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With Tithe Increase, SECC Decides to Give Back

By Verlon Strauss

This conference has been blessed. When the pandemic hit, we got very nervous. In the first couple of months, we saw some decreases in our tithe, but by the end of 2020, we saw an overall increase for the year. I never would have thought that during a year when our churches were closed we would see an increase in tithe, but we did. And then in

2021, we ended up with an increase of over 10% in tithe. That was one of the largest tithe increase percentages I have seen since serving as treasurer here in Southeastern California Conference (SECC).

I don't have a reason for why we would see these increases other than the fact that the world around us was dealing with issues and God still provided for His people. Our members have been gracious. Giving has continued, blessing this conference with funds to be able to continue to do God's ministry here.

One of the ways we have been able to do that was to give back a portion of the tithe to our churches. We know where the funds come from—our churches. We've tried hard to give back to each church as much



as possible. I feel very good that this year we have been able to give back 1% of tithe out of the SECC budget. Last year, it was a half percent. My goal is to continue to try to increase that each year.

Now we are looking at ways to continue to do ministry. We are looking at some evangelism projects. We are working on an interior design project to renovate our lodge at our camp, Pine Springs Ranch. We also put a significant portion of our dollars in education. Most of our schools have created endowments. We have a matching program that will continue to give back to our schools for years to come.

Thank you to all who have supported your church over these last two years, during this pandemic and in the past. It has shown me that God continues to work in mysterious and miraculous ways. The work isn't finished yet, and so we still want to encourage your giving through tithe and to your local churches.

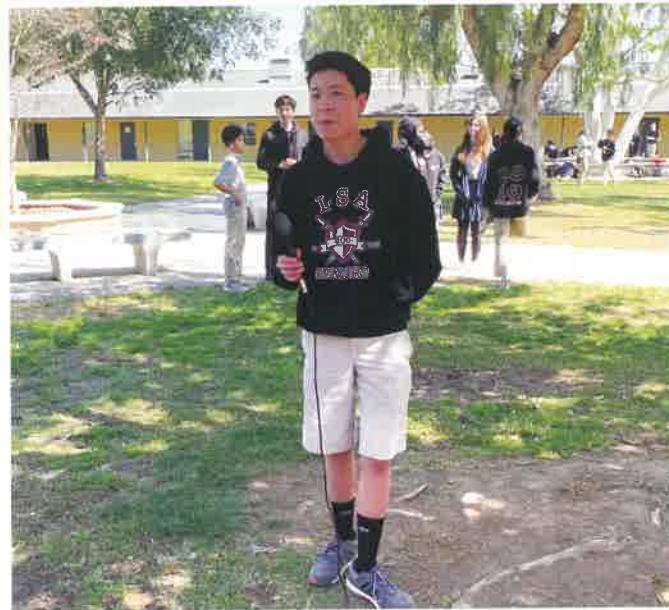
Most of our churches are set up for online giving. There are multiple projects listed for conference and local church giving opportunities. For long-term gifts, we have a planned giving department that will support you in your desires to set up a trust, a will, or an annuity. Thank you for your continued support as we move forward.

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FAR LEFT: Nguyen recites 1,000 digits of pi. LEFT: Nguyen practices his table tennis serve.

1,000 Digits of Pi

La Sierra Academy Student Recites 1,000 Digits of Pi in Annual Recitation Contest

By Israel Carreón Jr.

Joseph Nguyen, a 12th-grade student, broke a new La Sierra Academy (LSA) record by reciting 1,000 digits of pi. LSA holds its annual Pi Recitation Competition with junior and high school brackets. This tradition dates back to 2011. The previous record was held by 2018 LSA alum Ezra Sarmiento with an impressive 370-digit recitation. This year, the judges sieved through 16 pages before finally exhausting the numbers available to count. One thousand digits of pi had been recited.

Nguyen still had 111 memorized digits left in the tank.

What had first started out as an ostensible feat quickly evolved into a history-making moment unfolding before faculty and peers. A crowd of a few soon grew into a cheering assembly. Nguyen continued with assiduous focus.

"I tried to block out external conversations, but I couldn't help but hear the exclams of 'How does he know all this?' and 'The teachers just flipped another page,'" said Nguyen.

Nguyen began his journey toward memorizing over 1,000 digits of pi during

"I am no innate genius or math wizard. I only committed myself to consistency and perseverance to achieve this feat."

Christmas break. He memorized digits in divisions of 10 and subdivisions of 5. Sometimes a pattern of numbers would appear. Patterns facilitated fluid memorization. His goal was to memorize 15 digits per day—totaling to 1,325 digits by March 14, Pi Day, the day of the recitation contest. "This was my commitment to consistency instead of procrastination," he said. He took his practice wherever he went.

Nguyen carries no measure of hubris in victory. Quite the contrary, in fact. He demurred at any assertion of being a mathematical sage. "I am no innate genius or math wizard. I only committed myself to consistency and perseverance to achieve this feat."

Herein lies the true genius of Nguyen's talents—the proclamation not of inherent mathematical aptitude but of dedication,

discipline, and the grit to strive toward the achievement of an ambition. This type of genius is available to us all.

Nguyen no longer chooses to stay sequestered behind a computer screen. Along with picking up new record-breaking hobbies, he has traded computer games for a table tennis paddle. He's got a mean serve. He is currently applying to Adventist universities that offer majors in computer engineering. His shortlist includes Walla Walla University, Union College, and Andrews University. He attributes his decision to pursue this major to his enjoyment of mathematical thinking, analyzing problems, and crafting solutions.

After setting a new LSA record, Nguyen was ready for some actual pie. He settled for lemon meringue.



FAR LEFT: 31st Street honors oldest former pastor, John Damon. Pictured from left: George King, Stephanie King, Baron Peeler, Kurt King, Andrea King, Nancy Damon, John Damon, Rashad Burden, Stephany Burden, Kumanji Burden.

LEFT: Cleveland Hobdy shares a word of encouragement.

31st Street Church Celebrates 100 years

By Rashad Burden and Andrea King

The 31st Street church has been celebrating its 100th anniversary of ministry in San Diego. The church has a rich history of music, evangelism, and exceptional pastors. During the month of March, Rashad Burden, current 31st Street pastor, brought back some of the pastors from 31st Street's past to be celebrated and appreciated. Former pastors, Cleveland Hobdy, Andrea Trusty King, Robert Edwards, and John Damon, the most senior living pastor, were all honored during the month.

The celebration didn't end in March. The church scheduled ongoing events to

extend the fun and festivities throughout the year. They are compiling a cookbook that will celebrate many of the wonderful meals and excellent cooks that have served the congregation throughout their history.

The church is also doing its part to make sure its members enjoy the same kind of longevity the church has. Members were asked to walk and log 100 miles throughout the year. A mile-long walk path is being set up around the church to help members get in their mile.

"This is the campaign that will be celebrating fitness, will be celebrating

health, and will be celebrating our 100 years here at 31st Street," said Belinda Williamson, head elder of 31st Street church.

The year-long celebration will culminate in a homecoming weekend, October 21-23, 2022. Northern California Conference President Marc Woodson and James Doggette Sr. are scheduled to return. This weekend also boasts of a choir reunion and banquet. God has truly been faithful to 31st Street church, and they look forward to manifesting all that has been predestined by the Lord.

Bible Camp Inspires Students

By Trevan Osborn

High school students in the Southeastern California Conference (SECC) were blessed and inspired by the Junior/Senior Bible Camp in March. After not being able to have Bible camp last school year, students and staff were thrilled to come together again to grow closer to God and each other.

The camp was held at Pine Springs Ranch on March 13-15. Around 250 students attended from SECC senior academies as well as three schools from Southern California Conference. The event was focused on the theme "Movement." Students not only developed a deeper



Group time at Junior/Senior Bible Camp.

relationship with God but also grew in their leadership skills. Almost all elements of the program were led by students

themselves, including drama, worship leading, prayer groups, and facilitating "family groups" of about 15 students.

LNJA Hosts First-Ever Shark Tank School Event

By Danni Thaw

Forty-four students in grades K through 12 at Laguna Niguel Junior Academy (LNJA) participated in the first-ever Shark Tank competition on March 10. Based on the hit ABC television show of the same name, the event featured three judges—Jessica Preece, teaching principal at LNJA, and two parents—all of whom have entrepreneurial backgrounds and have had their own businesses.

Students were asked to invent a new concept, research the market for it, make a business plan to sell it, and produce a

prototype of the product. To supplement their presentations, students came prepared with tri-fold poster boards with logos and product information.

The event received resounding acclaim from parents who admired the focus on encouraging student-led innovation, since students worked on projects in class without much assistance.

Competition categories included Best Original Idea, Fan Favorite, Best Speech, Best Advertisement/Poster Board, Best Teamwork, and Most Brave (for two students who presented alone when others were paired). Awards were based on a provided rubric and presented at chapel time during the school day.

Some of the pitches included:

- GA Toothpaste: a dispenser that measures out the right amount of toothpaste onto a toothbrush.

- Boredom Busters: an entertaining box of various games and activities to beat boredom without the use of technology.

- Lunchpail Tracker: a GPS tracker placed on commonly lost school items such as lunch pails, backpacks, jackets, water bottles, and more.

- Wello: a dissolvable hydrating liquid in an edible pod that eliminates the waste from plastic water bottles.

- Forbade Blade: a keypad lock on cutting knife blocks to prevent small children from pulling out knives and getting hurt.

- Fire Heads: a ski pole that heats up and melts accumulated snow on the ski pole tip, helping users clip out of ski boots more easily.

- Stick'ems: stickers for blisters using materials for medical electrode devices.



Mrs. Preece shows off the competition's judges.

- The Webber: a wrist device that shoots out a string that attaches to an object that users need to reach from a distance.

The two most popular products were the Boredom Busters and The Webber.

"The ideas from our students were all fantastic," said Preece. "We were incredibly blessed to see the innovation and creativity of our young people when they are interested, engaged, and determined to put in their best effort to be successful!"

This event will be a new tradition going forward and is focused on continually nurturing the God-given talents of LNJA students.

Laguna Niguel Junior Academy is a Seventh-day Adventist school providing quality Christian education to students since 1984. The academy offers grades from kindergarten to eighth grade, with weekly chapel services in the main church sanctuary.

For more information on registration, to schedule a tour, or for other school information, contact LNJA at 949-492-3428.



Jeremiah Cline pitches his Boredom Busters.

ANGLES
A Southeastern California Conference Publication

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