

# southernconnect



**Velino A. Salazar,**  
*President*

## Higher Responsibility in *Serving*

It is New Year's Day, and I'm flying back home after spending the holiday week with my parents in Mexico, and I'm seated in seat 2D. Yes, it is Premier Class. I purchased my ticket at the regular price, but I was assigned to this seat when I checked in. Obviously, I didn't ask why. Was this my Christmas gift for being a good son? (LOL).

I'm thankful to my wife, Esther, and my two young adult children, who encouraged me to be with my 94-year-old parents during their first Christmas season not being together at home. (Dad is now at a nursing home close to their home.)

As soon as I sat down in my 2D seat, I began to experience special treatment from the flight attendants: a warm cloth towel, a glass of water, a cookie, and, 45 minutes later, a full meal. Wow! What a treat!

Then I started to reflect on the different seating classes on the flight, especially on the perks I received compared to the other passengers.

Yes, you may say, the difference is in the price passengers pay; there is nothing free. Yes, I know. However, this treatment is partial anyway.

At any rate, let's move to our theme. Now we have two words: *service* and *partiality*.

Precisely, this is what we see everywhere in our society

today. As Christians, how should we manage this elitist attitude? What does the Bible say in this regard?

Well, Scripture declares that God shows no partiality (Deuteronomy 10:17; Romans 2:11); also, it instructs us not to show partiality in our relationship with others (Leviticus 19:15; 1 Timothy 5:21). Lastly, it disapproves of those who act with partiality (Proverbs 24:23; James 2:1-4,9).

Ok. I got it. No partiality, favoritism, or preferential treatment. But look. As I reviewed the 26 Biblical references about partiality, I found one that caught my attention and puzzled me.

Paul recommended to the Galatians (6:10) to do good to all at every opportunity, "especially to those who are of the household of faith" (NKJV).

Does this mean that I should show some partiality or show more responsibility to those in my inner circle?

For instance, I am a Christian (a minister) and should treat everybody without preference, with no partiality and no favoritism. At the same time, I have a family (parents, wife, children) I need to take care of financially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In reality, I see a higher responsibility with these people closer to me by blood and relationship; this is my household (*oikos* in Greek)!

By saying this, am I out of the track of what the Bible says about partiality in our service?

Let me tell you that Jesus sensed His primary and higher

SCRIPTURE DECLARES  
THAT GOD SHOWS  
NO PARTIALITY.



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Church and conference honors Shinasue's call as he responds with thanks



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# Takuma Shinasue Is Ordained

BY ARAYA MOSS

“I’m here because of God, you, and the church,” said Takuma Shinasue. “I stand here as I’ve been honored to be called by God and affirmed as such by you.”

Last fall, Shinasue, who serves as associate pastor of Southern California Conference’s (SCC) three Japanese-American congregations in Pasadena, Gardena, and West Los Angeles, was ordained to the gospel ministry. The ordination service, held at Central Japanese-American Community church, concluded a full day of celebration, with the congregation’s 75th anniversary commemorated earlier that Sabbath.

The service included personal touches from family, friends, and colleagues. Shinasue’s maternal grandfather, who was not present, virtually read the key Scripture declaring God as the Good Shepherd. His childhood

friend Justin Nishino played “More Love to Thee” on the guitar. Church members gave him lei garlands. Vinh Nguyen, SCC Asian-Pacific region director, presented Shinasue with a shepherd’s rod and offered the ordination prayer.

Shinasue translated his own message in both English and Japanese. He thanked his parents, family, friends, SCC officers, and church members for their support. He expressed that this list may be excessive for an ordination response, “but this thanksgiving to the people cannot be severed from my response to the call from God for ordination.”

He described his path to pastoral ministry as a step-by-step journey, “not knowing where I’m being led to, but



Ordained pastors lay hands on Shinasue during the ordination prayer.

believing that I’m being led by the One I trust.” He has recognized this as God’s call because the congregation has affirmed it through their faith in God.

“I want to be a seal upon God’s heart,” Shinasue concluded. “I believe that only by God keeping me tied to Him by His love, I may truly be able to be your pastor. I pray that through me being tied to this Good Shepherd, God may, by His grace, make me a good, small shepherd of His for you.” ●



Marco and his family are introduced to the congregation by West Region Director Greg Hoenes.

This January, Marco Topete was installed as the pastor of the Van Nuys church.

“I have always felt that God was calling me to be a pastor ever since I became a Christian in 2012,” Topete shared. A decade later, Topete graduated from Andrews University with a Master’s in Pastoral Ministry.

## Marco Topete Joins Pastorate

BY LAUREN LACSON

The morning of Topete’s installation, SCC West Region Director Greg Hoenes preached a message from the book of Esther. “Pastor Marco, who knows that God has brought you to this church for such a time as this,” he shared at the installation.

Topete, too, sees God’s hand of leading Him at just the right time. In fact, when being interviewed in 2017 to join SCC as Literature Ministries Coordinator, he was asked, “Where do you see yourself in five years?” He answered, “Working as a pastor.”

“I feel that God led me eight years in Literature Ministries and that He

used these eight years to prepare me to be a better pastor,” Topete reflected.

In Van Nuys, Topete looks forward to making personal connections with people. “The part that most excites me about pastoral ministry is the opportunity to give personal Bible studies to people in the community,” he said. “I feel that will be a major emphasis.”

“One area I really want to plan and focus on is building up a place where kids can come and get to know Jesus,” he added.

Topete will be joined by his wife, Lisa, and his two sons, Abraham and Israel. ●

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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## in transition

### NEW EMPLOYEES

*Voted December 8, 2022*

**Ben Guerrero** | Pastor, Whittier church, as of November 27, 2022.

### LEAVING SCC

*Voted December 8 & 22, 2022*

**Lemuel Niere** | From Pastor, Glendale Filipino church, as of December 21, 2022.

**Wen-Sheng (Vincent) Chao** | From Pastor, San Gabriel Valley Chinese church, as of February 1, 2023.

### TRANSFERS WITHIN SCC

*Voted December 8 & 22, 2022*

**Ron Park** | From Pastor, Van Nuys church, to Pastor, Santa Clarita church, as of December 4, 2022.

**Fonnua Tonga** | From Ministry Leader, Hawthorne church, to Pastor, Hawthorne/Long Beach churches, as of March 7, 2022.

**Marco Topete** | From Coordinator, SCC Literature Ministries, to Pastor, Van Nuys church, as of January 1, 2023.

### RETIREMENTS

*Voted December 22, 2022*

**Linton Manier** | From Trust Development Officer, SCC Planned Giving & Trust Services, as of December 31, 2022.

## SPOTLIGHT

# Hispanic Youth Ministry

southern  
connect

### EDITOR

Lauren Lacson

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During Labor Day weekend 2022, Hispanic Youth Ministries held a camp for youth and young adults at Camp Cedar Falls where most of the Southern California Conference regions were represented.

Throughout the weekend, Izraias Uribe, Eagle Rock church youth pastor, led all 310 attendees through a journey of studying and learning the importance of trusting Scripture in this day and age of skepticism.

There were also many activities attendees could participate in, but what impacted

many of the youth was the Saturday night service where they were able to open up, share their scars, and allow God to work in them through praise. Sunday was packed with sports tournaments: volleyball, soccer, and basketball. On Monday morning, 11 young adults decided to give their lives to Christ, and the camp opened up the pool for baptisms.

The four-day camp was full of many blessings that the youth took back down the mountain with them as they returned to their schools, work, and churches. ●



Southern California Conference  
of Seventh-day Adventists

WEEK OF SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT 2023

TO BE LIKE  
*Jesus*

FEB. 4-11,  
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responsibility in ministry toward those of “the house of Israel.” He mentioned it in a few instances: when He sent out the twelve, instructing them not to go to the Gentiles but to the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6); when He delayed His healing to a Canaanite woman’s daughter (Matthew 15:24); when He highlighted His expectations of care, the Levite and the priest did not fulfill them (Luke 10:27).

I’m not saying that I should neglect others. No. On the contrary, I should care for my inner circle first, then others. It is a matter of order.

My intention in this reflection is to emphasize that sometimes we have found ourselves treating well everybody outside of our inner circle and sometimes treating those under our roof with negligence or harshness.

Jesus highlighted that to serve, love, and lead others, we need to begin with ourselves, our families, and our faith community; then we will be ready to serve (Galatians 6:10), love (Luke 10:27), and lead (1 Timothy 3:4-5) as He did.

I pray that the Lord can help us all to reflect and align our way of how to treat others at Jesus’ level. ●