

southernconnect



James G. Lee,
*Executive Vice
President*

Service in God's Kingdom

As a child attending one of the Southern California Conference churches, I was taught the importance of service—service to God and service to others.

I can remember going on Sabbath afternoons with my father to a nursing home not far from our home,

singing hymns and reading Scriptures and my father praying with the residents. I can recall other service activities, too, with my father—passing out literature and giving communion to the sick or shut-ins from our church.

In 2 Corinthians 9:12-13, the Bible says that the services we provide not only meet needs but also express our thanks to God and lead others to praise God. We serve so that God can reach others through our hands and words.

You will remember that, when asked how to “inherit eternal life,” Jesus responded by saying we are to love God and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27, NIV).

In His parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus indicated a person who truly loves his neighbor is one who provides services to him or her (Luke 10:25-37). Does that mean that we are to love and serve every neighbor in need, regardless of whether they seem friendly to us? The Bible doesn't qualify the statement; our role is simply to love and serve.

When we look at the life of Jesus, we can see that He spent most of His time serving others. Just a review of the miracles He performed reveals this: feeding the 5,000 and, on another occasion, the 4,000; healing the man with an

infirmity that kept him bedridden for 38 years; healing a crippled woman; healing the man with dropsy, raising the son of the widow of Nain; and many more.

Are we not to follow Jesus' example? Does the Bible require those who profess to follow Jesus to provide services to others? God calls us to be of service to others. We need look no further than accounts of God's concern for the widow and the orphan as demonstrations of some of the opportunities He gave people to be of service.

Matthew 22:37-38 (KJV) says, “Thou shalt love the Lord

thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.” The second, in verse 39, is the natural outcome of the first: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Principles in these two verses represent the foundational bedrock of the Christian life.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”

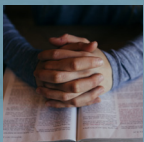
John 13:35 (KJV). Followers of great teachers reflect the characteristics of their teachers. Love was one of the principal attributes of Jesus. His life was a practical illustration of love.

As followers of Jesus, should we not manifest the same kind of love? This would give evidence that we are His and He is ours. It is this type of love—charity—that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13.

1 Peter 4:10 says, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace” (ESV). The spirit of service is the spirit of hospitality. Each person has the capacity for serving others. It's a privilege and a responsibility. What God has so graciously given to us, we are to share to others. “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8, KJV). This is the essence of service. ●

WE SERVE SO THAT
GOD CAN REACH
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OUR HANDS & WORDS.

INSIDE



Three Young Adult Pastors Ordained in Southern California Conference This Spring

Pastors Sarah Grover, Danny Castanaza, and Brian Campos all recognize God's calling on their lives and celebrate their ordination in personal and meaningful services earlier this year.

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Three Young Adult Pastors Ordained in Southern California Conference This Spring

BY LAUREN LACSON & ARAYA MOSS

SARAH GROVER



DANNY CASTANAZA



BRIAN CAMPOS



Sarah Grover Praises God for His Leading & Calling in Her Life

If you had asked me five years ago, I still would not have pictured myself being here—being an ordained pastor,” shared Sarah Grover, associate pastor at Camarillo church.

This May, Grover was ordained in a service that emphasized the uniqueness and importance of the occasion, as Grover is the second woman to be ordained in the West Region and the fourth in SCC.

“Sarah has demonstrated a profound capacity not only to find the courage and identify her gifts and her calling and to name that and to present that but to also overcome prejudice and to win people over,” said Greg Hoenes, West Region director.

Grover began as an associate pastor at the Lancaster church in 2012, where she served until July 2021. In that time, she earned three degrees—an associate and two master’s—that show her dedication to continuing education and excellence in ministry.

“I can remember many moons ago that conversation I had with you on the phone when you were in San Francisco, when you said you’re sensing God’s call to pastoral ministry, and I went, ‘Woo hoo! We got a good one,’” Ed Sammons, Lancaster church pastor, said in his welcome to ministry.

Grover recalls her answer at five years old to the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” It was

“A teacher, a missionary, and a nurse.” She later realized that these careers weren’t the perfect fit and prayed for God to guide her into His plan.

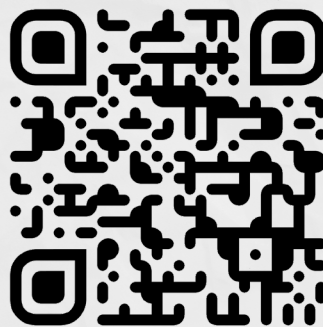
“As that prayer has continued and still continues in my life, with my hands open, saying, ‘God, I want to do what You want me to do,’ it’s interesting that I’m kind of fulfilling that dream of being a teacher and a missionary in the form of a pastor,” she reflected.

Grover claimed 1 Timothy 4:12, encouraging attendees: “Today, we’re talking about my calling, but I’d like for us to take a moment and remember that we’re all called,” first, to love God and others, and second, to use our gifts for His purposes. ●

PHOTO: LANCASTER SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH/YOUTUBE LIVESTREAM



Ordination of Sarah Grover



WATCH

Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera or visit <https://scc.adventist.org/ordinations> to watch any of these services.

Danny Castanaza: “God Works All These Moments Together”

Danny Castanaza’s journey to pastoral ministry wasn’t always a clear path. With a plan to attend college in Cerritos, a call from a friend the day before class was to start altered his course and set Castanaza on a path to Pacific Union College.

“Danny, God came and interrupted your plans,” reflected Velino A. Salazar, SCC president. “When God interrupts, it’s because He has a project and a plan because God needs you.” Salazar spoke of the various methods God used to recruit Castanaza into His service: friends, family, colleagues from school, and one of his mentors.

Every aspect of the service

emphasized the family-centered nature of Castanaza’s ministry. Many of those individuals who were so influential in Castanaza’s journey were present in support of his ministry. From the clarity his parents brought to his calling, to the support of his wife, to the love from his church, Castanaza’s ministry has not been a one-man show.

Manny Arteaga, pastor of the Kalēo church, welcomed Castanaza to ministry with an encouraging message. “Danny, those of us who know you recognize that God has given you a very important gift—you have the gift of discernment in a way that I’ve seen very little in the ministry,” Arteaga

shared. “You have insights that many of us often miss. As you enter this new season of ministry, use your voice and tell us what God is telling you. We will be a better team for it.”

While God changed his plans more than once, Castanaza is committed to follow where God leads, saying, “My intention is, ‘God, wherever and whatever You want.’”

In his response, Castanaza shared how deeply grateful he is for the family, friends, colleagues, and more who have walked alongside him throughout his journey. Castanaza reflected: “When you’re a pastor, your family is your pastor.” ●

PHOTO: ADONAI SDA YOUTUBE LIVESTREAM



Ordination of Danny Castanaza

PHOTO: LUZ BENITEZ



Ordination of Brian Campos

Brian Campos: When God Calls, One Listens

Growing up, Brian Campos didn’t think he would become a pastor. Looking back, he recognizes how God has purposefully placed people in his life to encourage him in his faith and his journey in ministry, leading to his ordination.

Campos was baptized as a teenager, but in high school he became discouraged and worried about his future. It was then that his mentor, Hernan Granados, suggested he study theology at Pacific Union College. Campos believed he needed to go; however, he soon started to doubt his call.

“In ministry, the moment you

feel inadequate, that’s the moment when you are apt to ministry,” Velino A. Salazar, SCC president, shared, “because you are going to depend completely on God and not on your own abilities.” He shared how Moses and Isaiah both felt inadequate at first but learned how to rely on God.

Campos’ community of friends, family, and church members were present to support him at his ordination. Pastor Daniel Castanaza shared a story of Campos’ commitment to follow where God leads. When Campos was asked to join Spanish American church during his first assignment at La Voz

Sylmar church, Campos declined, saying, “I’m not done here yet.” His friends and family were confused by his decision. Castanaza told Campos he will make decisions that may seem odd to everyone else, but “you know that deep down God has called you to follow Him and His will in your life above what anyone else thinks. The only thing I ask of you is to stay true to that.”

In his response, Campos was at a loss for words to express his gratitude to God and those who have uplifted him throughout his journey. “I’ve learned that when God calls,” said Campos, “one listens.” ●

in transition

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EDITOR

Lauren Lacson

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<https://scc.adventist.org/southern-connect-august-2021-in-transition>



NEW HIRES

Voted June 10 & 24, July 6, 2021

Norman Knight | Pastor, Valley Crossroads church, as of June 19, 2021.
Jason Colby | Teacher, Newbury Park Adventist Academy, as of July 1, 2021.
Joel Albritton | Teacher, Newbury Park Adventist Academy, as of July 1, 2021.
Vaneth Cruz | Girls' Dean/Teacher, Newbury Park Adventist Academy, as of July 1, 2021.

LEAVING SCC

Voted May 13, June 10 & 24, 2021

Yenny Jimenez | From Pastor, La Voz Silymar Spanish church, as of June 30, 2021.
John Trusty | From Pastor, Valley Crossroads church, as of June 30, 2021.
Ben Blach | From Teacher, Linda Vista Adventist Elementary, as of June 30, 2021.
Andrew Carpenter | From Vice Principal, San Gabriel Academy, as of June 30, 2021.
Julia Carrera | From Girls' Dean, Newbury Park Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2021.
Kimberly Coast | From Teacher, Newbury Park Adventist School, as of June 30, 2021.
Stacy Doyle | From Teacher, Conejo Adventist Elementary, as of June 30, 2021.
Sunny Lopez-Moya | From Teacher, Newbury Park Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2021.
Angelina Martinez | From Teacher, West Covina Hills School, as of June 30, 2021.
Raquel Menzior | From Teacher, South Bay Christian School, as of June 30, 2021.
Paul Newman | From Principal, San Gabriel Academy, as of June 30, 2021.
Stephen Stokes | From Teaching Principal, Sims Valley Adventist School, as of June 30, 2021.
Mervin Martin | From Teacher, San Gabriel Academy, as of June 30, 2021.
Veronica Porras | From Teacher, San Fernando Valley Academy, as of June 30, 2021.

RETIREMENTS

Voted June 24, 2021

Susan Whitaker | From Teacher, Glendale Adventist Elementary, as of July 1, 2021.
Linda Williams | From Teacher, Glendale Adventist Elementary, as of July 1, 2021.

TRANSFERS WITHIN SCC

Voted June 10 & 24, July 6, 2021

Harmer Hart | Pastor, from Hidden Treasures company to Bethel church, as of June 26, 2021.
Blanca Barrios | From Registrar to Vice Principal, San Gabriel Academy, as of July 1, 2021.
Alexa Fitzgerald | From Kindergarten Teacher, Linda Vista Elementary, to 1st Grade Teacher, Conejo Adventist Elementary, as of July 1, 2021.
Rosehaine Gorosope | From Elementary Teacher to Elementary Teacher/8th Vice Principal, San Gabriel Academy, as of July 1, 2021.
Bionnie Iverson | From Director of Advancement to Principal, San Gabriel Academy, as of July 1, 2021.
Hindi Penstock | From Substitute Teacher to Full-time Elementary Teacher, Linda Vista Adventist Elementary, as of July 1, 2021.
Luis DeWitt | From Teacher, San Fernando Valley Academy, to Kindergarten Teacher, Linda Vista Adventist Elementary, as of July 1, 2021.
Stanley Silholiang | From Associate Pastor to Pastor, Indonesian-American church, as of July 6, 2021.
Brian Campos | From Associate Pastor, Central Spanish church, to Pastor, Lancaster Spanish church, as of July 4, 2021.

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Seventh-day Adventists

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REGION NEWS

West Region

Dear Friends of the West Region,

The lede of this story is Pastor Sarah Grover. Sarah grew up in the West Region (WR) of the Southern California Conference (SCC), in the Lancaster church. Starting as a locally hired children's minister, she has navigated job changes, a Master of Arts in Religious Education from Golden Gate Seminary, and a Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry from Andrews University, all on her way to ordination! She stands as the second woman ordained in this region. The SCC administrative team, along with her congregation in Lancaster, celebrated Pastor Sarah's ordination in May (covered on the previous page).

As COVID-19 restrictions ease,

West Region churches are opening, seeking the new normal. Heroic efforts on behalf of our pastors continue, moving toward hybrid worship services meant to honor both those comfortable returning to some manner of gathering and those yet unvaccinated or uncomfortable returning, particularly to indoor environments. SCC has been proactive in protecting our churches and, as restrictions ease, empowering and supporting the local church for next steps. In the meantime, we're grateful for the partnership our members have entered with our churches and their pastors! God has been with us, and we've weathered this pandemic well so far.

Things are shifting in terms of pastoral staffing as well. Pastor Jim Ayars retired from Ventura church after more than 15 years of ministry there. He and his wife, Jean, have moved to

Florida, where I'm confident Dr. Ayars will continue to make a difference. Pastors never truly retire! We're also delighted to have welcomed former pastor of the Norwalk church, Pastor John Strehle, to Camarillo as lead pastor in July. Pastor John just finished a 3-month sabbatical, as well as his Doctor of Ministry degree from Andrews. As Region-to-Region movement is unusual, we're pleased to welcome a pastor from the L.A. Metro Region into the WR fold!

As if this isn't enough good news, Pastor Sarah Grover will be joining Pastor John on staff at Camarillo church starting August 2021. We're excited to see what kind of synergies this team will have in their new assignment! And we're delighted for Camarillo church that, after a long period of waiting, they are fully staffed.

By Gregory L. Hoenes, region director