

# southernconnect



**John H. Cress,**  
*Executive Secretary &  
Ministerial Director*

## The Strength of *Gentleness*

**W**hile leaving church, a businessman, after hearing the pastor say, “the meek shall inherit the earth,” was overheard telling his wife, “If the meek are going to inherit the earth, they’d better become a lot more aggressive.” That’s how life seems to work,

right? The aggressive, look-out-for-yourself, put-yourself-first, win-through-intimidation people are noticed in our culture, not the meek.

When we talk about meekness, we are speaking about gentleness. Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Paul encouraged Timothy to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and **gentleness**” (1 Timothy 6:11, NIV). He wrote the Philippians: “Let your **gentleness** be evident to all” (Philippians 4:5, NIV).

Unfortunately, especially in the culture today, gentleness is confused with being weak. I’ve heard it said, “Meekness is weakness.” It sounds good because it rhymes, but nothing can be further from the truth; the underlying principle of gentleness is strength.

The Greek word that is translated as “gentleness” (*Praus*) was used in antiquity for a wild animal that had become domesticated. For example, when applied to horses, it meant that the powerful, wild, unrestrained animal had been captured and trained to work beneficially alongside people. They are strong and powerful—but under control.

Look at an elephant’s trunk. With more than 40,000 individual muscles, it’s strong enough to rip branches from trees but sensitive enough to pick up a single blade of grass.

When I take the hand of my 4-year-old grandson, I could easily crush his hand. If we had a “hand war,” I could easily win. But I take his hand “gently.” A strong hand, not the weak one, must learn to be gentle. St. Francis de Sales wrote, “Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength.”

Consider God. He is all-powerful, but He never misuses His power. He never overreacts. He is gentle with His disruptive children and does what is best for us. He even instructs us, “If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of **gentleness**” (Galatians 6:1, ESV). In other words, in the same spirit that God deals

with us. Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am **gentle** and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29, ESV). He says, “Learn from Me.”

How did the all-powerful Jesus, Son of God, live among us with so much control? He took time with His Father. He learned from His Father as He was filled with the Spirit. Then He chose to live out His Father’s will on earth as it is in heaven.

Gentleness is not self-produced. God doesn’t leave us to dig deep and try to create this virtue. We must think of ourselves as branches. We won’t bear this fruit of the Spirit unless we are connected to the true vine: Jesus Christ (John 15:1-6).

The sinful nature that dwells in man is a grabbing, greedy, climb-the-ladder-and-knock-the-other-person-off-the-rung-if-you-can kind of mindset. Only God’s grace can help us have this wonderful aspect of the Spirit—gentleness—in our lives.

However, it is our choice. It is a conscious decision, especially when a person who has power, position, or privilege chooses to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The question of living out gentleness is not how strong we are, but how we use our strength. ●

**“GENTLENESS IS NOT SELF-PRODUCED.”**

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*The certainty of his calling and his passion for sharing the gospel are clear*



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# “All I Want to Do With My Life”

BY LAUREN LACSON

**P**ono Lopez’s story upholds what he calls the “messianic-saving, border-breaking, and inexplicably eternal grace of Jesus.”

Lopez felt the call to the gospel ministry when he was 14 years old. Yet, while committed to working in full-time ministry, he wasn’t sure “if it was the role of the pastor that Christ saw fit for me,” he shared. He discovered that Christ calls people to make the gospel relevant by sharing their story. “I realized then that pastoral ministry was by far the most fitting platform to share the gospel—that’s all I want to do with my life,” Lopez said with a smile. “To share the gospel through presence.”

Lopez worked with youth ministry in his four years as Associate Pastor

at Eagle Rock church prior to a recent move. On January 5, 2019, Lopez was ordained to the gospel ministry; it was also his first day as the new lead pastor at the Long Beach church.

Lopez’s ordination service was filled with praise and prayer, reflecting his passions about the gospel and about mentorship.

Velino A. Salazar, SCC president, said in his homily, “It is our prayer that today can be just a moment of reaffirmation of that call that you received at the Ohana group some years ago.”

John H. Cress, SCC executive secretary/ministerial director, presented Lopez with his new ministerial credential. “We have seen that you are a trustworthy presenter of the gospel of



Photo by Jon de la Paz.

Jesus Christ,” he confirmed.

Gerard Kiemenev, SCC L.A. Metro Region director, restated this message: “God has called you, Pono. I’m convinced of that. You and Caiti will make a huge impact in the ministry for Him for one simple reason: You accepted that God is your leader. That’s it.”

“My dad told me a long time ago to be good and do good in whatever you choose to do,” Lopez concluded. “This is what I choose. As a pastor, I choose to be good and do good.” ●



Photos provided by Juan Osorio.

**O**n Dec. 9, 2018, Central Spanish church’s bold new evangelism plan centered on Christmas in the Neighborhood at the historic Alvarado Terrace Park. “For the past two years, we have been developing conventional evangelism,” senior pastor Juan Osorio said, “but after praying to God to help us to do the most effective evangelism in our neighborhood, God revealed what the plan would be.”

Last September, the project was launched and 40 families accepted the challenge of investing 50 dollars for God’s work. Each family was given

## Central Spanish Lives to Serve

BY CONNIE JEFFERY

an envelope with 50 dollars inside and instructed to pray about how to invest it. “When the ‘day of grace’ arrived,” Osorio said, “we had nearly \$11,800.” Forty days of prayer had bathed the project in the grace of God. Each morning, they prayed at 6 a.m. and closed the day with prayer. A Sabbath was set aside for fasting and prayer. With the motto of “Live to Serve” emblazoned on colorful T-shirts, 100 volunteers went door to door in the community inviting neighbors to the event.

“The plan was to distribute 1,500 toys by age; feed 800 people; have pizzas for the children; and provide a special program of Christmas carols by the church choir,” Osorio said. “Special guests from the community, the police department, the fire department, representatives of the city assembly, and

representatives from SCC were invited.” The plan was shared with local businesses in the community and the goals were reached.

More than 1,000 people attended Christmas in the Neighborhood. “Our new evangelism plan is to achieve a relationship with our neighborhood, serving, supporting, and sharing with them,” Osorio said. “To God be all the honor and glory.” Yes, Central Spanish truly lives to serve! ●





# in transition

## TRANSFERS OUT OF SCC

Voted November 15 and December 13, 2018

**Young Yeop Cho** | From Pastor, Hacienda Heights Korean church, as of October 5, 2018.

**Edgar Lloren** | From Pastor, Pasadena church, as of November 12, 2018.

**Rabel Ortiz** | From Departmental Assistant, SCC Education, as of December 11, 2018.

## NEW EMPLOYEES

Voted November 15, 2018

**Romeo Zuniga Cañales** | Pastor, International church of La Verne, as of October 1, 2018.

## REGION NEWS

### West Region

Many of our West Region (WR) churches are experiencing renewal and revival. The Place and Tehachapi have experienced significant baptisms. Camarillo church hosted revival/evangelistic services, Santa Clarita held a series with Shawn Boonstra, and West Region Evangelist, Pastor John Aiken, worked in Sylmar and other WR venues. Others, like Northridge, Culver City, Burbank, and Hollywood, are renewing mission, community, and purpose.

Last year, 119 local WR church elders received special training emphasizing minimizing conflict resulting from confusion about roles of lay leaders vs. pastors. Ongoing training for key church lay leaders is one of the region's strategic missional objectives moving forward. Others include parsonages for our pastors and directed funds to place more women into remunerated ministry in this region.

by Greg Hoenes, Region Director



Photo by Lauren Lacson.

### Hispanic Region

In November, the Hispanic Region School of Evangelism graduated a faithful class of lay preachers at the Lincoln Heights Spanish church. The students met once a month on Sundays, and the classes were taught by Hispanic region pastors or invited guests. The new graduates will move forward with the Todo Miembro Involucrado (TMI) movement, working side by side with their local pastors, giving weeks of prayer, leading out in evangelism efforts, and winning souls for the Kingdom. Congratulations to the Class of 2018.

In October, small group leaders and those passionate about personal evangelism met to hear Elder Alejandro Bullon's call to heed the charge we have been given—teach and baptize. The approximately 400 in attendance were convicted of their mission. The VIDA GPS caravan made a stop in SCC. This is in preparation for the Net 2019 effort to be held in the spring.

by Luis Peña, Region Director



Photo provided by Gloria Huerta.

### Greater L.A. Region

The Compton Community church believes in the ministry of compassion as a way to follow Jesus' example of making disciples. The holiday season afforded us a golden opportunity to bless our community. Led by Sister Shirley Cook and the women's ministries department, more than \$2,000 worth of toys were distributed after service on Sabbath, Dec. 22 to members of the surrounding community who were welcomed as they worshiped and ate with the congregation. "The response to our initiative was tremendous!" Pastor Gamal Alexander observed. "We received donations from across the country as people were energized and inspired by our vision of serving people like Jesus did. I'm very proud of our church and the way we have allowed the Lord to use us. We look forward to making an impact in our community for Christ!"

by Royal Harrison, Region Director



Photo provided by Royal Harrison.

## SPOTLIGHT

# Young Adults Look Forward

In 2019, SCC has plans to invest in its young people to an even greater degree. From training and networking to worship and a boosted media footprint, it's clear that young adults are priority. Read on to find out what's in store!

First up are quarterly leadership summits, the first of which will be held on February 24. For the first time, these meetings will be held four times a year. "We'll be offering tools, presentations, training, and networking with other senior youth and young adult leaders and pastors," said Iki Taimi, SCC SYYA director. Mark your calendar for this valuable event!

On May 4, One House will host its annual worship event. Save the date...and stay tuned for location and further details!

Service opportunities will also be available throughout the year. Other gatherings

will offer dedicated time for youth and young adults to talk, mingle, and enjoy some social time. This year, SYYA also launches a vlog and podcast.

Lastly, SYYA is excited to announce the creation of 12 radius groups throughout the conference. This means that the conference territory will be divided purely by location into 12 clusters. Each radius group will be composed of 10-15 churches.

"The goal is for every single church in the conference to feel supported," Taimi said. "It'll be nice because young adult and youth leaders are open to being together and supporting one another. This will create nice connections for churches."

To stay in touch, like and follow **@OneHouseSoCal** on social media! Visit [www.onehousesocal.com](http://www.onehousesocal.com) for event dates and the latest info. ●



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Lauren Lacson

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