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# Conference PRIORITIES



From left to right; Adams, Vitug, Saleem,  
Rennacker, Jeffreys, Ibanez, Marruffo

## Our Youth Department Team



SOUTHEASTERN  
CALIFORNIA  
CONFERENCE  
OF SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS

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Sandra Roberts, President  
Jonathan Park, Secretary  
Verlon Strauss, Treasurer

**T**he first of our four strategic priorities in Southeastern California Conference is **ENGAGE**: We ENGAGE next generation leaders as a welcoming Christian community, through thriving ministries for youth and young adults, and in the development of leadership opportunities to serve that shape our shared future.

The conference leaders who focus on the young people in our churches and communities work and minister in our incredible Youth Department. They are a Jesus-focused, creative, fun-loving, hard-working, visionary group of people who are helping us continually take steps toward achieving this priority. They love your children, youth, and young adults!

I am in awe of the ministry they accomplish, including the supportive mentorship they provide to our children, youth, and young adult pastors, as well as the numerous opportunities for gatherings they create.

I encourage you to reach out to them and thank them for their ministry. Here are some of the words their colleagues have used to describe them:

### Youth Director

*Aren Rennacker, Lead for Youth and Young Adult Ministries: Empathetic, caring leader, excellent listener, compassionate, kind*

### Associate Youth Directors

*Carmen Ibanez, Director for Pine Springs Ranch: Courageous, brave, leader, caring, empathetic, thorough*

*Patty Marruffo, Lead for Club Ministries: Present, relative, caring, servant leader, motherly, innovative, calming*

*Manny Vitug, Lead for Family and Children's Ministries: Generous, visionary, thoughtful, compassionate, passionate, king of acronyms, hard-working*

### Support Team

*Judi Jeffreys, Office Manager: Servant leader, committed, fierce, organized, initiative, joyful*

*Liz Adams, Secretary: Accepting, courageous, servant heart, passionate, mission-oriented, authentic*

*Taji Saleem, Media Specialist: Servant heart, creative, proactive, committed to excellence, innovative, heart for ministry*



When the pandemic hit, Pastor Trinidad didn't know how he would continue conducting Bible studies—until his daughters introduced him to Zoom. After studying via Zoom every Friday since September, 11 young people made a decision to be baptized. Trinidad started the next batch of baptismal classes the third week of May.



## Loma Linda Thai and Filipino Churches Share the Bread of Life

By Faith Hoyt

Spiritual and physical needs are being met in the Loma Linda, Calif., area—and the efforts of two local churches have resulted in 11 baptisms and increased community engagement.

At the Loma Linda Filipino church, Family Life and Youth Pastor Lambert Trinidad had a problem to solve. For the past 19 years, his passion has been sharing Christ-centered Bible studies with young people. When COVID halted in-person studies, he started looking for ways to continue meeting with the youth at his church. Then, family members shared the solution.

"I had never heard of Zoom before, and my daughters introduced me to it," Trinidad said, adding his gratitude for the

software that helped his work continue.

In late September of 2020, he began sharing weekly Friday night Bible studies with a group of junior high and high schoolers on Zoom. On April 10, the congregation met in their church building for the first time since COVID to celebrate the baptisms of 11 of those young people.

Trinidad looks forward to continuing studies with the youth.

"Bible studies are the only way people will get to know the teachings of Jesus Christ," he

said, sharing that he himself is a convert through Bible studies.

In addition to sharing spiritual bread of life, church members in Loma Linda are also working to share physical bread to meet the needs of those around them. At the Loma Linda Thai church, Pastor Cris Manlongat and his church members are in the process of developing a food distribution program they started in 2020.



At the Loma Linda Thai church, Pastor Cris Manlongat and his church members distribute 5,000 pounds of food every week. The church purchased a van to deliver food to people who lack transportation or are homebound, which is fondly referred to by volunteers as the Sanctified Door Dash. (Photo credit: Cris Manlongat)

“Right now, we are serving 5,000 pounds of food every week,” Manlongat said.

As their efforts have grown over the months, so have their friendships with local residents who have volunteered to take part in the outreach—Manlongat notes that many of them have not had previous interactions with the Adventist community.

While working at the church distributing food, Manlongat shared how people drive by just to honk, wave, donate to the program, and verbalize their

support of what the volunteers are doing.

Though happy with the success so far, Manlongat says they still needed a solution for delivering food to people who lack transportation or are homebound. With these needs in mind, his church purchased a van to help them make deliveries. Because this part of their program doesn't have a title yet, members fondly refer to it as the Sanctified Door Dash. Locals and church members volunteer to drive the van to make deliveries, and some are also volunteering garage space to serve as

mini-satellite food distribution outlets. Additional plans are in the works that will allow community members to select which food items they want through a website.

Love is at the heart of what motivates Manlongat and his team.

“There is ongoing hate toward the Asian community,” Manlongat said. “We want neighbors to know that we are here to make a good impact on the community and be good neighbors. This is a peaceful way, an intentional way of making a good impact.”

## Norma Alban Continues Work in Adventist Education with a School for Parents

By Tricia Murdoch Zmaj

**D**r. Norma Alban has long been committed to Adventist Education for children and families. In 2013, she became the director of education for the Loma Linda Spanish church and spearheaded Project O.R.E. (Operation Rescue Education) to help families place their children in Southeastern California Conference (SECC) Adventist schools. “God has guided us in every step of our faith journey,” Alban said. “We had a clear mission to follow His divine plans for education by promoting the excellence of Adventist Education in preparing our children for eternity.”

In 2015, Alban and her team officially became the Hispanic Ministry of Education. Alberto Ingleton, former vice president of the Hispanic Ministries Department, helped the ministry to secure funding from the SECC Hispanic Ministries Department, the SECC Office of Education, the Pacific Union Conference, and the North American Division. Church families with children stepped out in faith and raised funds through a variety of projects, while area churches also served as sponsors. As a result, 163 students per year were able to attend Adventist schools, and many have graduated and moved on to college.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic produced many challenges to the



education of students and the health of the family. “We recognized that the pandemic deeply affected the three pillars of education: family, church, and school,” said Alban. “The Lord helped us to see the uncertainty of this crisis as an opportunity for our ministry to bless families suffering from high levels of stress.” With the help of Yohalmo Saravia, vice president of the SECC Hispanic Ministries Department, Alban and her team planned the School for Parents for the first Sabbath of October

in 2020. “The Sabbath School Quarterly started with the theme of Adventist Education at the same time,” said Alban. “We are convinced it was providential!”

The School for Parents includes a daily meditation, a weekly video, and a monthly workshop. The first quarter, from October to December 2020, was focused on rebuilding the family altar. The months of January, February, and March focused on methods for managing stress, anxiety, and depression. April's program featured inspiration from young adults serving as missionaries.

A team of volunteers helps to make the School for Parents possible. Michelly Lima, a missionary from Brazil who is currently a student at the Adventist university in Chile, serves as speaker and producer; Jonatas Oliveira Santos, also from Brazil, is the web designer and web coordinator; and Melina Wilson, the director of education from the Indio church, acts as the secretary for the project. The group utilizes several platforms: Zoom, Facebook, YouTube, and their website, where videos and articles are stored.

“The history of our ministry testifies of God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises,” said Alban. “We express our gratitude to the Great Teacher and Provider, who guides us step by step in the direction we need to go and who continually surprises us with His miracles.”

# Pastor Wade Forde Recognized by Riverside County for His Volunteer Work

By Tricia Murdoch Zmaj

**W**ade Forde, district pastor for the Lake Perris and Perris Fifth Street churches, was recognized as the 2020 Volunteer of the Year for Riverside County for his pivotal role in distributing over a million pounds of food to the community.

Forde emphasized that the Perris Adventist churches have been addressing food insecurity in their community for years under the leadership of Andrew and Lily Garner. As the economic effects of the pandemic intensified, Forde and his team prayed that their community services department could address the growing need despite their limited resources. "God led me to Judy Cannon, president of the Redlands Interfaith Council," said Forde. Cannon provided information about the Farms to Families program and directed

"We have heard so many different testimonies about what God did in the lives of people through our willingness to give our time to be of service and to be a blessing. When we see a need, we work to fill that need."

him to Jin Ju Wilder at Vista Foods. These two contacts helped to provide food for needy families by the truckload. "By the month of October 2020, we were giving away 6,000 boxes of food per week," said Forde.

Forde can trace his passion for community work to his grandfather's guiding influence. "In the early 80s, my grandfather started a program to help students get the resources and the tools that they needed to move from high school into college," said Forde. His grandfather followed this by starting a nonprofit called Adopt a Bike. "He saw the importance of having a bike because he did not have one growing up," Forde said. Forde's grandfather would require that kids read three age-appropriate books, complete classes on bike maintenance, and write a report. They would then receive a bike that was donated by the San Bernardino Police Department. "That program grew

from Adopt a Bike to Adopt a Computer in the early 1990s," said Forde. This blossomed into a golf academy program, because Forde's grandfather believed that the game of golf instilled integrity.

Forde's commitment to local community work has been a constant throughout his career as a pastor. The Adventist churches in Perris have given a community-wide baby shower in the past year and are planning a drive-through job fair for May 15, 2021. "We have heard so many different testimonies about what God did in the lives of people through our willingness to give our time to be of service and to be a blessing," said Forde. "When we see a need, we work to fill that need."

A graphic for the SECC NOW newsletter. The top half has a red-to-orange gradient background with the text "SECC NOW" in large white letters. Below that, in smaller white text, it says "News and events from the Southeastern California Conference". The bottom half has a yellow-to-blue gradient background with the text "Text SECCNOW TO 22828" in large white letters. Below that, in smaller white text, it says "or visit <http://bit.ly/seccnow> to subscribe to the SECC Now newsletter to receive news, resources, and upcoming events from around our conference territory!". There is a small white logo of a dove in the bottom right corner.