

southernconnect



John H. Cress,
Executive Secretary

DNA of the Kingdom

One of the most amazing passages in the Bible is found in John 13:3-5. "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God" (John 13:3, NIV).

In other words, Jesus, being fully aware that He was God, knowing that He was all

powerful, that He had existed from all eternity as part of the Trinity, and that He would soon return to His exalted stature, did something astonishing.

Knowing all that ego-inflating stuff, what does He do? "He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him" (John 13:4-5, NIV). What did Jesus do? He wrapped a towel around His waist and stooped down to wash His disciples dirty, grimy, and smelly feet and pat them dry with the towel.

The theologian John Stott says, "Grace is a God who stoops." He stooped as He was born a baby in a manger, grew up in a nondescript town, walked the dusty roads with no place to lay His head, washed the disciples' feet, and died on a lonely cross. Jesus demonstrated that the all-powerful God is a God who stoops down, a God who at the core is a servant.

We know from Luke 22:24 that the disciples of Jesus were wrestling with the tension between power and servanthood

when they entered the upper room. They were arguing about who is the greatest and fighting over who would sit by Jesus.

In the upper room, as Jesus in the upper room was thinking about stepping *down* to the cross, the disciples were thinking about stepping *up* to reach the top. As Jesus was aware of how He descended, how He had divested Himself of heaven's robes and clothed Himself in humanity, the disciples were bickering and arguing about ascending to position and power. While Jesus was going to the cross, the disciples were pursuing the throne. While Jesus was considering service, the disciples were all about status.

So, Jesus demonstrates His farewell message in the upper room to teach His disciples the DNA of the Christian life. As the disciples argue, the basin lies untouched; the towel lies unused. So Jesus picks up the towel and reveals that the very essence of God is to serve.

There are two powerful symbols of the Christian life, the cross and the towel. The cross is about surrender and sacrifice, total and complete surrender to God and sacrificial love. The towel is about service.

The cross is good news and the towel is good deeds. Both these symbols unpack for us the very nature of God.

This is God's DNA. Every Christian who carries the DNA of God lives these two realities: sacrifice and service. These two parameters gauge the dimensions of our mission. Jesus said, "I didn't come to be served but to serve others and to give my life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28, paraphrased). To put this another way, the cross is about proclamation. The cross proclaims God's love and grace. The towel is about our God-given identity as servants.

EVERY CHRISTIAN

WHO CARRIES THE

DNA OF GOD LIVES

THESE TWO REALITIES:

SACRIFICE & SERVICE.

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Drive-Through Baby Shower

Church plans a safe celebration for new-to-the-area friends of the church



COVID-19 Resources

Visit our website for current protocols, resources & helpful links

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Friends & Family Gather for Drive-Through Baby Shower

BY ARAYA MOSS

Los Angeles Portuguese church hasn't met together since churches in SCC first stopped in-person gatherings in mid-March. In May, that all changed, at least temporarily, when members gathered for a drive-through baby shower for Nayana Borghi and Ismael Sanches.

Borghi and Sanches are new to the area and are friends of the church. The women's ministry team planned a special, and safe, celebration to shower the couple with love as they prepared for the birth of their daughter, Antonella.

"We decided to organize a baby shower because Nayana was expecting her first child without her family and friends around," said Jorgina Da Silva, women's ministry director at the Los Angeles Portuguese church. "I got the feeling she was a little

stressed, so we wanted to help out."

The special event took two weeks to organize. Da Silva and the women's ministry team made calls to the entire congregation, created a list of items

Palmdale. About 15 people participated, and others sent gifts and well wishes to avoid crowding.

"We took great care so that this moment could happen without risk to any participant," said Alexander Salles, pastor of Los Angeles Portuguese church, who was in attendance, "and especially for the future mother and her baby."

Borghi was grateful for this expression of friendship, especially during these times. "I was very moved, very happy, and felt welcomed by this church," said Borghi. "When they arrived singing with all that affection, I felt special."



Photos: Alexander Salles



needed, and arranged for cards, balloons, and welcome signs. On the day of the baby shower, everyone met at Da Silva's house in Sunland and caravanned to

Their daughter was born a month later. "This is the reason why we exist as a community," said Salles. "To support each other." ●

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Too often, we have made our faith about statements of belief, about proclamation. But what our communities need most is not more talking heads but Christians who roll up their sleeves as servants. People who love so radically that they will lay down their lives to serve the needs of the underprivileged

and marginalized.

The apostle Paul advised, "You have been called to live in freedom...use your freedom to serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13, NLT). We are towel bearers. It is part of our DNA. We are most like God when we serve. ●

in transition

LEAVING SCC

Voted June 25, 2020

Orville Ortiz | From Conference Treasurer, as of June 19, 2020.

Darrilyn Peak | From Teacher, White Memorial Adventist School, as of June 30, 2020.

Allison Sleeman | From Teacher, South Bay Junior Academy, as of June 30, 2020.

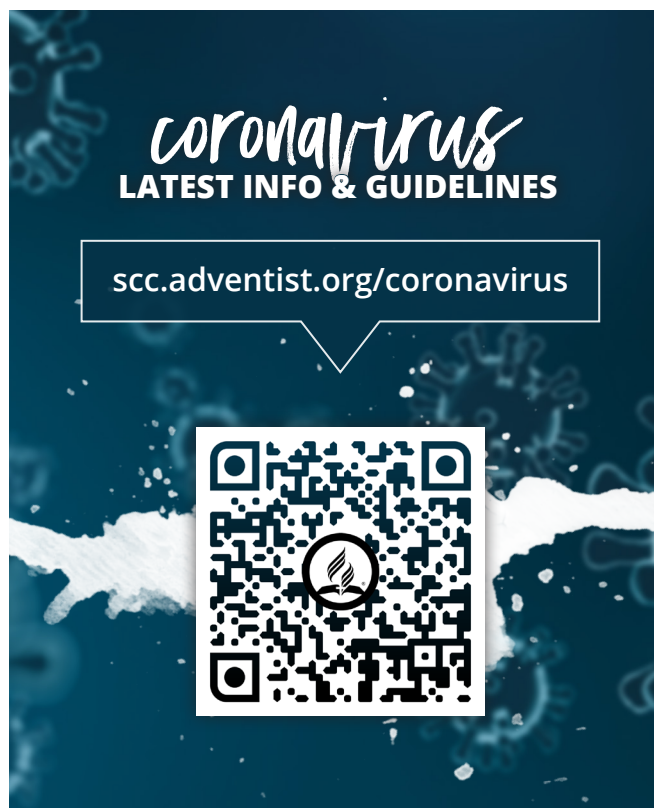
Susan Vlach | From Principal, South Bay Junior Academy, as of July 1, 2020.

NEW EMPLOYEES

Voted June 25, 2020

Deborah Dahl | Principal, South Bay Junior Academy, as of July 1, 2020.

Robert Hicks | Teacher, South Bay Junior Academy, as of July 1, 2020.



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L.A. Metro Region

Our food banks and thrift stores at both the Gardena Genesis Community (GGCC) and El Monte churches have continued serving their communities during this pandemic.

At GGCC, our food bank (Mama Rosa's Pantry) is open twice a month. The first week, we served 200 vehicles. People who lived in their cars came; we will not turn anyone away. Two weeks later, we served more than 300 cars. Our food bank also supplies food for the city and other local organizations. We have also partnered with Compton Community and Hawthorne churches.

GGCC community services director Jami Levy is the heart of this ministry. Paul Randall has done a remarkable job leading the physical distribution and others, like Rocio, Mama Rosa, Beverly, Phillip (RIP), Tony, Joel, Gloria, Eva, Robert, and Ellen, have made many contributions to this ministry.

Our thrift store has also been open—even men's suits and women's clothing for interviews have been given for free to the needy and less fortunate. Elder Adrian Watkins and Tenice Holman have been outstanding in serving those who come by.

At the El Monte church, Esther Gay and Elder Gerald Gay, with the help of Elder Sam and Mel Tua and Oscar, have continued to feed and clothe 25-35 families every Sabbath.

I am humbled and honored to be part of these communities that serve people who travel from as far as San Diego to Lancaster. The stories people have shared about their struggles during COVID-19 have inspired us to continue serving like Jesus. To God be the glory, for He is good!

By Filemu Filemu, pastor, Gardena Genesis Community and El Monte churches

Greater L.A. Region

I want to first give honor and glory to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! All praise belongs to Him. Our Greater Los Angeles Region (GLAR) pastors and members acknowledge that, if it weren't for the Lord on our side, things would be far worse—but because of His grace, GLAR continues to minister and care for all of its members and find ways to continue serving their local communities.

GLAR pastors have done an amazing job in adjusting to the closure of churches, and all of our churches were able to very quickly transition from in-person worship services to virtual worship services. I am proud of our pastors, church leaders, and members who supported and helped to make that transition almost seamless.

Several of our churches continue to serve their communities during this coronavirus pandemic. 54th Street church continues to serve the community with their shower ministry for the homeless. Philadelphian, Breath of Life, University, Valley Crossroads, Smyrna, Tamarind, Ephesus, and Antelope Valley churches all continue to serve their communities with their community services ministries. Tamarind church also held a virtual prophecy seminar conducted by Pastor Lanston Sylvester, during which several viewers gave their lives to Christ and are awaiting baptism. God has shown us that His Word is so powerful that it can change lives, even in the midst of a pandemic.

By Royal L. Harrison, region director

Hispanic Region

THE GOSPEL IS NOT IN QUARANTINE Everybody in quarantine, many people losing their jobs, all churches closed, much uncertainty for the future—this is how we started our quarter.

Something never seen before in our time. However, God in His infinite mercy inspired the churches to step up to the challenge. During this pandemic, the Hispanic Region churches opened up their community services, and they have provided food to approximately 2,000 families per week. Some of that food has been delivered directly to homes, especially to the elderly. They have also financially helped members of the church who lost their jobs. At least six virtual evangelistic campaigns were held at different churches, with at least nine baptisms. A special thanks to the Hispanic pastors for their dedicated service to God, as they ministered virtually to their members and encouraged them to keep their hearts open to the Lord while they were quarantined physically.

By Jaime Heras, region director

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Lauren Lacson

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