

southernconnect



John H. Cress,
*Executive Secretary/
Ministerial Director*

Let God *Love* You

I heard the story of a man who commented to a pastor, "I don't believe in God. I'm an atheist." The pastor wasn't shocked by the statement but simply replied, "Would you describe for me the kind of God you don't believe in?" So, he began. And when he finished, the pastor replied, "That makes me an atheist too because I don't believe in the kind of God you describe either."

The Bible says in 1 John 4:8, "God is love." Now it doesn't say God is loving. He is loving, but it says, "God is love." It doesn't say, love is god. There is a big difference. It's like saying, "My dog is a girl" or "My girl is a dog." How you say it makes a difference.

Scripture often articulates this very embodiment being love. In 1 John 4:16 (NIV) we read, "We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love." Romans 5:8 (NKJV) proclaims, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." 1 John 4:19 (KJV) states, "We love him, because he first loved us." Ephesians 2:4 (NKJV) adds, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loves us." And then Jeremiah declares, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3, NKJV).

The apostle Paul shares with us the dimensions of God

who is love. He writes, "I pray that you...[will] grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:17-18, NIV). These are four dimensions of God's love: "wide... long...high...deep."

First, God's love is wide enough to include everybody. John 3:16 (NIV) declares, "God so loved the world." Not just the church—but the entire world. God loves everybody you meet this week, the unlovely and the lovely. The good news is that God loves you. The bad news is that He loves your enemies just as much. His love is wide enough to include everyone.

Secondly, God's love is long enough to last forever.

Jeremiah declares, "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3, NKJV), and the Psalmist writes, "I will tell them, 'God's love can always be trusted, and his faithfulness lasts as long as the heavens'" (Psalm 89:2, CEV).

That is so different from human love. Human love wears out. But since "God is love," there is an everlasting reservoir of love that flows for all to experience. God's love never wears out. His love is patient, persistent, and

persevering. God loves you on your good days. He loves you on your bad days because His love is unconditional.

Thirdly, God's love is high enough to be everywhere. Paul, when describing this love in Romans 8:38-39 (NIV), writes, "For I am convinced that...neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

There is no place that you can go where God's love isn't. Nothing, no circumstance, no situation can separate you

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Osorio accepts the call to join the Hispanic Region, serving as director



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Baptiste speaks at his ordination service about God's faithfulness

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SCC Hispanic Region Welcomes Juan Osorio

BY LAUREN LACSON

Moving from a senior pastor role to the conference office was never part of Juan Osorio's plans. But one day, when he received a call to join the Southern California Conference office as the Hispanic Region director, he knew he would follow where the Lord led him.

Working in the conference office versus a church has proved to be a very different experience, but Osorio sees God's hand at work. "I believe God is the one who leads and guides us," Osorio shared. "I appreciate the opportunity. We're here to serve the Lord the best we can."

Osorio has pastored at various churches in SCC since 2001. His most recent role was serving as the senior pastor at the Central Spanish church

in Los Angeles. Prior to becoming a pastor, Osorio has experience working as an electrician.

As Hispanic Region director, Osorio's first mission is to connect with and provide support to the pastors. After having been a pastor for many years himself, Osorio knows what being a pastor is like, and he understands the unique challenges they face. His second goal is to accomplish the mission, prioritizing a plan for evangelism throughout the conference territory as all the region churches work together to spread the gospel to their communities.

No matter what the position may bring, Osorio says he is blessed to be able to serve as God leads.

"God is in control," Osorio said.



Osorio is pictured in Puerto Rico with his wife along with his children and their families.

"We do the minimum—God does the maximum." ●

Peter Baptiste Is Ordained

BY ARAYA MOSS

"My journey has not been a solitary one," said Peter Baptiste, Norwalk church pastor, of his ministry journey thus far.

This sentiment was evident at his ordination service this fall by the outpouring of support from friends, family, colleagues in ministry, and members

from current and past congregations to whom Baptiste has ministered.

"This is a monumental day, not just for Peter," said Baptiste's brother, Philip, as he welcomed attendees, "but for all of us who have journeyed with him and been a part of his incredible pilgrimage of faith."

Southern California Conference L.A. Metro Region Director Danny Chan presented Baptiste for ordination, noting how his ministry has flourished throughout many years of experience. "Your evaluation came back with one of the highest marks we've seen," Chan said, "which reflects the vitality and creativity you bring to ministry."

Brett Poynter, Temple City church pastor, who most recently ministered

with him at Temple City, welcomed Baptiste to the ministry. "I'm not here to welcome you to something new," said Poynter, "but I am here to welcome you to the new era of your life, knowing that your friends, colleagues, and family completely believe in you. That you are fully committed to God's calling. Never forget He's with you always, and we will confidently walk along with you in the journey of ministry."

In his response, Baptiste acknowledged how his heart was humbled and his spirit was deeply moved.

"This is not merely an affirmation of a personal journey for me but a testament to God's enduring faithfulness in my life," Baptiste said. "It's His voice that's called me and led me and His grace that has prepared me, molded me, and shaped me. I am merely a vessel in God's hand, chosen to shepherd His people." ●



Ordained pastors lay hands on Baptiste and his wife as Cress offers the ordination prayer.

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in transition

NEW EMPLOYEES

Voted September 21, 2023

Patricia Garcia-Flores | Teacher (1st Grade), Los Angeles Adventist Academy, as of July 1, 2023.

Courtney Jenkins | Teacher (Kindergarten), Los Angeles Adventist Academy, as of August 22, 2023.

Namyong Kim | Pastor, L.A. Central Korean church, as of September 17, 2023.

Brad Traxler | Pastor, Ridgecrest church, as of August 6, 2023.

Moises Morales Ruiz | Associate in Pastoral Care, El Rio Spanish church, as of September 1, 2023.

LEAVING SCC

Voted September 21 & 28, October 12, 2023

Paul Soontae Kim | From Pastor, L.A. Central Korean church, as of September 16, 2023.

Izraias Uribe | From Associate Pastor, Eagle Rock church, as of September 16, 2023.

Channing Zayzay | From Teacher (Kindergarten), Los Angeles Adventist Academy, as of August 13, 2023.

Daniel Guzman-Bernabe | From Pastor, San Gabriel Valley Spanish church, as of September 20, 2023.

Austin Rosen | From Teacher (Science), Newbury Park Adventist Academy, as of October 10, 2023.

TRANSFERS WITHIN SCC

Voted September 21 & 28, October 26, 2023

Benjamin Del Pozo | From Pastor, White Memorial church, to Pastor, Palmdale church, as of September 10, 2023.

Jaime Heras | From Hispanic Region Director to Children's Ministries Director, SCC Office, as of September 3, 2023.

Isaac Nevarez | From Pastor, Palmdale church, to Pastor, Canoga Park Community church, as of September 10, 2023.

Juan Osorio | From Pastor, Central Spanish church, to Hispanic Region Director, SCC Office, as of August 13, 2023.

Carlos Varona | From Pastor, La Voz Sylmar church, to Pastor, Central Spanish church, as of October 14, 2023.

Ron Sydney | From Pastor, Ventura church, to Pastor, The Place Adventist Fellowship, as of October 22, 2023.

EDITOR
Lauren Lacson

Submit a story
Email us at:
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Seventh-day Adventists**

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because God's love is everywhere. His love lasts forever, and His love is everywhere.

Lastly, God's love is deep enough to meet my needs. The Psalmist writes, "For I am poor and needy; I am hurt to the depths of my heart" (Psalm 109:22, GNT). Some of us have broken and wounded hearts because of something that happened in the past. God's love is deep enough to bind even these deepest wounds.

In Deuteronomy 33:27 (TLB), we read, "The eternal God is your refuge and underneath you are the everlasting arms." When you hit the bottom, God is underneath the bottom! Drop into His arms of love. Let Him catch you and support you when you have nowhere else to go. His love is deep enough to catch you no matter how far down you go.

When you go to Jesus Christ and say, "Jesus, how much do you love me?" He stretches out His arms on the cross and says, "I love you this much." His love is so wide that no one is excluded; so long that it lasts forever; so high that it can find you no matter where you are; and it is so deep that it can reach the deepest wounds and problems in your life. So, I invite you right now to let God love you. ●

