

# southernconnect



**John H. Cress,**  
*Executive Secretary*

## Unpacking Our *Gift*

**G**od does not gather His church together just to be inspired.

Christianity is not a spectator sport. Christians have not been called to be merely pew sitters and sermon tasters.

We were put on earth to contribute, not just to consume. Not only to get the most out of life, but to “add” to life, to give something back.

The apostle Peter wrote, “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10-11, NRSV).

This passage tells us a great reality—each of us has a gift. The word that the Bible uses here for gift is *charisma*. It means you have a competency or a set of competencies that have been given to you by God. This means that every person who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior has everything that is needed to fulfill God’s purpose for their life.

I’ve been told that some churches in China welcome new

believers by saying, “Jesus now has a new pair of eyes to see with, new ears to listen with, new hands to help with, and a new heart to love others with.”

Paul writes in Ephesians 3:20: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (NIV). Clearly, the success of God’s purpose lived out through our life is not based on our liabilities or limitations:

Abraham was old. Jacob was insecure. Leah was unattractive. Joseph was abused. Moses stuttered. Samson was codependent. Rahab was immoral. David was the runt of the family and had all kinds of family problems.

Elijah was suicidal. Jeremiah was depressed. Jonah was reluctant. John the Baptist was eccentric, to say the least. Peter was impulsive and hot-tempered. Martha worried a lot. The Samaritan woman had several failed marriages.

Zacchaeus was unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Timothy was timid, and Paul had what he called a “thorn in his flesh,” which he prayed three times for God to remove but God choose to leave it. That is quite a list of misfits, but God used each of them powerfully.

God told Paul that every time he used his gifts to serve people, this “thorn in the flesh” would remind him that “God’s grace is sufficient, for God’s power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

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### Donovan Childs Is Ordained

God’s calling on Childs’ life was on full display at his ordination service.



### Jason Whitley Is Ordained

Whitley’s ordination service focused on his story and God’s purpose.

### IN EVERY ISSUE

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# Jason Whitley Is Ordained

BY LAUREN LACSON

In December, the Culver City church family celebrated the ordination of their pastor, Jason Whitley.

Whitley briefly served as a worship leader at the Culver City church after earning his theology degree in 2013, after which he attended Andrews for his master's degree. He then served as associate pastor at the Camarillo church until October 2020, when he joined the Culver City church.

The ordination service included special music and words of encouragement from colleagues in ministry.

John H. Cress, SCC executive secretary, presented a credential recognizing Whitley's status as an ordained minister, and James G. Lee, SCC executive vice president, shared the call to ministry. The ordination prayer was

led by Jillian Lutes, West Covina Hills church associate pastor.

Greg Hoenes, SCC West Region director, gifted Whitley with a shepherd's staff, an on-the-go communion kit, and anointing oils.

Richard Roethler, Santa Monica church pastor, welcomed Whitley to ministry with counsel from his experience. "I needed to learn to listen more than I speak," he shared. With four succinct points, he imparted wisdom: to be a continual learner, love well, lead, and lean into God.

In his homily, SCC President Velino A. Salazar reflected on the shaping process for a minister and the important parts played by the home, schools, and church, recognizing the place of each in Whitley's life. He then shared



Whitley shares his response.

from the story of David, recalling Whitley's first devotional to the office staff of SCC, on the message of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. Like David, Salazar said, "Jason also is skilled in managing God's vision."

Whitley's response began with words of thanks to family, friends, colleagues, and his church.

"Thank you for the call you entrusted me with," he said. "My calling to anything will be to help you see the full picture of God and His love." ●



Elder Donovan's father, Virgil Childs, anoints his head with oil and offers the ordination prayer.

"Donovan stands tall because he doesn't seek the approval of the Christian but the calling of God," shared Iki Taimi, SCC Senior Youth & Young Adult Ministries director, as he welcomed attendees to the ordination of colleague Donovan Childs. "As we recognize Donovan today, it is sure proclamation to little Donavans in our church, all around, that they, too, have a calling."

In November, the University

# Donavan Childs Is Ordained

BY LAUREN LACSON

church celebrated the ordination of their Associate Pastor Donovan Childs.

John H. Cress, SCC executive secretary, presented Donovan with a new credential recognizing his status as an ordained minister, and James G. Lee, SCC executive vice president, shared the call to ministry.

In a special moment, Royal Harrison, SCC Greater Los Angeles Region director, presented Donovan with a beautiful preacher's robe, handmade by University church member Debbie Austin.

When it came time for the homily, SCC President Velino A. Salazar approached the pulpit and recalled his own ordination and how meaningful it would have been to have had his father more involved. So, as a surprise

for Donovan, Salazar had arranged for Virgil Childs, Pacific Union Conference Vice President for Black Ministries, to give the homily.

"As a pastor, you cannot be successful in this work if you're trusting in Donovan," Virgil counseled Donovan.

"You need to understand you're God's man," he continued. "Thank God for SCC, but *God* commissioned you first of all. He has called you to be a channel of grace."

In his response, Donovan thanked a long list of people, many of whom were present, who had supported, encouraged, and been there for him throughout his journey in ministry.

Ultimately, he said, "it has nothing to do with me but everything to do with Christ." ●

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So, our gift, or set of competencies, is not based upon our liabilities or limitations. It is based on God's grace when He gave us our gifts.

For Christians, service is not optional, something to be tacked onto our schedules if we can spare the time. It is the heart of the Christian's life. It is why we've been given gifts. In fact, it could be said that a "non-serving Christian" is a contradiction.

Jesus said, "Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28, The Living Bible). Jesus came "to serve" and "to give"—and those two verbs should define our life on earth, too.

Often, we're more interested in "serve us" than "service." We say, "I'm looking for a church that meets my needs and blesses me," rather than, "I'm looking for a place and space to serve and be a blessing."

God has gifted and empowered us with the hope that we will change the subject from "Who's going to meet my needs?" to "Whose needs can I meet?" ●

# in transition

## NEW EMPLOYEES

Voted November 18, 2021

**Hue San Kim** | Pastor, Cerritos Korean church, as of December 1, 2021.

**James P. O'Connor** | Pastor, West Covina Hills church, as of November 1, 2021.

## TRANSFERS WITHIN SCC

Voted November 18, 2021

**Deanna Simeone** | From Assistant Director to Director, SCC Human Resources, as of November 10, 2021.

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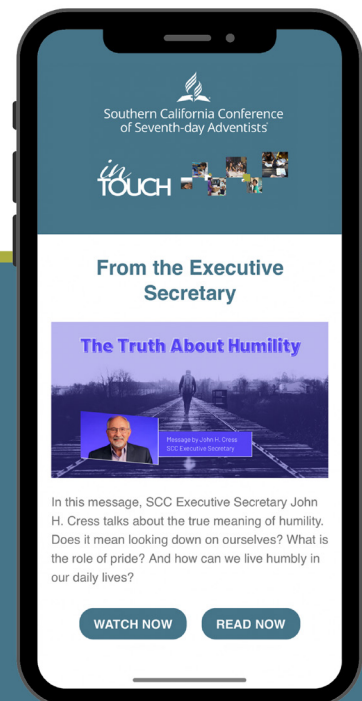
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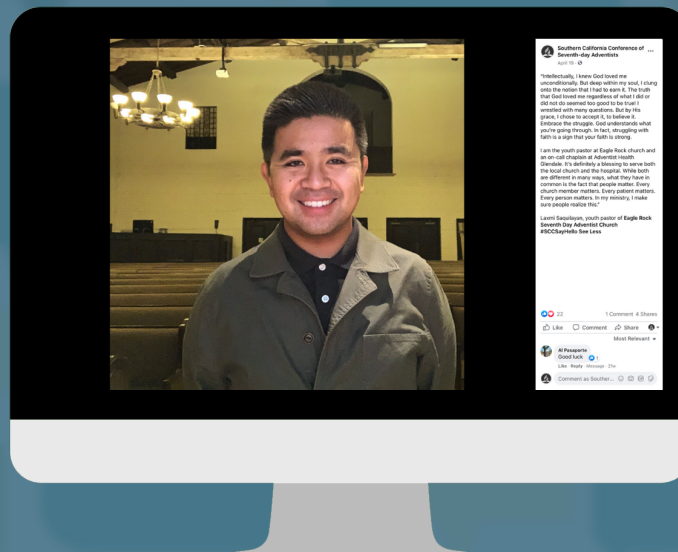
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