

# southernconnect



**Orville Ortiz,**  
*Treasurer / CFO*

## Stewardship in *Love*

**W**hen I looked up the meaning of the word *stewardship*, merriam-webster.com says that when this word first appeared in English during the Middle Ages, it functioned as a job description, denoting the office of a steward—the manager of a large household. Through the centuries, its range of reference spread to the oversight of law courts, employee unions, college dining halls, and many other organizations. Most recently, the long-established “management” sense of stewardship has evolved into a positive meaning, such as “careful and responsible management.” One can find this today in contexts such as “stewardship of the environment, the family business” and others.

So how can a word that began as a job description, void of emotions, convey the emotion and feeling of love, which translates into passion, commitment, care, preservation, kindness, selflessness, honor, meekness, patience, peace, and forgiveness?

To understand stewardship more deeply, we can look to the way God treated creation and the dynamics of family relationships. The first two chapters of Genesis give the account of God creating the world, everything in it, and humanity—us. God then told Adam what he could eat and entrusted His full creation to him. God entrusted to Adam his own body, as well as all the land, seas, vegetation, and animals that were created. “Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man” (Genesis 2:22, NIV), and Adam was entrusted with a family.

Here we can see the first expressions of love demonstrated by our Creator to humanity. God Himself demonstrated love by carefully crafting every leaf of every tree and plant, every petal of every flower, every fruit and vegetable, and He made sure that everything we needed to sustain the body was not only nutritious but appealing to the eye. God also formed with His hands Adam and Eve as a couple to make sure they would not be lonely, and He gave a beautiful place for them to live. As a Creator, He loved His creation and responsibly and carefully provided for anything Adam and Eve could possibly need.

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You can compare this to when a couple has a child. They lovingly prepare a room, and the entire home, to receive the child. The couple carefully plan not only for the environment but also for the food, clothes, and other necessary items to allow their child to be protected and feel the warmth of the love and care of the parents. This is

a selfless act full of passion, commitment, care, preservation, kindness, honor, meekness, peace, patience, and eventually forgiveness, because once that baby is born, unknowingly the baby will commit a number of acts that we would not allow an adult to get away with. Nonetheless, the parents will continue to care for this child’s emotional and physical well-being.

Imagine what love God showed! Knowing humanity would sin and separate from Him as Creator, He still created us and made all provisions—including for this separation. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV). Let’s demonstrate stewardship in love to God and humanity by keeping God’s commands in our daily lives (John 14:15, NIV). ●

**INSIDE**



### **WHOLE Conference 2020**

*Annual event educates and empowers attendees to take charge of their health*



### **José Gutierrez Ordination**

*Pastor Gutierrez’s unique path to ministry was highlighted*

### **IN EVERY ISSUE**

- 4 Ministry Spotlight
- 4 Region News

# WHOLE Conference 2020 Educates & Empowers

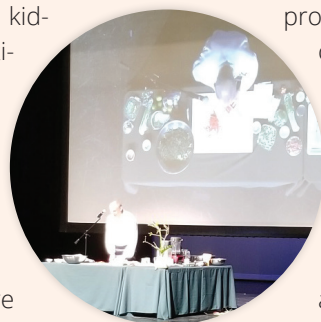
BY KARISA LOWE

This February 16, the Camarillo church sponsored the biggest WHOLE Conference (the Why and How of Life-promoting Eating) event yet. This year, 600 attendees, more than half of whom were first-timers, sold out the conference and packed into the auditorium to hear about the benefits of a whole-food, plant-based diet.

Every year, different presenters come to share their knowledge on the benefits of a whole-food, plant-based diet. "What made this year's event

especially valuable was the wide-ranging content of the various specialists, pointing out the evidence-based health advantages of a whole-food, plant-based diet for the kidneys, brain, gastrointestinal tract, and for weight loss," said Dr. David Lowe, event founder.

The WHOLE Conference is an incredible educational opportunity; yet it's more than that. It's also a ministry.



Educating and empowering people to care for their bodies is just one way to minister to their true needs the way Christ did. "This information and its proper dissemination has the capability of approaching Jesus' healing ministry when He was here on the earth," Dr. Lowe explained. "He ministered to mainly the primitive diseases in addressing their needs. Today, we can minister to

## José Gutierrez Ordination Reveals Unique Call

BY LAUREN LACSON

"I have to tell you," began Greg Hoenes, West Region director, "we don't do ordinations like this every day."

For José Gutierrez, ministry is a second career. After beginning his career in social work, Gutierrez sensed God calling him into ministry.

Trained as a family counselor by the county of Los Angeles, Gutierrez worked for multiple organizations in his earlier career, including Lockheed Martin, Penny Lane Foundation Organization, and Antelope Valley

Hospital & Medical Center.

Gutierrez began his ministry in the SCC in 2003 as a lay pastor. Prior to Palmdale, Gutierrez also pastored the Lake of the Woods and Sylmar congregations. He pursued a degree in religion in 2004 and in 2013 received a certificate from Philippine Amazing Facts Center of Evangelism. He is currently undergoing studies for the Master's in Pastoral Ministry with Andrews University.

Members from each of the three congregations Gutierrez oversees were present for the service: both the English and Spanish congregations from the Palmdale church, as well as members from the Acton group.

"Pastor José is a soul-winner," Hoenes asserted, to which the congregation responded with "amen."



The song "Let Them See You" by JJ Weeks Band was shared as a special presentation by Gutierrez's nephew and daughter; the lyrics fittingly describe Gutierrez's ministry.

"We pray that the fruit will be many in the kingdom," John H. Cress, SCC executive secretary, prayed in the ordination prayer as the ordained ministers in attendance laid hands on Gutierrez and his wife.

In closing, Gutierrez shared his response. "God did this—I didn't do this," he began. "I was searching in a life that is not worth mentioning. He forgave me, and then He called me. By His power and your help, I am here." ●



Photos by Ronda Harrison.

the myriad and overwhelming burden of chronic diseases in addressing the needs of our communities and reaching them in His name.”

This education offers hope and often encourages people to make healthy lifestyle changes. “Lifestyle choices affect more than 70% of total illness costs in the U.S., especially for chronic diseases,” Dr. Lowe explained. “There is a general lack of knowledge that these conditions can be prevented, arrested, and even reversed without the use of medications or procedures.”

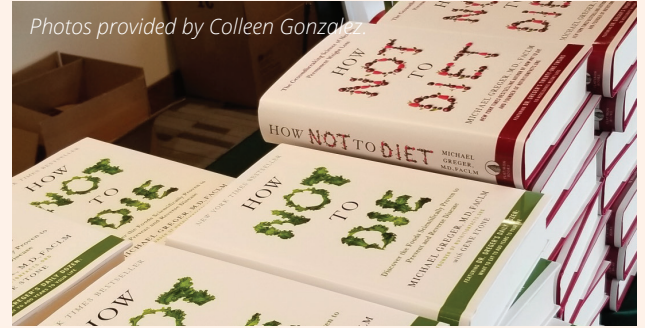
The keynote speaker for the 2021 event will be Dr. John McDougall, the

author of *The Starch Solution*. Dr. Kristi Funk, a breast cancer surgeon, will also present at the event.

The conference features nationally and internationally known speakers as well as cooking demos by professional chefs. Speakers’ books and cookbooks are also available for sale—offering conference attendees a unique opportunity to ask speakers questions and get face-to-face time with them.

Tickets will be on sale this

fall for the 2021 event, which will be held on Sunday, February 14, 2021, in Camarillo. Tickets \$89-\$159. A light breakfast and a whole-food, plant-based box-style lunch will be provided. For more information, visit [wholeconference.org](http://wholeconference.org). ●



Photos provided by Colleen Gonzalez

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## EDITOR

Lauren Lacson

## Submit a story

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Working with children brings the greatest joy! They are everything I want to be! Scripture tells us: "But Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children'" (Matthew 19:14, NLT).

Attending this year's North American Division (NAD) Children's Ministries retreat was a wonderful experience. Every year, this retreat gives us the opportunity to get together and meet other directors at all levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We learn from one another, and we want to put into practice what we learned.

So we want to be sure that all of our churches create the environment that makes children want to #SayYESToJesus.

Last year, we had our first NAD Children's Ministries training. This year, we

are moving forward to offer the first course for certification. We want to revive and recreate Children's Ministries in this conference by hosting a trainer's expo after the General Conference session in which NAD will come and train a special group, which we will choose to represent our regions. These trainers will be able to then go to the churches in their region to expand children's ministries leadership.

We are looking into bringing a special training for understanding and working with children with disabilities. Our long-term goal is to have a special team trained to work in this area. There is so much to do, and we are looking to create a committee that represents our regions to better serve the needs in our conference. If you have a passion for Children's Ministries, and would like more information, please contact us at (818) 546-8448. ●

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## REGION NEWS

## Asian-Pacific Region

Our Chino Valley Chinese church recently celebrated a special anniversary: 10 years as an organized church. This milestone marks 14 years of existence for the congregation. The church has been intentional in its outreach to and relationship with the local community. As a result, the congregation grew to achieve church status in just four short years.



"There are so many things to share from this miraculous church," said Paul Cho, Chino Valley Chinese church senior pastor. "We want to give all the glory to God."

Find the full story about this recent event and read more about the history of this church on our conference website at <https://scc.adventist.org/stories>.

## West Region

Since 2016, with a history of more than 60 years, the Northridge church had to undergo in-depth analysis of its past and present to determine a vision for the future that would be faithful and exciting. It required courageous shifts in organization and church culture toward a relational, multicultural, and multigenerational mission-oriented spiritual community.

Four values—people, spirituality, relationships, and growth—were

identified as central to move toward realizing the vision. That led to transformations in worship to be engaging and participatory, ministry to be relationally centered, and discipleship formation, among others. Our building also had to reflect the modern, refreshing, emerging congregation by recovering the beauty of the original midcentury architecture, which is underway.

In Christ, we are celebrating the present, hopeful about the future.

*By Paolo C. Oliveira, pastor, Northridge church*

