

southernconnect



Velino A. Salazar,
President

Setting *Priorities* for 2021

There is no doubt that in 2020, dealing with, controlling, and even avoiding COVID-19 was the priority. And after 12 months, we are still living with this “long-stayed visitor.”

After

witnessing this pandemic's effects for a whole year, we have learned to classify some of our priorities better and faster.

What are you most looking forward to in 2021? Health, employment, safety, spirituality, family? A month ago, we set goals and listed priorities to live for within this year. Have you been able to narrow your personal priorities to two?

I don't know about you, but I sometimes battle listing my priorities. Please don't take me wrong; I know what I lack and what I need. I simply debate between the good and the best, the important and the urgent, the self-building and the building and benefiting others. But, listing them in a wise order takes me time. Once I have identified and listed them, it is not much of a problem to follow them to get things done.

Reflecting on my prioritizing struggle, I found two filters in this process: responsibilities and relationships. In other words, all that I have to do is weighted by my responsibilities, which impact my relationships.

We all are accountable to God for our body, mind, and heart, and we are responsible for our families, our church, and our community in whatever we do.

So, in this context, for us, Christians, when dealing with priorities, there is a beacon, a flashing reminder from Jesus when He said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”

(Matthew 6:33, NKJV). Another statement declaring the desire and availability of God is found in Proverbs 8:17: “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me” (NRSV).

From these two verses, we can find help to list our priorities. The fact that the Lord loves me should be an igniter to put Him at the top of my prioritized list. The evidence of seeing His willingness to provide for me should reduce my anxiety for my lacking and slow me down in my race for getting things, even if those things are good or essential.

See! All He expects from me is to know Him and have a close relationship with Him. We all know that building strong relationships takes quality time—focused, concentrated time with no distractions.

Therefore, narrowing my priorities to two, here they are: spend more quality time with God and with my family. To foster and strengthen such relationships, I need to seek God more in prayer and communicate more with my family.

The well-known General Douglas MacArthur wrote: “By profession, I am a soldier and take pride in that fact, but I

AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, MAY

WE ALL BE KNOWN, NOT FOR

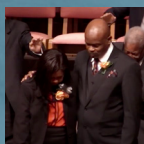
OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, BUT

FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

INSIDE



Michael Johnson Is Ordained

Michael Johnson ordained after more than three decades of ministry.

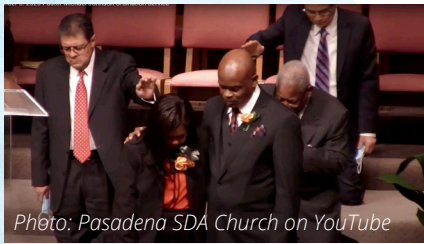


GAA Celebrates Thanksgiving

GAA faculty and students share gratitude and safe community.

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 3 In Transition
- 4 Region News



Michael Johnson Ordination Spotlights Far-Reaching Ministry

BY LAUREN LACSON

This winter, Michael Johnson, pastor of the Pasadena church, was ordained to the gospel ministry. The virtual celebration began with a video slideshow outlining Johnson's extensive experience and accomplishments in his ministry.

"Today is a very different occasion for me to speak to a person who has been chosen to be a pastor," began Velino A. Salazar, SCC president, "because this journey goes beyond 33 years ago." Over the past three-plus

decades, Johnson has been very active in ministry, from his role as speaker for the End Times Like These ministry to his work with various churches in pastoral positions.

Speakers for the event referenced the impact of Johnson's ministry for the kingdom. "I admire his passion for souls," said Samuel Lee, SCC Asian-Pacific Region Director, of Johnson. "More than a thousand baptisms and hundreds of Bible workers and lay evangelists testify to his call from God."

In the ordination prayer, Allen Sovory, pastor/evangelist, Southeastern

California Conference, prayed over Johnson, "You called him from darkness into the marvelous light of the gospel. You equipped him with many gifts and that's very obvious even now."

Johnson has been serving as the pastor of the Pasadena church since July 2019. First elder Greg Sewell reflected, "God needed Pastor Johnson to be here, and He brought him here for such a time as this."

In his response, Johnson said, "God bless you all; we've done it because of the blood of Jesus shedding for us, giving us the opportunity." ●

WATCH HERE: <https://scc.adventist.org/stories/michael-johnson-ordination>

GAA Celebrates Thanksgiving

BY AURA LUNA-ESCUADERO

With the inspiration of San Gabriel Academy's drive-through held in August, Glendale Adventist Academy (GAA) did a Thanksgiving drive-through on November 20.

It was held on the last day of school before Thanksgiving break started. God blessed our faculty's efforts and planning with the attendance of more than half of our student body in the academy. We had more than 70 people RSVP for the event. There were stations all over the campus where students could pick up free homemade food items prepared by our faculty, such as a boba drink, hot chocolate, a veggie corn dog, and a homemade chocolate chip cookie with a Scripture promise on it. We

also had a paper airplane competition and a water balloon target station.

At the water balloon target station, our business manager, Jared Hinkle, and history teacher, Stephen Nelson, were standing targets. What joy and laughter it brought our students to be able to splash them with a water balloon for a prize. Eagle Rock church was also in attendance, supporting the event. Both Senior Pastor Cherise Gardner and Youth Pastor Laxmi

Saquilayan were present, supporting GAA and passing out engraved Eagle Rock church pens for each student in the car with a goody bag of delicious treats.

The students were also encouraged to bring canned goods to the drive-through ahead of time to be collected and delivered to the White Memorial church for their food ministry.

It was a joyous and exciting event for the students, families, and teachers alike. God truly blessed our efforts and provided an atmosphere of thanksgiving and praise throughout this time of uncertainty. ●



WATCH HERE: <https://scc.adventist.org/stories/gaa-thanksgiving>

stay in touch

Subscribe to receive the latest news & updates from the Southern California Conference right to your inbox!



1

Text
SCC SUBSCRIBE
to 33777

2

Subscribe online at
scc.adventist.org/subscribe

3

Email us at
communication@sccsda.org

4

Call us at
818.546.8462

in transition

CHANGES WITHIN SCC

Voted December 16, 2020

Luz Benitez | From Executive Assistant, Executive Secretary, to Administrative Assistant, Greater Los Angeles & Hispanic Regions, as of December 20, 2020.

Kevin Morris | From Associate Pastor, White Memorial church, to Associate Pastor, White Memorial church & Interim Youth Ministries Director, SCC, as of January 4, 2021.

LEAVING SCC EMPLOYMENT

Voted November 12 & December 16, 2020

Jason Kim | From Pastor, L.A. Central Korean church, as of September 30, 2020.

Eugene Hamilton | From Pastor, Breath of Life church, as of December 5, 2020.

Lois McAdams | From Receptionist, SCC Office, as of November 5, 2020.

Fernando Sapigao | From Print Shop, SCC Office, as of December 2, 2020.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

am prouder, infinitely prouder, to be a father. A soldier destroys in order to build; a father only builds, never destroys. The one has the potentialities of death; the other embodies creation of life; and while the hordes of death are mighty, the battalions of life are mightier still. It is my hope that my son when I am gone, will remember me, not from the battle, but in the home repeating with him our simple, daily prayer, our Father Who art in Heaven."

As followers of Christ, may we all be known, not for our accomplishments, even those for God's church—but for our relationship with the Head of the Church.

It is my prayer that this closer relationship with God is among our serious priorities in our lives. God bless us all. ●

EDITOR
Lauren Lacson

Submit a story
scc.adventist.org/
submitastory

**Southern California
Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists**

President
Velino A. Salazar

Executive Secretary
John H. Cress

Executive Vice President
James G. Lee, Jr.

1535 E. Chevy Chase Dr.
Glendale, CA 91206

818.546.8400

info@sccsda.org

@SCCAdventists

scc.adventist.org

SHARE YOUR STORY

[HTTPS://SCC.ADVENTIST.ORG/SAYHELLO](https://scc.adventist.org/sayhello)

REGION NEWS

Greater L.A. Region

In July 2020, Altadena church received an inquiry that would shape our evangelism and renew our presence in the community. We were asked by Councilwoman Veronica Jones to consider our campus as a site for free COVID-19 testing in collaboration with the organization Young & Healthy under the direction of Mary Donnelly-Crocker. Elder Iheannyi Nathan was instrumental in bringing this to our church board.

In October, the testing schedule was set for Mondays and Tuesdays 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Eventually the rise of cases in our area caused the need for a third day to be added weekly and extended through November and early December.

While we had several hundred gift bags to give to those tested, we had no idea the impact that was being made and the impression felt in the community. After being mentioned on KABC news broadcast in both the morning and afternoon as the only free testing site in the San Gabriel Valley, our numbers for tests rose dramatically. All in all, 11,410 individuals were tested on our church campus. We voted to use funds to order and pass out 3,135 church-branded gift bags, and we were left amazed at God giving us the opportunity for ministry.



Even though we acted as hosts with the primary focus always on the testing, our kindness and compassion were appreciated by our community.

We have received multiple notes of thanks and donations to our ministries because of this endeavor. We have started a prayer initiative for the thousands who were tested, asking for God to reveal Himself in their lives.

In the midst of a year most would want to forget, God forged positive memories in the minds of thousands of people who visited our campus. Most importantly, during a global pandemic, when the church doors were closed, God showed that ministry was still open for business.

By Lawrence Dorsey II, Altadena church pastor