

# CONFERENCE

## Connections

### Our Next Pastor

**We believe God** is at work in young people, calling them to pastoral ministry. Unfortunately, we have seen fewer college students pursuing theology with a desire to pastor. In Southeastern California Conference (SECC), we made a conscious decision to be intentional about developing and nurturing young people for pastoral ministry.

It is easy to underestimate young people and how the Holy Spirit can impress upon their hearts to work for Him. When I was young, people asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. After considerable thought, I wanted to be a pastor since the age of ten. I thought it was the coolest thing to work directly for and with God and to have the privilege to report to Him. Even to this day, although we have our Adventist organizational structure, I still believe that I am ultimately working directly for and with God.

The SECC Ministerial Department, with collaboration from the Education Department, did a survey of the students in our academies.

Twenty-three percent of the students said they might consider a career as a pastor.

Forty students wanted to meet with someone to talk about pastoral ministry. Perhaps God has done His job of inspiring young people, but we have failed to acknowledge it and create an environment for young people to dream of what they can do as a pastor for God.

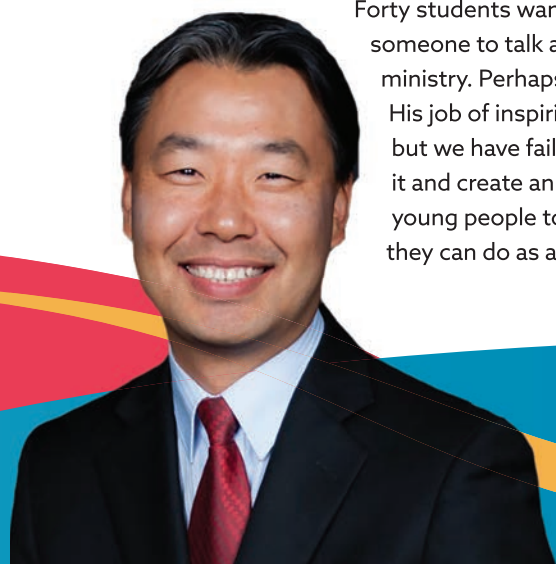
As a conference, we are tailoring a program to journey with young people through high school and college, helping them to understand what pastoring is, to discern how to hear God's voice, and to experience some of the joys of pastoral ministry.

Although we are working on this initiative at the conference level, there are things our members can do to help. One way is to respect and care for our current pastors. When young people see members lovingly support their pastors, even during times they must hold them accountable, they see a healthy church culture. It also provides them with a glimpse of the support they could receive in the future.

Secondly, members can make space for pastors to take care of and spend quality time with family. A healthy work environment and work-life balance are important and may have been neglected by previous generations. Finally, if there is a young person who you think God is calling to pastoral ministry, contact the SECC Ministerial Department. We would love to know about them and get them connected with our program.

We know that not everyone who goes through our program will become a pastor, but we are committed to helping them understand the call of God on their lives. We also are happy to point them to other ways they can serve God and minister through the other vocations to which God is calling.

*By Jonathan Park*



**Jonathan Park**  
SECC President

# Spreading the

**To celebrate Valentine's Day this month**, we asked members from across SECC to share their love stories. We hope that these stories inspire you to spread the love this Valentine's season!

*By Megan Jacobs*

## **Keturah Reed**

Keturah Reed, ministry coordinator of Azure Hills church, received a surge of love from her church after a surgery she had in August 2022. "I remember the dear friends and church members who called [and] texted me, the friends who fed me, the friend who picked up a case of water for me, and our church office manager who sent me flowers!" Keturah said. "These acts were an extension of God's love for me and a reminder of what a beautiful treasure community is!"

## **Fabiola and Obed Guzman: 30 years of marriage**

Fabiola and Obed Guzman, members of Loma Linda University church, celebrated their 30th anniversary in December 2022. Their marriage and family have always been blessed to be surrounded by their church family—they first met when Fabiola joined the young adult Sabbath School class that Obed was teaching at Monrovia church! They continued to grow with each other and the church through socials, Pathfinders, and visiting church members. Now, they enjoy spending time in nature and with their three adult children and their baby grandson.

Their secret to marriage? There is none! "We have learned from each other through the years many lessons—good and not so good—but we learned together," they said. "Our marriage has had many ups and downs as many do, yet we have trusted and centered our marriage and family around our closest friend Jesus, and He has been the reason our marriage has been blessed for 30 years."



*Obed and Fabiola Guzman with their grandson, Wesley Joseph*

# Love



## **Martin and Linda Cheney: 110 years of marriage?!**

Martin first met Linda in 1955 when he was visiting a family in Mt. Airy, North Carolina. "She won my heart," said Martin. It wouldn't be until much later, however, that they would marry. The two became pen pals and were able to see each other only three or four times before Linda's family suddenly moved away, causing Martin to lose all contact with her.

In 1956, while visiting the same family in Mt. Airy, Martin met Martha. They also exchanged addresses, and they wrote letters to each other for the next two years. After graduating high school, Martin joined the U.S. Navy, and nine months later, he and Martha were married. They spent 50 years of happiness together, bringing three sons and one adopted daughter into their family before Martha died.

Now, Martin needed to find Linda, knowing only her maiden name and the names of her father and sister. Through Ancestry.com, Martin found Linda's younger brother Benny. He then found Benny's obituary, which revealed that Linda had a husband. Searching further, Martin found Linda's husband's obituary. They had been married for 48 years and had one son. Finally, Martin found Linda herself in a Murietta newspaper article celebrating Linda's mother's 90th birthday.

After all that work, Martin's Facebook message to Linda hit a wall. "She had totally forgotten me and didn't reply," Martin said. Thankfully, a mutual friend was able to complete the connection. Martin convinced Linda to marry him. Now members of Fallbrook church, Martin and Linda have been married for 12 years and look forward to many more!

"People ask us how long we've been married," Martin said. "I respond, 110 years—my 50, her 48, and our 12. Yes, we've been married 110 years!"



## **Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

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### **Conference Connections**

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## The Unlikely Hero

**Can you imagine needing to wash your hands, but when you turn on the faucet, the water is dirtier than you?** Can you imagine trying to make dinner, but all you have is smelly brown water coming out of your pipes? Mari Copeny and her neighbors in Flint, Michigan, didn't have to imagine. They lived it.

Although Mari was only eight years old at the time, she wanted to do something about the water crisis. She participated in protests and even went to Washington, D.C., to meet with their governor.

She also wanted to write a letter to the president of the United States. Her mother told her that the president was busy with more important things, but she decided to try anyway.

President Obama saw her letter and even made time to visit her in Flint. He also made sure they had \$100 million to help get clean water.

Mari didn't wait until she grew up or until the adults around her were less busy. She decided to help with a

problem in her town immediately. There are many problems around you at school, at church, and even at home. Even though you may be small, you can make a big difference. This week, find a problem and ask God to help you become an answer.

*"Let us be bold, then, and say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:6, GNT).*



**Mari hugs President Obama during his visit to Flint.**

*By Andrea King*

## Spot the Difference! Can you find the ten differences between these photos?



**Answer:** 1. Star on fridge is now a heart 2. Green cups on top left shelf missing 3. Tree is frowning 4. Different cup under the lamp opposite way 5. No dots on the dish towel 6. Plant on the counter has more leaves 7. Child is not wearing glasses 8. Fish in the fishbowl is facing 9. Teapot on front table are different colors 10. Additional fork and knife hanging with silverware