

southern connect



A Family Filled With Faith

Where is your happy place? Maybe it's a favorite destination or a cozy spot where your heart feels full and at peace. Often, our happy places aren't just locations—they're people. There are those special individuals we can spend hours talking with, where conversations flow endlessly because there's always something more to share. Those moments with the ones we love are precious, and we wish they would never end.

After God created a beautiful world, He turned His

attention to human companionship. In Genesis 2:18 we read, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (NIV). God's vision for humanity included family. He knew the joy and love family would bring.

Who is your family—your parents, spouse, children, or close friends who feel like family? Think about the joy they bring. Even now, just imagining their faces likely brings a smile to your face.

Not long ago, our generation experienced what it means to share space continuously—24 hours a day, seven days a week. We had to adapt and find new ways of living and connecting. It wasn't always easy, but it brought unexpected blessings. We rediscovered routines we'd lost—like gathering for family worship, something often crowded out by busy schedules. Those shared moments of prayer and gratitude became sacred spaces where we could draw closer to God and to one another.

We also learned to talk more deeply

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with our children, to spend meaningful time with our parents, and to work side by side with our spouses. In many ways, that experience mirrors the story of Noah—a family confined together, learning to trust God and each other in a world of uncertainty.

Noah and his family remained inside the ark for approximately 370 days—more than a full year! In this story, we see a family that believed in a promise given to one man. Imagine sitting at dinner one evening when your father announces, "God has instructed me to build an ark." As Noah shared the details, his family believed and followed. Their faith wasn't in the plan itself but in the God who made the promise.

Inside the family is one of God's greatest gifts to humankind. In times of pain, joy,

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of Seventh-day Adventists

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Smyrna Church Celebrates 45 Years of Love and Faith, Awaiting Jesus' Return

BY ARAYA MOSS

Smyrna church's 45th anniversary celebration brought together friends, visitors, and members from near and far. With the theme "45 Years of Love and Faith, Awaiting Jesus's Return," the celebratory day focused on reflecting on God's faithfulness of the past and looking forward to how He will continue to lead in the future.

Although the church is currently experiencing a transition in pastoral leadership, that didn't hinder the celebrations. During the service, several members were honored for their dedicated service in ministry. The church was also recognized by several city and state government officials, such as Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass; Assemblymember Isaac Bryan, representing the 55th district; California Secretary of State Shirley Weber; and Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager-Dove.

Representing the Southern California Conference, Danny Chan, executive secretary, and Lawrence S. Dorsey II, Greater Los Angeles Region (GLAR) director, shared

remarks. Adolphus Garnett, who previously pastored Smyrna church and served as GLAR director from 2004 to 2011, was the guest speaker.

"The church is extremely unique in that its proximity to other churches is very close, and yet it has its own culture, worship experience, and presence in GLAR," Dorsey said. "My hope is that they can grow during this time of transition while at the same time keeping the unique characteristics that make them so special. They are a church that some would consider small, but the impact of their worship and their ministries goes beyond their walls."

"As we celebrate Smyrna's history we want to take time to reflect on the blessings that God has provided to Smyrna these past 45 years and the community impact that has shaped the church," said Carol Faciane, Smyrna church first elder. "May this anniversary celebrate the faith that unites, the hope that inspires, and the love that binds us as a family in Christ." ●



LEFT: Adolphus Garnett gives the message. **MIDDLE:** City and state government officials shared congratulatory messages with Smyrna church. **RIGHT:** The praise team leads worship.

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or trial, family surrounds us with love. When God is at the center of our homes, His love becomes visible through our relationships. We will still face struggles and disagreements, but our home becomes a place where grace grows. As T. Cecil Myers wrote, "Imagine if we had a home where Christ is known and

loved and served, where children come to know Him through their parents."¹

Noah didn't just walk with God—he led his family to walk with Him. In the midst of chaos, they stayed together, prayed together, and trusted together. Picture them in the ark: listening to the endless

rain, hearing the winds howl, and waiting for God's timing. The ark may have felt small, but God's presence made it a sanctuary. In a world falling apart, it became the center of faith, family, and obedience.

When the flood finally ended, Noah gathered his family once more. The

Enduring Faith in Jesus: For Such a Time as This

BY ARAYA MOSS

This fall, Tamarind Avenue church celebrated 60 years of ministry in Compton.

The congregation can trace its roots as early as 1957 from a seed planted by R. Hope Robertson, then pastor of the Philadelphian church in Long Beach. The former Baptist Church of Compton came the location of Tamarind Avenue church under Robertson's leadership when the Tamarind congregation was officially organized as a church in 1965.

Leading up to the jubilee celebration were weeknight services from guest speakers whose messages highlighted different attributes of Jesus. James Kyle II, pastor of Living Hope church and former Tamarind pastor (2006-2013), was the speaker on Sabbath morning, with a message entitled "What Has He Done for Me Lately?"

Various people and groups significant to Tamarind's history participated in the service in meaningful ways. Music was

provided by The Ambassador Chorale, a group conceived by Elder Herman Clements in 1986, who traveled from Arkansas to be at the celebration. The Compton Samoan church, for whom Tamarind was the mother church, gifted Tamarind with a check. City of Compton Mayor Emma Sharif and a representative for California Assemblymember Mike Gipson also shared letters of gratitude for the church's contributions to the city.

The church has celebrated the anniversary throughout the year with community events, including a weekend of service for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, food giveaways for Easter and Thanksgiving, and a food scarcity resource workshop in July.

"For 60 years, Tamarind has been a lighthouse in Compton; not perfect,

but faithful; not always full, but always alive," said Justino Jorge, Tamarind associate pastor. "We honor the past not to stay there but to declare that the same God who started this work is not finished yet. May your next 60 years be filled with revival, reconciliation, and with power." ●



TOP: The Ambassador Chorale. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Attendees gather at the altar for a season of prayer. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Pastor Jorge (right) receives letter of congratulations from Royal Harrison, Southern California Conference (SCC) executive vice president (right) on behalf of the SCC officers.

first thing he did was build an altar and worship God. Genesis 8:20 (NKJV) says, "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord... and offered burnt offerings on the altar." Worship was both his response and his family's renewal.

Today, I invite you to do the same—build

a daily "altar" in your home. Set aside time each day for family worship, to give thanks for one another and to praise the God who keeps your family safe. Hold your loved ones dearly. God has given us many families—our birth family, our church family, and our spiritual family. Like Noah, let's invite them

all into the ark of God's grace.

One day, when Christ returns, may we joyfully say, "Here am I, and the children [family] the Lord has given me" Isaiah 8:18 (NIV). ●

¹T. Cecil Myers, *Happiness Is Still Home Made* (Waco, TX: Word Book, 1969).

Santa Monica Church Hosts Anti-Aging Luncheon & Lecture

BY BETTY COONEY

Anticipation ran high for the “Anti-Aging Nutrition Luncheon and Lecture” held Sabbath, September 20, at the Santa Monica church. Participants learned about the “Blue Zones” and their cultures of longevity where people live to be over 100 years old in good health. Weeks in the planning, the event was organized by a small team of members led by Kammy Burnett with presenter John Westerdahl, Ph.D., RDN, lifestyle medicine and anti-aging nutrition expert.

Participants filled the church dining room, eager to sample a meal featuring recipes from The Blue Zones Kitchen cookbook. Members who helped with cooking found that ingredients in some of the exotic recipes were not available in the area, so they made substitutions suggested in the cookbook.

“I found the food amazing and really interesting,” said Donna Marcus, a member of the congregation.

As for guests who sampled the large variety of foods

offered for the meal, Joyce Manson summed up reactions neatly: “Some I liked; some I didn’t.”

The meal featured dishes from the five Blue Zones in the world: Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece, and nearby Loma Linda, Calif.

In the lecture following the luncheon, people took notes and asked questions, reflecting keen interest in learning how they could benefit from and practice Blue Zone guidelines for better health and longer life. They learned that common health problems such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, rheumatoid arthritis, and others were preventable and potentially reversible with a healthy whole-food, plant-based diet.

Westerdahl pointed out that Blue Zoners commonly were not smokers, family relations were important to them, they had regular social engagement, and they were usually engaged in spirituality and religion.

“As far as their diet,” Westerdahl noted, “they have moderate caloric intake, vitamins, and a plant-based diet, such as the one featured in today’s luncheon.”

Two subsequent events were planned in the months immediately following the introductory session. Visit santamonicaca.adventistchurch.org for details. ●



John Westerdahl finishes making an anti-aging smoothie that had participants eager for second samples.



Santa Monica interim pastor Andrew Pak (left) talks with guests during the luncheon.

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