

southern connect



Flourishing Faith

The Southern California Conference (SCC) vision statement declares: *“We envision spiritually thriving churches and schools with flourishing faith, caring for their communities and inspiring individuals to grow in and share Christ’s love.”*

When I think about the words “flourishing faith,” two things come to mind. “Faith” can be both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it describes something unseen—abstract, intangible, and

deeply spiritual. As a verb, it is active—lived out in choices, actions, and expressions of trust in God. Flourishing faith brings two realities together: unseen conviction producing visible fruit.

The word “flourishing” speaks of vitality, growth, and abundance: something alive, thriving, and fruitful. Scripture paints this picture clearly—we can visualize the concept of a faith that is active and dynamic but whose results can be measured, witnessed, and authenticated, and yet, it is a power that is unseen, intangible, abstract, and abstruse.

When I envision flourishing faith, I don’t have to look any further than the book of Jeremiah, where the prophet of old writes, “But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in Him. He is like a tree planted by the waters that sends out its roots toward the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes, and its leaves are always green. It does not worry in a year of drought, nor does it cease to produce fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7–8, BSB). What an

Flourishing faith
always points
beyond ourselves.

amazing analogy of flourishing faith: a faith that does not fear, never worries, always produces fruit, and whose leaves are always green.

This kind of faith is never self-centered; it is not merely for personal edification—it serves a greater purpose in God’s kingdom. Paul reminds us that “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works” (Ephesians 2:10, BSB). Flourishing faith always points beyond ourselves, glorifying God and blessing others.

At SCC, we are committed to our mission of exalting Christ by cultivating healthy churches and schools. That means ensuring our churches and schools are places where faith can truly flourish—alive in Christ, rooted in His Word, and bearing fruit for His kingdom. •



Royal L. Harrison, DHA
Executive Vice President



Southern California Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists

President John H. Cress | **Executive Secretary** Danny Chan | **Treasurer/CFO** Kathleen V. Díaz | **Executive Vice President** Royal L. Harrison

1535 E. Chevy Chase Dr., Glendale, CA 91206 | 818.546.8400 | scc.adventist.org | subscribe at scc.adventist.org/subscribe

southern connect **Editor** Lauren Lacson | **Submit a story** Email us at: communication@sccsda.org



ABOVE FAR LEFT: Student literature evangelists share praise music at Norwalk church on Sabbath. **ABOVE SECOND FROM LEFT:** Students gather in a prayer huddle. **ABOVE SECOND FROM RIGHT:** A student literature evangelist is baptized at the iShare Convention, a weekend-long event where student literature evangelists from the Pacific Union Conference gather to share testimonies and worship. **ABOVE FAR RIGHT:** John H. Cress, SCC president, encourages the youth rush team with a devotional message.

Doors and Hearts Are Opened at Youth Rush

BY ARAYA MOSS

“We’re living in a crazy time right now,” Angie, first-time canvasser, said, “but the fact that we’re out there and books are going out, it just shows that people, despite the fear, have a longing for something greater and deeper.”

Andy Villanueva, Southern California Conference (SCC) literature ministries director, knows that every summer has its unique opportunities and challenges; however, this summer was unlike any other since the pandemic. As students went door to door, they faced the challenge of communities fearful of opening their doors due to ongoing ICE raids in Los Angeles County.

“Yet, even in that, God opened new opportunities,” Villanueva said. “Many students offered prayer, and as people in the community accepted, they felt peace come upon them.”

Janice saw the power of prayer from a distance when she became a prayer warrior who remained in the van due to her hurt ankle. She saw one of her friends talking to a woman at her home and offered a quick prayer asking the Holy Spirit to touch this woman’s heart. After she finished praying, her friend called in to report on the books sold. Throughout the day, as soon as Janice finished praying, the other team members called in books. “There were situations where I thought that God didn’t listen to my prayers,”

Janice shared. “I came to a realization that I don’t have to understand God’s timing; He’s going to work in the timing that’s right for me. It was a blessing to see God working on that day.”

“Beyond homes, students connected with even more people in parking lots, where many showed interest in the books,” Villanueva said. “These one-on-one conversations reminded us that literature evangelism is most powerful when it is personal—meeting people where they are, listening to their needs, and offering words of hope.”

Nina was having a slow morning of canvassing and decided to refocus on prayer. She prayed for God to send her someone to bless with books and someone to encourage her. In a Costco parking lot, she saw a man loading items into his truck. She started a conversation with him, in which he shared three books he was interested in. He gave Nina extra money for the books. When she told her leader, they both tried to give the man more books to make up for the cost. The man said he didn’t want

to take more books, thereby preventing others from receiving them, but the leader reassured him they had plenty, to which the man responded by buying seven books in total. “God hears and answers prayers,” Nina said, “because not only was I able to bless that man, I was able to be blessed and encouraged by our conversation.”



CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Los Olivos Spanish Church Celebrates 10 Years of Ministry in Van Nuys

BY ARAYA MOSS

This summer, Los Olivos Spanish church celebrated 10 years of worshipping in its building in Van Nuys. The theme, “Thus far the Lord has helped us” (Hasta aquí nos ayudó Jehová) was taken from 1 Samuel 7:12. Former pastors Javier Huerta, Carlos Varona, and Rolando (Jae) Rivera and Southern California Conference Hispanic Region Director Juan Osorio sent video messages

of congratulations. Former Pastor Javier Caceres, who helped purchase the facility, was also in attendance. Pastor Jose Ramos, who was installed as pastor of the Los Olivos Spanish and Shalom Spanish district earlier this year, gave a message encouraging attendees. Special music was provided by the singing group Orion; they also gave the concert after lunch.” ●



PHOTOS: JOSE WALTERO AND WILSON ZAMBA

LEFT: The praise team leads the worship service. **SECOND FROM LEFT:** Attendees fellowship during potluck. **SECOND FROM RIGHT:** Members pose with a sign to commemorate the special day. **RIGHT:** Members of musical group Orion share their talents through praise.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

“The impact of Youth Rush is two-fold,” Villanueva added. “It strengthens the character, spiritual growth, and leadership of young people while extending the reach of the gospel to communities that may never step foot inside a church.” ●

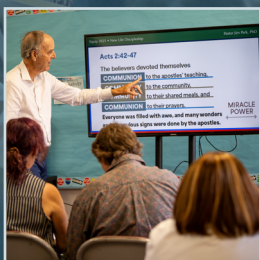
ANSWERED PRAYER

“That day, our whole team was energized—we had seen multiple answers to prayer and everyone was on fire. But Angie was having a hard time. She had faced rejection after rejection, and as the day was winding down, she began to wonder why she was even out there. Quietly, she prayed that God would show her some encouragement, some reminder of her purpose. With only five minutes left in the day, I decided to work alongside her for one last house. As we approached, I prayed, ‘God, You have to do something right now.’ At the door, we met a kind woman—a Christian, a mom, passionate about healthy living. We shared with her, and she was so open that she decided to support Angie and received all the books. Before we left, she affirmed Angie, telling her how important this work is and how much of a difference it makes. That simple interaction was exactly what Angie needed. God had answered her prayer in the final minutes of the day, reminding her that every effort matters and that He places us exactly where we need to be.” –Jonathan, Youth Rush leader





Stay tuned for the full story on our September 6 conference-wide training event in the next issue.



Southern California Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists

1901 125th 2026
anniversary

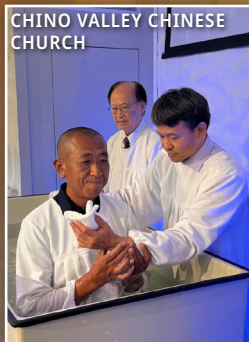
COMING FALL 2026

Evangelism Spotlight

PENTECOS
2025



CHINO VALLEY CHINESE CHURCH



CHINO VALLEY CHINESE CHURCH



SAN FERNANDO VALLEY SPANISH CHURCH



SAN FERNANDO VALLEY SPANISH CHURCH



SAN FERNANDO VALLEY FILIPINO CHURCH



SAN FERNANDO VALLEY FILIPINO CHURCH



HAVEN COMPANY



HAVEN COMPANY