partner, Dante. As he answered the call to ministry and began pastoring in SECC, Marruffo



served as a pastor's wife. She began her Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry at Andrews University to help support her husband in the local church. While pursuing her studies, she sensed the call of God beckoning her into pastoral ministry also.

God opened doors for Marruffo to join the pastoral staffs of Loma Linda University church, Azure Hills church, and OC Grace church. Still, staying

within the four walls of the church was not enough for her. She and her husband were active in the community as well.

"That's what energized me more than anything—bursting the bubble, stepping into the community and seeing how can we serve, how can we help. It is those things that have brought balance to my ministry over the years," said Marruffo.

Most recently, Marruffo has been serving as the associate youth director in SECC. She was elected as executive secretary after the position was vacated when Jonathan Park became the president of SECC.

Yohalmo Saravia, SECC vice president for Hispanic Ministries said, "We are excited to welcome the new executive secretary, Pastor Patty Marruffo, to our team. She brings a set of leadership skills and talents that will contribute and help this great conference carry on with its mission."

Although she is well qualified for the job and brings a wealth of experience to this position, she admits that "I don't fit the mold." Sensing God's leading in this new position, she decided, "God if you are calling me to this, I will not say no. I will say yes."

Her journey with God has taught Marruffo to lean heavily on Him. "You have nothing but God. There's nothing else to draw on. By the grace of God, you take your next steps," said Marruffo. As she steps into this new position, she plans to do so by God's grace and guidance and by the support of her husband, Dante, and their two adult children, Daniel and Jessica.



Patricia Marruffo with her family (from left to right) Jessica, their dog Mojo, Daniel, and Dante.

By Andrea King

Full Circle: Andrea King Appointed as New Communications Director of SECC

When I got word that the Southeastern California Conference (SECC) Executive Committee had voted me as the new communications director, I felt like God had brought me full circle.

Since I was a child, I wanted to become a news reporter. When I landed a coveted internship at Black Entertainment Television (BET), I took that as a sign I was headed in the right direction. However, things began to unravel when my supervisor and I got into a disagreement about the Sabbath.

To their credit, BET was flexible with my 40-hour work week. I could choose the days and times I wanted to work. There was only one caveat. My supervisor insisted, "Saturdays are non-negotiable." With Saturday being the only day I was required to work, I initially turned down the internship because it was a non-negotiable day for me also. Sabbath was the only day I wouldn't work. It seemed my internship had ended before it began.

While I tried to figure out what to do next, God brought the show's leadership team full circle. They decided to allow me to stay in the internship and to have Saturdays off. I knew God had opened a door for me that no one could shut.

Although I loved the communications field, it seemed difficult to progress without working on Saturdays. While I was working in the office of communication for Kalamazoo Public School District, God told me that I was going to be a pastor. This news made me cry. I was overwhelmed because I had heard God speak to me. I also cried because it felt like God was dashing my dream to work in media and communications.

It took some time for me to agree to pastor. I first opted to study communications instead of theology in college, but eventually I decided to study them both. I have pastored in SECC for over 20 years and am the wife of a pastor. My husband, Kurt, pastored in SECC for 18 years and is now a chaplain in the United States Navy. Together, we have two children, Lauryn and Jonathan.

I had the blessing of pastoring in San Diego, Rialto,



and Moreno Valley, Calif. Before assuming this position, I was privileged to pastor the 16th Street church in San Bernardino. I truly loved pastoring.

Michael Henry, a member of the leadership team at the 16th Street church, said, "As both a parishioner and a colleague, her presence will be missed in our local church, but we are excited for the expansion of the ministry that God has entrusted to her."

I remember being heartbroken that God was taking my dream away, but pastoring became the dream I never knew I wanted. Now it feels like God has brought me full circle. I have given up my obsession with the news. Often, it focuses on bad news, making it hard to watch. Once again, God's answer was greater than my prayer. He has opened the door for me to step back into the communications field, but this time I have the opportunity to share good news.

By Andrea King



The King family (left to right) Lauryn, Kurt, Andrea and Jonathan.



Depression and the Pandemic: A Challenge



In 2001, Nelly Antonia Fletes Ramírez faced the worst tragedy of her life. Her teenage daughter Zurany, who had just given birth, committed suicide. The unbearable pain of losing her daughter thrust Nelly Antonia into a deep depression, and she began to experience other consequences due to the emotional toll. While trying to overcome her grief, Nelly's mental health began to suffer even more. Unfortunately, the pandemic only exacerbated her pain. Considering it to be the only way out, Nelly contemplated ending her life.

Then, after 20 years of suffering, she found a ray of hope. When Nelly decided to visit her now 20-year-old granddaughter, Rosmary, in San Diego, her granddaughter introduced her to the San Ysidro Spanish church. It was here that Nelly found the emotional and spiritual support that she was longing for.

Under the leadership of pastor Didier Noriega, the church had organized and implemented creative evangelism, which was financially sponsored by the Pacific Union Endowment fund. Through the creative evangelism program, Nelly learned about the unconditional love of God. After such a long, pain-filled journey of loss and depression, Nelly decided to break the cycle of suffering. According to a report from pastor Noriega, on July 31, 2021, Nelly gave her life to Jesus and was baptized.

Nelly's story is a perfect example of what a church can do for members of its community when bridges are built to help connect the church with those in need. Through the church, Nelly found hope and strength in Jesus to continue living. Today she is happy in Christ, and her heart longs for the second

coming of Jesus. Her goal is to share Christ by supporting other families who are experiencing the pain of losing a child to suicide.



By Didier Noriega



Not I, But Christ: Elina Camarena Ordained at Paradise Valley Spanish

“When I was a teenager, I told my mom I would never marry a pastor,” recalled Elina Camarena, associate district pastor for Paradise Valley Spanish church (PVS). Camarena was the daughter of a pastor and knew all the nuances of pastoral family life and had decided it wasn’t for her. “Mom told me never to say ‘never’ to God, because there was no telling His plans for my life. Little did I know how right she was!”

Camarena not only married a man who became a pastor, but on September 11, 2021, she herself was ordained as pastor at PVS.

“When you put your life in God’s hands, He takes you to places you never would have dreamed for yourself,” she said.

Back in 2007, Camarena was about to begin studies for a master’s degree in education when she and her husband were asked to interview for a pastoral team post. She agreed, never believing it would come to anything.

“I am shy,” she admitted. “I don’t like being up front, I don’t like being the center of attention, and I’m not a strong speaker. I couldn’t imagine God using me in that role. But the Lord has His ways!”

When God made it clear He wanted her to become a pastor, Camarena said she resisted.

“I wasn’t telling God He was wrong,” she said with a laugh, “but I did ask Him to reevaluate.” It was a huge internal struggle for Camarena, and she didn’t think she was prepared to carry out the calling.

“God gently reminded me that this journey had begun when I was very young—when my mother involved me in Sabbath School at age nine—and continued into

adulthood as I partnered with my husband in ministry. God reminded me I was meant for this, that He needed me here, and that it has always been my calling. I know I’m where I’m meant to be, and every day I’m grateful to Him for this opportunity.”

Camarena and her husband were invited to accept the pastoral team position. “I knew it was God,” Camarena recalled.

Within a few years, they had acquired two additional churches and were team pastoring at PVS, Vista Spanish, and Ramona Bilingual churches. Camarena pastors the PVS church while her husband leads the others.

“My congregation has embraced me from day one,” she said with warmth. “They are a very loving, prayerful, supportive church, and we care deeply about each other.”

Camarena is the first woman to be ordained pastor of a Hispanic church in the SECC, and she said she hopes this is only the beginning.

“My prayer is that my ordination encourages other Hispanic women pastors who would love to serve in their own ethnic communities,” she said. “They are needed, and God will use them.”

At the end of Elina’s husband’s sermon at her ordination, he included the song “Not I, But Christ.” She pointed out that this is how she feels about her work for Christ.

“My ministry is not about me at all,” she said. “Although I have no idea where this journey will take me, I know He continues calling me every day to do His work. I just have to show up and say, ‘Yes Lord, here I am.’”

By Becky St. Clair

Rolling Hills Church Remains Together in Prayer, Witnesses a Miracle

At the beginning of the pandemic, a group of six ladies from Rolling Hills church faithfully met each day by computer teleconference for the 100 Days of Prayer initiative sponsored by the General Conference. When the 100 days ended, this group formed a new group called the Women's Share, Care, and Prayer Group.

"These sisters meet each week, with the purpose of coming together to pray and support one another and uplift the name of Jesus," said Albert Frederico, pastor of Rolling Hills church. "Some have prayed for health, others for restoration of relationships, a few have been for finances, and many have interceded for their families and loved ones."

Last July, one member, Adriana Duarte, requested prayer for her friend, Maritza Mira, who lives in Tucson. Mira had just been diagnosed with stomach cancer. One day, through Duarte's encouragement, Mira joined their prayer meeting during her first chemotherapy treatment and shared that she was scared but their prayers had calmed her.

"I decided to call them my prayer warriors because they helped me fight my battles," said Mira. "They never stopped praying for me; they held me up."

Eventually, the doctors notified Mira that she had to have part of her stomach removed and the surgery was scheduled. Preparing for the surgery, the medical team determined that the cancer had spread, and they

were unable to operate. The prayer warriors continued to uplift their sister in prayer.

Throughout everything, Mira continued to put her trust in God. While there were ups and downs, her faith continued to grow steadily. She continued receiving chemotherapy to slow the growth of the cancer cells. When Mira contracted a mild case of COVID, they were quite concerned about her weakened ability to fight infection. They continued to pray.

Then, she had a PET scan to check the progress of her cancer. To the surprise of the doctors, there was no cancer in her body, and they declared her cancer-free!

The group arranged for Mira to visit this summer. She attended worship service and allowed the prayer warriors to share her testimony. That was a high Sabbath, and the group was thankful to meet their sister and for God allowing them to witness His infinite power through answered prayer.

"Even though many facets of life have normalized," added Frederico, "they still meet so they can continually experience His power, love, and grace that only happens through prayer."

"For those of us going through tough times, never give up," said Mira. "Keep fighting. Keep your faith and your prayers. God is good."

By Christina Nesbit-Corney, with Araya Moss



While visiting Rolling Hills church this summer, Mira (third from right) stands with her prayer warriors, holding the Bible they gave her.



FAR LEFT: "To God Be the Glory" plays as the mortgage burns.

ABOVE: Salazar and Pastor Vunileva cut the ribbon to the new sanctuary.

LEFT: The new L.A. Tongan church sanctuary.

L.A. Tongan Church Celebrates God's Goodness at Building Dedication

To God be the glory. This humble statement of praise echoed throughout a weekend celebration at the Los Angeles Tongan church, packed with prayer, reflection, and worship.

The occasion was a celebration of the church's new sanctuary—a consecration and dedication of the building for God's mission work.

Friday's ribbon cutting and consecration focused on the words found in Exodus 25:8: "Let them build me a sanctuary." As the ribbon was cut, the women of the church led the processional into the new sanctuary. The remainder of the service was a time of prayer, consecrating the building to God, and focusing on His purposes for it.

Sabbath highlighted God's goodness and the congregation's faithfulness. The morning dedication service included worship music, burning of the mortgage, a message from the Word, and a dedication prayer.

Prior to burning the mortgage, Kathleen V. Diaz, SCC treasurer/CFO, shared the church's journey building this sanctuary, beginning with a loan taken in 2017 and ending with a note received on March 2, 2021, stating that it had been paid off. "We thank the Lord because what started in 2017 seemed like it would take 20

years to pay off and only took four years," Diaz said, recognizing the sacrifices the church made to pay it off. "There was faithfulness in this church."

Velino A. Salazar, SCC president, began his message by reflecting on the history of the congregation—as the first church organized outside of Tonga with 35 years of ministry since. "Looking back, we can see the miracles God has done along the way," Salazar said. "God has guided us in the past, is guiding us in the present, and will continue guiding us in the future."

In his message, Salazar revisited the concept of the temple in the Old Testament, concluding with the vision of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation. The Scripture served as a foundation for the purpose and mission of the church's new sanctuary. "This is a place where many will be impacted by justice and repentance," he said.

Salazar reminded the church of the charge found in Matthew 28:18-20 to make disciples. "Brothers and sisters, may the Lord bless this invitation and challenge given to us from Jesus Christ," he said. "We need to keep doing mission in this community."

By Lauren Lacson

El Monte Vietnamese Evangelism School Celebrates First Graduating Class

“What about an evangelism school?” Vinh Nguyen, El Monte Vietnamese church pastor, recalled a member asking him.

Initially, Nguyen was hesitant, and it was challenging. “I almost wanted to give up,” he recalled. “I said to God, ‘When we have enough students, we’ll start the school.’” But he sensed God’s response: “God said ‘You have so little faith—you start the school, and I will provide the students.’”

The idea first went to the board with three students. When the school launched its inaugural class in 2017, there were 40 students.

Fast forward to 2021, when the two-day graduation celebration highlighted the mission and work for the 15 graduating students. The graduates were spread out across the world. Many came from throughout the U.S., including California, Washington, and Florida, and some even participated from Vietnam.

Each graduate took a moment to share what their participation in the evangelism school has meant to them. The common thread of gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the evangelism school was woven throughout the comments.

“I finally realize God has done so much for me through these evangelism classes,” one graduate said.



PHOTO: LAUREN LACSON

Cress prays over the graduating class.

“I count it as a great privilege to be part of the Vietnamese evangelism school,” shared Cynthia Nguyen, pastor Nguyen’s wife, who was also a student in the class. “I can’t say no to it when I consider how much God has done for me.”

Graduates are currently using their gifts and passion for mission in many ways, like planting churches and leading Bible studies.

Jose Cortes, Jr., from the NAD Ministerial Association, spoke to the graduates during the morning worship program. Cortes was present when the first class started in 2017. His message was about baptism and making disciples.

John H. Cress, SCC executive secretary and ministerial director, was also there in 2017 when the school was organized. At the graduation, Cress encouraged the graduates to continue drawing closer to Jesus as they minister for Him. “Your walk with Christ is the crucial foundation for your work for Christ,” Cress said, encouraging graduates to “pay close attention to yourself (your walk) and your teaching (work).”

Cress also gifted the church with a check for \$1,000 on behalf of the conference to further the ministry.

Nguyen also shared that the first call was to build a mission center at the church—the very building where the graduation took place. The mission center would be a hub for two purposes: 1) serve community in mission work and 2) be trained for outreach.

The next evangelism school cohort will start in September 2022 and include even more modules, such as church planting, evangelistic meetings, life and ministry of Ellen White, and more.



PHOTO: LAUREN LACSON

Cortes (left) shares the morning’s message while Nguyen (right) translates.

By Lauren Lacson



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The control room staffed by the NAD team facilitated the technology behind the meeting to ensure everything ran smoothly.

The meeting was held virtually via Zoom, hosted from the NAD headquarters.

Todd McFarland, parliamentarian, speaks to the delegation.

Karen Cress, founder of Culture Shift, LLC, presents the Region Structure Evaluation Committee Report.

SCC Holds Special Constituency Session

At the last Southern California Conference (SCC) regular constituency session in September 2019, it was voted “that SCC conducts a comprehensive Region Structure Assessment and bring analysis and report at a special session of the Constituency in 24 months.”

To comply with this mandate, SCC conducted an assessment that was then presented at a special virtual constituency session this September.

“The research process and the collection of data and its arrangement, along with the production of graphs and presentations, was led by Culture Shift, a professional company contracted by the SCC,” shared Elder Velino A. Salazar, SCC president. “The information provided was eye-opening to the ad-hoc committee and the conference leadership, including the SCC Executive Committee.”

“The data collected from statistics and the input received from more than 1,000 participant SCC church members through a survey, seven focus groups, and five town halls revealed achievements and deficiencies, generating great dialogue to seek opportunities and ways to improve this organizational system,” he continued.

SCC’s unique region structure is made up of five regions: Asian-Pacific, Greater Los Angeles, Hispanic, Los Angeles Metro, and West. The region structure was created in 1996 with a two-fold intention. The first, as Salazar described, was “to have a closer interaction between conference leadership with congregations and pastors. It was challenging for the SCC officers to interact more frequently with 145 churches and 180 pastors.” Secondly, the region structure was designed “to share more authority and responsibility

to grassroots leadership (such as church leaders and pastors).”

Between the 2019 vote and the mandated 24-month deadline, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. By September 2021, the pandemic was not over, and the question was raised as to the safest way to conduct this meeting. As the conference leadership considered the options, a survey was sent to delegates to get a sense of their comfort level with an in-person meeting. Abiding by the results of this survey, the SCC Executive Committee voted to hold this meeting virtually.

On September 19, 2021, the virtual meeting took place, ending with one main motion approved: “to adopt the preliminary recommendations submitted by the Executive Committee, which includes adaptations of the Region Structure Guidelines without changing the SCC Bylaws.” The motion passed with 84% of delegates voting yes.

Regarding action steps to be taken by SCC following this vote, Salazar stated, “First, the SCC officers will prioritize the Preliminary Recommendations approved by the Session delegates; second, the region directors will provide their input on the specifics of how and when these recommendations can be implemented; third, the Executive Committee will provide their input and approval, including the timing and the accountability process of implementation.”

Visit the special session website at www.2021sccsession.org to view the meeting recording, to learn about SCC’s administrative and organizational system, and more.

By Lauren Lacson

Calendar

Central California Conference

Hombres de Verdad Retiro de Varones Virtual (Nov. 6) 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Register today at www.CentralCaliforniaAdventist.com.

This New World, New Church, New You (Nov. 6) This youth and young adult fall conference will be held virtually. Register today at www.CentralCaliforniaAdventist.com.

Our God: Miracle Worker! Prayer Event (Nov. 12-13) at the Bakersfield Central church. Friday at 7 p.m. and Sabbath from 9:30 to 3:30. Keynote speakers Jerry and Janet Page will present powerful worships, seasons of

prayer, and more. Sabbath lunch and childcare provided. Or watch live at www.CCCPrayerMinistries.com.

Zooming with Young Adults: Join the daily Zoom meetings online with the young adults. For an up-to-date schedule and meeting id#s, visit <https://bit.ly/2x0jvDf> or email tvang@cccsda.org.

Check the Events page online at www.CentralCaliforniaAdventist.com for all the updates. Many events and outreaches are now being virtually presented or streamed online.

La Sierra University

Archaeology Discovery Weekend The Center for Near Eastern Archaeology will hold its 13th Annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend Nov. 13-14 in virtual and in-person formats. The weekend will feature presentations by leading scholars on the theme "Southwest Turkey: Famous Cities, Churches and Synagogues." For further information and to register, visit <https://lasierra.edu/cnea/discovery-weekend/> or email archaeology@lasierra.edu.

Virtual Music Performances La Sierra University's Department of Music offers a variety of virtual recorded performances, its Distinguished Artists Series, and Department Stories on YouTube under La Sierra University Music, or <https://bit.ly/3dCr5pK>. For information about the music department and to sign up

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Information

The Pacific Union *Recorder* is published 12 times per year with a circulation of approximately 75,000. For more information about advertising, please email to recorder@adventistfaith.com.

Upcoming Deadlines

These are the advertising deadlines for the *Recorder*. Your local conference news deadlines will be earlier.
December: *November 8* • January: *December 7*

Contributions

The *Recorder* pages are assigned to the local conferences, colleges, and health care institutions, and all content comes through the communication departments in those organizations. If you have a news story/idea, calendar announcement, etc., please contact your local communication department. See the masthead for contact information. Want tips for writing for us? See www.dailywritingtips.com/the-art-of-writing-news.



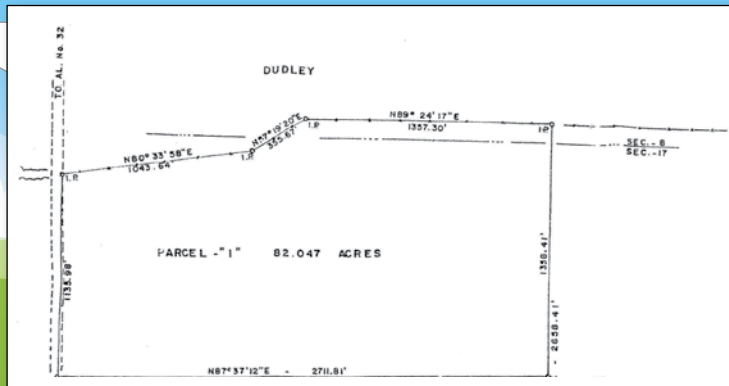
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for its newsletter: music@lasierra.edu, or 951-785-2036.

The La Sierra Report Stay in the know and sign up to receive The La Sierra Report, an e-newsletter of interesting news and events. To subscribe, send your email address and subscription request to pr@lasierra.edu.

COVID-19 Vaccines: Answers & Insights La Sierra University created a public education campaign aimed at providing insights and answers to some of the most common concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines. To view a series of public service announcement videos, a symposium recording featuring science and medical experts and informational resources, visit <https://lasierra.edu/covid-19/vaccines-answers-insights/>.

Northern California Conference

Adventurer Family Outing (Nov. 7) Sacramento Zoo. Everyone must attend with an NCC Adventurer club and make advance reservations with the Adventurer, children's, and family ministries department. Ask your club director to RSVP. Info: NCC Adventurer Ministries Department: 916-886-5654.

Online Asian/Pacific Convocation (Nov. 20) 3 p.m. "Thrive in the New Normal with Christ." Speaker: Dr. Kyoshin Ahn, North American Division executive

secretary. Info: nccsda.com/asian-pacific-ministries.

Get the News! Engage with the Northern California Conference by subscribing to the NCC's weekly emailed news source, "Northern Lights." Sign up: nccsda.com.

Classified

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Newsdesk Online



The regular section of Newsdesk in the *Recorder* is available online at:
sda.faith/pacificnewsdesk

SDA Immigration Attorney

We handle family and employment-based immigration cases for clients throughout the United States and around the globe. We also provide free immigration law seminars for churches and other groups. Please contact Jason Mustard at 831-249-9330 or jason@surowitz.com.

Country Living: Properties available in California. Call Soonyoung Park 707-312-3635 or email soonyoungnapa@gmail.com. Country properties and all real estate needs. CA BRE Lic #01421077.

Adventist realtor serving North Georgia and Southeast Tennessee. If you want to buy land or a home in this beautiful area, call me. Pierre @ Remax REC 423-987-0831 (cell) or 423-664-6644 (office).

You can help the Lord's ministry of healing in Micronesia by donating your car, boat, bike, RV, or truck. All proceeds go to provide free medical services to the island peoples of Micronesia. Canvasback Missions, a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization, has been serving since 1986. Visit our website for more info: www.canvasback.org or call 707-746-7828 to arrange your donation.

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perspective that we are now living in the last days? Do you enjoy peeling back the layers of the words in the Bible to discover hidden meanings? Visit our website: www.comingkingpublications.com.

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New Adventist book— *Cross the Waves and Climb the Steeps*. Join the Meyer family as they uproot their lives and heed God's call. Adventures start in Africa, transition to Lebanon and back to Africa, with other countries in between. Appealing for all ages. Available online at liferichpublishing.com/en/bookstore, barnesandnoble.com, and amazon.com.

Employment

Wanted: single person to manage and care for estate home in Lake Las Vegas part time. Live-in with private room/bath. For a widow...lovely situation. Call Myrna at 702-568-7777 or 310-613-9549 (cell) or email me at curtismyrna@verizon.net.

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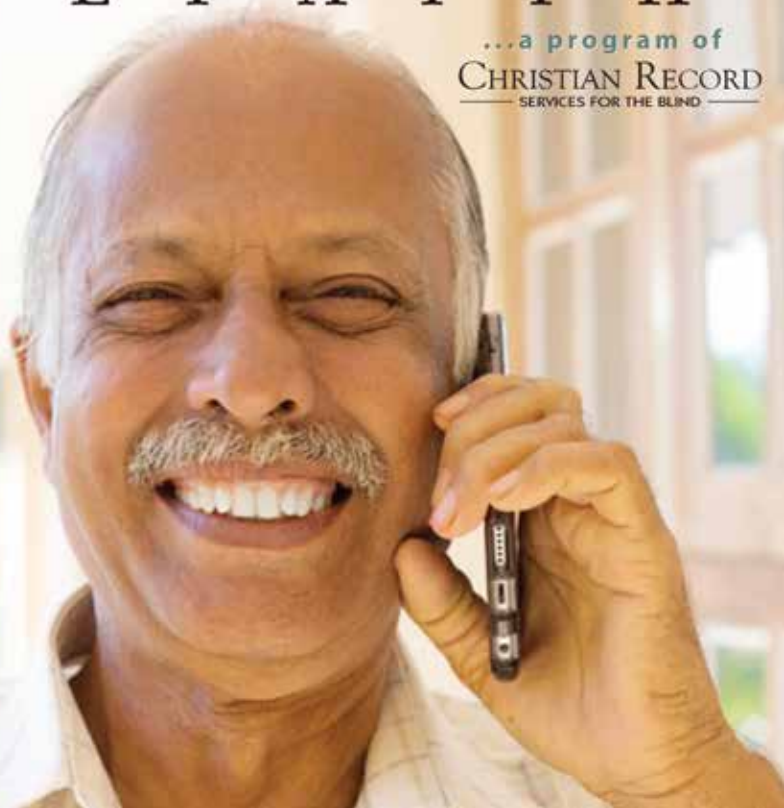
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Seeking full-time Substance Use Navigator to join Stallant Health, a rural health clinic in Weimar, Calif. This individual must have the unique background of substance abuse with at least one year of successful recovery and will serve to assist patients navigate aspects of their recovery using knowledge of available community resources, personal experience, and modeling successful recovery behaviors. Certification preferred, but assistance available to acquire certification after hire. Please contact the Associate Manager of Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program at 530-637-4025 x289 or by email: jodi@stallanthealth.com.

Stallant Health, a rural health clinic in Weimar, Calif., is accepting applications for a family practice physician and an NP or PA to join the team. Interested individuals should contact Marva by email: marva@stallanthealth.com.

Pacific Union College is seeking a full-time Housing Coordinator. Major duties include coordination of PUC faculty/staff housing, moving arrangements, and monitoring of commercial leases/master leases and utility charges for all College-managed leases. Must be customer service oriented and able to multi-task with numerous projects. Must be able to maintain organization and be team player. Salary position. For more information or to apply, please call Human Resources at 707-965-6231 or visit our website at www.PUC.edu/campus-services/human-resources/current-job-postings.

Pacific Union College is seeking a full-time Associate Vice President of Finance for Financial Administration. Major duties include provision of leadership and guidance for all financial aspects of PUC and Howell Mountain Enterprises, ability to develop and implement long- and short-term financial goals consistent with the mission of PUC, budget and balance analysis, and development of strategic tools and systems for critical financial and operational goals. Also must work in conjunction with the Vice President of Financial Administration in engaging the Board of Directors and other members of cabinet in matters of finance, auditing, and investment issues. For more information or to apply, please call Human Resources at 707-965-6231 or visit our website at

www.PUC.edu/campus-services/human-resources/current-job-postings.

Faculty Healthcare Finance & Economics @ Loma Linda University School of Public Health. We are seeking a full-time faculty member for the Master of Healthcare Administration (MHA) program with experience in financial management, economics, and/or quantitative methods. Instructs 4-6 graduate-level courses per year (e.g., Healthcare Economics, Finance, Quantitative Methods in Healthcare Management, and Accounting) using both face-to-face and online modalities. Produce research or practice activities that are industry-related and align with the school's strategic focus areas. Advise and mentor graduate students. Requires a doctoral degree from an accredited institution, and healthcare experience in practice or research is preferred. Apply at <https://lluh.referrals.selectminds.com/via/BenjaminB-6piol/jobs/faculty-public-health-16900>.

Executive Director - EXSEED Program @ Loma Linda University. Develops and coordinates STEM education, activities, events, and professional development in support of Kindergarten thru Graduate degrees for the Adventist education system and San Bernardino Unified School District. Coordinates organizational networking throughout the Adventist educational

system to collaborate with, support, and promote STEM-related clubs, projects, and camps. Oversees the LLU pipeline and pathway programs for minorities to develop project-based science engagement at LLU. Requires a doctoral degree in related field, five years as faculty within a K-12 or higher education academic institution involved in substantial teaching experiences, and experience or involvement in faculty professional development. Apply at <https://lluh.referrals.selectminds.com/via/BenjaminB-6piol/jobs/exec-director-exseed-program-16437>.

Director - Drayson Center @ Loma Linda University. Join our Loma Linda University team as the Director - Drayson Center! Drayson Center opened on January 11, 1995, as a 100,000-square-foot, recreation and wellness center promoting physical, emotional, and spiritual wholeness. The Drayson Center is dedicated to the health and fitness of our Loma Linda University Health employees, students, and community. <https://drayson.llu.edu/> Requires a bachelor's degree, must be a member of Seventh-day Adventist Church, and have five years' experience in managing personnel. Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), First Aid, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED); certifications required within 30 days of hire. Apply at <https://lluh.referrals.selectminds.com/jobs/director-drayson-center-17421>.

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Great opportunity in Idaho for \$275K. Do you want to experience country living while operating an outpost/ministry or operate your own business? Here is your opportunity to own an 8,000 sq. ft. 2-story building featuring: large open country-themed banquet area,

renovated separate living space/office with bathroom/shower, 180-seat auditorium, stage, baby grand piano. SDA church 20 minutes away. 11 S. Main St., Kooskia, ID 83539. Price reduced to sell. For information: bit.ly/3iiG47R or Theresa Reynold 208-798-7822.

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For Sale: Amazing California land with water; Incredible Hawaii land; House in mainland; 36' Islander sailboat in Waikiki. Due to COVID and Paradise Camp Fire we are interested in exploring options. Facing tax foreclosures. Call us at 209-507-9686, email us at: health.by.choice.120@gmail.com, or text me at 530-353-5561.

Southern Oregon, country setting, 3 acres, easy I-5 access. Modified A-Frame, 3-bdrm, 3-bath, ample living areas, grapes, trees, pool, outbuildings, well, septic. SDA church and school, close to Milo Adventist Academy. 541-430-2710.

Office building for lease in Nashville. Kentucky-Tennessee Conference is leasing a free-standing building ideal for medical, dentistry, or counseling practices. The building was recently renovated and measures 3,000 square feet. It is located immediately off the interstate exit in a highly trafficked upscale commercial area, and it is only 30 minutes from Nashville—a growing city with a booming economy. For more information, contact Terri Jenks at 615-859-1391 ext.1006.

For Sale

Houseboat at Lake Don Pedro, Fleming Meadows, 35 minutes east of Modesto, Calif. Master bedroom with bathroom and shower, guest bathroom, living room with hide-a-bed and two recliners, TV, gas fireplace, full kitchen with two refrigerators/freezers covered upper deck for family, Pathfinder events, etc. Can sleep 20 in sleeping bags. Twin engine power and Sea-Doo personal watercraft. \$110,000 for 1/3 ownership, plus monthly dues of \$375 to cover slip rental, insurances, taxes, and routine repairs and maintenance. Call: Dan García 209-968-7979. Leave a message and I will return your call.

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COVID). Turn-key business. Training provided. Local K-12 SDA school and active SDA church. Small town with mountains and ocean nearby. Inquire: sdanwptclinic4sale@gmail.com

Piano for sale by owner: \$29,999 or best offer. 1926 Steinway Model M 5'7" ebony with original ivory. Completely restored in 1990. 2005 appraisal for \$25,000. Looks brand new. Please call 209-931-9619. Email: bhbm1959@gmail.com.

Vacation Opportunities

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Sunriver, Central Oregon. Four-bedroom vacation home on the North Woodlands golf course. Two master king suites, two queens, one bunk set, hot tub, loft, Jacuzzi bath, gas log fireplace, BBQ, W/D, bikes, all resort amenities, sleeps 10, no smoking, no pets. For rates, photos, and reservations, call: 541-279-9553, or email: schultz@crestviewcable.com.

Angwin home: Five-bedroom, three-bathroom vacation home 2 miles from PUC. Fully furnished, large kitchen, dining room, living room, family room, piano, vineyard views, WiFi, washer and dryer, BBQ, sleeps 10. Call for rates, photos, and reservations: 415-539 7980 or email nroger1965@gmail.com.

Israel and Jordan Jesus Tour April 24-May 6, 2022, with Dr. Carl Cosaert of Walla Walla University. Rediscover the power of the life of Jesus as we visit Galilee, Capernaum, Caesarea, Petra, Jerusalem, and more. For more information on this and other upcoming tours to Egypt, Greece, Turkey, and China, visit www.adventtours.org or email info@adventtours.org.

Adventist Tours 2022. Israel in Jesus' Steps, March 9-17 & June 12-21 (optional Jordan/Egypt); New Testament Alive/7 Churches, June 2-12; African Safari & Service, May 24-31; Germany-Austria: Luther to WW2, June 22-July 1 (includes Oberammergau Passion Play); Thailand, July 27-Aug. 7. All tours are Adventist-led, with excellent rates and beautiful experiences for all ages. \$1750+/person. For full details, contact tabghatours@gmail.com or [facebook.com/TabghaTours](https://www.facebook.com/TabghaTours) or call 423-298-2169. "The best trip I've ever had! Nothing comes close." "Fabulous!" "The Bible comes alive." "An awesome experience!"

At Rest

Cahill, Jodi – b. Dec. 8, 1946, Denver, Colo.; d. Sept. 10, 2021, Riverside, Calif. Survivors: daughters, Jennifer Tyner, Julie Lemus, Vanity Williams; sons-in-law, Matthew Tyner, Cesar Lemus, Branden Williams; siblings, Linda Kuntz, Kathi Spetnagel, Terry Swenson; five grandchildren.

Chaplain, Maryann – b. April 16, 1930, Monet, Ark.; d. July 9, 2021, Santa Maria, Calif. Survivors: sons, David Rush, Joseph Chaplain; daughters, Suzanne Abbot, Kathren Davenport; nine grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren.

Cotton, Helen YaYa (Tanner) – b. Feb. 27, 1924, Parker, Idaho; d. May 29, 2021, Riverside, Calif. Survivors: sons, Bobby and Michael Kelly; daughters, Kathi, Jan, and Pamela Kelly; 16 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren.

Hill, Ronald M. – b. Dec. 19, 1926, Hedley, Texas; d. Aug. 12, 2021, Riverside, Calif. Survivors: son, Ronald; sister, Ruth Cortez.

Linser, Heinz – b. May 30, 1939, Stuttgart, Germany; d. Sept. 9, 2021, Loma Linda, Calif. Survivors: daughters, Cara Morris, Lara Esterson; two brothers; three sisters.

Peterson, Ormand, E. – b. Aug. 24, 1932, Minneapolis, Minn.; d. July 25, 2021, Whittier, Calif. Survivors: wife, Peggy; sons, David, Douglas; daughter, Katherine Peterson-Acosta; 10 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; 3 great-great-grandchildren.

Tribhuwan, Raj – b. Jan. 23, 1944, Amednagar, India; d. Sept. 30, 2021, Loma Linda, Calif. Survivors: wife, Shashi; daughters, Monica Nowrangi, Nicole Sihotang; sons-in-law, Milap Nowrangi, Elmer Sihotang; five grandchildren. Retired scientist and professor at Loma Linda University Biochemistry Department; loyal husband, loving father, doting grandfather, and a true man of God who lived his life leading by example.

Webster, Betty – b. Jan. 27, 1924, Klamath Falls, Ore; d. Sept. 27, 2021, Redlands, Calif. Survivors: sons, James, John; daughter-in-law, Cynthia; one grandchild. Were missionaries in Thailand.

November 2021 Sunset Calendar

City/Location	NOV 5	NOV 12	NOV 19	NOV 26
Alturas	5:51	4:44	4:38	4:34
Angwin	6:05	4:58	4:53	4:50
Bakersfield	5:57	4:51	4:47	4:44
Calexico	5:47	4:42	4:38	4:36
Chico	6:00	4:53	4:48	4:44
Death Valley (Furnace Ck)	5:46	4:40	4:36	4:33
Eureka	6:07	5:00	4:55	4:51
Four Corners [E]	6:14	5:08	5:03	5:00
Fresno	5:57	4:51	4:47	4:44
Grand Canyon (South Rim)	5:57	4:52	4:48	4:46
Half Dome	5:54	4:48	4:43	4:40
Hilo	5:44	5:41	5:40	5:39
Holbrook	5:22	5:16	5:12	5:10
Honolulu	5:43	5:41	5:39	5:39
Joshua Tree	5:48	4:43	4:39	4:36
Lake Tahoe	5:54	4:47	4:42	4:39
Las Vegas	5:40	4:34	4:30	4:27
Lodi-Stockton	6:01	4:54	4:50	4:46
Loma Linda	5:52	4:46	4:43	4:40
Los Angeles	5:56	4:50	4:46	4:44
McDermitt [N]	5:39	4:32	4:26	4:22
Moab	6:13	5:07	5:02	4:58
Monterey Bay	6:06	5:00	4:56	4:53
Mt. Whitney	5:53	4:48	4:44	4:42
Napa	6:04	4:58	4:53	4:50
Nogales [S]	5:33	5:28	5:24	5:22
Oakland	6:05	4:59	4:54	4:51
Paradise, CA	5:59	4:52	4:47	4:43
Phoenix	5:32	5:27	5:23	5:21
Pu'uwaiiaiu, Ni'ihau [W]	5:45	5:43	5:41	5:41
Reno	5:52	4:46	4:40	4:37
Riverside	5:52	4:47	4:43	4:41
Sacramento	6:01	4:54	4:49	4:46
Salt Lake City	6:18	5:11	5:06	5:02
San Diego	5:54	4:49	4:45	4:43
San Francisco	6:06	5:00	4:55	4:52
San Jose	6:05	4:59	4:54	4:51
Santa Rosa	6:06	5:00	4:55	4:51
Sunset Beach	6:05	4:59	4:55	4:52
Thousand Oaks	5:58	4:53	4:49	4:46
Tucson	5:29	5:24	5:21	5:19

[N]=Northernmost [S]=Southernmost [E]=Easternmost [W]=Westernmost point in the Pacific Union

"So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." Hebrews 4:9

Recorder Membership

The *Pacific Union Recorder* is provided as a free service to members of the conferences that are part of the Pacific Union Conference (Arizona, Hawaii, Northern California, Central California, Southern California, Southeastern California, and Nevada-Utah). Each conference maintains the list of members, based on the reports from their churches. If you would like to make a change to your subscription (name, address, cancellation), please contact your local conference.



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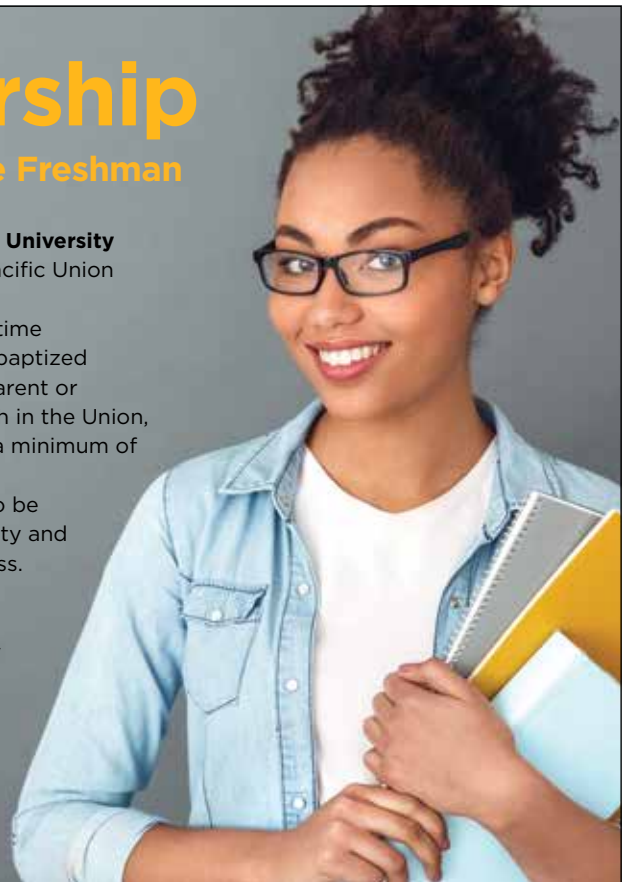
\$2,000 Scholarship Supports In-Union Adventist College Freshman

Incoming freshmen at Pacific Union College or La Sierra University now have access to a \$2,000 scholarship provided by Pacific Union Conference for the 2021-2022 school year.

Freshmen applying for the scholarship 1) must be first-time undergraduates, 2) must be enrolled full time, 3) must be baptized members of an Adventist church in the Union, or have a parent or guardian that is a baptized member of an Adventist church in the Union, or have attended a Union-operated secondary school for a minimum of one semester.

Applications and verifications for this scholarship are to be completed with Pacific Union College or La Sierra University and submitted as part of the student financial clearance process.

For more information about this scholarship, email the student financial services department of Pacific Union College at studentfinance@puc.edu or La Sierra University at sfs@lasierra.edu.



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Through practicing the art of giving, we can flex our spiritual muscles. We can learn what it means to surrender ourselves completely and wholly. Through giving, we can build our faith.

Principle #1 - My money is not my money

The Bible makes some very clear statements about material possessions. Essentially, it all boils down to one simple fact: God created the universe, and everything in it is His—including your house, your car, and your bank account.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).*

“Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for *everything* in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all” (1 Chronicles 29:11, emphasis added).

Principle #2 – God requests a portion back

Once we have decided that everything we own belongs to God, it is a natural progression to want to give something back. Through tithing, we can begin to act upon the gratitude and thanksgiving that we feel.

Tithe is giving back to the Lord one-tenth of our income. In Biblical times, when income was derived primarily from crops, tithe was paid in produce. In today's equivalent, tithe is one-tenth of the money that we earn. The Bible makes it abundantly clear.

"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops" (Proverbs 3:9).

Principle #3 – Attitude vs amount

Scripture records the poignant story of the widow and her mites (Mark 12:42). Jesus, seated in the temple courts, was obviously touched by the woman's gift. Clearly it had nothing to do with the amount she gave. She gave two copper coins—a small, insignificant amount that would have been surpassed by hundreds of others that day. She would not get a special mention in the temple bulletin thanking her for her generosity. And really, what difference did her pennies make? Apparently, a lot. Centuries on, we are still learning from this faithful woman's act. The amount is irrelevant. The attitude is everything.

Principle #4 – Offerings: Using money for good

While tithing is important and a right attitude is essential, it is not the sum total of what God expects a Christian to give. All through the Bible, people brought offerings to God. Some of the offerings were atonement offerings in the sacrificial system; however, others were offerings of joy and thanksgiving for the blessings bestowed upon the giver. Indeed, the widow we discussed above was in all likelihood bringing what could be called a "free will" offering to the temple. It is the practice of churches today to collect offerings as part of their worship services to assist them in their work. This Biblical principle continues to be significant.

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made" (1 Corinthians 16:2).

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27).

Principle #5 – How much?

Getting down to the nitty gritty is the underlying question of "How much?" How much should a believer give to the church? Perhaps the best principle can once again be found in the Bible.

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

It is clear that the decision of how much to give is one that is made in each person's heart and that their heart posture is what counts. Once again, the amount is secondary to the attitude.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Where have you stored your treasure?

**All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*



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FINDING JOY IN STEM

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At La Sierra University, we understand the vital roles that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics play in our changing world. That's why we offer our students unique opportunities to immerse themselves in these interdisciplinary fields through the Title V-funded Guided Pathways to Success program. Students who participate in this program receive enhanced support to achieve their academic goals, and are given additional opportunities for networking, research, and internships. Outside of the program, the departments of Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Mathematics, and Physics are instrumental in preparing their students for exciting careers ranging from radiological health physics to economics to medicine. #changeyourworld

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