

CONFERENCE

Connections

A New Season of Ministry: Communications and Digital Evangelism

In every season, God is faithful, and in this season, He is connecting us in new and relevant ways. The Southeastern California Conference Communications & Media Department exists to share what is happening across our conference and why the mission of our church matters. It is not often that this conference department is front and center, nor is it the first to come to mind when thinking of ministry; however, it functions in most day-to-day operations behind the scenes.

The role of the Communications & Media Department is distinct both as a ministry and as a service, sharing information through our publications and digital formats. Not only does the department oversee the collective dissemination of stories happening around the conference, it weaves together a beautiful tapestry of lives being transformed by the gospel. Often, this is seen through the stories that are shared here in the *Recorder*, giving members a sense of connection to a broader community.

From the far stretches of the northern-most part of San Bernardino County to the border in Imperial County, the stories in between represent the powerful work that our conference is committed to accomplishing and the pastors and educators who share that love and hope. This work helps unite us as a family of believers.

Further, the Communications & Media Department is responsible for creative cohesion among our diverse family of believers as Seventh-day Adventists. In many cases, we hope that viewing the Adventist logo evokes positive memories and experiences while creating curiosity about our beliefs among the unreached. The



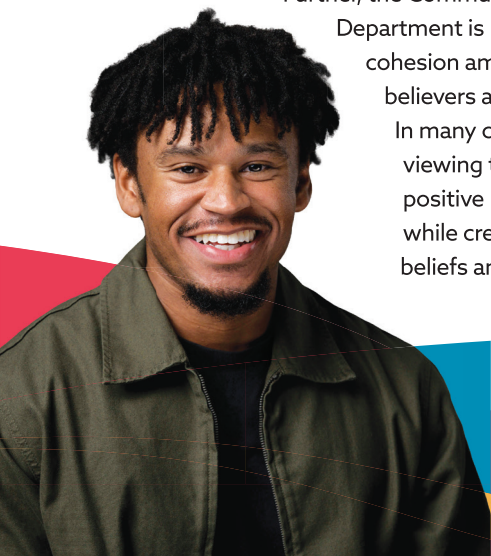
LEFT: A Crosswalk camera operator captures livestream video. **RIGHT:** The Azure Hills media team serve at a Vacation Bible School program.



"brand" of our denomination is one that we hope to reflect as a symbol for the soon coming of our Savior, Jesus.

We recognize the prime opportunity in reaching the unreached through new methods, including the use of media. We know that people are hearing the gospel in different ways than they used to. For many today, their first experience with church is not a building. It is a post, a livestream, or a video shared by someone they love. This invigorates our purpose to empower leaders to communicate with clarity and purpose. Whether creating a short video with inspirational messages, documenting the stories of everyday members in their walk with Jesus, or supporting a local church with recommendations to improve their church livestream, media presents itself with numerous abilities to reach beyond our church walls and extend out to those in need.

Our department will continue to support the mission of the conference and bring Jesus to those who are in search of Him in new ways.



Taji Saleem
Communications & Media Director

RIGHT: Lindsay D. is baptized by pastors Filip and Kelly in January 2026.

FAR RIGHT: Young adults Sarah and Christian are prayed over by the church before their baptism.



Life Groups Encourage 4,000 Young Adults into Discipleship at Praxis

In 2019, at Praxis Ministry, the young adult ministry of Loma Linda University church, the very first small group, called "Life Groups," was launched. This one group would change the trajectory of how the church did ministry with young adults forever. After the first group launched successfully, Praxis continued to grow six more groups the next season. The church saw a ripple effect as members personally invited their friends to join them in a book-based study or an activity-based group consisting of about eight to 12 young adults. Each Life Group became a place that met the core needs of young adults (identity, belonging, and purpose), deepened friendships, helped people learn faith in real life, and developed leadership skills among its young adult facilitators. Then, something happened that the pastors and elders never saw coming: Life Groups became an evangelism engine.

Engaging in personal evangelism can look different for different people. In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us that for him, evangelism meant planting seeds of the gospel; for Apollos, it meant watering those seeds through teaching, discipleship, and nurturing (1 Corinthians 3:6).

In these Life Groups, it started with a simple invitation. While an invitation from a friend might seem insignificant, Praxis started to see an increase in attendance, and to the church's surprise, many began making decisions to be baptized! As this ministry grew, so did the expense of running each group. This led to Praxis applying for financial support from the Southeastern California Conference Evangelism Fund on multiple occasions.

Since that first Life Group started, more than 4,000 young adults have taken part in a group. Today, Praxis has between 12 and 18 Life Groups that meet seasonally, three times a year for ten weeks in the fall, winter, and summer.

"We cannot take any credit for the spiritual awakening happening among young adults during these years, but we can say that we are trying to be faithful with the gifts and talents God has given our young adults to do wonderful things for his kingdom," Pastors Filip and Kelly shared. "Like the master who entrusted his servants with talents, we pray that we will not hide what has been given to us. Instead, may we faithfully invest it and return it multiplied, for there is deep joy in seeing souls come to Christ."

By Kelly Lin Dickinson and Filip Milosavljevic



Alexis R. gets baptized by pastors Filip and Kelly in January 2026.

Annual Retirees' Retreat Makes a Post-Pandemic Return

On a three-day stint in the San Jacinto Mountains, senior citizens from around Southeastern California Conference (SECC) enjoyed brisk, fresh air and shared faith and warm fellowship at the resumed Annual Retirees' Retreat, held at Pine Springs Ranch (PSR) from May 26-28.

This was the first time the retreat had been held since 2019; plans were hampered by challenges of the covid pandemic and renovations to the PSR lodge. Newly minted senior ministries leader Mark Tatum, mainly learning via anecdotes from previous attendees, knew it would be both a learning and re-building year. But a few dozen three-day attendees, accompanied by day visitors from the Linda Valley Villa retirement center, enjoyed worships and activities in the Lord's natural ambience.

Several activities were held across the three days. Day hikes provided sightseeing and movement; numerous deer, hawks, and other animals were spotted in the early morning. Exercise options, chair aerobics, candy bingo, and a movie night motivated the seniors. Jonathan Finau and Donald Lowe, Linda Valley Villa's activities and spiritual directors, respectively, provided entertaining and fulfilling portions. Additionally, camp staff member Fritz Wuttke provided a hayride across the camp.

Ron du Preez, senior pastor of the Beaumont church and twice a retiree himself, inspired the group by providing stirring devotional thoughts, guided by the theme "God's Gargantuan Grace." Sharon and Harley Harder, accompanied by Dorothy Wareham on the piano, led the seniors in worship and singing. "There was lots of music. We even got to sing some of the old JMV choruses," Sharon Harder shared. "It was fun!" Additional guests included SECC President Jonathan Park, who spoke and ate with the seniors, and Kim Stewart, trust officer for SECC Property & Trust Services Department, who educated attendees about available services.

Every element of the event was a reminder of its purpose. Wareham, who visited PSR in prior years, shared, "Upon returning to camp, I looked up at the mountain I used to climb regularly. This was where I talked to God on top of that peak, listened, and waited for Him to answer me. I am assured that God answered me with His promise and encouragement that He is indeed coming soon, and very soon."

Plans are to continue the retreat next May and in future years. Seniors who would like to be involved in future retreats are encouraged to contact Mark Tatum, assistant to the president, by emailing Mark.Tatum@seccsda.org.

By Mark Tatum



LEFT: Du Preez preaches in the morning about God's Gargantuan Grace.



BELOW: A group of retirees gather in the fort.

"I am assured that God answered me with His promise and encouragement that He is indeed coming soon, and very soon."



**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

kidskonnnect

Ben's Biggest Adventure

Ben loved exploring the woods behind his house. He was excited to start a garden in his grandpa's backyard so he could create more adventures. Ben imagined hidden trails, colorful birds, and friendly animals waiting around every corner. One afternoon, he asked his grandpa, "Will heaven have adventures too?"

His grandpa smiled at the thought of creating an adventure garden. "The New Earth will be the greatest adventure of all," he replied.

That night, Ben dreamed of running through endless green fields, climbing giant trees, and playing with lions, deer, and little rabbits that weren't afraid. Crystal-clear rivers sparkled in the sunshine, and every flower stayed bright forever. Best of all, Jesus walked beside him, laughing and talking like a best friend.

When Ben woke up, he grinned. "I can't wait for the New Earth!"

Until that day comes, he decided, he would follow Jesus and share His love wherever he went.

By Taji Saleem



Spot the Differences

Search for the differences between the photos. Look closely at every detail to find all eight differences.

- Answer Key**
1. Sun with no face
 2. Green bird
 3. Right black bird missing
 4. Blue tank top
 5. Recycle symbol arrows changed
 6. Bigger white daisy
 7. Blue glasses missing
 8. Red tent