“GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE.”

PSALM 46:1
Blest Be The Tie That Binds

Northern Nevada Church Members Attend Grief Recovery Workshop
In Reno and Sparks, Nev., two congregations recently came together to learn about ministering to those who are grieving. For three days, members attended a workshop called “Becoming a Skillful Comforter,” which included grief education and comfort support skills training.

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The April 2020 issue of the Pacific Union Recorder was delayed due to printing and mailing difficulties related to the coronavirus crisis, and this has also impacted the release date for the May 2020 magazine. Our editorial staff of the Recorder join with the officers and staff of the Pacific Union Conference in recognizing the extraordinary response to this crisis from our members, churches, schools, hospitals, and ministries. Our prayers are with those whose lives have been disrupted by COVID-19. We remain steadfast in our hope and faith, remembering the words of the prophet Isaiah:

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

—Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)
Hundreds of years later, the Gospel writers told stories of Jesus that show He was filled with compassion during His ministry on earth.
The novel coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19, have added some terms to our everyday lexicon: *stay at home, community spread, flattening the curve*. Most of us are faithfully practicing social distancing and washing our hands like never before. COVID-19 has greatly impacted our world and there may not be a return to normal.

Some things never change, however, such as God’s compassion. The prophet Jeremiah wrote: “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23, NKJV).

According to some commentaries, the prophet made this bold statement while he was in the grip of personal suffering and while his country was enduring the consequences of forsaking Yahweh. Yet, Jeremiah assures us very clearly that no matter how much suffering surrounds us or comes to us personally, Yahweh is still the God of compassion—and He knows how to deliver.

Hundreds of years later, the Gospel writers told stories of Jesus that show He was filled with compassion during His ministry on earth. “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every
disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’” (Matthew 9:35-38, NKJV).

Jesus had a multifaceted ministry, primarily consisting of teaching, preaching, and healing. And when He saw the multitudes of needy people, He was moved with compassion.

There were those who were suffering in the villages He visited, and He served them by offering what they needed most. He taught them the truth about God. He preached the Good News of His kingdom. And He healed them of their diseases. He recognized that there was no one providing the basic task of shepherding the people. He saw that they were “weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.”

Shepherds provide leadership, guidance, and protection for the flock. A shepherd personally knows each sheep in his care. But most importantly, a shepherd does what he can to help them. A shepherd cares for his flock. A shepherd’s compassion for his sheep moves him to action.

One dictionary defines compassion as “a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.”

Compassion is a derivative of agape, the unselfish, other-directed love that Jesus talked about and demonstrated throughout His ministry.

His compassion for a rebellious planet resulted in His becoming one with His own creation, living among sinners and then dying on the cross. His ministry was not finished when He died; it resumed in a new phase when He arose. We serve a living Savior.

Some people may be wondering where the compassion of God is during the time of coronavirus and COVID-19.

God’s compassion can be seen in the fact that there are survivors of this plague, this pestilence. Jesus predicted that pestilences would come (Luke 21:11), and they have arrived throughout the centuries. Is this the beginning of the last plagues? I don’t think so.

God’s compassion can also be found in His people. Jesus tells us His followers are to radiate the character of our God: “You are the light of the world…. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16, NKJV). We are to be compassionate people, not only in word but also in action. Truly compassionate people don’t just see and feel sorrow; they act to affect change.

So how do we demonstrate compassion during this pestilence, when we are sequestered by stay-at-home orders? How do we reveal our caring heart and help others while we strive to avoid becoming infected with this invisible disease that has gripped the world and is killing tens of thousands?

**So how do we demonstrate compassion during this pestilence, when we are sequestered by stay-at-home orders?**
We do what we can where we are.

One recent news source, The Record newspaper, had an article about Mrs. Ruth Anderson of Naples, Fla. She started sewing when she was eight years old. Today, at age 101, she is making cloth face masks for frontline health care workers. Her sense of compassion ignited a desire to do something, and she is using her talents and skills to help others.

In the April 6/April 13 special double issue of Time magazine, José Andrés, a world-class master chef, is featured as the subject of the cover story. (Audrey and I heard him speak last May when we attended our daughter’s graduation at Georgetown University School of Public Policy in Washington, D.C.) When the Grand Princess cruise ship was recently sequestered off the coast of California because of the outbreak of COVID-19 among passengers and workers, Andrés boarded a plane for San Francisco to deploy his charity, World Central Kitchen, to set up a field kitchen to feed the people on the ship. Compassion compels him.

Ruth Anderson and José Andrés are powerful examples of compassion and love in action for the rest of us. I don't sew, and I am not a master chef. But there are some things I can do to demonstrate compassion today.

First, I don't need to add numbers to the count of those who are becoming infected and falling sick. Seriously. It is a compassionate thing to maintain my own health so as not to swell the numbers of sick folk who need help. The medical personnel are being inundated daily by the sick and dying. I don't need to add one more number, myself, to the crowd.

Second, while we are on lockdown, we can still pick up a phone and call someone to give them a word of good gospel cheer, reminding them of God's promises. A lot of people are suffering silently while being sequestered. They are lonely; we can, in compassion, ease their loneliness, even if just temporarily, by calling them and praying with them on the phone.

One of Audrey’s ministries is a card ministry. She is sending greeting cards, which we purchased some time ago, to others who are isolated as we are to remind them that they are not forgotten. I have mailed Signs of the Times tracts to people. They have wonderful, Christ-centered messages in them and are overflowing with hope-filled Scriptures.

We can go shopping for someone who can’t get out or is too fearful to venture out. We can buy them some groceries and wipe those items down, leaving them at their door.

We can write a check and send it to a relief agency that we have confidence in.

Most importantly, we need to pray for safe passage through this time of fear. “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:38, NKJV).

But we should go beyond praying that God will send help. We should do something to help others, too. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, NKJV).

The sheep are weary and scattered—without a shepherd. We can be today's shepherds of compassion.

Ricardo Graham is the president of the Pacific Union Conference.
With millions of others, our lives have contracted as we practice unprecedented public health directives: we wear a mask at the grocery store, maintain six feet of separation, frequently wash our hands, and, most importantly, stay at home. Many of us are now working exclusively through technology, meaning that Zoom is no longer a speed but a meeting tool. Everyone is navigating this new normal, but it impacts some more than others.

Essential business workers are out in the world every day to maintain the basics of life for the rest of us. How thankful we should be for each of them! Teachers and pastors are adapting to the unprecedented task of providing remote education and spiritual care. These dedicated and creative leaders are serving meaningfully and relevantly to keep schools and congregations together from a distance.

There is also the daily drama of life and death in hospitals. Our healthcare workers face the emotional strain of caring for so many for us—as well as trying to keep themselves healthy. Yet, even with their heroic efforts, we all must confront the ever-multiplying stories of loved ones taken in death by this treacherous disease.

In times of crisis, Christ’s followers again must examine what it means to be serving in His name. We are certainly judged by the standard written by Jesus’ brother in the first century: “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:14-17, NKJV). Practically speaking, how do the principles of our faith inform our response in a time of pandemic?

Our daughter-in-law has a great way to motivate positive actions in our granddaughter Macy: the Sparkle Jar. The clear container starts out empty.
while beside it sits a tray of gold plastic gems. As Macy obeys Mom and Dad and helps with little sister, the gold gems begin to fill the jar. Sometimes gems are removed when she slips up a bit. But soon enough the Sparkle Jar is filled, and the reward comes in the form of a new toy, a special event, or a craft that she has been pining for.

Parents find creative ways to encourage their children to goodness. At the outset it’s quite transactional: positive reinforcement for good deeds and negative consequences for the bad. But ultimately every parent knows that molding the character of a child exclusively around reward and punishment is inadequate for bringing genuine maturity. A relationship of love and trust brings the greatest prospect for success in shaping a young heart. As Macy approaches her fifth birthday, goodness has become more than filling the Sparkle Jar. A smile of approval from mother and joy expressed by father are more lasting then acquiring the next toy or filling a jar with plastic gems. Year by year, the values of principled living, respect for others, and service and unselfishness while encountering a sinful world are becoming her own because that is who she chooses to be.

What does this have to do with Christian service? Moms and dads seek to guide their children from mere self-centered motives of transactional behavior towards genuine character transformation. It is the same with our great Heavenly Parent. Service to others, even in Christ’s name, that focuses on human accolades or filling up a Heavenly Sparkle Jar misses God’s goal entirely.

Jesus addressed this misreading of God’s intentions in the Sermon on the Mount: “Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” Jesus goes on to describe the heaven-approved approach: “But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will
“Himself reward you openly” (Matthew 6:2-4, NKJV).

But isn’t this transactional as well? Does anonymous action give us credit with God after all? Paul later clarifies that there is no Heavenly Sparkle Jar to earn a prize from God. Galatians 2:16 (NKJV) declares, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.” In 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) Paul states, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” The clear message of the Christian good news is that our Heavenly Father knows nothing about a merit system to earn an eternal existence with Him. Any transactional modality of Christian living and service actually betrays God’s purpose for us eternally while also failing to provide a meaningful life now.

Authentic Christian service springs from a divinely empowered internal transformation rooted in Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection. We learn in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NKJV) that, “The love of Christ compels us…. He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” I particularly like this dynamic translation of Galatians 5:13-14 (MSG): “It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don’t use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that’s how freedom grows. For everything we know about God’s Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That’s an act of true freedom.”

True freedom as a Christian is serving others because the One who we ultimately love first and best engages us to be like Him in service and sacrifice. How will we accomplish this in our current situation? We activate ourselves by answering the question, “How can I love others now?” It’s simple kindness at the grocery store, a smile and greeting as you pass your neighbors on the sidewalk (6 feet apart, of course), making phone calls and sending emails or texts of encouragement to your friends, family, and church. It’s letting the pastors, schoolteachers, and health workers know that you’re praying for them. You can thank (and tip) food workers and other essential providers. Avoid forwarding questionable stories from Facebook and the internet that may confuse or harm others. And, along with all this, remain sensitive and available to meet the emotional, physical, or spiritual needs that arise within your social network.

Laboratories all over the world are racing toward an effective vaccine for COVID-19, as well as proven therapies to counteract the disease’s effects. Fellow Christian, we are also in a giant laboratory. Our heavenly Father is looking for us to be witnesses and transmitters of the heavenly vaccine and therapy for what ails this world. “Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it” (Romans 12:1-2, MSG).

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It was so close they could almost touch it. Just beyond the Jordan River it waited, lush and green, filled with growing things and beauty. It was their piece of earth, set aside for them by God Himself—the prize, the payment, the promise at the end of their journey. The only obstacle standing in the way of setting up housekeeping in their new homeland was a deep, abiding fear of the unknown. And the giants.

The children of Israel had left Egypt some 40 years earlier. Their very own “Egypt to Canaan” game had played out in real time right before their eyes. They had seen hard times, frightening times,
uncertain times. They'd complained, disobeyed, worshiped false gods, and even threatened to return to the slavery they'd left behind. Their hardheartedness and blatant disregard for authority had cost lives and earned them years of wandering aimlessly through the dry, barren desert.

But that was all in the past. The Promised Land spread out before them enticingly.

“Not so fast,” God told Moses, the longsuffering leader of the desert wanderers. “First, you've got to check things out.” (The full story is found in Numbers 13-14.)

And here a somewhat familiar name appears in a list that Moses made of designated spies he was about to send to explore the land. That name was Joshua. We'd seen him in action from time to time during the desert wanderings where he acted as Moses' aide—a position he'd held since youth. We find him fighting the Amalekites (Exodus 17), heading up cloud-shrouded Mt. Sinai with Moses (Exodus 24), and discovering the golden calf set up in the camp (Exodus 32). Now he, along with 11 other men, had been tasked with the responsibility to scope out the Promised Land as God directed (Numbers 13).

So, off the spies went in good spirits, ready to be amazed at what was supposed to belong to them very shortly. Amazed they were, but not necessarily in a good way.

**Unsettling statistic**

On their return, the spies offered a detailed report to Moses, Aaron, and the whole Israelite community. “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there” (Numbers 13:27-28, NIV).

Wait! Did you say “descendants of Anak?” Those people were known for one unsettling statistic: they were huge! “We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes,” the spies admitted, “and we looked the same to them” (verse 33).

Well, this changed everything. How can you enjoy a Promised Land when you're dead—squashed like a bug under some giant's thumb? Heads shook and hands waved. “We can't attack those people,” the Israelites lamented. “They are stronger than we are” (verse 31).

Soon, the whole encampment was buzzing with despair. “That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, ‘If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken...

"The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us."
as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?' And they said to each other, 'We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt’" (Numbers 14:1-4, NIV).

That's when Joshua—along with fellow spy Caleb—spoke up. Their words set them apart from everyone and made possible many victories to come. "Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, ‘The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them’’ (Numbers 14:6-9, NIV).

Seeing opportunities

Effective leadership—especially in times of uncertainty and fear—is more than coming up with good ideas or sound financial guidelines. It's more than rallying the troops with promises and enticements. It's about looking at giants and seeing opportunities for winning big!

Just as important, it’s about looking back as well as forward. That’s what Joshua must have done. To believe what he believed and say what he said required a knowledge and motivation built from past experiences.

Joshua was there when the Red Sea parted. Joshua was there when the approaching Egyptian army was stopped cold by that same sea. He was there when the bitter waters at the Marah spring turned sweet, when manna daily dusted the desert floor, when snakebites healed, when a pillar of cloud led the way by day and a pillar of fire shone brightly through the darkest desert night.

Joshua was there when God spoke from Sinai and offered detailed instructions on how the people could safely live in earth’s dangerous and deadly environment.

Later, when he stood on the banks of the Jordan River across from Jericho as the newly appointed leader of the Israelites after Moses had passed away, giants weren’t on his mind. He was thinking about the God of seas, manna, healing, and fire. Joshua’s leadership style wasn’t based on obstacles to overcome but on following God’s commands, come what may. His faith was his motivation. His experience was the proof he needed to trust God, even in a land of giants.

A God for that

We need a few Joshua-type leaders these days, don’t we? We need men and women who will boldly go forward because of what they’ve learned from God in the past.

Pandemics? Financial crashes? Fear of the unknown? Seemingly insurmountable barriers to happiness and peace? There’s a God for that. Congregations deeply divided over political or theological opinions? There’s a God for that. Health challenges? Unrelenting grief? Urge for revenge? There’s a God for those things, too. Now, more than ever, we need Joshua-type leaders in our homes, our schools, our institutions, and our churches.

At the very edge of the Promised Land—the land of the giants—Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you” (Joshua 3:5, NIV).

Shortly thereafter, with those words still ringing in their ears, the children of Israel watched in awe as the walls of Jericho fell.

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The great pandemic. The beginning of an economic downturn or even a depression. I don’t know what the name or description of this era will be in the history books, but I’m certain the events of 2020 will change the world as we have known it.

In just a few weeks’ time, the world has seen changes we never imagined. Lately, it has not been business as usual. There should be some deeply meaningful shifts taking place right now among our faith community.

We must have a paradigm shift. Google defines paradigm shift as “a fundamental change in approach.” The world as we know it has changed, and those of us who believe in a soon-returning Savior must understand that our very survival as a church depends on a careful understanding of what is taking place.

Here are some paradigm shifts to consider as we move with our church into the post-virus era, as our wait for Jesus continues.

**We must practice what we preach.**

The faith community should have been the first one to follow all of the suggestions of the authorities for our protection—from washing our hands to social distancing. We should have set the tone for the rest of the world. We should have been the first to support our medical personnel. We should have been the first ones thinking about the well-being of everyone...
Let’s help the faith community take their rightful place in the world.

**We must understand who we are.**

Crises have a way of showing you things you weren’t really seeing before, of helping you focus on what really matters. It’s been happening all around us. People are talking about this all over social media. A new hashtag has surfaced: #imthechurch. A paradigm shift is occurring right before our eyes. Who are we? We are the church. It took closing our places of worship to help us remember that, for the purposes of finishing the work, buildings are not vital.

Instead, buildings have propagated some misconceptions about who we are. Buildings come with constraints. There is something about those walls. They propagate the idea of us vs. them. They keep us from looking outwardly.

You are the church. The Spirit of God lives within you. People are far more important than any building, any rule, or any sacrament. Jesus died and is coming back for people. Everything else was created to aid people. We are more than buildings.

Paradigm shift: We don’t need buildings to have church. The church is wherever God’s people are. You are the church.

**We must understand what our true calling is.**

What is the purpose of the children of God? If your answer is to make everybody Adventist, I think your response is lacking.

The purpose of the children of God is to serve selflessly, demonstrating who God is. True service
comes from a deep conviction that we are the church. The primary job of a church is to provide a safe place for people to be attracted to Jesus.

We’ve adopted a militant approach to evangelism that has done a disservice to Christianity. We hold “campaigns” like the army. We prepare, attack, and retreat with our prize. That’s not who we should be. We are to mingle with the people like Jesus did. We are to care for those who do not know about the wonderful Savior we serve.

Our true calling lies within our own salvation. “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, NIV). While the world is still sinning, we are called to die to the walls that separate us from them, die to our preconceived ideas of what they ought to be, and simply love them into our church. You don’t need a hook or a set of organized doctrines to persuade them. The Spirit of God thrives in genuine love.

Paradigm shift: We don’t need methods or curriculums to conquer the world for Jesus. We need love—genuine love for those who perish without a Savior.

We must stop going to church.

We don’t go to church: because we are the church, we bring church. Our places of worship are the places where the church comes together to worship God and build up one another.

The paradigm shift I’m proposing here is designed to move us one step closer to what the primitive church was all about. Churches met in houses. Every family was a church. What if every family was a church in your community? What if the building was there for the purpose of celebrating the overwhelming presence of God in every church family?

Paradigm shift: Stop going to church and instead start bringing church to your household and your community. Be the light you want to be. Be the mouthpiece of God and His hands and feet in your community.

We must take on our role as stewards of the resources of God.

If we’ve learned one thing from the present crisis, it is that the resources of the world are limited. Another thing we’ve seen is that people are willing to go to absurd lengths to take care of me, myself, and I. Unfortunately, while our resources are limited, hoarding and acting irrationally only increase the problem.

The presence of Christians should make this world a better place to live. We must be trendsetters and game changers in the way we approach God’s creation. We have already talked about our responsibility towards our neighbors, but what about the resources of God that make this world go around?

Religious institutions worry about surviving the financial impact of this crisis, even after the pandemic is over. A crisis most adversely affects the less fortunate. Generally speaking, the average Seventh-day Adventist church is sustained by many people with fairly conservative incomes. It is reasonable to be worried about our financial situation in the days to come.

God made us stewards of this world. We often talk about the four T’s of stewardship: Talent, Time, Temperance, and Treasure. My challenge to you is to adopt the role of being God’s steward, now more than ever.

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15-17, ESV). Our calling in a crisis like this is to redeem the time and be wise.

We must utilize our talents to serve the world. Now is the time to work together to break down the barriers

Crises have a way of showing you things you weren’t really seeing before, of helping you focus on what really matters.
that separate us and reach towards serving our communities through the many talents that collectively make us better.

We must view our financial resources in the right perspective. They belong to God. We are called to put them to work for Him. Tithe giving is actually God’s way of helping us put His resources, which He graciously shares with us, in the right perspective. It really doesn’t matter how much or how little we have to give, because what God requires is the same for all of us—a percentage.

While the world is thinking about hoarding and getting more, God’s stewards should be thinking about giving and sharing with the “least of these” among us.

Paradigm shift: God created and therefore owns the planet. We must be good stewards of His resources. How can we help one another?

**We must quit wasting our time.**

Finally, would you please stop fighting? Stop arguing for the sake of arguing. Stop criticizing and belittling one another. How can we as a church ever gain the trust others when we cannot even agree to disagree and move forward in fulfilling the mission?

Every time I post anything on social media, I know that someone is not going to like something about it. Some think it is their responsibility to respond.

Dear Christian sojourner, think positive. Think together. Think team building. Remember that we are actually trying to get to the same place. Remember that the message of salvation should take precedence over all the things that divide us.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29, NIV). The world is watching—and they evaluate God by the way we behave.

Paul responded to criticism: “Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening” (2 Corinthians 12:19, NIV). Paul wanted to build the people up and he wanted them to build each other up.

In a world full of fear and hoarding, Christians need to learn to work together and build each other up. Don’t think in terms of liberals or conservatives, race or culture, conference or world church. Think in terms of all of us being Jesus’ collaborators. Let’s build each other up and make the case of Jesus stronger.

Paradigm shift: Don’t waste your time on irrelevant issues and discussions. Instead, find ways to build each other up and strengthen the kingdom of God.

I hope this will be part of a greater discussion that moves us closer to God. Please continue to pray and reflect, and let’s work together to figure this thing out.

Carlos A. Camacho is executive secretary of the Nevada-Utah Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Man is to represent Christ. He is to be long-suffering toward his fellow-men, to be patient, forgiving, and full of Christlike love. He who is truly converted will manifest respect for his brethren; he will do as Christ has commanded. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Where the love of Christ abounds in the soul, there will be an expression of that love that will be understood by the world.

God would express his character in humanity; but the attributes of Christ can only be revealed through those who labor in love for the souls for whom Christ has died. God has given power to the human agent, which makes him accountable for the impressions which he makes on the minds of his fellow-men. I cannot say it is well with you when you have little concern as to what kind of impression you are making upon the minds and the characters of those with whom you associate. Those who work in a reckless, careless manner, and have no concern as to what becomes of those whom they deem to be erring, have false ideas as to what constitutes Christianity. Jesus says, “Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Not all who name the name of Christ are one with Christ. Those who do not have the Spirit and the grace of Christ are none of his, no matter what may be their profession. By their fruits ye shall know them. The customs and practices that are after the order of the world do not carry out the principles of God’s law, and therefore do not breathe of his Spirit nor express his character. Christlikeness will be revealed only by those who are assimilated to the divine image. Only those who are being molded through the operation of the Holy Spirit are doers of the word of God, and express the mind and the will of God. There is counterfeit Christianity in the world as well as genuine Christianity. The true spirit of a man is manifested by the way in which he deals with his fellow-man. We may ask the question, Does he represent the character of Christ in spirit and action, or simply manifest the natural, selfish traits of character that belong to the people of this world? Profession weighs nothing with God. Before it is everlastingly too late for wrongs to be righted, let each one ask himself, “What am I?” It depends upon ourselves as to whether we shall form such characters as will constitute us members of God’s royal family above.

If we would become Christlike, we must study Christ’s character. God has given capabilities to the human agent by which he is to co-operate with God, in blessing, uplifting, strengthening, and ennobling, not himself only, but others with whom he associates. This work of blessing others we shall do by giving men an example in our own lives of the spirit, ways, and works of Christ. When self controls, it works to discourage, to dishearten, and to drive souls away from their Saviour. Christ says, “He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”

It is necessary that we should closely examine ourselves, and inquire, Is this Christ’s way? Would Christ pursue this course of action? What kind of impression am I leaving upon the minds of those with whom I am connected? Shall I pursue a course of action that will weaken the confidence of any one with whom I deal, and cause him to think lightly of the Christianity that I profess? Shall I be uncourteous, unchristlike, unmerciful toward the purchase of the blood of Christ?... Christ said, “Ye are the light of the world.” Who did he mean were the light

The true spirit of a man is manifested by the way in which he deals with his fellow-man.
of the world?—He meant those who are following in his footsteps. He says, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” It is those who are branches of the living Vine, who bear much fruit. They are sustained by the nourishment that flows from the parent stock. Those who abide in Christ will have the same spirit that he manifested, and be actuated by the same motives, and be pure, peaceable, and undefiled, yet they will be as burning and shining lights amid the moral darkness of the world.

Fair-weather disciples will not answer to the Lord’s call in the time of peril toward which we are hastening. It will take those who not only hear but do the words of Christ, to be active disciples, “not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”....

Let those who minister in word and doctrine mix faith with earnest prayer, and seek to put to use every ray of light that comes from the written word. The voice of God calls from heaven and demands the use of every intrusted capability. Every talent is to be used to its uttermost. If ever there was a time when men and women should have an assurance that they are co-partners with Christ in the saving of the world, it is now. Ask yourself, Am I a faithful steward of the grace of God? Am I burying the light, failing to improve the talent that has been lent me to trade upon? The way in which we use God’s intrusted capability is deciding our own future destiny, and settling the question as to whether or not we shall be intrusted with greater gifts, even with eternal riches....

Do not live a life of uncertainty. “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober....

Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.” Every human agent knows for himself whether his feet are tending toward the city of our God, or tending toward the darkness of the shadow of death. There are many who claim to be Christians who are as spurious coin. They are traveling in the broad road of selfishness and sin. But he who rests upon the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, who has received Christ by faith, has the promise that he is the son of God. “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” As sons of God, we are partakers of the divine nature. We know what true light is, and know the power of the grace of Christ. We have the faith that works by love and purifies the soul.

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Let those who minister in word and doctrine mix faith with earnest prayer, and seek to put to use every ray of light that comes from the written word.
Exercise, gardening, socializing, and community outreach—sounds tiring, right? Well for Sonia Ulloa, that’s just living your best life. At 92 years young, Sonia is the oldest member of Adventist Health White Memorial’s (AHWM) ¡Vive Bien! Senior Wellness Program.

Run by AHWM’s Community Information Center, the ¡Vive Bien! Senior Wellness Program is on a mission to save lives, rejuvenate the weary, and bring the community together.

According to several studies, such as one from *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, depression reaches its highest level in adults 80 years and older. Eighty years—that’s our parents, our grandparents, our aunts and uncles, and our neighbors. The ¡Vive Bien! Program wants to ensure that our elders have something to live for, something that brings joy and wellness.

“It saved me from depression. I’ve made friends, and I’m living my best life at 92,” said Sonia. She isn’t the only one impacted by this program. Sonia is just one of the hundreds that the ¡Vive Bien! Senior Wellness Program continuously helps through enriching nutritional education and social clubs. By working closely with the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation, ¡Vive Bien! also offers seniors over the age of 60 on-site and over-the-phone assistance, resources, referrals to agencies, and programs based on individual needs.

More importantly, however, the ¡Vive Bien! Program gives its members the opportunity to give back to the community. The knitting club provides not only a social outlet but also helps create cozy beanies and booties for AHWM’s NICU children. Seniors serve homeless men and women at Dolores Mission, just blocks away from the hospital. Through the gardening club, they learn about nutrition and help maintain a special haven for the community to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables.

Sonia loves the fact that the program is at a hospital. She feels...
safe knowing that if anything should happen, she’d be taken care of quickly. Additionally, she encourages everyone to stay active and find outlets like ¡Vive Bien! that foster socialization. “I can’t just stay home; I’ll find myself bored and sad. We can’t do that,” she said.

“As our (Adventist Health) mission is to live God’s love by inspiring health, wholeness, and hope, we want ¡Vive Bien! to do that specifically for our senior community. We bring people together, incubate friendships, fight the loneliness that often comes with seniority, provide spiritual guidance, and help them learn how to stay healthy,” said Elizabeth Rodriguez, AH Community Information Center coordinator.

With gardening, book, knitting, Bible study, and many more clubs, ¡Vive Bien! is out to provide seniors in Boyle Heights a refuge that prioritizes human wholeness. Alan Sanchez, Community Information Center manager, said, “We have the commitment to provide our community members with resources and education services to help them live fulfilling lives—inspiring happiness, collaboration, and a sense of a greater community for the wellbeing of all.”

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in the gospel of Christ, His ministry here on earth, and that we are called to be His light in this world. We are to live as He lived. Christ healed the sick, He made the blind see and the deaf hear—but He didn’t stop there. Christ healed the soul!

If we are to be a hospital that claims the name of Jesus, then our mission of living God’s love must be fully realized in that we not only heal the body but we heal the soul and inspire hope. This program is just one way Adventist Health is fulfilling its mission and acting on our organizational values to own our mission and be a force for good.
New Chandler Fil-Am Church Celebrates God’s Faithfulness

By Phil Draper

In Hebrews 6:15 we read that Abraham patiently waited for and then obtained the promise of God. In like manner, members and friends of the Chandler Fil-Am church believe they have waited patiently. On March 7, a bright, sunny Sabbath, the church held a celebration and ribbon cutting service to commemorate God’s faithfulness and inaugurate their new sanctuary. The members chose the theme “Celebrating God’s Faithfulness.”

The inauguration ceremonies were a culmination of the hard work and perseverance of many individuals throughout the years. “The building of His temple was only accomplished with God’s grace and faithfulness, which carried us through this journey for His glory. We would not be here today without the individuals who helped us form Chandler Fil-Am church,” said Carlos Chua, fundraising committee chairman.

The Chandler Fil-Am church had a humble beginning when a group of several families started studying the 28 fundamental beliefs. Their first meeting was in the small chapel of the Chandler Adventist church. Over time, and with a little growth, they moved around to several locations across the valley, meeting every Sabbath.

Arizona Conference officers are on hand to give their blessing: President Ed Keyes, Treasurer Reggie Leach, and Executive Secretary Jorge Ramirez.

Then Arizona Conference Multi-Lingual Director Glenn Sta. Ana and church leaders stumbled upon a property that was for sale. “A miracle occurred when the seller of this property turned down an initial offer from a buyer with a solid down payment,” he recalled. “Wondrously, through fervent prayer and God’s provision, the seller accepted our offer. We had offered to purchase this property despite not having the money for the actual down payment. As our members prayed together, yet another unexpected miracle occurred. An astonishing $35,000 was raised in one night to be used as a down payment to buy the property! The journey toward building a new church began.”

Slowly and steadily, the construction project got underway.
The changes took place all over the building, but they were not completed without various challenges, roadblocks, and disagreements along the way. However, members knew God was in control.

“Now, a few years later, the building has come to resemble a beautiful church,” Chua said. “Members, families, and friends of the church have donated approximately $800,000 to the building project. Please stop and let that dollar amount sink in—that is a tremendous amount of money. God has truly filled the cup of the Chandler Fil-Am church and made it overflow.”

Sadly, some of the original members were not able to witness the completion of the house of worship in person, nor would their songs resonate in the new sanctuary. Rene Nabua and Ric Mary, both elders of the church, and Jack Krueger are all now resting until the resurrection morning.

“To the families of the Chandler Fil-Am church and our friends who wished to see our success, we thank you,” Chua said. “Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your monetary gifts and resources. And thank you for your labor, time, and support.”

Sta. Ana is thrilled with the beautiful new sanctuary. “The fruits of our labor will now be seen by the community as our church becomes a beacon of light in Chandler, Arizona. We are all excited about sharing this accomplishment, and we are proud that God has allowed us to be a part of this building project. Let us continue to pray for this new house of worship that we may remain diligent and steadfast in our work and our giving and that we may be more motivated to participate in God’s ministry in order to win more souls for His glory.”

Arizona Conference President Ed Keyes participates in the ribbon cutting ceremony, accompanied by Chandler Fil-Am Pastor Glenn Sta. Ana, Conference Executive Secretary Jorge Ramirez, Building Supervisor Ed Zimmerman, and Conference Treasurer Reggie Leach.

(Left) Pastor Glenn Sta. Ana and historian Cubes Anderson tell the story of the Chandler Fil-Am church from its beginning to the present. (Middle) The ladies choir sing with all their hearts! (Right) Arizona Conference President Ed Keyes welcomes the first Fil-Am church in the conference at the grand opening.
Paul urged Timothy to “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12, KJV). He understood what it took to keep getting up, even when knocked down again and again. Paul would likely urge us to do the same today, in spite of the challenges coronavirus has created over the last several months.

Getting knocked down is not easy, and sometimes it can be very sad, particularly during this pandemic. Cancellations of family/friends/vacation events are disappointing. In addition, there are new ways of attending church and delivering education. But there is more to the story in the Central California Conference (CCC).

**Good fight of faith**

Anticipating trying times ahead that would call for a “good fight of faith,” Ramiro Cano, CCC president, sent out a letter of encouragement. He wanted CCC members to know they were being prayed for constantly. “Therefore,” Cano reassured, “take courage! Now, more than ever, we need to cling to our Lord. Be courageous, be joyful, and be confident that He will see us through this precarious time of the coronavirus pandemic.” He also let members know that the conference administration and local leadership will continue to monitor, learn, and apply appropriate adjustments during a continually fluctuating situation.

**Giving this year to God**

Knowing that challenging days were ahead, the CCC leadership had to make some difficult decisions. Because plans and contracts had to be confirmed months before the summer events, the difficult decision to cancel Soquel Camp Meeting was made in early March. Many other conference events, such as Life Hope Centers’ clinics, summer camp at Camp Wawona, and Teen Bible Academy, were also canceled or postponed. It also became necessary to close the office building.

Every conference-wide evangelistic project had to be put on hold. Yet...
nothing will stop the sharing of the good news of God’s love. Constituents can check the conference website, its Facebook page, and other social media outlets for resources and news.

Knowing that information is important during a time of frequent changes, Cano and the CCC staff meet weekly with pastors in a Zoom conference. Filling six computer screens with an average of 120 attendees, department directors provide updates and pastors share and ask questions on a wide range of topics. “I am so encouraged to hear every week that our pastors continue to show their strong faith and are constantly seeking creative ways to serve their congregations,” Cano said.

Other department directors also meet with their ministry groups through distance communication platforms. For example, Treasurer Mayra Thompson and her team are working with pastors and church treasurers to provide training on a variety of giving avenues that can be done easily and securely.

Pastor Daniel Gouveia of Fresno decided to do a weekly video of encouragement on his YouTube channel, “crucified4me.” As the sixth-grade class chaplain, he also has a weekly devotional via Zoom with those students at Fresno Adventist Academy.

Many churches decided to divide up their list of members with their elders. Every elder is encouraged to do wellness checks at least once a week with their assigned members and also with each other. The Discover Life church in Sonora prepared a detailed response description to the crisis for its church leaders that has proven useful.

Pastor Stephen Constantine of Palo Alto found that attendance at Wednesday night prayer meeting had more than doubled using a conference call-in line. Something very interesting happened when emails were sent to members about how to access the online church services. “It was an exhilarating experience to reconnect with members who had moved away from the area and who now lived in places like Bakersfield, Los Angeles, Virginia, and even London,” noted Constantine.

Of utmost concern is how all of this will impact the children and youth. Danita Rasmussen, ministry pastor in San Luis Obispo, started a special project for children. She came up with “Sabbath Bags” for families with small children. She wanted to make
sure each child in the congregation would know that Sabbath was special, while not presenting too much of a burden on parents.

Each child received a pack with a bag for each Sabbath of a four-week period. Each Sabbath bag has a variety of interesting items and suggestions for parents. Examples include having a scavenger hunt to find objects starting with the letters in their name. To encourage social contact, parents can post a picture of an activity on the church’s Facebook page. Some members are helping with family worship by reading a continued story. Additional ideas and resources for children’s ministry can be found at www.childminchat.com.

Other ideas include community service projects and sending messages to members and friends by mail or social media. In order to encourage the local community, the San Luis Obispo church printed a large banner to hang in front of their church. Keep praying for our churches as they go forward in faith.

## CCC young adults

Events planned for teens and young adults throughout the summer also had to be postponed. However, young adult leaders around the conference, under the direction of CCC Young Adult Director Anil Kanda, knew that God did not want them to stop doing ministry. And, indeed, they have not.

They started a weekly online young adult prayer meeting that included interactive prayer with each other. Kanda stated, “I have never seen so many young adults excited to pray!” That led to something called “Growth Lab,” where they learn new skills and expand talents. At their first Zoom meeting, they maxed out at 100 people with 83 in the waiting room. They have since learned how to include everyone. They are also experiencing their Sabbath afternoon vespers at capacity. A recent vespers held a panel discussion with several pastors and counselors on the topic, “Pandemic and Prophecy.” Because this provides opportunity to invite non-Adventist friends, they are placing an emphasis on people connecting to their local churches for follow-up. “The results are incredible,” Kanda said. “It’s powerful to see what’s happening even during a time of crisis!”

The young adults definitely plan on keeping the “church” wide open. They feel it is a time for creative ministry, because young people are hungry for a spiritual community like never before. For them, this pandemic outbreak is an invitation for God’s people to shine and share. Keep praying that our young adults will have unyielding faith.

## Impact on CCC schools

As school buildings closed, teachers and students began learning new ways to deliver and receive classroom instruction. Just how this will impact education in the future will be interesting.

Additionally, most schools had to make difficult decisions about canceling or postponing all sorts of...
Central California Conference

trips that usually take place toward the end of the school year. These included class trips, music trips, mission trips, and educational field trips that the kids enjoy so much. They now wonder how graduation will be affected.

Principal Chandra Young of Fresno Adventist Academy shared that they were just about to perform *The Sound of Music*, a student-produced musical. All the sets were finished and costumes were made. Then, two days before opening night, they had to totally shut down. While understanding the reason, the disappointment was great.

Cancellation of events has caused frustration and discouragement, especially for students who had a mission trip planned to serve others by building churches or schools. Yet CCC’s schools showed that they had “special endurance,” and they maintained a solid faith in Jesus throughout a time of crisis.

**MOUNTAIN VIEW ACADEMY**

For 20 years, Mountain View Academy (MVA) has been going on mission trips all over the world. It started with only eight students and their sponsors, but it has expanded to include volunteer medical and dental professionals.

This year, 80 people, including 45 students, were to return to Africa to build a classroom and conduct medical outreach at their sister school, Emmanuel Adventist School in Chisambia, Zambia. Because of the Bay Area’s early stay-at-home regulations, the school made the heart-rending decision to cancel the trip early in February, providing enough time for an alternate plan. The coordinator, Pastor Moises Guerrero, flew to Zambia to deliver the collected donations.

As you can well imagine, tears of joy greeted Guerrero when the school administrators received the MVA gift. “Although we wanted to be there in person, this brought comfort to our hearts because we were still able to help,” he reflected.

MVA recognizes that mission trips are amazing spiritual, social, and cultural tools that can enhance the lives of their students. They are already planning for next year’s mission trip. Keep praying for MVA’s endurance of faith.

**MOTHER LODGE ADVENTIST JUNIOR ACADEMY**

At Mother Lode Adventist Junior Academy (MLAJA) in Sonora, plans began about a year ago to help build a church for the Asia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Peru. A total of 65 individuals, 38 of them students, also planned medical, dental, and physical therapy services and a children’s Bible program.

By the time they were ready to leave on March 19, church members in Peru had already demolished their old church building, and the foundation for the new one was in place. Preparations were complete when it became clear it would need to be canceled or postponed. On Saturday night, just four days before leaving, the difficult decision was finally made. “Tears flowed and hearts broke,” said Pastor Nathan Renner. “Nevertheless, it was the right decision because by the very next afternoon, Peru closed their borders.”

Norma Santos, one of the ninth graders, explained, “When I got the news that it was being postponed, I was disappointed. However, now I believe God has a reason for everything, and I trust in Him to make the right call for us to go.” Keep praying for MLAJA’s endurance of faith.

"Not closed but open"

“Our motto during this health emergency, ‘Church is Not Closed, Just the Buildings,’ certainly proved to be true in ways we never expected," said Cano. The CCC team continues to make plans to help reach people during this difficult and unprecedented time. "Pray that our churches, schools, hospitals, and every member will share church with each other and their communities."

Check [www.centralcaliforniaadventist.com](http://www.centralcaliforniaadventist.com) for further developments.
There are many words that come to mind when hearing “COVID-19”—words such as social distancing, stay-at-home orders, hoarding toilet paper, Zoomhackers, and unemployment. These words usually carry a negative connotation; after all, the coronavirus has stopped the world in its tracks.

Yet, through the grace of God, glimmers of hope rise above the bad news, and evidence of courage, kindness, heroism, strength, and faith remind us that the Lord is and always has been in control.

During this crisis, it has been challenging to be of service to those within our church and school communities, as well as to those in the community at large. Yet churches and schools have embraced the opportunity to put into action the mission of the Hawaii Conference: REACH UP (worship), REACH AROUND (fellowship), REACH OUT (evangelism), and REACH IN (nurture).

Adventist Malama Elementary School
By Cathie Workman, Principal

We made the decision to allow the parents of Malama Na Keiki O Waianae Preschool to use the elementary school’s tablets and online resources so that children from the preschool could continue early learning during the stay-at-home work-from-home mandate. Some of the preschoolers are already registered to move into the elementary school next year, and we wanted to help them continue their learning in preparation for the fall.

Parents have made masks for our Miki Nelson delivers the cleaning supplies that Adventist Malama Elementary School donated to Adventist Health Castle.
Hawaiian Mission Academy
By Joe Lee, Principal

At Hawaiian Mission Academy, we understand that we are all struggling together during this pandemic. It is a passion of Marshall Freitas, our dormitory dean and cook, to give to others. Marshall offers weekly meals to families who have been financially affected by the coronavirus. Families come to campus and pick up prepared meals for their loved ones. In this time of social distancing and fear, we want to remind people that service never stops.

"Through men [and women] His blessings are to be conveyed to the world. Through them His glory is to shine forth into the darkness of sin. In loving ministry they are to meet the sinful and the needy, and lead them to the cross" (Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 330).

Hawaiian Mission Academy
Ka Lama Iki
By Sarah Traczyk, Principal

On March 23, Adventist schools on Oahu were asked if we had any cleaning supplies on campus that we could share with Adventist Health Castle, as our campuses had already moved to online learning and there was a medical supply shortage looming over Hawaii. We were so happy to be able to raid our supply closets and deliver cases of Clorox wipes, paper towels, and other cleaning supplies. Our donation was relatively small, but the happiness it brought to the staff to give all we could to help our Adventist hospital was a blessing.

An extended blessing came when we shared this request with other private schools across the State of Hawaii, which triggered an outpouring of cleaning and medical supplies from other schools to their local health facilities.

One thing we’re doing to help students and their families while they are learning at home is to share silly science experiments once a week through our Facebook page. Learning is fun, but it’s extra special when we can share laughter during a difficult time. We’re proud to be sharing smiles, and, while the actions themselves may seem small, they come from a place filled with lots of love, heart, and hope.

Hawaiian Mission Academy
Windward Campus
By Hilda Scott, Principal

I am proud to be part of a team that is pouring their love into engaging with families and students through this uncertain time. Transforming to online teaching has been both overwhelming and a fun challenge, depending on the day. Students, families, and teachers have been incredibly positive and flexible during this unprecedented time. Teachers have worked to provide positive material for our students and to create happy memories for them online. Students are finding unique ways to continue classroom traditions in the digital space. We are a family in the Hawaii Conference, and we are in this together, supporting one another.

On the school Facebook page, we have provided chapel experiences and HMA Windward Campus makes the most of distance learning during stay-at-home orders.
stories are read aloud. Youth Director Erik VanDenburgh is working with various speakers from far and wide to provide a virtual Week of Prayer. This program will be shared with all of our Adventist elementary schools in Hawaii.

The staff at HMA Windward continue seeking creative ways to provide virtual events for our students and families to look forward to. We will continue School Spirit days online—students can participate from home and post pictures on the school Facebook page. Families and teachers are working together to create a special graduation ceremony for our 8th graders, which may be a combination social media/drive-through event.

Last week, during Parent/Teacher Conferences, a parent referred to something I had said to my class during devotions on Zoom, stating how encouraging it was for him to hear. My heart was filled with gratitude. It made me realize that our ministry is bigger now than ever! Now our voices are reaching past our classrooms, to anyone within earshot. We can trust that God will use it all to His glory.

Honolulu Japanese Church
By Jane Chun, Executive Director, Hale Kokua O Manoa

Our church started a community center, called Hale Kokua O Manoa, a couple of years ago. The center has seven or eight regular programs that met weekly or biweekly, as well as other monthly events.

In early to mid-March, we decided to cancel all programs until further notice due to the pandemic, but we still wanted to do something to help the community. Church members were able to mobilize within a few days, gathering toiletries and non-perishable items. We came up with a plan to distribute 70 of these care bags to the immediate neighbors of the church in Manoa, as well as to all of the Meals on Wheels clients in Manoa. Our plans to distribute 130 more bags the following week were put on hold after the mayor issued the stay-at-home order, but we still have more bags and supplies available for those who request help.

Through our Facebook page, website, email, and word of mouth, we have spread the word that we will assist those who need help with grocery shopping or other errands. Community members have expressed gratitude for the care bags and have said they will share the supplies with others who need it.

Kaneohe and Hauula Churches, Waiola Worship Center
By Tim Nelson, Pastor

COVID-19 may have shut down the building, but it has opened the church in more ways than we could have imagined. In the Kaneohe and Hauula churches and Waiola Worship Center district, we are trying to...
keep connected during these times through social media, especially using Facebook as a means to unite and inspire our members. Isolation poses the danger of us retreating into ourselves, but it is our duty to be God’s blessing to the world. It was critical that we create ministerial opportunities for members to bless the community; therefore, the call was put out to try using social media. Unsure of how to wield the technology, but sure that God would speak through them, members responded in faith.

Each day a different member steps up to give a message of hope, inspiration, and encouragement via our Facebook group. Sundays are reserved for health talks from Princeton Simeona. On Mondays Blanca Castellanos shares end-time thoughts and quotes from Ellen White. Tuesday has provided me the opportunity to interview some of the great hearts in the church (i.e., Ralph Watts, III, Hawaii Conference president; Walter Nelson, retired pastor; Jesse Seibel, director of Mission and Spiritual Care at Adventist Health Castle; Jonathan Leonardo, Love Reality Tour Evangelist—with many more to come). Wednesdays are a special treat for the community when former Kaneohe and Honolulu Central church pastor, Elder Walter Nelson, brings words of wisdom to uplift. Kaneohe church pastoral intern Sonia Cartwright shares an inspirational devotional on Thursday. On Fridays I give a thought or two. And then on Sabbath we gather virtually for a thoughtful Sabbath School led by Jonathan Bryant, Hauula church head elder, and a powerful time of praise with Waialoa worship leaders Monte and Isaac De La Cruz.

Furthermore, throughout the week members share stories of hope, praise, and encouragement with each other through social media, spreading our own spiritual brand of Aloha beyond the physical walls of our church buildings into the far reaches of our world. Before this pandemic, members found it hard to witness to their unbelieving friends and family. Now, by simply sharing how God has blessed them during this time of darkness, they have been able to speak directly to their hearts. Every day more members are stepping out of their comfort zone to add to the chorus of online praise, spurred on by the examples of faith from their brothers and sisters. COVID-19 may have shut down the buildings for now, but it has allowed the church to open itself to more than we thought possible.

**Kona Adventist Christian School**
*By Beverly Church, Principal*

Dr. Leon Matsuo, a Kona Adventist Christian School alumnus, was our chapel speaker in March. He emphasized the importance of hand washing for 20 seconds, using hand sanitizers, covering coughs and sneezes, and having tissues always available. He stressed how important it was for students to stay home if they were sick. It is important that we all do our part to keep our community and ourselves healthy and safe.

**Waimanalo and Oahu Hispanic Churches**
*By Jean-Marcel Clouzet, Pastor*

The Waimanalo church paired up with the Malama Meals program to help feed those in need within the Waimanalo community. Members of the Waimanalo and Oahu Hispanic churches help to deliver food to *kupuna* (Hawaiian for the elderly or grandparent) as well as those who may be living on the beach, in the woods, or in tents. *Malama* means to care for or to serve, and while the churches are currently feeding those in the Waimanalo community, they hope to further *malama* those in the community by seeking ways to provide machines for the homeless to wash their clothes, especially during this COVID-19 crisis.
The coronavirus was just gaining media attention when Holbrook Indian School began its spring break. One of our students, who had a less than ideal home life on the reservation, received permission from her guardian to spend spring break with the family of two other students, who lived in the Phoenix area. These two students also had challenges at home, so staff members offered to keep the three students during the break. However, the three were determined to spend their spring break having fun in the “big city.”

Later, we received the news that all students had to stay home through the end of April, with the possibility that schools would be closed for the rest of the school year. Throughout the spring break, we checked in with these three students and were assured that all was going well. However, after the second week, the visiting student shared that under the circumstances she wished to be with her family. One of our teachers was able to pick her up and return her to Holbrook Indian School. The next day, our director of development made the two-hour drive through the Navajo reservation to take the student home.

At that point, there were only two cases of COVID-19 confirmed on the Navajo reservation. A revival meeting had taken place the week before, and it is believed that an outsider brought the coronavirus to the reservation. A
stay-at-home order was put in place. As of April 15, there are more than 800 cases and 28 confirmed deaths. “We’ll persevere through this. I don’t know why this is happening. We just don’t know why but God knows,” said Jonathan Nez, Navajo Nation President. “We just put our faith in our prayers, put our faith in our creator, that we know that we will overcome.” Holbrook Indian School invites you to join us in praying for our students, their families, and all the people of the Navajo Nation.

Starting in April, the Navajo Nation was put under a nightly curfew. During Easter weekend, a 57-hour curfew was implemented in which Navajo Police issued more than 100 citations for violations. Nez said he wouldn’t rule out another 57-hour curfew to keep his people safe. In mid-April, the Navajo Nation began receiving rapid testing kits, which will allow people to get their COVID-19 test results back within hours.

We are always concerned about the well-being of our students when they are away from campus. During this time, we have even more to be concerned about. Homes are very small, and often more than one family lives together, creating cramped and unhealthy conditions that will make the spread of the virus harder to contain. Food scarcity has always been

Holbrook Indian School invites you to join us in praying for our students, their families, and all the people of the Navajo Nation.

A little Navajo girl outside her home in Canyon de Chelly.
HIS teachers, counselors, and mentors are reaching out to students to help them stay connected to our loving Savior by praying with them and sharing Bible texts and devotionals.

an issue; we shudder to think how much worse it is now.

Our boys’ dean, Mike Findorff, and his wife had a wonderful opportunity to impact two students who live with their grandmother on the Apache Reservation. Mrs. Findorff called them often to ensure that everything was going well.

One day she asked if they needed anything. After some hesitation, the student admitted, “We could use some food.” Mrs. Findorff sensed that the student was embarrassed to be sharing that. She immediately promised to see what could be done.

HIS had funds available to help out. The Findorffs headed to the store to buy groceries, and that evening they drove to the reservation. It was already dark and cold when Mr. and Mrs. Findorff arrived. The students’ grandmother came out to meet them. “Thank you,” she repeated over and over. Not long after this, the Apache Reservation put a stay-at-home order in place and travel is now being restricted.

Our teachers are also hard at work serving our students. Sharon Lodge, one of our elementary teachers, spends half an hour on the phone with each of her students, reviewing
Holbrook Indian School (HIS) is a first- through twelfth-grade boarding academy operated by the Pacific Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. HIS also manages a first- through eighth-grade day school on the Navajo reservation in Chinle, Arizona. Eighty percent of funding comes from individuals who have a desire to support Native American ministries and Christian education. Your generosity makes a difference in the lives of our students, their families, and the communities they serve. Thank you for your support.

Many HIS students live in Monument Valley.

We often hear our students say that they miss being at school. Holbrook Indian School is a safe place for them to live, learn, and grow. It’s a sanctuary from the trauma and disconnect they face in their lives. Jaden, one of our elementary students, told Ms. Lodge, “I can’t wait to be back at school!” We are hearing this from many of our students.

We don’t know what the new normal will be once the pandemic is over. We do know that the support we receive is more important than ever as we continue to serve our students and this community. It is through faithfulness to this unique ministry that together we can help ensure that Native American children and youth continue to receive a Christian education and go into the world knowing that their Creator loves them and has a plan for them.
The world began through an unfathomable act of brilliant creativity that human minds cannot comprehend. Earthly life, marred as it has become, abounds with innumerable exquisite moments and elements, all the handiwork of the original Artist who expressed Himself and communicated His deep love through creating what previously did not exist.

The stated aim and mission of Seventh-day Adventist education is to pursue whole-person development and produce service-oriented, joyful individuals who are deeply connected to and modeled after our Creator God.

The visual, performing, and literary arts provide a multitude of avenues for students to develop in this way, to function as “brand ambassadors”—storytellers for our Creator and for His gospel mission and objective to create new lives out of suffering, to give a voice to the marginalized, and to know ourselves and each other in a meaningful way.

“The arts give us meaning and help us communicate our stories and experiences across time,” said Terrill Thomas, chair of La Sierra University’s Art+Design department. “Without visual
communication…no organization, including the SDA church, would be able to communicate their message to an increasingly connected and visually literate society.”

He added, “The only way we can influence the world is to engage with the world and connect our students to art and design careers to every industry around the world.”

Alums of La Sierra’s arts programs over the decades have made their presence known across industries, including within the Adventist denomination. Among them: the late Wayne Hooper, a 1941 La Sierra music alum and prolific gospel music writer, arranger, Kings Heralds quartet singer, and coordinator of the 1985 Seventh-day Adventist hymnal; 1975 and 1977 English department grad Donald Davenport, award-winning television script writer for Hallmark Channel movies and Kenny Rogers book collaborator; 2003 music grad and operatic mezzo-soprano Kimberly Sogioka, whose performances on high-profile stages have garnered rave reviews; 2008 music alum and baritone Abdiel González, who has also appeared in significant operatic productions and on major feature film soundtracks and television scores; Curt Doty, an Art+Design graduate whose branded and original content company, Vertuoso, is making waves with such clients as The Grammy Awards, Spaulding sporting goods and HUD; Patricia Fa’asua, English department/drama program graduate and actress on the 2019 TV miniseries Unbelievable.

Input and interaction with professionals, and professional involvement on the part of faculty, are vital to the development of relevant arts skills and serve as inroads to industries.

La Sierra University Students and faculty of La Sierra’s Art+Design department won a record number of Addy Awards this March.

The drama program through the English department is led by Dr. Marilynn Loveless, a multi-award-winning theater director and screenplay writer who led past La Sierra drama groups to Kennedy Center honors and other recognitions. She brings experienced actors and directors to assist with the drama program’s productions.

Most of La Sierra’s music department faculty members, including its adjuncts, also function as professional musicians, appearing with such noted groups as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Pacific Symphony Orchestra, and many other leading groups. Its members have won Emmy and other awards, played on film score soundtracks, and made significant marks as prolific composers. Its Hanson-Koobs Chamber Music Series brings high-profile classical artists to the region at little cost to audiences, and the annual Montecito International Music Festival includes free performances by some of classical music’s most eminent artists.

Art+Design’s Thomas and faculty also function as professional artists in the Los Angeles and Riverside areas. The department partners with design companies and brings in visiting artists to teach classes. The department’s Brandstater Gallery, under the direction of Tim Musso, assistant professor and an exhibiting artist, brings in recognized artists and curators each year.
The department’s students have won multiple regional Addy Awards from the American Advertising Award. This March, Art+Design brought home a record 16 student Addy Awards and three professional awards, with marketing and graphic design student Katie Nichols winning a $1,500 Academic Achievement Scholarship Award, a department first.

The Film and Television Production Department, one of La Sierra’s newest disciplines, brings accomplished film industry professionals into the classroom to deliver firsthand knowledge of the business. The program is led by Rodney Vance, an award-winning writer, producer, and director whose short film *The Butterfly, the Harp and the Timepiece* starred Oscar-winner Melissa Leo and Golden Globe-winner Alex Ebert. Vance also wrote *Miracle at Gate 213*, a 2013 holiday television drama produced by Faith for Today and starring Oscar-winner Louis Gossett, Jr. Film students’ work has been recognized by film festivals around the world, including by the SonScreen Film Festival organized by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

The department has recently realigned its degree programming in keeping with industry demand and toward enhancing the employability of its students. The department’s Bachelor of Fine Arts degree teaches all of the basic skills required to complete a video or short film with advanced specializations in either editing or sound. The BFA also incorporates workshops teaching vocational skills in software and gear, for which students receive a certificate.

“Editors from *Spectrum* and *Adventist Review* regularly visit our Writing for Publication class and give students insights into what makes for a successful submission,” said Sari Fordham, associate professor of English and creative writing, and a multi-award-winning writer. Her students’ work has frequently appeared in Adventist youth publications such as *Guide*, *Primary Treasure*, and *Insight*, as well as *Spectrum* and *Adventist Review*.

Fordham’s creative writing class launched *The Road Runner Review*, a student-produced international literary journal that brings together students from various universities around the world. Two of La Sierra’s students won awards in 2019 from the Society of Adventist Communicators for their work on the *Review*.

During the current coronavirus
For more on how La Sierra University’s programs are handling online learning and student virtual interaction visit https://lasierra.edu/together/

pandemic, arts instruction has merged into online delivery mode and public programming has been temporarily suspended in light of county and state stay-at-home orders. Faculty are presenting classes on Zoom video conferencing and other platforms and pushing their own creative efforts to teach the arts remotely.

In addition to lecturing and doing art critique sessions on Zoom, Art+Design faculty are asking students to post their progress online to Pixieset.com. Professors screen-record their feedback and send students a Quicktime file. They are also using overhead iPhone tripods to record video demonstrations.

A+D department ‘FAM’ food nights, held with Film and TV students, are also continuing via Zoom.

During the pandemic quarantine, Film and Television students have been challenged to create a short film that is shot entirely in the space they are inhabiting using equipment they have on hand, and to learn lighting techniques with light sources that are available to them.

“We are creators,” Vance told his students. “We are the best-equipped people on the planet to deal with this kind of abrupt change. We tell the stories that give people hope, that hold communities together.”

Noted Vance, “Stories reveal the process of human change and growth and so are foundational to the human experience. Ideologies and positions divide us; stories unite us and invite us into a communal experience strong enough to create the world we long for. The question is, what kind of world do we long for?”

La Sierra students participate in a recent improv drama production at Matheson Hall.

David J. Puder, MD, medical director of the MEND program at the Loma Linda University Behavioral Medicine Center (BMC), said news reports can increase a person’s fear of a topic. “News shows can make it feel like COVID-19 is happening right outside your front door,” he said. “I don’t believe intentionally minimizing the virus is good preparation, but it’s important to keep things in perspective.”

Puder recommends some things to consider through this period:

**Take a break from the news**
While it may feel important to know everything that’s going on, the damage from too much media exposure might outweigh the good. Try scheduling times in your day when you take a break from the news. “This can be helpful for those of us who are empathic and deeply feel for the stories we are hearing,” Puder said.

**Log out of social media**
When you’re physically distanced from your friends, family, or co-workers, you can be tempted to spend a lot of your day on social media. But this can quickly become overwhelming. “When we see other people’s worst-case scenarios, it creates the same type of stress in us,” Puder said. “We can be aware without letting it consume us.” Staying connected is important, but Puder warns against using social media as our source of information.

**Exercise**
Getting out to exercise is more important than ever during stressful times. Fresh air and physical activity are good for both your mental health and physical well-being. “We store stress in our bodies, so it’s essential to stay active to release all that stress,” he says. “Get your blood flowing and receive the positive benefits of moving around a bit.” If you’re not comfortable going out, it’s easy to find workout videos you can follow along with at home.

**Practice deep breathing**
Breathing may feel basic, but deep breaths can be important for both getting oxygen to the brain and calming the body. “You can find video tutorials online that show you how to use breathing to bring your body and mind back into a myelinated parasympathetic state—that rest and relaxation state,” Puder said.

**Eat healthily**
Eat as healthy as you can while you’re isolated. This is especially important if you have limited ability to go outside or be as physically active as you’re used to. “It feels like some people are hoarding for a six-month ordeal,” Puder said. “But it’s important to keep fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet—both for your mind and your body.”

**Connect with others**
It’s important to stay connected to your loved ones, especially when you’re feeling like you’re missing the association with the people you value. “Call people, text them, stay involved in what’s going on with them,” Puder said. “Stay in contact with people who make you happy.”

Puder encourages people to contact their healthcare provider if stress starts feeling unmanageable. He also encourages people with existing mental health conditions to continue with their prescribed treatments and be aware of any new or worsening symptoms.
Navigating Possible Hospitalization During COVID-19

By Heather Jackson

Throughout much of the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic, the United States was the most impacted nation in the world, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. With no clear projection of the disease’s ongoing course, many wonder what the short- and long-term future holds.

Along with following good health habits and maintaining social distancing, medical professionals are urging people to consider another important issue: making your healthcare wishes known. Unfortunately, most individuals have not indicated the plan they would like medical professionals or their loved ones to follow in the case of sudden hospitalization or an end-of-life situation. Known as an “advance directive for healthcare,” this important document has been completed by only 37% of Americans. Among younger adults, only 29% have completed the advance directive process.

Gina Mohr, MD, a palliative medicine specialist at Loma Linda University Health, said not having a directive is one of the biggest mistakes a patient can make. Under ordinary times, few people have discussed what their wishes would be if they became seriously ill, Mohr said. When a person’s illness progresses to a point that they can no longer communicate, families are often left guessing what their loved one would want.

“The coronavirus pandemic presents new challenges for individuals, families, health professionals, and health systems,” Mohr said. “We are seeing patients get suddenly ill—sick enough to require being in the hospital and perhaps on a breathing machine. This pandemic makes it more important than ever to think and talk about the care you want before any hospital care may happen.”

Mohr says medical professionals will always err on the side of saving a life if there is not an advance directive. To ensure you have control in decisions concerning your end-of-life care, Mohr provides this guide:

High-risk groups currently receiving care

Mohr says patients will still receive the best treatment possible if they are currently undergoing treatments such as chemotherapy for cancer. It is still important to have a plan during these times, since at-risk groups have a higher probability of contracting the coronavirus. If during your care you contract COVID-19, treatment will not resume until you have recovered from the disease.

Healthy individuals who need to go to the hospital

Medical professionals do all they can to save the lives of otherwise healthy individuals who suddenly become acutely ill and arrive at the hospital. When this happens, Mohr wants individuals to remember they cannot have loved ones present in the hospital at this time, increasing the importance of having an advance directive in place. In addition, medical professionals may not have much time to contact a family member to discuss potential care decisions. Be prepared and provide a copy of your advance directive to first responders and when you go to the hospital.

At-risk groups wishing to handle end-of-life care at home

Most deaths during this pandemic have occurred in certain high-risk groups: the elderly, those with immunocompromised systems, and those with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and others. Loved ones and individuals who are aware of this statistic may be hesitant to go to the hospital or send their loved one from one of these groups. If you prefer to keep your loved one home, Mohr suggests reaching out to your physician, who will guide you through completing a POLST (Physician Order for Life Sustaining Treatment) form that will allow you to communicate your wishes to first responders or others on the healthcare team. Complete the requested health information before an emergency strikes.

See the latest news and Health & Wellness stories from Loma Linda University Health at news.llu.edu.
After Matt and Sarah Gill attended Financial Peace University, hosted by the Adventist Center of Influence in Reno, they were inspired to bring the program to their home church. When Sarah approached the board of the Fallon church to seek support for the class, the church agreed to host the class, as well as sponsor 15 memberships to ease the financial burden for people who wanted to attend.

Encouraged by the response from the church board, Sarah extended an invitation, via Fallon church’s informational Facebook page, to anyone in town who would like to learn more about financial freedom. One family in town had taken the class previously; they’d been so blessed by it that they requested to sponsor a membership to bless someone else with what they had learned. Four people from the community signed up for the class and attended faithfully almost every week.

Jose Kary, head elder of the Fallon church, heard about Financial Peace University at the board meeting, so he and his wife, Claritza, were among the first to sign up. After the class was finished, Jose said, “The Financial Peace University class was very helpful for my wife and me. I wish we had known about this savings system when we first got married. We would be living debt free, with a lot of savings in the bank right now. At the moment we are on baby step one, but we are reducing our debt very aggressively. This class has definitely been a blessing for us.”

When Sarah signed up to be a facilitator, the counselor from Financial Peace University estimated that with a church membership the size of Fallon’s, the class would likely have four to eight participants. The class ended up having 22 people attend nearly every week.

Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University presents guidelines broken down into seven baby steps:

1. Save $1,000 for your starter emergency fund.
2. Pay off all non-mortgage debt.
3. Save 3 to 6 months of expenses in a fully funded emergency fund.
4. Invest 15% of your household income in retirement.
5. Save for your children’s college fund.
6. Pay off your home early.
7. Build wealth and give generously.

Ramsey uses the analogy of a gazelle running from a lion to illustrate the intensity with which people should be running from debt—like it is life or death!

The second week of the class, participants were asked to provide a financial snapshot: Non-mortgage debt, credit card accounts, and liquid cash available. Then, throughout the 10 weeks of the class, people worked with “gazelle-like intensity” to save money and pay off debt. In
less than two months, the 22 people, representing 17 households, paid off $21,491 of debt, saved $34,824, and paid off and closed 18 credit card accounts!

Matt and Sarah loved facilitating the class and can’t wait to do it again. Sarah said, “Taking Financial Peace University was life changing for us. Not only in the way we dealt with our money, but in opening up conversations between Matt and me about money and our dreams that helped to strengthen our marriage in a very special way. We wanted to share that blessing with others, and we were blown away by all the amazing people that attended our class. Each one brought a unique perspective to our discussions, and we are so proud of everything everyone accomplished during this class.”

The final baby step is “Build wealth and give generously.” The goal of the class is to teach people to be responsible with God’s money to the point that their own cup runs over and they share God’s blessings with those around them.

This class ended mere days before the world came to a halt in an effort to stem the spread of the coronavirus. Graduates of the class are entering this challenge with less debt and more savings to carry them through, along with a greater desire to reach out and help others. While everyone is self-isolating, Roxann Hamilton, a church member in Fallon as well as a Financial Peace University participant, is helping her elderly friends and neighbors. “I’ve been checking on people, taking them food, and picking up prescriptions. The biggest thing is praying for and encouraging people. These are unprecedented times, but we serve a big God!”

It’s reassuring to know that the God we serve not only owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” but is also the Great Healer. Even in these uncertain times, we can trust our God with absolutely everything—our health, our finances, our families, and our future.
There is no doubt that we are living in very unusual times. COVID-19 has surely changed the way we live and behave as a society. During these difficult times, Adventist schools have been impacted by government recommendations meant to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. One of these recommendations has been to cancel in-person classes and move instruction to a distance learning platform. Suddenly, all students are at home with their parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and in some cases, grandparents. One big, happy family!

Except for essential workers, most adults and children are required to stay at home. Here in Reno, Nevada, where Fernando Lista lives with his family, residents have been asked to remain in their houses as much as possible. Lista and his wife, Cristine, decided that they needed to organize themselves differently as a family if they were going to be successful with the things that needed to be done, including their job responsibilities.

The Listas have two boys, Kian and Dallan, who attend Riverview Christian Academy in Reno. The school faculty and staff have been amazing in helping parents and students continue with the education program remotely. Teachers have prepared lesson plans in advance, made creative weekly educational packets, set up Zoom meetings (videoconferencing software), and opened virtual classrooms for the kids to connect and retrieve important educational information and post completed work. In addition, teachers have been available via text messages, facetime calls, etc. Lista says, “I understand this whole process hasn’t been easy for parents, but I’ve realized that this must have been really difficult for teachers as well.”

In these unique times, in the Lista family, the work weekday schedule runs like this: Kids wake up around 7:30 a.m., they all have breakfast, then family worship. The parents take turns: one assists the children in completing their academic work while the other gets some work done. In between this and the kids’ Zoom meetings with their teachers and classmates, there is time for the boys to ride bikes, read books, play Legos (or other toys), and go outside and play close to the house (away from other kids in the neighborhood). The goal is to finish the academic schedule by 2 p.m. “But one of the things we’ve learned with homeschooling is that flexibility is everything,” Lista shared. “There are days that are better than others, but my wife and I have come to realize the hidden blessings of spending more time together as a family. Also, we understand the consequences that COVID-19 has had on many people’s jobs and professions. Not being able to work and produce an income is nerve-racking. In our community, the local church’s Center of Influence continues to provide free food through its daily pantry service.”

In spite of the adversities and difficulties we are all facing, as a family the Listas find comfort in the way God has guided their lives. Lista offered these encouraging words: “If we manage to keep present in our minds all of God’s interventions in our lives, the miracles He has performed, and His providence leading us up to this point, we can rest assured that this same God won’t abandon us in our time of need (Exodus 16; Numbers 11; Psalm 23, Mathew 28:19-21). The One who never fails (Joshua 21:45, Luke 1:37), the One who doesn’t lie or deceive (Numbers 23:19, Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18), and the One who never changes (Isaiah 40:8, 1 Peter 1:25) has promised to give us, soon, very soon, an eternal home with endless happiness and absence of pain, tears, and death (Revelation 21:4). Thank you, Jesus!”

Today’s technology has been a tremendous help in keeping students like Kian Lista in touch with teachers and classmates.

Dallan Lista wrote a story about the difficulty his dad had finding milk and seeing all the empty shelves at the grocery store during the stay-at-home challenges.
Families from Riverview Christian Academy (RCA) in Reno, Nevada, had the opportunity to participate in a community service project for those in their school family who are serving on the front lines of this pandemic. Parent Krista Wyman and her children Dani (second grade), Brody (sixth grade), and Rylee (tenth grade) organized an appreciation gift for physician Cristine Lista and nurse Mia Finau. Both Lista and Finau are working with patients each day, serving them unselfishly in spite of high risk for themselves and their families.

Krista and her children contacted RCA families, asking them first of all to pray for these ladies and their families. They were encouraged to collect small, thoughtful gifts that would bring a smile to their faces (examples: gum, hair ties, healthy snacks, hand sanitizer, and so on). These gifts were then taken to a drop-off container that was provided in front of each of the homes. At each home, near the container, was a giant card inviting others to write words of encouragement as they dropped off their gifts.

Second-grader Dani Wyman said, "It was fun making the posters and getting everything ready! I wanted them to feel appreciated and remind them all that Jesus loves us. It makes me sad that I can't play with them [their children] now, so this was a way to make them feel happier, because they could be missing friends too."

This project was a surprise that really meant a lot to Lista and Finau. Wyman and her children also made posters and gift baskets for other frontline medical workers that live in their neighborhood. The Wymans invited neighbors to participate while walking their dogs or on their drive home, and the neighbors were delighted to help out with such a worthwhile project.

"When my neighbor told me she is working in the respiratory unit at the hospital daily and felt that she and her family may be asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19, she wasn't comfortable with the girls going on a quick bike ride," Krista Wyman said. "This got my family conversing about the extent of the worry that all of these frontline families may feel and how a little something thoughtful could brighten their days. The idea emerged and my kids learned a lesson in selflessness—that kind actions can be so rewarding, and others benefit beyond our knowledge. We are proud of and pray for all those involved that help to make our country and world a safer place to be."

Brody Wyman, a student at Riverview Christian Academy, prepares baskets to be left by the "frontliner" homes for gifts of appreciation.
Amid a whirlwind of change this spring, people in the Northern California Conference were in uncharted waters. In February, remote work, distance learning, and virtual ministry would have seemed impossible, but God clearly was and still is in control. NCC ministries, churches, and schools have continued to flourish, despite closing their physical doors.

“I’m so grateful for the dedication of our ministry leaders, pastors, teachers, and members,” said NCC President Marc Woodson. “During this difficult time, I am constantly inspired by their creativity and resilience to continue our mission. They continue to live up to our conference motto: ‘Doing what matters for the Kingdom.’

Conference ministries find new ways to serve

Online youth group organizes

The newly formed NCC Online Youth Group met for the first time on March 24, hosted by Youth Director Eddie Henrich, with about 75 conference teens and youth pastors in attendance. Since then, each Tuesday meeting includes a game, an icebreaker discussion, and a Bible study. “We want to provide a resource to support our youth during this difficult time,” said Heinrich. “It is also a fun way for them to interact and be social.”

Online Pathfinder club begins

Members of the newly formed online conference-wide Pathfinder club held their first meeting on April 2. Each Thursday, an average of 100 Pathfinders and leaders worship together, recite the pledge and law, and work on honors. Recently, the group worked on the cooking honor and the virus honor. Organized by Heinrich and the Pathfinder area coordinators, the club will continue to meet for months to come.

Edwin Elsner, Leoni Meadows assistant food service director, bakes bread.

Leoni Meadows provides bread to the community

Each week Leoni Meadows assistant food service director Edwin Elsner bakes 50 loaves of bread for housebound people in nearby Grizzly Flats. The camp donates the bread to a local church for distribution throughout the area. “Several community families are asking for three or four loaves at a time as they are without much in their pantries,” said Craig Heinrich, executive director. “The Leoni staff realize, now more than ever, the importance of helping our community.”
#engage

**Redwood Camp Meeting pauses**

In April, the Redwood Camp Meeting Executive Board voted not to hold Redwood Camp Meeting this year, to close the campground until the end of 2020, and to revise the current budget to keep the camp operational until next year. Redwood leaders and NCC administrators consider this development a pause—not an ending—to the ongoing camp meeting tradition. "We know people are disappointed with this painful decision, and our leadership is very sad, too," said Redwood Area Camp Director Harry Salvini.

**Local churches care for their members and the community**

Most NCC churches are livestreaming or prerecording their worship services and other meetings—including the Richmond Beacon Light church, the Hayward Spanish church, the Sacramento Samoan church, the Red Bluff church, and the Elmshaven church. Some congregations are serving their communities with food distribution, including Camino, Chico Spanish, Crescent City, Fairfield Community, Lockeford, Oakland Market Street, Palo Cedro, Pleasant Hill, Sacramento Fijian, and Valley Community.

**Adapting to community need**

The Carmichael church transformed their nine-year-old traditional food bank into a drive-through food pantry, now open twice a week. Video of volunteers loading food into people’s trunks appeared 14 times on a number of local news programs. Recently, the pantry received a $10,000 grant to help with the increased need for food in the local area. In early April, the pantry provided food for 940 people in one day.

Families and younger volunteers—elementary through college students—stepped in to fill the gap when the usual retiree volunteers could no longer help. "We have been running extremely smoothly," said Senior Pastor Keith Jacobson. "It’s been a real joy to see so many people willing to serve."

**Ministering with daily contact**

Lodi Fairmont church Senior Pastor Tracy Baerg uploads a daily devotional video titled “The Word: Embrace Grace” and texts a link to around 250 church members, colleagues, and others. “I felt God impressing me to reach out via text to share inspiring Bible promises,” said Baerg. Associate Pastor Jesse Malin shares, too.

**Building relationships through community service**

Each of Pastor Gresford Thomas's congregations—Lincoln Amazing Grace, Penn Valley, and Olivehurst—hosts its own weekly drive-through food giveaway. The churches partner with nonprofit organizations to acquire the necessary resources. Thomas reports that community members are grateful for the opportunity to serve. During this difficult time, he is ministering to his volunteers as well as to people receiving food. "It's almost like I have a fourth church of community people," he said.
Collaborating to make a difference

The Napa Spanish church distributes food twice a month with the help of the National Guard, which has been deployed to support the work of food banks across the country. “We are blessed to have these young people serving our nation and helping us with the community,” said Pastor José Díaz. During the current crisis, the number of people coming to the church for food has tripled. Recently, volunteers served 536 families in two days.

Supporting law enforcement

The Placerville church women’s ministry (and friends) sewed 1,700 face masks and donated them to county agencies and community members. Recipients included the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office, a newborn intensive care unit, several substance abuse recovery facilities, a maternity home, senior services, and more. “This simple project has turned into a very big opportunity to serve our community,” said Daisy Stephens, who leads the women’s ministry along with Edie Stewart.

The sheriff’s office posted a message on its Facebook page: “A very grateful and special thank you to the Placerville Seventh-day Adventist Church Women’s Ministry for their donation of masks… [The masks are] headed to our jails, where our correctional staff is working diligently to keep themselves and those in their care safe from COVID-19.”

Adapting to new circumstances

When its county issued an early stay-at-home order, the Pleasant Hill church had already started a nine-day series, “All About Jesus,” presented by Lee Venden. He continued the series while church members—as well as people from other states and countries—watched at home. On the final Sabbath,
people in 144 households viewed the worship service. “Our members told me they are grateful that—of all weeks—this week we would have a revival all about Jesus,” said Senior Pastor Mitch Williams.

**Continuing ministry over breakfast**

Tracy church Pastor Tyler Kraft and his wife, Crystal, teach Sabbath School from their living room. “The number of people attending Sabbath School has increased, and it has become a family setting where members join in, even while finishing breakfast,” he said.

**Taking care of one another**

The Woodland church has a creative way of encouraging its members to check in with each other. “We have created a circle that is made of the names of all of our members/attendees,” said Pastor Dan Garza. “Every person is to look after the person to the left and right of their name. It’s quite effective! People really feel cared for.”

**Educators, parents, and students collaborate**

NCC teachers, parents, and students navigate the distance learning experience together. Since personal connection is vital to success, the NCC education department and principals encourage teachers to make a daily connection with their students.

Educators ensure their virtual classrooms meet the North American Division standards for teaching, which exceed standards set by the state of California. “Teachers are jumping in to make education happen,” said Albert Miller, superintendent of schools. “I see innovation and collaboration between experienced teachers and those newer to the profession. It is very inspiring.”

**Chico Oaks Adventist School**

Every morning, kindergarten teacher JoAnn Moon posts a video explaining a topic, reads a book about it, and gives students an activity to do. One mother reported that her daughter gets up and watches Moon’s video several times every morning.

**Lodi Academy**

While students learn at home, Lodi Academy provides spiritual support and promotes school spirit. The school hosts livestream worships and posts prerecorded worship talks by staff and students. The student association plans games and activities, such as school spirit days. “We are trying to capture online what we would normally have in school,” said Principal John Winslow. “We want our whole Lodi Academy family to know they are still loved and cared for, and—most importantly—that Jesus loves them.”

**Napa Christian Campus of Education**

Each K-8 student received a box full of hands-on learning items delivered to their home. The boxes included the ingredients to make a volcano, materials to learn fingerprint science, items to construct the armor of God, and more. Middle school kids received kits to make their own computers. To go along with the materials, the school created a website where families can view a weekly schedule, watch worship programs, and get instructions to tailor projects for their children.

Principal Justine Leonie encourages the families to do the best that they can and not worry if they don’t get everything done. She tells parents: “Don’t create a stressful environment at home for you and your family. It’s all about balance.”

**Sacramento Adventist Academy**

Sacramento Adventist Academy’s third-grade teacher Janine Harrington created a virtual field trip to a stable and explained how to care for horses. She planned to build on the trip to teach vocabulary and other lessons. Harrington and other teachers value the opportunity to reach out to their students. “The most important thing is that we are still connected to each other,” said Principal Matt Jakobsons.

**Orangevale SDA School**

Ensuring that families stay connected is a priority for Principal Brad Davis and his teachers. They post a daily greeting for school families, including information on disinfecting classrooms, plans for distance learning, and topics vital to learning success.

**Yreka Adventist Christian School**

To engage her students in learning, Meriah Matthews, lower grades teacher, records Miss Meriah’s Adventures and posts episodes on YouTube. She takes suggestions from her students and demonstrates the activities they propose. So far, her adventures have included tips to stay healthy, snowshoeing, outdoor safety, and horseback riding.

**Westlake SDA School**

Teacher’s aide Angela Benson teaches students American Sign Language (ASL) as a standard part of this one-room school’s curriculum. She continues teaching ASL through a one-on-one FaceTime call with each student.

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Like all other educational institutions, Pacific Union College (PUC) has felt the impact of COVID-19, not just in terms of academics and how learning takes place but in human terms because of social distancing and California’s shelter-in-place order.

Academically, PUC has done what most other educational institutions have done, which is transition to online learning via a variety of platforms and programs, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Canvas. Teachers and students can meet “face to face” from their own homes, share materials, and engage in other forms of school activities such as Student Association clubs and organizations.

“We started the quarter in online instruction only, and now that has extended to the entire quarter,” said Milbert Mariano, academic dean at PUC. “To help our students transition to online learning effectively, we have created a Student Emergency Fund, which has helped students who may need special assistance during this time and who may be confronting unforeseen personal challenges.”

Mariano added that students have shared that they are missing the residential education that has been very much at the heart of the PUC experience, and they are eager to return—just as faculty and staff are eager to have them back.

“In the meantime, the best indications are that students and faculty are working well together to make the transition to online instruction and learning,” he said.

Social media has played a huge role in helping students and faculty stay connected, not just academically but simply as a community, adding an element of warmth and lighthearted humor to an otherwise very difficult situation.

On the school’s Facebook page and on Instagram, professor Chantel Blackburn shared a video of herself at the end of March “commuting” between the kitchen to her office for her first day of spring quarter online teaching, stating she hoped to not encounter too much traffic and narrowly avoiding a “speedbump”—a cat lounging on the floor.

On Instagram, the university also asked students and staff to share their remote classrooms, and several responded with “classroom selfies” of their work-from-home desks. On Instagram, students have also shared their tips for staying organized and on track in a new at-home environment.

Professor Damaris Perez shared a story on IG TV, reading from the book *Be Who You Are* by Todd Parr. She prefaced her story by saying, “Hi everyone. You’re probably at home thinking, ‘Boy, I wish for once our professors would read to us.’ Well, today is your lucky day.” She concluded by saying, “We can’t wait to have you back on campus. Please be safe and take care of yourself.”

Bob Cushman, PUC president, offers words of encouragement in an online video, reading portions of Psalm 91.
PUC’s annual student week of prayer was conducted entirely online, with students working together to organize and carry it out.

Pets are also a common new fixture in online learning, making guest appearances in their humans’ remote learning and work photos, sometimes “helping” to grade papers, but always boosting morale, even if snuggling up a little too close to laptop keyboards to do so.

On the school’s blog on the official website, Dana Negro, formerly a public relations and journalism major and now communication specialist in the Marketing and PR office at PUC, shared a blog post about what it’s like working from home. Negro wrote that she still starts her day at 8 a.m., with “management,” a dog named Stellaluna, “breathing down my neck” as she works. As a staff member, Negro’s days are filled with Zoom meetings, editing blog posts, writing, updating the school’s social media platforms, receiving updates from Napa County Public Health, and other related tasks.

For spiritual connection, the annual student week of prayer was conducted entirely online, with students working together to organize and carry it out. According to Mariano, “Our annual Student Week of Prayer was conducted online, and our students pulled the whole thing together and managed it, just as they normally do. There was already a lot being shared on social media, but that has expanded significantly.”

The PUC Facebook page and the PUC Parents and Families page have been a hub of not only sharing relevant information but also social connection. The pages contain videos, articles, and even the recipe for the PUC cafeteria’s famous biscuits and gravy.

Kent Rufo, campus chaplain, shared a short video devotional encouraging students to stay hopeful, drawing strength from several verses in Philippians 4 to face these new challenges and find contentment in all circumstances. “Whether you’re struggling or not, God will always provide,” Rufo said. “He will take care of you.”

The Facebook pages also contain timely updates on how COVID-19 is impacting the campus, such as the postponement of graduation weekend. “Rest assured that PUC remains committed to an on-campus commencement ceremony for your student when we are able to welcome everyone back to campus,” the statement read. “We are disappointed that we will not be able to celebrate with you all back on campus,” the statement read. “We are disappointed that we will not be able to celebrate with you in person on June 14, but we are in close contact with county officials and health professionals regarding the current guidelines, shelter-in-place orders, and event size regulations. We will have a date for you as soon as possible.”

In a video message posted on March 30, Bob Cushman, PUC president, offered words of encouragement, reading portions of Psalm 91.

“As we move forward during these next few weeks together, I want us to do so with hope, faith, and trust in our God,” he said.
Online Ministry Flourishes in Midst of Crisis

By Cynthia Mendoza

No one saw the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic coming—or the way it would significantly alter from one day to the next the way ministry is done. But neither did anyone foresee the mission-driven creativity and innovation that churches have embraced equally as fast to keep ministry going in new ways.

As recommendations not to assemble in large groups quickly morphed into government mandates to stay home, churches were not only forced to close their doors for Sabbath worship but were severely limited in how they could meet in small groups for planning and producing content. The biggest question was, “How are we going to do church on Sabbath if we can’t meet?”

Cue digital and online worship. Livestreaming church services was not new to many churches who had already been doing it for years, but for others it was a brand new experience that required a crash course in learning how to use technology in order to connect with their congregations and offer a worship service or any other kind of content.

But for both technologically experienced and inexperienced churches, there was still much unchartered territory in terms of learning how to digitally connect with members and be able to worship consistently in the weeks and months ahead.

“At first we just started on the telephone,” said Aurelio Huerta, district pastor of the Rubidoux Spanish and Lake Elsinore Spanish churches, of the initial steps he and elders took to stay connected to their congregations. “It was challenging to learn new technology. As a church we had some idea, but not really in depth.”

Huerta’s congregations were divided into seven groups comprised of seven families per group. Each group was assigned a day of the week when they meet together online to study the Sabbath School lesson. On Sabbath, Huerta then preaches live from his home.

“We’re trying to maintain a systematic way that church members stay in touch with each other, apart from my usual phone calls,” Huerta said. “This is how we keep our members engaged.”

For Valley Fellowship church in Rialto, using technology wasn’t necessarily new, but adapting to livestreaming was more of a challenge. Before this, the church simply recorded their sermons and then posted them to YouTube afterwards.

“We had to figure out how to go live as opposed to posting afterwards, because going live has different components,” said Baron Sovory, sole pastor of the church. They also became active on Facebook and Twitter.

Using budget-friendly programs, Valley Fellowship created a way for members to record the various parts of the church service throughout the week, such as the welcome and scripture reading; then those parts were easily integrated into the livestream.

Digital worship has also allowed the church to invite guest speakers from near and far to present for their online mid-week service.

“Our online prayer meetings have been some of the best attended in a long time,” Sovory said, adding that inviting guest speakers for online worship may be something they continue to do in the future, even after returning to on-site worship.

Darren Carrington, sole pastor of the Fullerton church, saw a need...
Southeastern California Conference

for people to feel comforted and connected from home, and he sought to fill it through a Facebook Live reading of Uncle Arthur’s Bible Stories.

Carrington reads two stories from the classic children's books twice a day. He goes live every morning and then posts a pre-recorded story reading later in the evening.

His story time has even reached families in Australia, one of whom shared a photo of their three girls watching story time on a large TV screen connected to YouTube.

Prior to the pandemic, the church already had a YouTube channel for sharing their Sabbath morning worship, but they were struggling to get subscribers. The silver lining in otherwise negative circumstances is that many more people have now subscribed in order to stay connected.

“People really want to connect,” Carrington said.

The youth department also took unprecedented steps to offer content and connection for kids and youth. Early in March, before stay-at-home orders were issues by the state, the youth department team and 12 youth and children’s pastors quickly planned and recorded a full Sabbath School program for the first Sabbath that churches would not be able to assemble as a group.

But creating content together became a challenge when the stay-at-home order was put in place. The kids’ Sabbath School production team divided up the different parts of a Sabbath School program and each recorded their part separately at home. The various parts, including the lessons from SECC’s Growing Young Sabbath School curriculum, are then put together and edited for the final video, which is shared on Sabbath morning on the youth department’s Facebook page.

“This experience affirmed that churches collaborating can produce amazing results,” said Manny Vitug, associate youth director for family and children's ministries. “It’s also an opportunity for churches to look at ministry beyond their own walls and touch a larger group of people.”

Patty Marruffo, associate youth director, echoed similar thoughts about the experience.

“We have amazing pastors who are willing to roll up their sleeves and produce content, not just for our own members but for our communities too,” she said. “For many people, church is life; it’s where they find nurturing and encouragement.”

For information on the youth department’s worship resources, visit their website at seccyouth.com. For a list of SECC churches offering online worship, visit secc.adventistfaith.org. To receive the latest news and updates from the conference, sign up to receive the SECC Now newsletter: http://bit.ly/seccnow.

A family in Australia shared this photo of their girls watching Darren Carrington, pastor of Fullerton church, reading an Uncle Arthur story.

Carrington reads two stories daily: one live in the morning and one prerecorded and shared later in the evening.
From church parking lots to busy street corners, church members in the Southeastern California Conference are making a tangible difference in their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted lives worldwide.

As the virus began to spread in the U.S. and local governments began instituting social restrictions to slow its increase, toilet paper appeared to be the first basic commodity that began to run out in stores. Soon, it became very difficult to find any at all.

Jonny Blue, a member of the Escondido church, decided to do something to help. He took to the streets of Encinitas, Calif., to collect and share rolls of toilet paper, while carrying a sign that read, “Share your toilet paper.”

“I saw that people were looking out for themselves but weren’t being very considerate of others,” Blue said of his observation that many were obtaining excessive amounts of toilet paper, which left nothing for other people. “I wanted to encourage others to be good neighbors and do something for their community.”

Blue eventually set up a table on the street corner where others could drop off basic commodities like toilet paper and food. He set up a sign behind the table that read, “We are here to help.” People who needed food or any of the items on the table were free to take what they needed, and people who had enough to share were encouraged to do so by leaving it at the table.

The outreach, which happened only a few times before stay-at-home orders were put in place, made a difference for those who had a real need.

“The benefit of this experience was that it encouraged people to think of others,” Blue said. “We shouldn’t be judgmental of people acting out of fear. We’re all doing the best we can.”

Blue’s story was featured in The San Diego Union-Tribune, Huffington Post, and Washington Examiner.

In Anaheim, the Emmanuel Spanish church was also busy with their own ministry of providing foods such as dry beans and rice, eggs, and other basic needs, including toilet paper, for the community in a drive-through ministry in their parking lot.

“We had been doing a food bank before the crisis, so we had to adapt to new ways of providing,” said Carlos Acosta, pastor of the church. From initially serving about 40 cars early in the crisis, they were soon serving close to 100 cars a week by the end of March. Church volunteers wore masks and gloves to protect themselves and others from possible contagion as they quickly handed out the bags of goods from a safe distance. They also prayed with many of the community members who drove through.

“Along with the physical needs, we see a real spiritual need here as well,” said Acosta.

A photo of the Emmanuel Spanish church drive-through ministry was published in a March article by Christianity Today about what churches are doing to help their communities during the crisis.
Just as ministry does not stop in times of crisis, neither does education.

As the crisis began to intensify and schools started closing down, Children’s Discovery Centers kept their doors open to continue serving their families, many of whom were still working in what are considered essential jobs. However, some parents chose to keep their children at home while continuing to pay full tuition, even though their kids were not attending.

“They’ve told us that we are their extended family,” said Laura Parker, Children’s Discovery Center director in Riverside, about the parents’ kindness. Other families have donated household items, such as paper towels, and even made financial donations.

“You never know the ministry you have or lives you’re touching,” she said.

At San Antonio Adventist Christian School, students and teachers innovated ways to stay connected, such as holding Spirit Week online. For Twin Day, for example, students picked a classmate with whom to dress alike. Students took photos of themselves in the same outfit and then shared them in a private Facebook group. Cecilia Sanchez, teaching principal, visited students’ homes, leaving colorful chalk messages on the sidewalk.

From a classroom perspective, some teachers also quickly took much of their interaction and engagement online, which was not new to some. For others, it was their first time engaging online, but they quickly learned.

At Escondido Adventist Academy (EAA), some teachers have stayed connected with students by visiting students’ homes and chatting with them from the sidewalk. Teacher April Zimmerman hosted the “Duke Tour” as she brought her dog Duke along with her for the visits. Teacher Diane McCary delivered goodie bags and hard copies of schoolwork, though most work is now done online.

Like many other schools, EAA has made challenging transitions to online learning. Teachers have done their best to schedule blocks of time to be available to their students online for general study and questions, the same way they would on-site.

“It’s been challenging, but in the long run we’ll be much stronger for having stretched ourselves in so many ways,” said Bill Davis, EAA principal.

As schools scrambled to adapt in delivering education in new ways, the SECC Office of Education also saw a need for continued spiritual connection. They enlisted the help of John Oscar Cordero and Clayton Koh, Loma Linda Academy chaplains, to create a website, seccspirituallifeconnect.com, dedicated to connecting SECC schools and homes to resources to help navigate a new learning environment in the context of spiritual, social, and emotional learning. The site contains sermons, chapels, online Sabbath Schools, spiritual and character-focused media, live chats, and links that explain coronavirus in child- and youth-friendly terms.

“The work educators are doing to provide excellent academics as well as to stay focused on mission and spirituality is to be commended,” said Don Dudley, superintendent.

Dudley added that many teachers also gave up some of their own vacation time to learn new ways of delivering education and make the necessary changes to keep it going.

“Their commitment and dedication are noteworthy,” he said.
SCC Churches Foster Community and Pursue Ministry Using Digital Tools

BY LAUREN LACSON AND ARAYA MOSS

The last few months have been a whirlwind for us all. As the novel coronavirus has ravaged the world, our communities have been deeply impacted. Shared experiences range from emotional stress and spiritual discouragement to physical illness.

During this unprecedented and challenging time, our churches have come together with innovation and creativity. “Ministry is actually multiplying right now in this environment,” said Greg Hoenes, SCC west region director. Many of our churches quickly sought to provide for worship opportunities, as soon as the first Sabbath after stay-at-home orders were issued.

As pastors were working to facilitate digital worship opportunities for their members, one pastor saw a great need. Long Beach Pastor Pono Lopez noticed the need for a fast, quality solution at his own church. He quickly created a livestreaming set-up to enable his church to continue to worship without interruption. But he didn’t stop there; he created a guide to a simple low-cost livestreaming set-up that can be found at https://www.longbeachadventist.org/post/live-streaming-on-a-budget.

We celebrate these creative solutions. And the ministry of our churches goes beyond livestreamed worship services—it also includes personal chat groups and virtual discussion spaces.

Small groups

Many SCC churches are fostering community in virtual safe spaces. Life Groups had been a core ministry at Kaléo church long before this pandemic—and that hasn’t changed, even with the rapid changes and disruptions brought about by this crisis. North Hills church hosts a Facebook group that allows for the community and fellowship that is needed now more than ever. Pasadena church uses the video conferencing platform Jitsi to facilitate Bible study classes, small group meetings, and young adult discussion groups.

Children’s ministry

What began as an idea to remain connected with the littlest ones in the congregation has grown into an interactive opportunity with staying power. When stay-at-home practices were gaining traction in early March, Linda Biswas, community engagement pastor at Vallejo Drive church, began to toss around the idea of reading stories to the kids online.

In mid-March, Biswas started leading a daily story time on Facebook live,
where kids ages 1 to 12 could tune in to the Vallejo Drive Facebook page to hear stories of Adventist missionaries.

Storytime is one of the many ways Vallejo Drive church has remained connected with their youngest members. Their innovative Kids Connection program, highlighted on p. 53 of the April issue of the Recorder, has gone virtual, complete with printables for kids to engage with at home. Kids can also participate in kid-2-kid conversations on Sundays. Additionally, Parent Connection, a time of fellowship for parents that launched in February, has also since moved online. “What better way to connect with your community than by sharing the love and hope of Jesus during a crisis,” said Biswas.

(Above) Pasaden
Lancaster church
Spotify playlist

Resources
Many churches have gone above and beyond to encourage members in their day-to-day experience. The Lancaster church, for example, created Spotify playlists with inspirational music to lift the spirits of its members. Churches like Downey, Eastmont, and El Sereno are taking this opportunity to share daily inspirational video messages on Facebook. Journey church pastor Adam Hicks and his wife, Cassie, host a weekly book study on YouTube. Simi Valley church pastor Phil White creates short daily inspirational podcasts to help his members through this challenging time.

Jillian Lutes, youth pastor at West Covina Hills church, created the blog “Meanwhile, Life Goes On,” based on her own recent experience with social distancing while she recovered from a vocal cord infection—months before the term social distancing became known as it is today.

Maintaining the blog soon became part of a larger strategy under the direction of Rogelio Paquini, senior pastor at West Covina Hills church, to stay connected with members on a daily basis. Other means include streaming worship services, meeting via Zoom, and praying and studying through Facebook Live.

“Be patient but diligent as you learn the different modes of digital communication,” said Lutes. “You will make mistakes along the way, and you won’t be proud of everything you produce; but it’s important to keep at it and grow.”

These are just a few of the ways the SCC team has met this situation with new and relevant methods of doing ministry. Our pastors continue to innovate and seek creative ways to meet the needs of their communities during this crisis.

We look forward to the positive lasting changes we will experience after this season is over. “I don’t think we’ll be the same church when we come out of this,” commented Elder John Cress, SCC executive secretary and ministerial director. “We’ll be a closer church.”
Adventist educators have been given the same commission Christ gave Peter in John 21: “If you love Me, feed My sheep.” Teachers recognize that Christ didn’t mean this to apply only when things are going well—He meant it even when schools must shut down for a time.

At San Gabriel Academy (SGA), plans for an alternate education design were already underway when the conference closed its schools. Then the dominos began to fall, from the cancellation of the school’s music tour to Italy to the possibility that the mission trip to Thailand might not happen. Therefore, the administration and faculty, under the leadership of Principal Paul Negrete, decided to implement SGA’s distance learning protocol.

March 24 was the first day of the new education model, and all students from TK to grade 12 showed up for classes at the normal times—from home. The teachers used the Zoom app to meet with students in real time. Attendance has been almost perfect; even chorale, orchestra, and P.E. meet virtually. The curriculum has not changed, and students have readily adapted. Understandably, many students dress casually while learning from home, but some students sign on wearing their uniform shirts, perhaps hoping to bring a feeling of normalcy to an otherwise strange reality.

SGA’s parents have been enthusiastically supportive. One high school parent shared, “As a parent of two children enrolled at SGA, I can say unequivocally that this program has just as much depth and direct instruction as before, and it drives real learning. I’m very proud of what SGA has been able to accomplish in these difficult times.” Another says, “SGA has put student learning first. Rather than using email as the primary means of communicating assignments and lessons, our teachers are helping students learn, answering their questions, and creating real-time virtual classrooms and collaboration.”

An elementary parent expressed relief that her children were excited to log in to their virtual classrooms and interact with their classmates and teachers.

Virtual interaction paired with a strong, Christ-centered curriculum is the name of the game. Faith Yeaton, head of the Department of Technology, said, “My students are learning to work with technologies to make presentations in virtual classrooms. They are creating media that can be viewed during video conferencing.”

In the first-grade classroom, “Show and Tell” has become “Sharing My Off-Campus Story.”

Christian educators have an enormous responsibility, not only to provide a quality education, but also to point their students to Christ. On the second day of distance learning, Kristi Huynh asked her fourth-grade students to share how they felt by giving a thumbs up, thumbs sideways, or thumbs down. One student gave a thumbs up, and Huynh asked why. “My day is going well, because I get to see all of you guys,” came the reply. It was a simple answer, but it spoke volumes. “In the midst of the chaos and uncertainty in our world,” Huynh said, “it’s such a blessing to provide some sense of normalcy for our students.”

Through distance learning, SGA continues to feed Christ’s sheep.
What does community outreach look like in a time of global pandemic? For the Spanish American church, whose food bank has been serving its community for more than 20 years, the ministry must continue.

On March 18, about 40 volunteers distributed 10,000 pounds of food to more than 100 families. About 250 families were served on March 25. “God cares for His people,” said Mario Melendez, community services director at Spanish American church. “We have the privilege to serve others during a time of crisis.”

On both service days, Mario and his wife, Gloria Melendez, experienced no shortage of volunteers; in fact, due to safety precautions, they had to turn away those eager to help.

Volunteers and recipients followed social distancing guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local government. There were fewer volunteers, all wore masks and gloves, and volunteer stations were marked with red tape to designate a minimum of six feet between each person. Additionally, all recipients received gloves and a mask to wear before they entered the line to pick up food.

Although the circumstances have changed, a typical day of distribution begins in the same way for Gloria and Mario. They start at 6:30 a.m. with prayer for God’s order, harmony, peace, and protection to surround all who are involved—drivers, packers, distributors, and everyone in between. Some days they don’t finish until 8 p.m.

“We see God’s protection in all that we are doing during this crisis,” said Gloria. “The willingness that God has placed in people who are eager to help out—it’s amazing.”

Because of the high cost of living in Los Angeles, this food bank is a relief for families living paycheck to paycheck. Other recipients who benefit are seniors who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits and those who are unemployed.

Although the food bank is currently open to distribute food just twice a month, the work isn’t always completed during those days. Food is also available on an as-needed basis on weekends. In the past, the team collaborated with their youth ministry to deliver food to elderly church members who are unable to go out. Mario and Gloria have also recently partnered with Sabbath School teachers to pick up and deliver food to class members and their families.

“Hunger has no color, no shape, no age, no religion, and no country; it affects all,” said Mario. “With the food bank ministry that my family is involved in, we try to make a difference in our local community to get rid of hunger—one person at a time.”

**Spanish American Church Distributes Food Amid Coronavirus Pandemic**

**By Araya Moss**
Hanford Couple Supports Adventist Education with Endowment

By Connie Vandeman Jeffery

For Larry and Ruth Martella of Hanford, California, Adventist education means everything. Turning a large apartment complex they owned into an endowment for Armona Union Academy turned out to be an incredible blessing, not just for students and faculty but for the Martellas as well.

Larry grew up on a 240-acre ranch in Hanford. After graduating from Armona Union Academy, he married Ruth in 1954. The couple relocated to Southern California, where Larry worked for three years as a research mechanic at North American Aviation (later Rocketdyne) in Canoga Park. In 1959, Larry started a janitorial business in Simi Valley and the couple began acquiring rental properties. They sold their rental properties in 1982 and moved back to Hanford to help care for Larry’s elderly parents. The proceeds from the sale of the Simi Valley properties were put into a 32-unit apartment complex in Hanford. After buying old houses and fixing them up, Larry decided to get his real estate license in 1989. He opened his own real estate office in Hanford, and for 31 years he bought and sold houses, managed his own properties, and managed other people’s properties. Larry retired this past February and closed his real estate office, but he plans to keep working for as long as he can.

Faithful members of the Adventist church in Lemoore, Larry and Ruth have a burden in their hearts for young people and for his old alma mater, Armona Union Academy (AUA), a K to twelfth-grade Adventist school serving Kings and Tulare Counties since 1904. “I felt impressed to give to our church school,” Larry said. “I believe in kids.”

By 2017, the 32-unit apartment complex in Hanford had significantly appreciated in value. If the Martellas had sold the property and kept the proceeds, they would have had to pay huge capital gains taxes. Through careful planning and coordination of documents with Western Adventist Foundation, the Martellas transferred their apartment complex into a Charitable Remainder Trust. The Trust sold the property without paying any capital gains taxes. The Martellas will receive income from the trust throughout their lifetimes. Upon their deaths, the remaining monies will provide a generous endowment for AUA.

The Martellas turned a large apartment complex they owned into an endowment for Armona Union Academy.
In addition to helping the school with his resources of time, skills, and finances, Larry started a Booster Club that raises an average of $250,000 per year to help students receive an Adventist education at AUA. During the past 18 years, the Booster Club has raised over four million dollars.

Before the coronavirus pandemic forced the school buildings to close and learning to take place online, three vans transported students each day from Visalia and other nearby towns. One young student who lives in the slums of Visalia graduated from eighth grade last year. In the summer, he looked up his former friends and discovered they were in Juvenile Hall or in trouble with the police. He thanked his mom for sending him to AUA and is grateful for the help he receives from the Booster Club for his education.

The personal testimonies of the lives being changed at AUA are what keep Larry and Ruth energized about their decision to turn one highly appreciated real estate asset into tangible results: children who will be blessed and transformed by a Christian education.

“Armona Union Academy exists to introduce children to Jesus, nurture their love for Him as well as others, teaching them to think and empowering them to serve.” This is one mission statement that is being fulfilled on a daily basis at AUA.

“You know how people say you can’t take it with you?” Larry said. “I believe you can take it with you—in the form of people. When the Lord comes, the only thing going home with Him are people. I invest in young people and telling them about Jesus.”

Larry and Ruth hope their story will prompt others to help Armona Union Academy or other Adventist schools that they are passionate about. Working with Western Adventist Foundation in coming up with the right plan for their apartment complex has made a huge difference—not only in Larry and Ruth’s lives but in the lives of countless young people.
Caveat emptor is a Latin phrase that means “Let the buyer beware.” I use the phrase here because I am concerned for the good members of the Pacific Union Conference. Let me explain.

It has been my observation during the 45 years of my ministerial experience that when a crisis occurs or an emergency arises—especially when it concerns the unique religious beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—there are always people who take advantage of the opportunity to “sell” something based on the potential buyer’s fears.

There is always a conspiracy theory around. Caveat emptor.

In the spiritual or religious realm, this usually presents itself in misleading statements that often take Scripture—and, for Seventh-day Adventists, statements from the Spirit of Prophecy—out of context, which renders them inapplicable (at the least) or potentially damaging to a person’s spiritual journey (at the worst).

The COVID-19 situation has created a unique opportunity for ideas and concepts to be “sold” to believers, including Seventh-day Adventists. Spiritual scammers are proliferating. Caveat emptor.

Recently, I received a PowerPoint presentation that posed conspiratorial ideas about the government or some nefarious power at work to bring about the fulfillment of prophecy and the end of religious or any freedoms and/or the ushering in of the end of all things. And this was all supposedly happening by means of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When I asked the sender how he had vetted the information or the person presenting the alleged facts, I
didn’t get a response that answered my question. I received a reference to another person who believed the theory. Hmm…

While I believe that the coronavirus is a pestilence like those Jesus mentioned in Luke 21:11, I am not yet convinced that it is one of the last plagues that will one day fall upon the earth as the Book of Revelation foretells. As I understand prophecy, other things will happen first.

Nor am I convinced COVID-19 is part of a worldwide conspiracy. I didn’t say it wasn’t; I’m just not yet persuaded that it is.

We shouldn’t believe something just because it appears in print. Nor should we disbelieve it either. We need to exercise due diligence and research the facts for ourselves. We should not believe everything we read on the internet. While it is a great tool for research, we need to exercise careful diligence there—and in social media, too.

So, as we hear things or read things that sound too amazing to be true, we should tread carefully until we check things out.

A colleague sent me a link to an article in Christianity Today, a magazine I haven’t read in a long time. The article, “On Christians Spreading Corona Conspiracies: Gullibility is not a Spiritual Gift,” by Ed Stetzer, included this statement: “Sadly, Christians seem to be disproportionately fooled by conspiracy theories. I’ve also said before that when Christians spread lies, they need to repent of those lies. Sharing fake news makes us look foolish and harms our witness.”

I agree.

While it is true that we are facing a frightening pandemic that is killing people daily, we need to exercise some intellectual skepticism when uncertain theories are presented to us.


“*These things I have spoken unto you,*” He said, “*that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*” Christ did not fail, neither was He discouraged, and His followers are to manifest a faith of the same enduring nature. They are to live as He lived, and work as He worked, because they depend on Him as the great Master Worker. Courage, energy, and perseverance they must possess. Though apparent impossibilities obstruct their way, by His grace they are to go forward. Instead of deploring difficulties, they are called upon to surmount them. They are to despair of nothing, and to hope for everything. With the golden chain of His matchless love Christ has bound them to the throne of God. It is His purpose that the highest influence in the universe, emanating from the source of all power, shall be theirs. They are to have power to resist evil, power that neither earth, nor death, nor hell can master, power that will enable them to overcome as Christ overcame.

*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 679-680
With the announcement of stay-at-home orders for those living in the Pacific Southwest and across the United States, churches operating Adventist Community Services began adapting their operations to safely serve their areas.

“The compassionate Adventist Community Services volunteers across all five states of the Pacific Union Conference continue to serve their communities even in the midst of this worldwide pandemic,” shared Charlene Sargent, ACS director for the Pacific Union. “They have found innovative ways to distribute much-needed food, water, and other supplies, while following CDC guidelines to keep themselves safe and prevent spread of the coronavirus.”

Southeastern California

As the nation adjusted to a new normal—social distancing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic—the Southeastern California Conference (SECC) continued with a norm of its own: helping four ACS federations and their respective churches to serve their communities. In order to assist people who have lost their jobs, several churches are participating in a “drive-by food distribution” operation, a new modality for safe food distribution.

Though the shelter-in-place mandate closed churches, the essential nature of food distribution was recognized, and churches could open solely to continue to conduct this much-needed service.

SECC churches in Orange County—including Anaheim Sunkist, Costa Mesa Spanish, Orange County Grace, Fullerton, La Habra Spanish, Emmanuel Spanish, and McFadden churches—have continued their food distribution programs and, as of mid-April, distributed a combined total of 55,000 pounds of food.

“As we work through the COVID-19 pandemic, the community services departments of the Southeastern California Conference are committed to continuing to do as much as we possibly can to help hurting people in our churches’ communities,” said Marquis Johns, ACS director for the SECC.

Northern California

Northern California churches also opened their community service centers with food pantries to distribute food and daily necessities. One church was featured by Good Day Sacramento, which aired their...
mid-March visit to the Carmichael church food bank where they interviewed Pastor Keith Jacobson. The church started a drive-through food bank utilizing younger volunteers from their church and community.

Other NCC churches like Valley Community Church in Stockton are using their church van to deliver food and items to those who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

“We have more than 20 churches that are actively engaging in community outreaches right now,” shared James Lim, ACS director for the Northern California Conference. “Other churches are distributing food to the needy community with precautions in compliance with social distancing measures.”

Central California
Across California’s Central Valley, similar ACS efforts are taking place. “Churches have been very creative about the ways that pastors and food pantry ministry leaders are assisting their communities,” said Antonio Huerta, ACS director for the Central California Conference. Huerta reports that approximately 33 churches are actively involved in serving their communities through drive-through food pantries that comply with social distancing regulations.

“Pastors have shared stories of the families they are connecting with,” Huerta said. “Our churches are serving and are extremely glad to help.”

Nevada and Utah
In the Nevada-Utah Conference, churches in West Jordan, Salt Lake City, Provo, and Quincy, as well as Centers of Influence, are involved in safe distribution of food and homemade masks. The masks are distributed to nursing homes, hospitals, and those on the front lines.

Additionally, area coordinators are encouraging local churches involved in ACS to collaborate with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), a coalition of organizations involved in disaster-response related work.

“We are currently contacting the other SDA congregations to determine if ACS is established in each congregation and if they are connected to Utah’s VOAD,”
Continued from page 65

said Linda Walton, area coordinator for Utah and a member of the Provo church. “Congregations are small and spread out, but it is a very important network for both the church and other disaster and community service organizations.”

**NAD grant for local conferences**

In mid-April, the North American Division Adventist Community Services announced their investment of $1.5 million in grant monies for conferences in the NAD. Conferences who submit grant applications will be designated $25,000 for relief efforts.

Pacific Union conferences such as the Central California Conference have applied and received this relief funding from the NAD to help provide food to their communities.

To learn more about ACS in the Pacific Union Conference, visit AdventistFaith.com.
Adventist Health Responses to Coronavirus, Supports Communities in Midst of Crisis

By Adventist Health, with Randy Speyer, Mary Parra, and Faith Hoyt

As the spread of coronavirus began impacting communities on the West Coast, Adventist Health made the safety of patients, associates, and physicians their top priority. The hospital system's highly trained infection prevention practitioners closely followed the guidelines of the CDC and local public health departments. Adventist Health also kept close contact with federal, state, and local agencies to ensure that physicians, staff, and patients received the best possible care.

In addition to their response to the safety of those working and receiving care in their hospitals, Adventist Health also launched several resources for both medical and spiritual care to support their communities during the COVID-19 crisis.

Adventist Health acquires Blue Zones as part of transformation into catalyst for overall community health and well-being

Adventist Health announced in early April that it has acquired Blue Zones®, a pioneer in taking a systemic and environmental approach to improving the health of entire cities and communities. The organization's work in over 50 communities across America has been credited with double-digit drops in obesity, smoking, and Body Mass Index, achieving millions of dollars of savings in healthcare costs. This revolutionary move by Adventist Health comes at a time when public attention is especially focused on the interconnectedness of our health to that of our friends and neighbors in the face of the coronavirus crisis. Post-pandemic, a focus on improving and strengthening community and public health will be more critical than ever as communities across the nation and globe navigate recovery.

"Adventist Health has always believed in creating environments of belonging and easy access to healthy lifestyles, and we also know that the future of healthcare goes beyond the role of traditional hospitals by investing in our communities to improve people's overall wellbeing," Adventist Health President and CEO Scott Reiner said. "Adventist Health's work with Blue Zones represents the future of healthcare and is a major component of our plan to redefine the role of health organizations across America and strengthen our commitment to inspiring health, wholeness, and hope."

Continued on page 68
Adventist Health launches COVID-19 virtual assistant and symptom checker

To serve the community’s needs and protect staff and the community, Adventist Health clinics in Fort Bragg, Willits, and Ukiah began offering virtual visits to provide uninterrupted care in early April. Through on-demand virtual visits, using video and audio through a computer or mobile device, patients now receive medical guidance and get care without leaving the comfort and convenience of their homes. Virtual visits are vital to cope with the growing surge in demand for medical services—and have kept health workers and patients safer. Instead of sitting in a waiting room, patients can see their doctor from home, using video from their computer or device.

Higher Grounds virtual event provides spiritual care for Adventist Health associates

In an effort to provide spiritual and emotional support, relevant medical and health information, and creative opportunities for connection, Dr. Jeff Egler, medical director and provider for Inspire Health Center, and Dr. Randy Speyer, mission director for Adventist Health Roseville, launched Higher Grounds on Friday, March 20. This daily virtual event is 30 minutes long and is moderated by Joe Morrell, administrative director of the Inspire Health Center. It was designed to provide a safe place for associates to ask important questions related to their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being. In addition, practical resources are provided and there are opportunities for participants to share creative solutions to common challenges—as well as stories of courage and hope. Higher Grounds is a way for associates to learn from each other about the strategies and lessons learned thus far in this current crisis.

Topics have included: COVID-19 guidance and resources, building healthy immune systems, managing structure and boundaries working at home, and nutrition. Daily participation has averaged around 200, with many responding that the mix of physical and mental health support is just what they need. Higher Grounds puts great emphasis on the unwavering values of openness, authenticity, inclusivity, and prevention.

“Adventist Health has always believed in creating environments of belonging and easy access to healthy lifestyles, and we also know that the future of healthcare goes beyond the role of traditional hospitals by investing in our communities to improve people’s overall wellbeing.”
In light of the dramatic impact the COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed on the world in recent months, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Signs of the Times magazine, pastor and evangelist Mark Finley, internal medicine physician Lyndi Schwartz, and registered dietitian Rebecca Barnhurst worked together to create a special Signs edition, part of its Truth Matters series.

Inside the 16-page COVID-19: Facing the Crisis with Confidence, readers learn about the disease itself, including prevention techniques, ways to boost the natural immune system, and symptoms of illness. It then tackles the relationship between the pandemic and a spiritual worldview by exploring Bible history and touching on prophecy. Hope crowns the magazine, reassuring readers that even when trouble comes, God is with us.

The full color magazine is designed as a practical and spiritual response to the most significant global health crisis of the 21st century.

Send copies to friends and neighbors, place them in food baskets, or have them mailed to entire zip codes. Each magazine also includes an offer to receive Bible studies.

For more information about the COVID-19 Signs special issue, visit AdventistBookCenter.com.
Versacare Grants Support STEM Programs in Pacific Union Schools

By Charles C. Sandefur, with Faith Hoyt

On March 6, 2020, Versacare Foundation, a self-funded, independent private foundation that exists to support ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist church, awarded $1,435,000 in grant funding to 189 Adventist primary and secondary schools across the United States and Canada in support of STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)—$285,000 of which was awarded to schools in the Pacific Union Conference.

This was Versacare Foundation’s fifth successive year funding STEM grants, and this marked the third consecutive year it funded every school that applied for a STEM grant. The STEM grant program has provided funding in three categories: $5,000 for smaller schools of three classrooms or less; $10,000 for larger schools of four or more classrooms and 12-year schools; and $10,000 for senior academies.

“We have heard from smaller schools that their $5,000 STEM grant is helping them retain students that would otherwise go elsewhere,” said Tom Macomber, president of Versacare. “That is a huge bonus when our objective all along has been to assist the schools by enhancing their ability to teach STEM subjects, and that assistance is helping keep their doors open. The lesson for me is that STEM education is vital, both for teaching skills the students will use the rest of their lives but also for keeping our schools competitive when compared to the local public schools.”

The many uses of STEM funds include the purchase of classroom smart boards, tablets or Chromebooks for student use, equipping or updating student computer labs, installation of 3D printers and related software, initiating or funding robotics programs, instruction in software coding, the equipping of chemistry,
La Sierra Academy is one of Versacare’s 2020 grant recipients. The academy, together with the Greater Riverside Chamber of Commerce and the Southeastern California Conference, celebrated the grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony of their brand-new STEAM Lab (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) in the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year.

$2,000 Scholarship
Supports In-Union Adventist College Freshman

Incoming freshmen at Pacific Union College or La Sierra University now have access to a $2,000 scholarship provided by Pacific Union Conference for the 2020-2021 school year.

Freshmen applying for the scholarship 1) must be first-time undergraduates, 2) must be enrolled full time, 3) must be baptized members of an Adventist church in the Union, or have a parent or guardian that is a baptized member of an Adventist church in the Union, or have attended a Union-operated secondary school for a minimum of one semester.

Applications and verifications for this scholarship are to be completed with Pacific Union College or La Sierra University and submitted as part of the student financial clearance process.

For more information about this scholarship, email the student financial services department of Pacific Union College at studentfinance@puc.edu or La Sierra University at sfs@lasierra.edu.
Continued from page 71

Central California Conference
- Hollister SDA Christian School, $5,000
- Peninsula Adventist School, $5,000
- Sierra View Junior Academy, $10,000
- VHM Christian School, $10,000

Hawaii Conference
- Mauna Loa School, $5,000
- Hawaiian Mission Academy Ka Lama Iki, $10,000

Nevada-Utah Conference
- Fallon Adventist Christian School (Nevada), $5,000
- Summit Christian Academy (Utah), $10,000

Northern California Conference
- Echo Ridge Christian School, $5,000
- Foothills Adventist Elementary School, $10,000
- Hilltop Christian School, $10,000
- Napa Christian Campus of Education, $10,000
- Orangevale Adventist School, $10,000
- Pacific Union College Elementary School, $10,000
- Paradise Adventist Academy, $10,000
- Pine Hills Adventist Academy, $10,000
- Rio Linda Adventist Academy, $10,000
- Westlake Seventh-day Adventist School, $5,000

Southeastern California Conference
- El Cajon SDA Christian School, $5,000
- Hemet Adventist Christian School, $5,000
- La Sierra Academy, $10,000
- Mesa Grande Academy, $10,000
- Murrieta Springs Adventist Christian Academy, $10,000
- Oceanside Adventist Elementary, $10,000
- Redlands Adventist Academy, $10,000
- Victor Valley SDA School, $5,000

Southern California Conference
- Antelope Valley Adventist School, $10,000
- Glendale Adventist Academy, $10,000
- Newbury Park Adventist Academy, $10,000
- San Diego Academy, $10,000
- San Fernando Valley Academy, $10,000
- Simi Valley Adventist School, $10,000

U.S. News & World Report
Ranks PUC in Top Ten Colleges

By Ashley Eisele

U.S. News & World Report has released its annual Best Colleges list, and Pacific Union College has again been ranked in the top ten colleges. PUC was placed in the top 15 in the following categories:

- #10 in Regional Colleges West
- #7 in Best Colleges for Veterans
- #4 in Best Value Schools
- #14 in Top Performers on Social Mobility
- #1 in Campus Ethnic Diversity (West)

“We are incredibly proud of our rankings in U.S. News & World Report,” said Milbert Mariano, academic dean at PUC. “These results speak to the quality of a PUC education, as well as an overall PUC experience that puts students at the heart.”

Regional Colleges are split into four regions and are placed in this category based on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education’s Basic Classification system, the accepted standard in U.S. education. A few of the factors and weights included in the methodology are graduation and retention rates, graduation rate performance, social mobility, faculty and financial resources, student excellence, and alumni giving. PUC is the only Adventist school in the top ten.

Best Colleges for Veterans are selected based on meeting the following criteria: certified for the G.I. Bill, participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program, for the third consecutive year enrolled a minimum of 20 veterans and active service members, and ranked in the top half of its 2020 edition Best Colleges ranking category. PUC is the only Adventist college ranked on this list.
**Best Value Schools** are ranked based on giving students the best value for their money. The school's academic quality is considered, along with its net cost of attendance for students receiving the average level of need-based financial aid in 2018-2019. PUC ranked #4 among Regional Colleges West for having a high-quality program and a comparatively lower cost. Only schools ranked among the top half of their categories are included in this ranking.

**Top Performers on Social Mobility** are selected based on how successful they are at graduating large proportions of disadvantaged students awarded Pell Grants. (The vast majority of these federal grants are awarded to students whose adjusted gross family incomes are under $50,000.)

**Campus Ethnic Diversity** is drawn from each institution's fall 2018 total undergraduate student body. The ethnic categories used in the calculations are non-Hispanic African-American, Hispanic, American Indian, Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, Asian, non-Hispanic white, and multiracial (two or more races). Students who did not identify themselves as members of any of those demographic groups were classified as non-Hispanic whites for the purpose of these calculations. The formula produces a diversity index that ranges from 0 to 1. The closer a school’s number is to 1, the more diverse the student population.

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**Help us Congratulate our 2020 Graduates!**

Do you know someone graduating this spring? We want to share in the recognition of this achievement by including their name in the list of our graduating scholars to be published in the Pacific Union Recorder. We also will publish names and photos of the graduates online.

If you or your graduate are graduating from one of the schools operated by the Seventh-day Adventist church in our union, your school is participating in this recognition and has submitted the names of their graduates.

If you or someone you want to recognize are graduating from a school not operated by the Seventh-day Adventist church; and are graduating from the 8th grade, the 12th grade, or a college or university; and are a member of one of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the five states of the Pacific Union—Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada or Utah—please use the link below (or scan the QR code) to submit your information (and photo).

Thank you—and congratulations to the Class of 2020!

Pacific Union Conference | Office of Education

[HTTPS://SDA.FAITH/2020GRADS]
Churches of every size, in rural and urban settings, and representative of our wonderful ethnic and cultural diversity, have responded to the coronavirus crisis through streaming their services. Many have found ways to connect that include Bible study, activities for children and youth, virtual musical performances, and much more.

The seven conferences of the Pacific Union Conference have each worked hard to keep up with the ever-changing list of churches that are livestreaming their services and/or hosting online meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. While extensive, these are not definitive directories—they form a flexible and growing list. The most up-to-date directory can be found on the respective conference websites.

For up-to-date information about how your conference is responding to the coronavirus pandemic, visit their website.

www.azconference.org
www.centralcaliforniaadventist.org
www.hawaiisda.com
www.NUCadventist.com
www.nccsda.com
www.secc.adventistfaith.org
www.scc.adventist.org

If you would like to add your church website, YouTube channel, or Facebook page to this directory, please email a link and the name of your church to: info@adventistfaith.com.

For a summary list, go to adventistfaith.com/streaming, or use your app or device to scan this QR code.
Children’s Ministry: Join the CCC Children’s Ministry Department through podcasts and countless other available resources. Find them on Facebook at ChildMin.Info, at www.childminchat.com, or email childmindirector@cccsda.org.

La Sierra University Alumni Homecoming Online! Dear La Sierra alumni, we were sure sorry that we couldn’t visit with you at alumni weekend this year, but we are providing many activities and ways to connect online. Visit https://lasierra.edu/together/ and let’s get together in cyberspace! Email: alumni@lasierra.edu or 951-785-2578.

November Inauguration. La Sierra University’s compliance with county and state stay-at-home orders has required the postponement of the inauguration of President Joy A. Fehr. New date: Nov. 13.

Graduation postponed. Due to the school closure order issued by Riverside County’s public health officer, and in compliance with ongoing stay-at-home orders, La Sierra University is postponing its June commencement weekend. Details about a future celebration for the Class of 2020 will follow.

Our community is together online! Participate in La Sierra’s online community at https://lasierra.edu/together/ where our students, alumni, and others are enjoying online games, videos, and information. While you’re at it, visit https://lasierra.edu/covid-19/ for the latest La Sierra University COVID-19-related information and messages.

The La Sierra Report. Stay in the know and sign up to receive The La Sierra Report, a monthly e-newsletter of interesting news and events. To subscribe, send your email address and subscription request to dmartint@lasierra.edu.

Northern California Conference

Prayer Call: Join the NCC Prayer Line every Thursday morning from 7-8 a.m. The hour includes a short devotional and the opportunity to pray with people from around the conference. Call: 1-916-637-8111. Use code 469648#.

Resources for Kids: Find a variety of fun and interesting children’s activities for Sabbath, family worship, and anytime. Info: nccsda.com/resources-for-kids.

Youth Ministries: Join the online NCC Youth Group, hosted by Youth Director Eddie Heinrich

Advertising
Advertising is accepted as a service to Seventh-day Adventist church members in the Pacific Union. The Recorder management reserves the right to refuse any advertisement, especially ads not related to the needs and practices of the church membership. Acceptance of any advertising shall be considered a matter of accommodation and not a matter of right, nor shall it be construed to constitute approval of the product or service advertised.

Payment in advance must accompany all classified advertisements or they will not be published. Display ads for known advertisers will be billed. To pay by credit card, please call 805-413-7280.

How to Submit Advertising
 Classified ads must be sent with payment to the Recorder office (silvi.butler@adventistfaith.com). Display ads should be arranged with the editor (info@adventistfaith.com).

Classified Rates
$70 for 50 words; 75 cents each additional word.

Display Rates (Full Color Only)
Back cover: $4,200; full page: $3,800; 1/2-pg., $2,200; 1/4-pg., $1,200; 1/8-pg., $700; $160 per column inch.

Information
Circulation is approximately 76,000 homes, and magazines are scheduled to arrive in homes by the last Thursday of the previous month. For more information about advertising, please click on the Advertising tab at www.pacificunionrecorder.com, email sali.butler@adventistfaith.com, or call 805-413-7280.

2020 Deadlines
These are the advertising deadlines for the Recorder. Your local conference news deadlines will be earlier.
June: May 7
July: June 8

Contributions
The Recorder pages are assigned to the local conferences, colleges, and health care institutions, and all content comes through the communication departments in those organizations. If you have a news story/idea, calendar announcement, etc., please contact your local communication department. See the masthead for contact information. Want tips for writing for us? See www.dailywritingtips.com/the-art-of-writing-news.
and NCC youth pastors, every Tuesday at 7 p.m. Info: nccdsa.com/youth.

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**At Your Service**

**A well-established, In-Home Care business** for seniors/disabled, located in beautiful Northern California. We have some government contracts in place as well as an excellent staff. Email inquiries to scass85@gmail.com.

**California Adventist Federal Credit Union**, your “One Stop Finance Shop.” Serving our Adventist Community for over 65 years with financial products and services, along with wealth building education. Please visit our website at www.SdacreditUnion.com for updates on all that CAFCU has to offer. Call our office and speak to our friendly staff or manager for additional information: 818-246-7241.

**SDA Realtor:** Let us help you sell your property or buy the ideal home here in gorgeous northern California. Rural properties abound. Perfect for families and retirees. Jerry Kea, Realtor, 707-888-9613, email: thomaskea.tk@gmail.com, CA BRE Lic#02080864, TREG INC, dba The Real Estate Group.

**TN/GA Realtor.** Specializing in buying or selling affordable homes in the Collegedale, Chattanooga, North Georgia or surrounding areas. Howard Karst, Realty Specialists of Ooltewah, is your best partner for experienced professional service. 301-332-8471 or tsrak@msn.com.

**Employment**

**Associate Dean (School of Nursing) for Loma Linda University.** Responsible for planning, organization, staffing, and evaluation of the academic disciplines assigned and for general welfare of faculty. Doctoral degree required. Minimum five years of experience in nursing education, preferably in both graduate and undergraduate nursing, required. Please apply at careers.llu.edu and search for job # 20000590.

**Vacation Opportunities**

**2 bdrm condo in Honolulu, Hawaii.** Minutes to beaches, Chinatown, and hiking. Sleeps 6 comfortably. Furnished kitchen; washer/dryer; AC & more. Free parking. Visit honcentralsda.org/vacation-rentals/nelson-hale or call 856-278-1334.

**Angwin home – Five-bdrm, 3-bath vacation home, 2 miles from PUC.** Fully furnished, large kitchen, dining room, living room, family room, piano, vineyard views, WiFi, washer and dryer, BBQ grill, sleeps 10. Call for rates, photos, and reservations: 415-497-5678 or email: nvroger@mac.com.

**Egypt tour** (Dec. 28, 2020-Jan. 6, 2021) with Dr. Carl Cosaert of Walla Walla University. Discover the Pyramids, the Valley of the Kings, the Exodus, a Nile cruise, and much more. Wonderful weather, meals, and accommodations $2,565 plus airfare. For information contact info@adventtours.org.

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What shall I return to the Lord for all His goodness to me?

PSALM 116:12
While circumstances may prevent us from gathering together, they cannot stop our worship. We can still praise God for His blessings, still open our hearts in prayer, still share our needs and concerns, still proclaim His goodness to us in times of difficulty and uncertainty, still bring our thanks and supplications, still share in hearing the Word of God preached, and still return our tithes and offerings with faithfulness and thankful hearts.

We are made for worship. Demonstrating our faithfulness through our tithes and offerings is still an integral part of our life in Christ.

The support your church needs to carry on the work of Christ in your community doesn't stop if the church building is closed or if circumstances prevent the membership from gathering. Now is the time for us to bless and be blessed through faithful support. Now is the opportunity for us to both serve and be served through the ministries of our churches. Because every act of worship is part of our life in Christ, in all things we are able to both give and receive.

AdventistGiving allows you to return your tithe and give your offerings online, even when circumstances prevent gathering for worship. There is no cost for this service, and gifts can be made with credit or debit cards and ACH transactions. You can even set up recurring donations for both tithe and offerings. Your tithe and offerings are processed securely, quickly, and efficiently. Smartphone apps make participation even easier.

Worship happens whenever we lift our hearts to God. The AdventistGiving program enables your worship to include your faithful return of tithes and offerings. It enhances the mission of the church and carries a blessing for you and for your local church.

For more information, go to adventistgiving.org or ask your pastor for more details.
We know the Bible is able to instruct us, guide us, teach us, and show us what to believe and how to live. It is our rule of faith and practice. Too often, however, we find something less than joyful delight when reading the Bible. Sometimes we’re not sure what the Bible is saying or how it could possibly be relevant to the kinds of issues we face. And let’s face it: sometimes reading the Bible gets just plain boring.

It is the thesis of *Enjoying Your Bible: Finding Delight in the Word* that reading the Bible can and should be a delight and that the Bible is much more understandable than you might think. Our goal is not to talk about the inspiration of the Bible or to discuss all the theoretical issues of divine revelation—our goal is to help the reader experience the joy of discovering the message of the Bible.

*Enjoying Your Bible* is not intended for scholars. It is for the typical believer in the pew and for those who may not have occupied a pew for a while. It is divided into two main parts. The first offers some general discussion about reading the Bible, and the second looks at specific sections of the Bible to offer a few tips for enhancing your reading.

The study guides at the end of each chapter were prepared to be used in connection with the book.