



Velino A. Salazar
President

About the President

In May of 2015, you asked me to serve as your president for the next four years. This four-year term has come to a conclusion, and it is time to present a report to you.

But, before any information or story is told, I want to praise God for the blessings He has poured upon the Southern California Conference (SCC) family during this time. To Him be all glory and the merit for any and every good thing that happened among His people in this part of the world. I have the conviction that all that has happened is because of His love, His grace and His purpose.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a global family, and SCC is part of that worldwide community. We reside in the beautiful and sunny southern tier of the Golden State, and here, we are happily and responsibly “exalting Christ by serving others.”

The composition of our churches and schools reflects the kaleidoscopic community we live in. We are not alike; we are as diverse as our many cultures, languages and worship styles, making us a beautiful family with many shapes and flavors.

Our strength and our treasure is our diversity. We like the beautiful family we are, and we are happy. Yes, like all families, there are times when we become impatient with one another, but we have learned to admire, respect and value each other as children of the same loving Father.



Cherie Vendouris
*Executive Assistant
 to the President*



At the same time, as we mingle while carrying out our mission in our communities, we realize that we need each other to fulfill the great commission Jesus gave to the disciples of His time *and* our time.

The multifaceted role of the president includes:

- Fostering unity among our diversity
- Motivating the ministerial and educational workforce to share Christ in any way possible
- Inspiring our church members to experience a closer relationship with God
- Promoting harmony when challenges and impatience appear
- Facilitating reconciliation when struggles and misunderstandings arise
- Representing SCC at different entities
 - Within our denomination (La Sierra, Pacific Union College, Adventist Health hospitals)
 - Within our community (Glendale, Los Angeles, Simi Valley)



I have sought to fulfill this role in these four ways:

- Visiting the churches and schools
- Being accessible to church members
- Interacting with church and community members
- Dialoguing with conference employees and other entity leaders

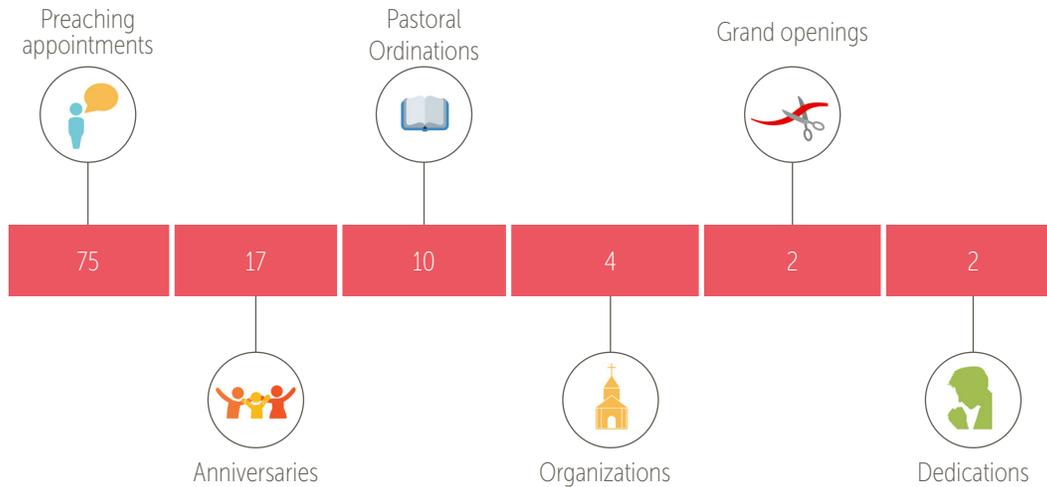


Therefore, with this background in mind, the pace of the president's role has been pretty fast.

Fortunately, our conference geographical territory gives the president more time to fulfill this role, rather than spending time traveling long distances between cities for appointments.

During the last four years, I have been able to visit most of the SCC churches on different occasions: preaching appointments, anniversaries, ordinations, organizations, grand openings, dedications and other purposes.

2015-2019



Asian-Pacific

Hispanic

Greater L.A.

L.A. Metro

West

Several times during the past quadrennium, I visited our five region committees and region pastors meetings, including their pastors' retreats. I spent this time interacting and having fellowship with them, listening to their needs and plans and observing their customized ways to strategize their evangelistic approach in their cultural and territorial context. The uniqueness of our region system allows us to experience a gathering among congregations that have a similar cultural way to do ministry in a particular framework.

Although we have those region-specific functions (elders orientation, lay training, baptismal rallies, health fairs, etc.), we also have had conference-wide or cross-region gatherings and events (men's, women's, prayer, health retreats, ONE House for young adults, etc.), reminding ourselves that we are one big conference family.

Pastors' Spiritual Retreat

One event all our SCC pastors expect every year is our pastors' spiritual retreat, beginning the first Sunday of March through Tuesday. The entire program is planned, organized and conducted by our SCC prayer and spirituality renewal team. This time is for prayer, fellowship, sports and rest — not conference business or promotion at all. It is a real retreat. We have received this wonderful spiritual gift for six consecutive years, and we have been blessed! Thank you to Janet Lui and team.



Highlight Conference-Wide Events

Pathway to Health

In spring 2016, we hosted the Pathway to Health mega-clinic at the L.A. Convention Center. More than 4,200 volunteers from our churches and hospitals assisted 8,500 Los Angeles residents with free health care services. The total cost of this program was several hundred thousands of dollars. But, the SCC evangelism budget funded only \$107,000; the remainder was covered by donations. We were joined by dozens of volunteers from across the U.S. and other countries (Australia, Europe, etc.). Most of our churches had follow-up contact with patients; some are now members of or attending our churches.



“Alive” Convocation

In fall 2017, we held our first convocation in 16-plus years at the Greek Theatre. What beautiful moments we experienced with the more than 4,500 people that full Sabbath day! This collective event became a reality as a result of the visionary push of one church member and the loving generosity of another who donated the money for the rental of the venue. The conference covered the remaining expenses for the event: \$25,569. Praise the Lord, and thank you so much, sisters!



Strategic Planning

One of the areas that we have grown is in our strategic planning. For several months, the SCC leaders (officers, region/department leadership, executive committee) got together to present our current realities and our dreams for the future to take the ministry of SCC to the next level. Throughout the process, we rediscovered that with the great talent God has given to this conference, we can do great things to demonstrate God's love for the benefit of our surrounding communities.

www.2019sccsession.org/about

We refocused our vision, restated our mission statement, identified our core values and set our objectives to enhance the culture of doing ministry in our conference.

Today, we are pleased to present to our members at

the constituency session a comprehensive strategic plan for the immediate next years. To God be the glory, and our sincere gratitude to Karen Cress, Ph.D., who mentored us while pursuing her doctoral degree. Her guidance and services also benefited our pastors, churches and schools.

Evangelism

Our churches and pastors are impacting their communities in any way possible so the members of their community can know about the love of Jesus Christ and His soon coming. Some churches have done this through traditional evangelism holding nightly meetings for one or two weeks; others have done it through unconventional methods, such as health clinics and fairs, plant-based cooking classes, providing food and showers to homeless community members or simply by hosting neighborhood baby showers.



Youth & Literature Ministries

Our conference youth department and literature ministries have assisted many churches and schools in sharing Christ through community services and by young people knocking on doors to pray and leave books and pamphlets in the homes. Thousands of homes have been blessed through these front-line ministries carried by hundreds of young people through this life-changing experience.



Senior Youth & Young Adult Ministries

At our last constituency session, you expressed once again serious concerns for the senior youth and young adults in our conference and asked us to revisit and revamp that area of ministry. Today, I'm pleased to report that the senior youth and young adults ministries department has been re-established, and we have a full-time director to serve our entire conference. We praise God for pastor Iki Taimi's gifts and talents, and we thank him for his passion to minister to this sector of our church.

By faith, we decided to reopen this vital ministry in our conference, and we have the firm confidence that the Lord will provide the resources — both human and financial — for this ministry to involve our children and grandchildren in church life and give them a prominent place within our church family.

Finances

Talking about financial resources, I want to stop here to praise God for providing what we needed, not what we wished, and to thank you as members for your faithfulness to God in returning tithe and for your trust in the conference leadership to manage this sacred money to advance the cause of Jesus Christ in our territory. I will repeat what I have said on various occasions: We have learned to trust in the Lord daily, not leaning on our savings account (in fact, we haven't had it in years). Responsibly, we have tried to be careful and prudent Christian stewards. Every single employee or vendor has received what they deserve for their ministries or services provided.



NEW DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

As I have interacted with you and listened to your perspectives and viewpoints, I have given thought to explore new ways to do ministry in the conference and be more relevant to our context and the immediate future. I have shared some of these ideas with our conference administrative team, and after praying and assessing these possibilities, we have implemented some of them.

One of those is the establishment of a development department to seek additional resources to fund specific needs in our current ministries and to expand new ones in our conference. A year ago, we retained the services of a development director to raise funds for the conference, our churches and our schools.

Conference Projects

Last but not least, the conference projects will be communicated in a separate report. But here is a very brief summary:

NEWBURY PARK PROJECT

This project is still around; not good news. What we anticipated and reported to you four years ago in terms of timeline and expenses hasn't worked exactly as planned.

- The lot of the former Ventura Estates was sold on March 2017 instead of closing escrow on November 2015 as we anticipated.
- The North Campus went in escrow on November 2015 to close it on December 2017; however, six weeks before closing escrow, the buyers came up with issues that we had to dispute ending in parting ways in March 2018. Now, the property is back on sale, and a couple of offers have been made. Now it's time for us to make a decision and choose the right buyer.



Newbury Park property.

SCHOLL CANYON RETIREMENT CENTER

At this moment, we have not taken any money from this joint venture; the gains have been reinvested to build capital in the investment.

More details about these projects will be reported separately.

Conclusion

I conclude by reaffirming that the Lord has blessed this conference in a beautiful way, and I attest that He has been so good to us. For that, we should praise Him and give Him all the credit and honor. We are simply instruments in His hands.

It has been an honor being your president during the last quadrennium. My wife, Esther, and I have enjoyed so very much interacting with the various churches and schools in our conference; we have appreciated your music, your worship styles, your food, your costumes, your stories and your time spent talking with us. We have learned to appreciate and value the beauty of each culture. As immigrants, we have realized that our culture and our preferences are not the only ones, not even the best, but they are part of a whole composed of many other beautiful cultures.

I grew in my understanding of different perspectives and views. Thank you for your openness and for sharing your concerns and possible solutions. Thank you overall for your love, prayers and support.

On the other side, I cannot deny it; there have been challenging moments when I discovered that this responsibility is beyond my education and experience, beyond my abilities and skills. At those times, I had to spend much more time on my knees, presenting those situations to the Lord, and He has never failed in providing answers.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southern California belongs to Jesus Christ, and He is the real and ultimate leader. To Him be all the glory and honor for what He has done for us.

Your brother in Christ,

Velino A. Salazar

President

Southern California Conference