

southernconnect



Lawrence Dorsey II,
Greater Los Angeles
Region Director

Do You Want to Be Made *Well*?

John 5 tells a very familiar story. After Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days, He went to the pool of Bethesda. Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. One of the men lying there had been sick for 38 years. We don't know how old he was or how long he lived before he got sick, but for 38 years, he was ill, and he found himself in a place where all the sick people hung out.

When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, He asked him: "Would you like to get well?"

"I can't, sir," the sick man said. "I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me."

Jesus told him, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!" Instantly, the man was healed. He rolled up his sleeping mat and he began walking.

God sees us. Jesus shows up. He saw a man in the midst of all the sick people, and He said, "Do you want to be made well?" Jesus sees you in the midst of people who are flourishing, sick, or stressed. When you are sitting there by yourself—at work, at home, in your family, wherever it is—He sees beyond all of that and sees exactly what you need. He's always asking the question: Do you want to be made well?

God hears us. God doesn't just see; God hears. That means He wants us to be authentic in how we communicate with Him when we pray.

Think about Gideon. He was hiding, trying to gather food. The angel tells him the Lord is with him, and Gideon says, "If that's the case, why am I doing this?" Sometimes, it doesn't make sense why we're in the situations we're in, and we have questions for God. Don't suppress your feelings—say, "God, why is this happening? This is unfair."

When God is there—willing and able to listen to us and wanting to do things for us—let's not be like the sick man and say, "I can't get well." Because if God asks us, "Do you want to be better? Do you want to do better? Do you want to see better?" we should say, "Yes, Lord."

God moves on our behalf.

God moves for us in amazing ways. Would you believe that the people were upset that this miracle was done on Sabbath? Their attention wasn't on the fact that this man had relief after 38 years; they focused on the fact that he was carrying his mat on the Sabbath.

God moves for us in a spectacular way at just the time we need it, and sometimes even before we know He's doing it. Proverbs 3:5-6 says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (NKJV). Proverbs is saying that God Himself goes before us to make sure there are no potholes, trees, or problems in our path.

So today, remember this verse. May we trust in His work on our behalf and respond to His call in each of our lives. Let us courageously work together here in Southern California toward our calling of exalting Christ as we cultivate healthy churches and schools. ●

JESUS IS ALWAYS ASKING THE QUESTION: DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL?

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and remains a living testimony of God's faithfulness



Ephesus Church Marks 45 Years of Ministry

The church on the corner with Christ at the center

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El Shaddai Celebrates 30 Years of Ministry

BY ARAYA MOSS

In February 1995, a small group from the Central Spanish church decided to step out in faith to form a new church community with a vision to bring the gospel to Central Los Angeles.

Carlos Ramirez, who pastored the Central Spanish church at the time, led the church plant. The new congregation, originally named South Central, was first located near MLK Blvd in South Los Angeles. During the congregation's formative years, the name and location changed several times. After about a year and a half at the first location, the lease expired, and the congregation worshiped in rented spaces for a few years. At some point, the name changed to Central Dos, paying homage to their mother church Central Spanish. Despite these challenges, members remained faithful to God and were not discouraged. In time, the congregation purchased its own church building in East Los Angeles

and settled on the name El Shaddai Spanish church.

At the anniversary celebration this spring, El Shaddai Spanish church honored those founding members who answered God's call to serve long ago. The celebratory week-end began Sabbath with a worship service that included special recognition of members and a sermon from Ramirez and concluded with potluck and an afternoon program. Sunday evening, members held a benefit concert at Vallejo Drive church to raise funds for a new piano and platform remodel.

"Looking back over these 30 years, we honor the vision of Pastor Carlos Ramirez, who planted the seed of this mission, and all the founding members who helped it grow," said Sandy Valiente, a founding member of El Shaddai Spanish. "El Shaddai remains a living testimony of God's faithfulness, and we joyfully move forward into the future with gratitude, unity, and a renewed sense of purpose." ●



TOP LEFT: Charter members are recognized during the anniversary service.

BOTTOM FAR LEFT: Carlos Ramirez, who planted the congregation, shares a message about how God has a plan and purpose for our lives.

BOTTOM LEFT: Obdulio Hernandez, first elder (left), and Arturo Cornejo, treasurer (right), hold up a letter from conference leadership and a \$2,500 check gifted to the church for ministry.

TOP RIGHT: Tía Sandy y los niños perform at the benefit concert.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Members of the church praise team, plus friends of the church, shared a selection of music for the benefit concert.



in transition

RETIREMENTS

Voted June 26, 2025

Terry Tryon | From Teacher, Adventist Education Simi Valley, as of June 30, 2025.

Oscar Withmory | From Principal, San Fernando Valley Academy, as of June 30, 2025.

LEAVING SCC

Voted May 22 & June 26, 2025

Eliu Lafo | From Pastor, Compton Samoan church, as of May 13, 2025.

Eileen Legaspi | From Executive Assistant to the Treasurer/CFO, SCC Office, as of May 9, 2025.

Daniel Ortega | From Youth Director, SCC Office, as of May 31, 2025.

Jonathan Fox | From Principal, Linda Vista Adventist School, as of June 30, 2025.

Patricia Garcia-Flores | From Teacher, Los Angeles Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2025.

Nancy Garcilazo | From Associate Superintendent, SCC Office of Education, as of June 30, 2025.

Ephesus Church Celebrates 45th Anniversary

BY LAUREN LACSON, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DAWN BERNARD AND NOLYNTHIA BRANGMAN

It was on January 7, 1980, against the backdrop of the social issues of the '60s and '70s that the Ephesus church found its start.

Beginning with 75 members as an overflow of the 54th St. church, the new Ephesus congregation met first at Inglewood Park, a Presbyterian church on Normandie Ave., then at 53rd St. School gymnasium, before settling at its current location on Western Ave. in December 1985.

"Throughout the past 45 years," shared Dawn Bernard and Nolyntia Brangman, members of Ephesus church and the 45th anniversary planning committee, "ministries included weekly Bible studies, back-to-school programs, parking lot health fairs, health education classes, participation in Pathway to Health, and numerous services to the community through our Ephesus Community Services in partnership with local churches and volunteers, including a food pantry, a clean safe place

for showers, and distribution of clothes and other essentials."

This year, as the congregation celebrated its 45th anniversary, it was a time of reminiscing and recommitment to the mission that has driven them for almost five decades. Southern California Conference (SCC) leadership affirmed the church, stating: "For nearly half a century, Ephesus has stood faithfully as *the church on the corner with Christ at the center*—a beacon of light, hope, and unwavering witness in the city of Los Angeles. Your ministry has been a living testimony of the love of Christ, reflected through vibrant worship, passionate outreach, and your deep commitment to building community and proclaiming the everlasting gospel."

"Forty-five years later, our mission remains the same," current pastor Donovan Childs said, "worshipping God in spirit and truth and being of service to the community." ●

PASTORS WHO HAVE SERVED EPHEsus CHURCH

Pastor Craig Arthur Dossman, Sr.
Pastor William Dawson
Pastor Leslie Pollard
Pastor Howard Small
Pastor Lorenzo L. Grant
Pastor John D. McCoy
Pastor Robert Dent
Pastor Kendall Guy
Pastor Louis V. Petite Frere
Pastor Edwin McBride
Pastor Donald McPhaul
Pastor Donovan Childs



PHOTO: ALISON WHITE



TOP: SCC Executive Secretary Danny Chan, Childs, and SCC GLAR Director Lawrence Dorsey II display a letter presented by SCC commemorating the occasion.

BOTTOM: Childs shares the morning's message.

Roselaine Gorospe | From Teacher, San Gabriel Academy Elementary, as of June 30, 2025.

Nancy Hernandez Ruiz | From Teacher, Linda Vista Adventist School, as of June 30, 2025.

Molly Moore | From Teacher, Conejo Adventist Elementary School, as of June 30, 2025.

Elizabeth Negrete | From Principal, East Valley Adventist School, as of June 30, 2025.

Beatrice Pang | From Teacher, South Bay Christian School, as of June 30, 2025.

Trisha Saban | From Teacher, Glendale Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2025.

Arnilynne Tupas-Setser | From Teacher, Los Angeles Adventist Academy, as of June 30, 2025.

TRANSITIONS

Voted May 8 & June 12, 2025

Kevin Camato | Pastor, from Upper Room Fellowship company to Temple City church, as of May 11, 2025.

Heidi Pennock | From Teacher to Teaching Principal, Linda Vista Adventist Elementary School, as of July 1, 2025.

Lorena Piedra | From Teacher to Teaching Principal, East Valley Adventist School, as of July 1, 2025.

EVANGELISM CORNER: PENTECOST 2025

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Lauren Lacson

Submit a story

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130 decisions for baptism



309
people have accepted Jesus



16
professions of faith



182 baptisms



EQUIP²⁵

LEAD | SERVE | ENGAGE

A conference-wide training event

3 P.M. **SEPTEMBER 6, 2025** VALLEJO DRIVE CHURCH



SCC.ADVENTIST.ORG/EQUIP