

Conference

Priorities

Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Worship Sets Spiritual Tone for Constituency Session

By Jocelyn Fay

At Southeastern California Conference's constituency meeting on October 26, 740 delegates gathered to do the business of the church. This included electing officers and vice presidents, an Executive Committee, and a Bylaws Committee, as well as listening to reports and voting on a Pine Springs Ranch master plan, bylaws revisions, and a Justice Commission recommendation.

At the top of the agenda, however, was worship, which established the spiritual tone for the day. Violinist Daniel Alvarez opened the session by walking alone onto the platform of the La Sierra University church, raising his instrument to his chin, and silencing delegates who had not yet come to order by playing "Amazing Grace."

Wesley Knight, in his devotional message on the meeting's theme, "At Jesus' Feet," brought his listeners to the foot of the cross with the soldiers who cast lots for Jesus' robe.

It was Mary, also at the foot of the cross, who showed the soldiers what they should have done instead—look up to His face, to see the love in it. Listen to His voice and

hear Him say, "Father, forgive them."

"Don't just sit there this morning. Look at Him, listen to His voice, and determine His will for this conference," said Knight, who is senior pastor of the Mt. Rubidoux church in Riverside.

More music, a responsive reading of commitment to the work of the session, and prayers of commitment rounded out the devotional experience.

Conference Leaders Are Elected/Confirmed

After a few preliminary business items, such as the reading of the conference mission statement, the declaring of a quorum, and officially seating the delegates, including those from churches and companies that were organized since the previous constituency session in 2004, the business of electing conference leadership began.

This included:

- Reelecting SECC's president, Gerald D. Penick, Sr.; executive secretary, Sandra Roberts; treasurer, Thomas Staples;

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Seven hundred forty delegates gathered in the La Sierra University church October 26 for Southeastern California Conference's Fourth Quadrennial session.



Elected to five-year terms as SECC officers are (from left) Thomas Staples, treasurer; Alberto Ingleton, vice president for Hispanic ministries; Sandra Roberts, secretary; George King, vice president for Black ministries; Gerald D. Penick, Sr., president; and Rudy Bermudez, vice president for Asian/Pacific ministries. Delegates also confirmed all the departmental directors and elected new Executive and Bylaws committees.

- Electing a new conference Executive Committee, which will include 12 new members: Lionel Booth, John Brunt, Kisa Grayson, Fabiola Guzman, Mark Johnston, Tai Kim, Adriana Lopez, Stefani McFarland, Frieda Roos, Shirley Tan, Victor Tolan, and Jay Winston. Members continuing to serve on the committee will be LeRoy Baker, Anna Mae Crowder, Larry Grimaldi, Caleb Jara, Robert Macomber, Chris Oberg, Jason Turner, and Andy Wongworawat.

- Electing a new Bylaws Committee: Elwin Dunn, Humberto Hernandez, Julihana Madison, Teri Maksoudian, Prudence Pollard, Andi Sandiford, Adeny Schmidt, and Juanita Singh. (Maksoudian, Pollard, and Sandiford are new; the others are returning.)

- Confirming all the departmental directors: Rudy Bermudez, disabilities ministries/prison ministries/adult Sabbath school director; Steven Case, conference controller; Rudy Carrillo, youth director; Donald Dudley, education superintendent; Jocelyn Fay, communication director; Ernest Furness, ministerial director; Audray Johnson, family ministries/health ministries/legislative issues director; David Johnson, information

systems director;

Delegates ate their boxes lunches wherever they could find a place to sit or stand.

Gina Heslep, human resources director; George King, community services/Ingathering/inner city director; Charles McKinstry, Property and Trust Services director; Brian Neal, commitment director; Emil Peeler, church growth and discipleship director; and Brian Schwab, Pine Springs Ranch director.

- Voting credentials and licenses for all full-time conference employees.

Delegates Hear Reports, Act on Recommendations

The officers, in a video report, told of new churches purchased or constructed during the past four years and churches and companies organized. Membership totaled 66,653 as of December 31, 2007. And although the conference has experienced a steady year-by-year tithe increase—from \$40.8 million in 2003 to \$49.5

million in 2007—base tithe income (excluding one-time “windfall” donations) has declined during the past two years. The base tithe percentage peaked in 2005 at 8.65 percent, but fell to 2.66 percent in 2006 and 1.26 percent in 2007.

As votes were being counted, delegates heard a report from George King,

about the conference’s aid to victims of last October’s wildfires, and reports from the General Conference Auditing Service and Ahern Adcock Devlin, LLC, SECC’s internal and external auditors, respectively.

After a spirited discussion about the master plan for Pine Springs Ranch, delegates approved it. The major issue was financing future construction there, given that earlier in the day Thomas Staples, treasurer, had reported declining tithe and investment income as a result of the United States economy’s severe downturn. Decisions about construction expenses at PSR will be left to the conference’s new Executive Committee.

Emil Peeler challenged delegates to lead others to Jesus’ feet during 2009, the Year of Evangelism.



In his devotional message on the session theme, “At Jesus’ Feet,” Wesley Knight, senior pastor of the Mt. Rubidoux church in Riverside, focused on Jesus at the Crucifixion.



“There’s more than one way of doing evangelism,” he said, encouraging each person, each church, to consider prayerfully what God would have them do for Him during the coming year.

Adeny Schmidt and Ernest Furness, representing the 65% Committee, a subcommittee of the Bylaws Committee named for the 65 percent of SECC members who are women, reviewed the conference’s history regarding women in ministry. They also reported on women now serving as pastors or in local church ministries, noting that 19 women serve congregations as senior and associate pastors



Delegates registered for the session and received their lunch tickets and voting cards outside the La Sierra University church. By the time the quorum was called, in order to conduct business, 731 had registered; nine more came later in the morning.

(8.5 percent of SECC’s pastors, down from 12 percent). Thirteen other women serve as chaplains, Bible teachers, or conference leaders.

Among the Bylaws Committee’s recommendations approved by delegates was that constituency meetings now will be held every five years instead of every four. Julihana Madison, committee chair, said that this would not only put Southeastern in step with other church entities (such as the Pacific Union and the General Conference) but also save the conference considerable expense, as well as time preparing for the event.

Another bylaws recommendation that was approved was to reflect more inclusive language in the conference’s mission statement. With the inclusion of “by women and men” it now reads, “The mission of the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the expansion of God’s kingdom through the

Voting was a colorful event, as delegates voted by raising red or green cards.

preaching, teaching, publishing, and living of the everlasting gospel by women and men in the cross-cultural communities of our territory.”

After Jim Walters, from the Justice Commission, which was established four years ago, reported that for whatever reasons,

the commission “didn’t realize the success we were hoping for,” delegates recommended to the new Executive Committee that education about mediation principles be conducted at the local church level.

The day was an inspiring and productive one. Jose Garcia, from the Escondido Spanish church, called the meeting “different from many others that I have attended. It was inspiring and clearly focused on our task: evangelism.”

Several pastors commented on the meeting’s spiritual focus, including Demetrio Robles, from the San Diego Filipino-American church, who felt “unity and the presence of God.”

Leeroy Coleman, pastor of the Kansas Avenue church, also said he was struck by the spirit of unity. “It was a solidifying day for the conference,” he said.

Standing to sing “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” delegates brought the worship segment of the meeting to a close.



Gerry Chudleigh



Gerry Chudleigh

Gerald Penick, Sr., conference president, instructs delegates to vote “yes” by raising their red card and “no” by raising their green one.



Jocelyn Fay

Float Wins First Place Awards *in Loma Linda Parade* By Gilbert Vega

The Loma Linda Spanish church won two first-place ribbons for its float in the city's annual parade October 19.

In keeping with the parade's theme, "Hometown Heroes," the float carried Romualdo Costa, a 90-year-old artist from the congregation. It also transported a number of musicians, who hail from many parts of the world but are united by singing together. During the parade they sang "This Land Is Your Land."

Costa, who began painting at age 16, has completed more than 15,000 paintings in his lifetime. They can be found all over the Western Hemisphere. Displayed on the float was a painting of the landmark Loma Linda University Medical Center. The painting has been donated to the local Chamber of Commerce.

Walking behind the float were people from many lands who have settled in the Loma Linda community. Following them were children born in the United States—future heroes as they embrace the American Dream.

Luis Aponte, lead vocalist on the float, described having

had "an unforgettable experience" when he noticed the spectators joining in the singing of the song. "At that moment I really sensed a community spirit. It was moving," he said.

The crowd loved the float, and so did the judges, who awarded it first-place ribbons for Most Impressive Float and Best Use of the Theme.

The parade was sponsored by the Loma Linda Chamber of Commerce.



Painter Romualdo Costa and musicians rode on the award-winning Loma Linda Spanish church's float in the city's annual parade.

Fallbrook Class Is Tasty *and Life-changing* By Bonnie Haines

"I can't believe these 'meatballs' don't really have any meat in them," said more than one happy participant of the vegetarian cooking school conducted by Fallbrook church members on three Thursday evenings in October.

The invitation to "embark on a life-changing journey" to change the way people think about "healthy" foods was



Health educator Karen Houghton begins her cooking demonstration.

presented through colorful handouts, a newspaper advertisement and articles in the local paper's food section featuring recipes from the classes.

A \$60 registration fee was charged to cover the cost of food samples and handouts.

Health educator Karen Houghton and Dr. Wes

Youngberg joined talents to present a better way to eat and live that drew close to 95 people nightly.

Each class began with a keynote presentation on the benefits of fruits and vegetables in boosting the immune system and in the battle against diseases such as cancer and diabetes. Several guests said these concepts were "totally new" to them and they could "hardly wait for the next class."

Lively food demonstrations came next. To make this part both fun and practical, each guest was handed a copy of the recipes so they could easily follow along and ask questions. A favorite recipe for many was Karen Houghton's red lentil

soup. Some guests were so excited about the recipes that they tried as many as they could during the week and shared their success stories in later classes.

But the best part for most people was at the end, when they were each given a plateful of the tasty foods and could decide for themselves that they were both nutritious and delicious.

Two of the women who faithfully attended each evening said, "We are so sorry to see these life-changing classes end. Please have more of these."



It took five church members several hours in the kitchen to prepare food samples for the nearly 80 people who attended the cooking classes.

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of Seventh-day Adventists**
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