



IN THIS
EDITION



A Wise and Gentle Leader:
Don Dudley Retires After 47 Years



Church Ministry
in SECC

Conference

PRIORITIES

An Interview with New SECC President Elder Jonathan Park

What brought you to the ministry?

I was made in Korea and imported to the U.S. when I was 10. When I was young, I thought I would be a fireman, or this or that. Then I found out that my uncle, Daniel Ha, pastored in the United States, and it dawned on me that, while other occupations have another person as a boss, pastors have God as a boss. So I thought, "Wouldn't it be great to work for God?" That youthful outlook led to other affirmations that brought me to give my life to Jesus as a pastor.

When we came to the U.S., I'd go to my uncle's house and read his theology books, in Korean. I knew if I wanted to be a pastor, I needed to understand the Bible. Eventually I discovered that it's not just knowledge—it's an attitude of service. So I started to serve. I was active in high school, and I served as a youth coordinator when I was at PUC.

How long have you been at SECC?

I was a pastor in the Loma Linda Korean church for a little over three years, then I received a call to serve as vice president for Asian Pacific ministry for three years, and then in 2018 I became executive secretary.

How has your background prepared you for your new role?

As a pastor, I was a bridge between the first- and second-generation immigrant members. I

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balanced ministering to both groups—listening and helping them focus on what's important. That helped me as executive secretary, as I facilitated conflict resolution in churches or dealt with deeply held differences of opinion. I helped them focus on common goals.

When I became VP for Asian ministry, I researched other Asian cultures to appreciate their ways of doing ministry, I shared meals with them and listened. When people know you'll listen and want to help, they too are willing to be vulnerable and open. We share the same Jesus, and we're all Adventists.

Then as executive secretary, my ministry further expanded. The diverse members of the SECC extended such kindness to me and were willing to journey with me in ministry. Within this conference, there's racial tension; I'm not going to deny that. But, from pastors to lay members, we embrace diversity, and they're not going to treat me differently from previous officers.

What do you love about this conference?

Our conference embraces diversity. We have conservative churches and progressive churches. We may have differences about lifestyle, but we

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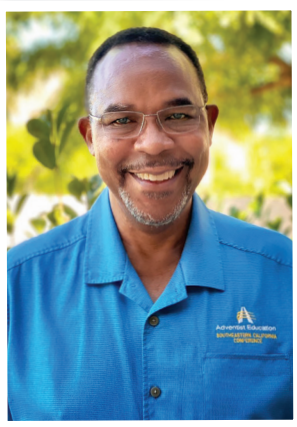
LEFT: Don Dudley visits students at Needles Adventist Christian School.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Don Dudley speaks to school administrators at a recent Education Management Team meeting and joins the education department in a staff photo in 2012.

A Wise and Gentle Leader: Don Dudley Retires After 47 Years

By Becky St. Clair

On August 31, 2021, Don Dudley, superintendent of education, retired after nearly 50 years of service to the church—all of which were spent in the SECC.



“Don is a gracious, patient, wise, caring administrator. He loves the students, he loves the Lord, and he loves Adventist education.”

It started with a job at San Diego Academy, teaching Bible classes to junior high students, and grew into a role as vice principal and then principal, first at San Diego Academy and then Mesa Grande Academy. In 1996, he was asked to be associate superintendent and, 10 years later, superintendent, a position he held until his retirement.

“Don is a gracious, patient, wise, caring administrator,” enthused Doug Herrmann, longtime friend and colleague of Dudley and recently retired head of schools at Loma Linda Academy. “He loves the students, he loves the Lord, and he loves Adventist education.”

Dudley’s reputation throughout the conference and beyond was one of a wise and gentle leader.

“Don has about him an unflappable sense of calm,” explained Berit von Pohle, director of education for the Pacific Union Conference and Dudley’s colleague for 42 years. “He speaks quietly, yet authoritatively, and no one questions that he’s the leader when he’s in the room. But he leads by being quiet, thoughtful, passionate—and truly great fun.”

Though he was excellent at it, Dudley never set out to be an administrator. He says it “just happened.”

He can clearly remember saying to his wife during his first year of teaching, “I can’t believe I’m getting paid for this—I love it so much!” And although he enjoyed everything he did during his career, teaching remained his favorite.

A product of the public school system, Dudley was not exposed to the lasting gift of Adventist education until he enrolled at Pacific Union College.

“After my experience at PUC, I realized if I could help create that whole person development for our Adventist kids, and make that education accessible to as many as possible, I absolutely wanted to do that,” he recalled.

Dudley has always enjoyed walking across Adventist school campuses, stepping into elementary classrooms, and listening to teachers interact with their students.

Von Pohle says Dudley recently shared how heartwarming it is to see his own grandchildren benefiting from Adventist education.

But it isn't just the kids on Dudley's radar; he also cares deeply for his colleagues.

"Wherever he's been, Don generates a sense of camaraderie among those he works with," said von Pohle. "It's a sense of shared mission, and that's a true accomplishment."

Every successful career, however, comes with its challenges. And Dudley's biggest one came during the final year before his retirement.

"Nothing in my career has come close to the difficulties of COVID," he admitted. "But I've also seen the Lord's hand at work throughout. I saw the teachers and the members of my team step up and serve even harder. It was incredibly rewarding to end my career on that note."

Every successful person has someone in their life who pushed, guided, and encouraged them. For Dudley, one role model he really looked up to was Charles McKinstry, whose leadership nearly spanned Dudley's entire career.

"Charles provided incredible mentorship through my years in education," Dudley

said. "His impact on my ministry cannot be overstated, and I am forever grateful for his leadership and counsel."

Dudley acknowledges that throughout his career, he was surrounded by a lot of wonderful people who offered him great support. In turn, he has done his best to be a support to others from whatever role he filled, identifying those with potential for leadership and fostering that possibility.

"As much as possible, I've tried to pay forward the cultivation I was given," he said.

Now, as he settles into this new chapter, Dudley says he can step down and move forward in peace.

"The office of education is working with a great team of principals and administrators," he affirmed, "and I know education in the SECC is in good hands."

Now his primary goal is to enjoy his family, from his wife, Christine—who also retired recently from a long career in education—to his grandchildren, who live nearby. He also looks forward to being able to watch Lakers and Dodgers games without a list of meetings to interrupt them, and of course there's golf, something Dudley has always wanted to learn.

"Basically, I'm just going to enjoy however many more years I'm blessed to enjoy this side of heaven," he said.

Dudley has worked hard for half a century, dedicating his every breath to Adventist education and the church. And even he has heroes.

"The dedication and commitment of our teachers is awe-inspiring to me and has always been what kept me motivated to serve," he said. "They work so hard—how could I do anything less?"



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embrace one vision and we love each other. I see the pastors interact with one another—there are many great collaborations between the pastors and churches and many innovative ministries as a result. Our new ministerial team is mentoring pastors—equipping them and connecting them with one another.

I believe this conference has the courage to stand up for what we ought to do. There's a history of doing the right thing, even if nobody else is doing it or some people are uncomfortable.

Our pastors are in their positions because they are well qualified and called to serve by God. Our conference has been intentional about developing leaders across the board, without reference to gender or ethnicity. Because of that culture, I have the opportunity to lead this conference.

What do you see as a challenge?

The pandemic has created a gap between churches and their members. We are working to empower, equip, and enable our pastors to reengage with members. Although we may want to restore everything to the way it was, through this pandemic God has shown us different ways to do ministry.

What would you want the members to know about you?

I am here to serve. I believe the conference exists for the local church, not the other way around. I believe by being accessible, approachable, accountable, and a lifelong learner, I can help the conference better serve our pastors and churches.



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Church Ministry in SECC

Youth participate in door-to-door evangelism

A group of young people from the Los Alamitos church had been praying about making an impact on the community around the church. They recognized that most of the church members drive into the area each week and then drive out again without the community even knowing they are there.

Some of those young people attended a youth conference at the Granite Bay church. Those who attended experienced a deep conviction to go out and meet people and to share the love of Jesus. So, they made plans and prayed. They were excited as they went door to door to pray with people and pass out literature.

Participants wore their "Hey, Let's Pray" shirts and handed out *Steps to Christ* and *The Great Controversy*. They were all excited after their first day of going door to door and are eagerly waiting for the next time to go and share. One of the kids said, "I liked going door to door and praying with the people because it was a way to personally encourage the people and let them know that God cares about them."

These young people are convinced that time is short and Jesus is coming soon. God is anxious to use the young people in these closing days of Earth's history, and they are ready to do their part. It is hoped that their example will encourage others to do the same.

By Michelle Neally



Transformed lives at Thai church in Redlands

Danny and Magali Preciado were baptized on Saturday, August 21, in Huntington Beach. They had been living together with their son for years as an unmarried couple, but when they decided to accept Jesus in baptism, they also decided to live together in the blessing and joy of marriage. They were married on August 13. Their commitment to Jesus overflowed into a commitment to be with each other for life.

Danny has had a dark past. When he was younger, he had been driven from home by his parents and was adrift in the world. But now he is a renewed man, a better husband, and a transformed Christian, ready to share his faith with others.

Magali will have another baby soon, and the church is looking forward to a baby shower in December.

Their baptisms were witnessed by Danny's Adventist family and Magali's non-Adventist family. Danny's eyes flowed with tears before he was immersed.

By Cris Manlungat

Back-to-school block party at San Diego 31st Street church

On August 15, Pastor Rashad Burden and the 31st Street church hosted a back-to-school block party. The members served the community by giving away backpacks, gift cards, haircuts, and much more.

