

CONFERENCE

Connections

Faithful in Yesterday, Courageous for Tomorrow

As I look back on 2025, my heart is full of appreciation and gratitude to God. This past year, we've seen God at work in ways both big and small, as you've read in the *Pacific Union Recorder*. Sometimes it's been in the visible victories we celebrate together, but just as often it's been in the quiet, steady faithfulness of people simply showing up and doing what God has called them to do. And through it all, we've held onto this promise: "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:8, NIV).

One of the highlights of 2025? Watching lives change through the gospel. We've already celebrated over 1,200 baptisms in 2025, and reports are still coming in. Each baptism has a story behind it—a journey of grace and a decision to follow Jesus. None of this happens by accident. It's the fruit of prayer, relationships built over time, and faithful ministry in our churches and schools across the conference. I'm grateful for every person He's used to expand His kingdom.

I also want to thank those of you who serve so faithfully. To our pastors: thank you for shepherding God's people week in and week out with patience and perseverance, even when the work is hard. To our teachers and school staff: thank you for investing in young lives, both academically and spiritually, often going far beyond your job descriptions.



And to our lay members and volunteers: thank you for your quiet, consistent faithfulness—serving, giving, and being a witness in your churches and neighborhoods.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to our conference office staff. You often work behind the scenes, and not everyone sees what you do, but God does. You serve tirelessly, ensuring we remain compliant with regulations, maintain financial integrity and transparency, and provide the support our churches and schools need. Your dedication keeps things running smoothly and allows the ministry to move forward with trust and accountability. You matter more than you know.

Throughout 2025, our churches have continued to grow in discipleship, reach out to their communities, and invest in the next generation. Faithfulness doesn't mean everything is easy, and the past year reminded us of that. But in every season and through every difficulty,

Continued on page 2



Jonathan Park
SECC President

Love

Stories from SECC

*The Wrights
with their
two sons,
Chip and
Todd.*



*Dr. Bill and
Judi Wright*



Love is the greatest thing God has given us,
and we want to celebrate it this month in
Southeastern California Conference!

The love story of William Wright Jr. and Judi Wright began long before they understood what love truly meant. Growing up together, their lives were intertwined through faith, family, and the Adventist church that first connected their parents. What began in childhood grew into a lifelong partnership guided by God.

Married for 61 years as of Dec. 20, 2025, much of their early marriage was marked by constant movement. During their first 18 years together, they moved every two to three years as Bill served as principal at different Adventist schools across Ohio, California, Alabama, Missouri, and Georgia. Throughout these transitions, they were blessed with two sons, Chip and Todd, whose lives were shaped by faith, resilience, and love. Today, their family has grown to include five beautiful grandchildren.

Through constant change, William and Judi learned that a strong marriage is built on communication, kindness, respect, and, above all, a prayerful connection with God. Looking back, they give God all the credit for their beautiful family, their perseverance, and a love that continues to endure to this day.

*Continued
from page 1*

God has given us what we needed: wisdom, resilience, and unity.

As we step into 2026, God invites us to move forward with fresh focus and purpose. He's calling us to go deeper in our faith, be more

intentional in making disciples, and engage our communities with compassion and courage. Regardless of what challenges may lie ahead, I am confident we will face them together and trust the God who has already gone before us.

We're moving forward together, confident that God will continue to guide the Southeastern California Conference as we work to expand His kingdom and share the hope of Christ wherever He sends us.





Unto Us: The Nativity Story

This past December, Kansas Avenue church opened its doors to the community for a powerful retelling of the Christmas story through ***Unto Us: The Nativity Story***, presented by KA Live! Drama Productions. Originally produced by LifeHouse Theater, the play was graciously shared with Kansas Avenue church through special arrangement, allowing the congregation to bring this meaningful production to life for their local community.

Presented across four performances on Dec. 6, 7, 13, and 14, the immersive experience invited audiences of all ages to reflect on the hope, humility, and love found in the birth of Jesus. Through music, movement, and storytelling, the production created an atmosphere that encouraged both reflection and worship, reminding attendees of the true reason for the Christmas season.

The production starred Marissa Wright as Mary, whose heartfelt portrayal captured the faith, courage, and grace of a young woman chosen for an extraordinary calling. Aaron Yanez served as both director and visionary behind the production, guiding the story with creativity, intentionality, and spiritual depth. In addition to directing, Yanez portrayed Joseph, offering a moving depiction of steadfast faith and quiet obedience amid moments of uncertainty and questioning.

Behind the scenes, the dedication of the cast and crew played a vital role in the production's success. Over the course of more than three months, volunteers committed to weekly weekend rehearsals, demonstrating remarkable faithfulness, teamwork, and passion. Their commitment was evident in every scene, reflecting a shared desire to tell the story of Jesus with excellence and purpose.

Through thoughtful staging, meaningful dialogue, and a spirit of worship, *Unto Us* reminded audience members that Christ came for all—bringing light into the world and hope into every heart. Kansas Avenue church extends heartfelt gratitude to the LifeHouse Theater owners, their church cast, crew, and all the volunteers who helped create a memorable and meaningful experience for families throughout the community.

By Jordyn Wright



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

kids konnect

God's Plan: Two are Better than One

One windy afternoon, Elijah's family decided to build a big kite to fly in the park. Dad held the wooden sticks, Mom tied them together, Elijah cut the colorful paper, and his little sister, Naomi, brought the tape. Everyone had a job, and soon the kite was ready. When they tried to fly it, the wind pushed it sideways, and it fell to the ground. Elijah frowned. "Why didn't it work?" Dad knelt beside him, "Because every part has to work together, just like a team or family."

They adjusted the strings and, this time as a team, tried again. The kite caught the wind and soared high into the sky. Elijah watched it soar alongside other kites and felt proud of what they had done as a team. Mom smiled and said, "This is why God created families, so we wouldn't face life alone. When we help each other, we grow stronger."

The Bible teaches in Ecclesiastes 4:9, "Two are better than one." God designed marriage so husbands and wives could support one another with love and kindness. Families grow from that love: children learning from parents, siblings helping each other, and everyone practicing patience and forgiveness.

On the way home, Elijah thought about what had happened. The kite only worked when everyone helped, and he realized families are the same way. God gives each person a role, and when they support one another, things just work better. Marriage and family are important because God uses them to shape us—teaching us to care, to cooperate, and to grow in faith together. A strong family isn't perfect, but it leans on God and on each other.

By Jordyn Wright

Two Are Better Than One

Guess the Bible Characters/Families

Word Bank:

Esther & Mordecai
Joseph & Mary
Noah & his family
Hannah & Samuel
Joseph and his brothers
Ruth, Boaz & Naomi
Adam & Eve

1. We were the very first husband and wife, Living in a garden filled with life. **Who are we?**
2. God told me to build something big and wide. It kept my family safe when it rained outside. **Who am I?**
3. I stayed by my mother-in-law's side through every test. "I'll go where you go," because love is best. **Who are we?**
4. Angels told us news that changed the world forever. We raised a special child—God's Son and Savior. **Who are we?**
5. I prayed for a child with all my heart. God answered and gave me a great start. **Who are we?**
6. My cousin raised me when my parents were gone. With God's help, I saved my people and stayed strong. **Who are we?**
7. My colorful coat made my brothers mad. But God turned it into something good, not bad. **Who am I?**

Answer Key:

1. We were the very first husband and wife, Living in a garden filled with life. **Who are we?** [Adam & Eve]
2. God told me to build something big and wide. It kept my family safe when it rained outside. **Who am I?** [Noah & his family]
3. I stayed by my mother-in-law's side through every test. "I'll go where you go," because love is best. **Who are we?** [Ruth, Boaz & Naomi]
4. Angels told us news that changed the world forever. We raised a special child—God's Son and Savior. **Who are we?** [Joseph & Mary]
5. I prayed for a child with all my heart. God answered and gave me a great start. **Who are we?** [Hannah & Samuel]
6. My cousin raised me when my parents were gone. With God's help, I saved my people and stayed strong. **Who are we?** [Esther & Mordecai]
7. My colorful coat made my brothers mad. But God turned it into something good, not bad. **Who am I?** [Joseph & his brothers]