

CONFERENCE

Connections

Pastor Appreciation

Over this past year, as ministerial director, I have seen some pastors begin ministry and others reach retirement. I have seen engagements, graduations, and the birth of several children. I have visited pastors in the hospital and followed up with others recovering at home. I've spoken with pastors who were in crisis, dealing with conflicts, or trying to make it through a major transition in their life.

Sometimes in ministry, we see the pastor as just their role, but a pastor is a human being. She or he has accepted a call to minister, to show up to the lives of the members and church(es) they serve. Yet they are also living in the reality of their own life. It is the call, and pastors understand the need to be present even at times that are not convenient in their personal lives.

We want pastors to know that they are human. They are first to be loved by God and affirmed in God's presence before they can be of service to others. They deserve whole-person care. We provide resources to support pastors in this endeavor, from counseling and coaching coupons to meetings and fun days that encourage and equip them.

However, you as a church member also play an important role in supporting a pastor. Pastors aren't serving for recognition, but it is meaningful when people you invest in say thank you.

October is Clergy Appreciation Month. Here are a few suggestions for you to consider in showing your

appreciation to your pastor or pastoral team:

1) Pray for them. This is the greatest gift you can give. Your prayers are vital!

2) Share words of appreciation. This can be by phone, email, writing a letter, or in person. Speak to them of the ways you have experienced their ministry or have seen the impact of their time and effort.

3) Share an act of service. You could invite them over for Sabbath lunch or help them with a need you notice.

4) Give a gift. Gifts can also show your appreciation—perhaps a gift card to a restaurant or a store where your pastor typically shops. You can give a gift that supports them in a hobby they participate in to find balance in their life and ministry.

Being a pastor is not an easy job. It involves working with people from various backgrounds with different experiences and viewpoints to bring them together to serve in God's mission of expanding His kingdom.

Pastors aren't perfect—we are all growing together on this kingdom journey. There will be times that you feel something more can be done. I want to encourage you to also be aware of the ways that God is already moving. Join your church and pastor in serving with God in the mission, and share your appreciation of this along the way.

By Will Penick



Will Penick, Ministerial Director



Jonathan Park
SECC President



Ignite volunteers gather with praise signs.

Ignite: College Students Gather for Worship Experience

On July 5-6, a group of college students gathered at Mt. Rubidoux church for "Ignite," an intercollegiate worship experience. Faith Ncube, a full-time student at Oakwood University, was the visionary behind this Spirit-led worship event. The inspiration for Ignite was placed on her heart during her senior year of high school when she noticed a lack of spaces where young people could authentically worship God. This realization, combined with her deep passion for worship, propelled her to say "yes" to the calling.

"I saw a need for a space where people my age could connect with God in a meaningful way," Faith shared. "Even when there were opportunities for worship, they often didn't meet the specific needs of college students. That's why I felt compelled to start Ignite."

The success of the first Ignite event led Faith to continue the ministry for a second year, but not without

challenges. Planning from across the country, while attending college in Alabama, made the process strenuous. Faith and her team began planning in December, tackling logistics like dates, venues, and budget considerations. Despite the challenges, Faith remained anchored in the theme verse for the year, Psalms 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" (NKJV). This promise gave her peace throughout the planning process, reassuring her that God would be glorified, regardless of the obstacles.

The event drew over 600 attendees across multiple services. Among the many touching moments was the testimony of a college student who attended Ignite for the first time and decided to give her life to Jesus. For Faith, the event was also a personal testimony of

God's provision. "I saw firsthand that when we boldly approach God's throne with requests aligned to His will, He is faithful to answer."

Looking ahead, Faith's goal for Ignite is to continually seek God's will for the ministry. She aims to provide a space where God can ignite a deep and lasting passion for Him within the hearts of those who attend. "We can't do this without striving to achieve His will," she said with conviction, ensuring that Ignite remains a place where God's presence is powerfully felt and lives are transformed.

By Ezrica Bennett

"I saw a need for a space where people my age could connect with God in a meaningful way."



Attendees raise their hands in praise.



Three SECC Women Pastors Receive the Junia Award

The Association of Adventist Women is pleased to name Maria Ejurango, Elina Camarena, Shiphrah Fepulea'i, Therezinha Barbalho, and Linda Biswas as recipients of the 2024 Junia Award in the North American Division. Three of these are pastors in the Southeastern California Conference: Maria Ejurango (Waterman Visayan Fil-Am church), Elina Camarena (Paradise Valley Spanish church), and Linda Biswas (Azure Hills church).

We are highlighting women who have recently been ordained while leading in mainly immigrant communities. Ejurango is the first Filipina in a Filipino church, Camarena is the first Hispanic in a Spanish church, and Biswas, the first Bengali-American.

The Association of Adventist Women created the annual Junia awards as a way to highlight women from each division who are active in their local church leadership, administration, or religious training. The Junia Award is named after Junia, who was acclaimed by Paul as his coworker and prominent among the apostles (Romans 16:7). We wish to highlight women's roles in nurturing and sustaining church life—as Junia did, along with many other women who led in the early church. This includes groundbreaking new roles for women and roles that are representative and/or unique in their division.

Our goal is to encourage other women who are also leading in church groups and to assure the worldwide church that women have been accepted as holding up half the sky in a wide array of cultures in the Adventist church. These women may be the exception, but they are also exceptional in carrying out their God-given calling. Many women are following the calling God has placed on their hearts because of the example of the Junia award recipients.

By Nerida Taylor Bates MD PhD, President of Association of Adventist Women

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF ADVENTIST WOMEN: AAW was begun as a committee of the Association of Adventist Forums (AAF) and grew into an independent, volunteer organization incorporated in 1982 as an independent, not-for-profit entity. It has become a major source of encouragement for Adventist women both in North America and internationally. One initial goal that has been met with so much enthusiasm was to create a Women's Ministries Department at the North American Division.



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Preparing for Winter

As the fall season settles in, you may find yourself inside more often than not. The weather is colder, the sun sets earlier, and the indoors has hot cocoa and fuzzy blankets.

Preparing for winter is easy when we have cars with working heaters and grocery stores that sell any food you can think of. But what about wild animals? Where do they get their food when the trees are bare and snow covers the ground? Bears avoid this problem by hibernating. Hibernation is a period when an animal is in a dormant state during the winter.

Hibernation in bears is an amazing feat that can last anywhere from a few weeks to several months. Their heart rate drops to only 8-10 beats per minute. On average, they only take one breath every minute. Bears don't eat, drink, or even pee or poop during hibernation! So how do they survive it?

During the summer and fall, bears eat and drink nonstop to build up the fat in their bodies for energy during the winter. They find tree hollows, logs, or rock crevices to sleep in. With these preparations, bears are safely and healthily tucked away from the harsh winter and starvation.



Just like bears preparing for winter, we need to prepare for when Jesus comes. Although we don't know the exact time, we can still share God's love nonstop—like a bear's eating habits in the fall! What are some ways you can get ready for Jesus' return?

Source: National Park Service website

By Megan Jacobs

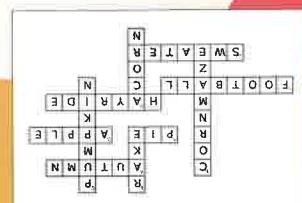
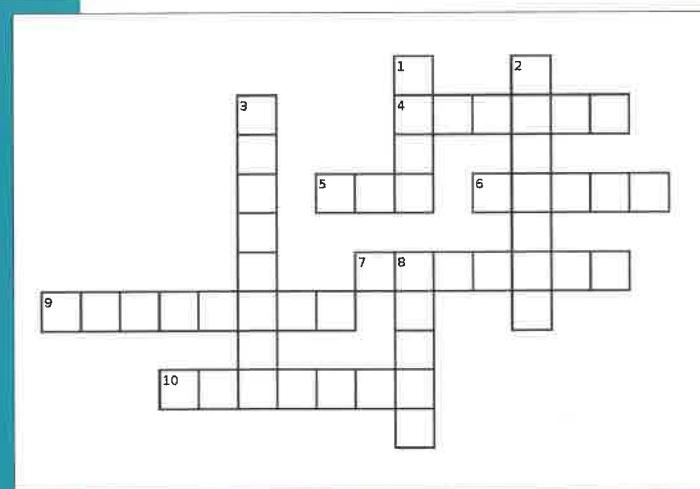
Fall Crossword Puzzle Use The Clues To Find The Answers

Down

1. You need this to make your big leaf pile
2. Orange squash
3. You don't want to get lost in this
8. A squirrel's treasure

Across

4. Also known as 'fall'
5. Thanksgiving dessert
6. This keeps the doctor away
7. A tractor makes this activity possible
9. The sport of the season
10. _____ weather (it rhymes!)



ANSWERS