

southernconnect

The *Heart* of the Father



Gerard Kiemenev, D.Min., L.A. Metro Region Director

begin with a simple proposition: Our Heavenly Father loves and values “the one.” Which one? Anyone!

In Luke 15, we are confronted with a disturbing picture of God’s church in Jesus’ day, a church that was offended by Jesus “eating with” “tax collectors and sinners.” It makes one wonder, had the church in Jesus’ day lost its sense of mission and purpose? Ellen White states on the first page of *Acts of the Apostles*, “The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of people.” But by the way the church was complaining, one would wonder if it was really “tracking” with God. Had the church in Jesus’ day become a cultural gathering of exclusive bigots under the umbrella of a “religious” organization? It appears that this group of people called “the church” needed the “Rabbi” to reframe their theology.

So, Jesus used storytelling to teach His church about God’s inclusive love...the Shepherd so loved the sheep that He went after it, the woman so valued the coin that she searched for it, and the Father so loved the son that He lovingly received him.

Friends, God so loves the world, and not just one sector of it. Sometimes in our passion for being “end-time” zealots, is it possible we forget that “doing right” must always be preceded by “being right” with Him and one another? The commitment of “being” and “doing” in Him must always align. Jesus’ and Paul’s teachings reflect such a connectivity (refer to “being” right in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 and 1 Corinthians 13).

I can’t help but think that Jesus spending time with the tax

collectors and sinners is what prompted all of the accusations hurled at him. “How could a man of God ‘hang with’ sinners?” they may have asked. “You see what happens to teachers when they don’t attend the accredited rabbinical schools? You see what happens when teachers don’t hang with ‘established’ church people? They start hanging with sinners, and before you know, they too become comfortable with sin, and the integrity of the church is compromised!”

But oh, were they wrong. Even though Jesus was comfortable with sinners, He was never “comfortable” with sin. For Jesus called out sins, especially with the church leaders of His day—the sins of pride of pedigree and social status, giving offerings to God from revenue taken from the poor, personal enrichment that stemmed from judicial injustices, and more. Jesus had no problem dealing with weightier sins. Unfortunately, many of His religious leaders had sanitized the sins which God most abhorred (Micah 6:8).

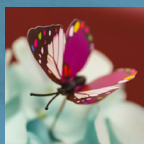
But, friends, there’s no need to dwell on the negative. Since we are all in need of a Savior, Jesus “hanging” around sinners gives hope to all, both religious and non-religious. God’s incarnational commitment reveals that we all have hope in Him. His comfort level with us “while we are yet sinners” invites us all to audaciously believe there is hope in Christ!

Let us ask: Have we experienced the heartbeat of Jesus on a daily basis so that we will share His love? Or has our sanitized Christianity become an exclusionary demonstration? What intentional, prayerful steps will we take to meet, mingle, and minister with others? After all, love is not an event but an adventure-filled journey of walking in lockstep with God.

Friends, God so loved the world, so let us begin by loving “the one,” anyone who stands before us! ●

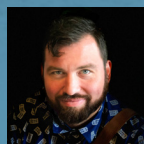
HAVE WE EXPERIENCED THE HEARTBEAT OF JESUS ON A DAILY BASIS?

INSIDE



Hispanic Women's Ministries Retreat

Event celebrates 30 years of Hispanic Women's Ministries in SCC



Adam Hicks Ordained

Ordination service highlights the Lord's calling in Hicks' life

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Women Find Jesus at Retreat

BY LAUREN ARMSTRONG

This June, 440 women gathered at Murrieta Hot Springs to fellowship and draw closer to Jesus at the 30th annual Hispanic Women's Ministry retreat, titled "Seeking Abundant Living." "Women are drawn to the annual spiritual retreat for spiritual refreshment, growth, and bonding," said Gloria Huerta, Hispanic Women's Ministries president. "It provides a safe haven for non-Adventist women to enjoy Christian camaraderie in a beautiful setting, to learn about Jesus, and ultimately have the desire to walk with Him day by day."

With breakout sessions, morning walks, united worship, and more, this retreat provided spiritual refreshment and community. The retreat also

featured a war room, a new addition this year. Modeled after the sanctuary, the room offered an opportunity to personally experience the meaning of each emblem. "Tears were shed and lives were changed," Huerta said. "Many visitors had a hands-on experience of the sanctuary, a key fundamental belief of our faith."

Women's Ministry committee member Miriam Hernandez brought five visitors to the retreat; each left with "overwhelming gratitude," she said. One particular attendee, Emerita, prayed at the retreat that the Lord would come into her heart. Hernandez remembered, "Emerita came with a hunger and thirst to find Jesus. She found Him."



Women at the 30th annual Hispanic Women's Ministries retreat. Photos by Kary Camacho.

Carmen Rodas, Central Spanish church, attended all 30 retreats. While some things have changed through the years, women continue to experience the profound truth that "we are not alone." ●



Colleagues in ministry lay hands on Elder Adam Hicks during the ordination prayer. Photo provided by Adam Hicks.

On June 2, 2018, Elder Adam Hicks, Journey church, was ordained to the gospel ministry, surrounded by friends, family, and colleagues.

He chose to have the following verse read during the service: "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it

Adam Hicks Ordained

BY LAUREN ARMSTRONG

in, and I cannot." Jeremiah 20:9 (English Standard Version). "Many times in my life, I tried to walk away from God and His calling, but no matter how far I ran or how hard I tried to not preach, God wouldn't let me get away," Hicks said.

While John Cress, SCC Ministerial Director, was unable to attend, a message from him was read. He addressed both the joy and the challenges that come with ministerial work, adding, "Such is your calling and, in a sense, the calling of all of us. 'You will be hard pressed, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.' Why? Because, as Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 'Life is at work in you.' Whose life? Christ's — and that is all you need, my friend!"

Colleagues shared in songs of blessing and participated in the ordination prayer. "Adam throws himself into the friendships he is called to minister through," shared Pastor Branden Stoltz, Hollywood and Burbank churches. "Adam isn't afraid of the gritty parts of life or complicated questions that come from people from all walks of life. I've been blessed to be able to have parallel ministries to his since college years!"

"I am humbled beyond words that God has called me to ministry, in partnership with the priesthood of all believers," Elder Hicks said. "This ordination, this calling is no more mine than my narrative is. It belongs to all of us who are spreading the gospel to all the world." ●

in transition

NEW EMPLOYEES

Voted May 10 & June 14, 2018

Nicholas Perez | Junior Accountant, Southern California Conference, as of April 23, 2018.

Trevor Stewart | Pastor, Smyrna church, as of July 1, 2018.

LEAVING SCC EMPLOYMENT

Voted May 10, May 24 & June 14, 2018

Shane Akerman | From Associate Pastor, Vallejo Drive church, as of May 31, 2018.

Lauren Cline | From Associate Pastor, Thousand Oaks church, as of June 23, 2018.

Deidre Hodnett | From Teacher, Antelope Valley Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2018.

Ivanelle Perez | From Teaching Principal, East Valley Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2018.

Steve Liang | From Principal, Newbury Park Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2018.

Don Krpalek | From Teacher, Los Angeles Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2018.

Stephanie Woodson | From Teacher, Los Angeles Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2018.

TRANSFERS IN SCC

Voted June 14, 2018

Sheldon Parris | From Principal, San Fernando Valley Academy, to Principal, Newbury Park Adventist Academy, as of July 1, 2018.

RETIREMENTS

Voted May 10 & June 14, 2018

Terry Benson | From Pastor, North Hills church, as of April 30, 2018.

Linda Meager | From Teacher, Conejo Adventist Elementary School, as of June 30, 2018.

Peggy Hampton | From Teacher, Glendale Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2018.

Sharon Lee | From Teacher, Glendale Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2018.

COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

September 16, 2018 • 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. • Temple City Church



Lauren Armstrong
SCC Communication
Director



Connie Jeffery
SCC Associate
Communication
Director



Ray Tetz
Pacific Union
Communication
Director



Dan Quach
Software Developer



Jesús Noland
Founder, Litpen



Emmanuel Olguin
Youth Pastor, Kaléo

Gain simple tools and learn tips to effectively reach your audience!
Practical teaching and exercises, a case study on one local church's communication strategy, plus free giveaways to help you in your ministry.

TOPICS

Building your team • Church websites • Social media • Live streaming • Mobile apps • Writing

Fee: \$15, payable at scc.adventist.org/commworkshop or by check to SCC, Communication workshop on memo line. Includes lunch & materials. Register by Aug. 31. Contact communication@sccsda.org, 818.546.8461.

Sponsored by the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' Communication Department



Much can happen in 30 years. For the Southern California Conference Women's Ministries, 2018 marks the anniversary of the ministry's founding in 1989.

Pastor James W. Zackrison, the founding director, could never have imagined the impact this ministry would have throughout the churches in SCC's territory. In the words of Moses: *"And in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place" Deuteronomy 1:31 (New King James Version).*

Since 2016, the ministry has hosted a heart health convocation, free to all attendees. This event has attracted nearly 900 women each year. The ministry has also broadened its community outreach by

providing emergency kits to homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, and women prisoners of the L.A. County jail. "The charge is: Connect with your community," said Gloria Huerta, Hispanic Women's Ministries president. "Find a need and fill it. Quoting Albert Schweizer: 'The purpose of human life is to serve and show compassion and the will to help others.' That is what Jesus did. That is what we are called to do. That is our mission."



Huerta said the hope is to continue involving more young women and teens. "Women's Ministries has a place for them," Huerta said. "We need them."

"We have mothers come to us in tears of gratitude, saying, 'Thank you for what you are doing for our daughters,'" Huerta commented. "We say, 'Thank you Lord for what You are doing for Your daughters!'" ●

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REGION NEWS

Asian-Pacific Region

The L.A. Tongan church has taken a new approach to evangelism. They are in the middle of an evangelistic series with Pastor Sifa Uaine speaking in English in the sanctuary and senior pastor Sonatane Vunileva speaking in Tongan in the fellowship hall. "We are so excited about what God is doing through this series," Vunileva said. We will have a special report in an upcoming issue on the souls won for God's kingdom!

Five language groups in Asian-Pacific are having camp meetings this summer: Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Japanese language groups. Please pray that God's blessings will continue to be poured out on all who attend.

by Samuel Lee, Region Director

L.A. Metro Region

The L.A. Metro Region continues to rely on God's Holy Spirit to inspire both an innovative approach to ministry as well as foster networking between pastors and churches.

Such innovative and networking relationships include "Churches Without Walls" in the Glendale area, where churches approach ministry beyond their specific local congregation in an effort to better reach the greater community of Glendale. Clinic-in-a-Box in the South Bay area featured offering free medical and social services to local community residents.

It is the resolve of the L.A. Metro Region pastors to be open to God's Spirit in direction as well as creativity. We solicit your prayers as we move forward.

by Gerard Kiemney, Region Director

West Region

The West Region seeks to be relevant in the communities surrounding our churches. Simi Valley church supplies the land and added nutrients to host a large community garden. Hollywood is "a community of God's friends, befriending the city," offering free showers and other vital homeless needs. Mojave and Ridgecrest have thriving food ministries; Ridgecrest recently hosted "Just a closer 'Wok' with Thee," as Pastor Will cooked up Asian fare to share. Lancaster and Palmdale are active in community service, preparing and distributing food baskets, especially during holidays.

The West Region is on fire to show the hospitality, warmth, and acceptance of Jesus in a respectful manner to all men and women, who are created children of and by our King.

by Gregory L. Hoenes, Region Director