

CONFERENCE

Connections

Made for a Mission: Discovering Your Gift in God's Kingdom

Gifted individuals with superpowers are everywhere in today's stories—from comic books to blockbuster movies. The longing to have a gift that can change the world is universal. What a beautiful truth, then, that in God's kingdom, we do have supernatural gifts. These aren't fictional powers but real, Spirit-given ones meant to build up the body of Christ.

Paul reminds us that "there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7, NIV). Every believer has been given a gift—not for personal glory but for a greater purpose: God's mission in the world.

Each summer, I get a front-row seat to those gifts in action through the ministry of Vacation Bible Schools across our conference. From preteens helping with crafts to retirees leading storytelling and providing snacks, VBS is a beautiful picture of the church growing and serving together. It is intergenerational, joy-filled, and unified mission. Churches pour their hearts into blessing children and pointing families to Jesus, often reaching those who may never have stepped through church doors before.

What makes VBS so powerful isn't just the decorations or songs (though those are fun!). It's the way the



LEFT: Children at La Sierra University church work on a craft. **RIGHT:** Leaders at the San Ysidro church lead in a prayer reading.



Spirit moves through the gifts of God's people—through their hospitality, teaching, creativity, encouragement, leadership, and more, all to make Jesus known.

Just as no VBS could happen without the whole team, the Church cannot function as it should unless every member offers their gift. So whatever gift the Spirit has placed in you, know this: your church needs it, the children and families in your community need it, and the world needs it. And when we serve together, we witness what only God can do through a gifted, willing people.

In a world searching for heroes and superpowers, may our churches continue to shine with the real power of the Holy Spirit—through every act of service, every smile shared, and every child who learns that they, too, were made for a purpose.

Isaac Kim serves as the interim youth director for the Southeastern California Conference.



Isaac Kim



Jacob gives his graduation speech to OAE.

The Power of Prayer in Education

When Jacob Magin first stepped onto the campus of Oceanside Adventist Elementary (OAE) as a second grader, he had no idea what to expect. Coming straight from public school, he was met with unfamiliar traditions, such as group prayer and chapel services.

Now, having just graduated from eighth grade, Jacob looks back on that first day with amazement at how far he's come. He recalls being puzzled on his first day in second grade as his classmates bowed their heads in unison while the teacher spoke aloud to someone unseen. To him, it felt like a strange ritual—one he didn't yet understand.

As that first week continued, Magin noticed how central prayer was to daily life at his new school. Whether before lunch or at dismissal, every moment seemed to begin with a quiet reflection.

"Prayer to me is a place to invite God into our lives every day. I am thankful for my teachers here at OAE for helping me understand more about God and especially about prayer."
Jacob Magin

something began to shift for him. Seeing an entire room filled with students, teachers, and staff united in joyful song and reverent prayer left a lasting impression. For

the first time, Magin tried bowing his head too.

Over time, that sense of confusion turned into curiosity—and eventually, conviction. Years later, the same boy who had once questioned why people prayed now stood on that very chapel stage as a leader. He sang songs, led motions, announced programs, and, most importantly, prayed—not out of routine, but from the heart. "Prayer to me is a place to invite God into our lives every day," he reflected. "I am thankful for my teachers here at OAE for helping me understand more about God and especially about prayer."



Jacob Magin smiles.

Magin's story is more than a story of growth. It is a testimony to the lasting impact of Adventist education. In a setting where faith is interwoven with learning, Magin found not only academic knowledge but also spiritual understanding, personal growth, and a deeper connection with God. His journey from outsider to spiritual leader illustrates why Adventist schools matter: they nurture the whole child—mind, body, and soul—and create space for students to discover their faith at their own pace.

In his testimony, Magin's "new adventure," as he described it, proves anyone can start a relationship with God.

By Jordyn Wright



"What Am I Good At?"

Grace sat quietly during Sabbath School while the teacher talked about spiritual gifts. "God gives each of us special gifts to serve others," Miss Elena said. "Some people sing. Others fix things. Some are great encouragers!" Grace looked down at her hands. *I'm not good at singing, she thought. I'm not good at talking in front of people, either. Do I even have a gift?*

Later that day, during potluck, Grace noticed Mr. Thomas struggling to carry his tray with his cane. Without thinking, she ran over. "Can I help?" she asked, carefully guiding him to his seat. He smiled. "You have a gift for noticing people. That's rare."

That night, Grace asked her mom, "Is helping people a spiritual gift?" Her mom hugged her. "Yes! The Bible calls it service. It's one of the most beautiful gifts." The next Sabbath, Grace made it her mission to help wherever she could—refilling water cups, passing out hymnals, and smiling at lonely faces.

Grace knew she didn't sing solos but that spiritual gifts come in many forms. Whether big or small, your gift is God's way of loving others through you.

By Jordyn Wright

Grace could use a hand! Can you help her complete the crossword puzzle she started?

GUIDING GRACE



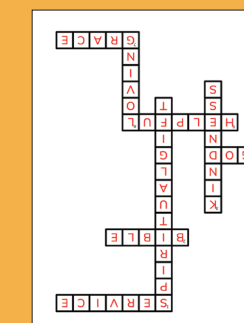
The Questions:

Across

- 1 - An act of helping or doing work for someone
- 2 - A book that teaches God's word
- 4 - Our heavenly Father
- 5 - Being willing to give assistance to someone who needs it
- 7 - God's love and forgiveness

Down

- 1 - Special ability given to us by the Holy Spirit
- 3 - Being thoughtful and considerate
- 6 - Acting with deep affection and care for others



Answer Key/ Word Bank

- Helpful
- Spiritual Gift
- Loving
- Kindness
- Service
- Bible
- God
- Grace

Key Points

Scripture

Read 1 Peter 4:10, NIV

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

Point:

Every single person has a gift. Even if you're not a singer or speaker, God has given you something special. The Bible calls it the gift of service, and it matters just as much as any other. Noticing others, offering kindness, or lending a hand is a powerful way to show God's love. Your gift is God's way of caring for people through your actions.

Reflect:

Grace learned that serving God doesn't mean you have to be on stage. Just by helping others with love, she was using her spiritual gifts. Doing something small for someone else will make their day better. Maybe it's helping your parents with the dishes or playing with someone who's alone at the playground. No matter how small it seems, your action can make a big difference.

Questions:

1. What is something I'm good at that I can use to help others?
2. Who around me might need kindness, and how can I show it to them this week?

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving me special gifts to help others. Please show me how I can use my gift to make people feel loved. Help me be kind, helpful, and ready to serve—just like You. Amen.



Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

11330 Pierce Street
Riverside, CA 92505
951-509-2200

www.seccadventist.org

Jonathan Park • President
Patty Marruffo • Secretary
Verlon Strauss • Treasurer

Conference Connections

Taji Saleem, Editor