

MINUTES OF THE 66TH CONSTITUENCY SESSION

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

September 29, 2024

White Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church | 401 North State Street, Los Angeles, California 90033

DEVOTIONAL SERVICE

WELCOME

The 66th Constituency Session of the Southern California Conference (SCC) began at 7:48 a.m. when Elder Manuel Arteaga, White Memorial Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church senior pastor, welcomed attendees to the Session, which he hoped would be more than a meeting of the minds but a communion of hearts in fellowship bound together by a shared commitment to Christ and His mission. His hope was that this gathering would strengthen bonds and refocus on the calling we share to be Jesus's hands and feet bringing light to the world, and every conversation and decision be led by the Holy Spirit.

HYMNS

Dr. Jenelle Westerbeck invited participants to join in community and communion singing hymn number 73, "Holy, Holy, Holy," then hymn number 2, "All Creatures of Our God and King," followed by hymn number 341, "To God Be the Glory."

RECOGNITION OF PLATFORM PARTICIPANTS

Elder Velino A. Salazar, Southern California Conference President and 66th Constituency Session Chair, began by thanking musicians Dr. Jenelle Westerbeck, music director for Newbury Park Adventist Academy; Ms. Jacqueline Lee, member of Chino Valley Chinese SDA Church; and Matthew Lisud, senior at San Gabriel Academy. Platform participants were introduced, including Kyoshin Ahn, North American Division (NAD) Executive Secretary; Elder Bradford Newton, Pacific Union Conference (PUC) President; Elder John H. Cress, SCC Executive Secretary; Kathleen V. Diaz, SCC Treasurer/CFO; Elder James G. Lee Jr., SCC Executive Vice President; James P. Willis II, SCC Vice President for Education; Alison Dorsey, member of University SDA Church; Pastor Reuben R. Rafanan, pastor of San Fernando Filipino SDA Church; and Pastor Manuel Arteaga, pastor of White Memorial SDA Church.

SCRIPTURE READING & OPENING HYMN

Alison Dorsey, member of University SDA Church, led out in a responsive reading from Hymn 747. Dr. Jenelle Westerbeck led in hymn number 12, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee."

INVOCATION

Pastor Reuben Rafanan, pastor of San Fernando Filipino SDA Church, led in the invocation.



EMBRACING
COMMUNITY
in Christ

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE
66TH CONSTITUENCY SESSION

(Revision: 10.20.2024)

MUSIC & INSPIRATION

Special music was presented by the 66th Constituency Session mass choir, made up of 181 students from SCC academies and directed by Marcus Desir, Lee Rugless, Sheen Sanchez, and Dr. Jenelle Westerbeck. The mass choir performed three songs: “Wake Up, Sinnuh, Let the Glory In,” “Behold Our God,” and “I Am Not Ashamed.”

DEVOTIONAL

Elder Velino A. Salazar thanked the students from the mass choir for being here so early and the parents for bringing them. He expressed appreciation to the conductors Marcus Desir, Sheen Sanchez, Lee Rugless, and Dr. Jenelle Westerbeck. Elder Salazar then led in a devotional, noting we have come to praise God for what He has done these past five years, to envision a bright future under new leadership, to update bylaws, and to receive reports. He affirmed the first century apostles who urged, preached, and wrote about the imminent return of Jesus, and that although Jesus did not return in their generation, nor in the generation of the early church, nor in the generations of the dark ages, nor in the generation of the reformers, nor in the age of the early Adventists in the U.S. and others in early Adventist work in Mexico, yet they all had hope in Jesus the author and finisher of their faith. Each of them obtained the promise through faith according to Hebrews 11. Elder Salazar ended by affirming that Jesus is coming soon and bringing a reminder to not let anything discourage us from that certainty.

SEASON OF PRAYER

Janet Lui, SCC Prayer, Spirituality, and Renewal Team leader, invited session delegates to pray for the proceedings in groups of two. After a season of prayer by delegates, Janet Lui led in a corporate prayer.

BUSINESS SESSION

PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

Elder Velino A. Salazar asked platform participants to disperse, leaving only SCC officers on the platform. He announced that this gathering was being recorded for internal, archival, and legal purposes. It was noted that, as a 501(c)3 entity, an audit from appropriate agencies verifies SCC is operating according to its own bylaws. For legal purposes, Jon Daggett was invited to the session as legal counsel. Elder John H. Cress, Southern California Conference Executive Secretary, was invited to the podium and gave guidance on the electronic voting mechanism to be used for official voting. Elders Salazar and Cress led out in a series of questions requiring participants to “practice” voting.

READING OF THE OFFICIAL CALL

Elder John H. Cress read the official call of the Session, which was published in the Pacific Union *Recorder* for six months, beginning in April and ending in September 2024, as required by the SCC bylaws.

(Appendix A)

SEATING OF THE DELEGATES

The conference secretary reported to the Session chair that 570 regular delegates were elected to the Session, with 60 percent of those, or 342, required to have quorum. The last count given to him was 375 who registered that morning, which exceeded the 60 percent of the regular delegates to transact business, as required by the SCC bylaws. *(Appendix B)*

DECLARATION OF QUORUM & OPENING OF THE SESSION

The SCC executive secretary announced that quorum was met as required by the bylaws of SCC. The Session chair declared the Session open to transact business. He then gave some brief instructions on when to speak and how to approach the chair to comment on or make motions.

SPECIAL GUESTS

Session chair recognized attorney Jon Daggett, a select group of delegates and guests who are members of the executive committees of either the North American Division or the Pacific Union Conference, who per SCC bylaws are delegates at large, and other conference representatives from Pacific Union conferences. A special guest was recognized and invited to stand, Elder Sunny Oh, former SCC Treasurer/CFO.

SEATING OF THE PARLIAMENTARIANS

VOTED 01-24 To accept the recommendation of the SCC Executive Committee on May 21, 2024, to invite attorneys Karen La Madrid and Duane Montgomery to serve as the Session parliamentarians.

READING OF CONSTITUENCY SESSION RULES & PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

Duane Montgomery, leading parliamentarian, provided instructions regarding the constituency Session rules and the parliamentary procedures governing the Session using the Robert's Rules of Order newly revised version. Attorney La Madrid would assist delegates with questions regarding procedures, how to word a motion, or the proper way to approach with concerns. *(Appendices C, D)*

VOTED 02-24 To accept the recommendation of the Conference Executive Committee to adopt the Session rules and parliamentary procedures to conduct this constituency Session as presented and clarified by the parliamentarians.

REPORTING CONGREGATIONS WITH NAME CHANGE

Elder John H. Cress reported that during the last five years, the following congregations changed their name: Mojave SDA Church to High Desert SDA Church, Thousand Oaks Korean Group to Ventura County Korean Group, and Glendale City Armenian Group to Los Angeles Armenian Company.

REPORTING CONGREGATIONS THAT MERGED

Elder John H. Cress reported two churches merged into one: Glassell Park SDA Church and Highland Park SDA Church to become Gerizim Spanish SDA Church.

REPORTING CONGREGATIONS WITH “COMPANY” STATUS

Elder John H. Cress reported that the Los Angeles Armenian Company was organized February 27, 2021, and Haven Filipino Company was organized July 15, 2023. These two companies are allotted delegates based on membership.

REPORTING NEW CONGREGATIONS WITH “GROUP” STATUS

Elder John H. Cress recognized five new groups that organized in the last quinquennium including Mongolian Mission Group; Ventura County Korean Group; CODA* for Los Angeles, formerly known as Crosswalk Foothills Group; Gardena Filipino Group; and Beth Ohr (House of Light) Group.

CHURCHES DISSOLVED

Elder John H. Cress reported that Journey SDA Church was dissolved on November 8, 2022, and San Pedro Yugoslavian Company was dissolved May 21, 2024.

VOTED 03-24 To remove from the list of SCC organized churches Journey SDA Church and San Pedro Yugoslavian Company.

CONGREGATIONS CHANGING STATUS FROM “CHURCH” TO “COMPANY”

Elder John H. Cress reported that Lake of the Woods SDA Church and High Desert SDA Church changed their status from “church” to “company.”

VOTED 04-24 To change the status of Lake of the Woods SDA Church and High Desert SDA Church from “church” to “company.”

NEW CONGREGATIONS ORGANIZED

VOTED 05-24 To accept Ebenezer Spanish SDA Church, organized June 4, 2022, and Light Above Filipino SDA Church, organized October 15, 2022.

Delegates of Ebenezer Spanish SDA Church and Light Above Filipino SDA Church were seated.

RATIFICATION OF THE 65TH SESSION MINUTES

VOTED 06-24 To ratify the Minutes of the September 22, 2019, 65th Constituency Session as approved by the SCC Executive Committee at its meeting on May 21, 2024. *(Appendix E)*

RATIFICATION OF SPECIAL CONSTITUENCY SESSION MINUTES

VOTED 07-24 To ratify the Minutes of the September 19, 2021, Special Constituency Session as approved by the SCC Executive Committee at its meeting on November 9, 2021. *(Appendix F)*

SESSION AGENDA FOR THE 66TH CONSTITUENCY SESSION

DEFEATED A motion was made and seconded to amend the session agenda, but it was defeated.

VOTED 08-24 It was moved and seconded to accept the session agenda as approved by the SCC Executive Committee on a meeting held September 10, 2024.

AGENDA FOR THE 66TH CONSTITUENCY SESSION

- A. Devotional Worship
- B. Preliminary Business Items
 - 1. Reading of the Official Call
 - 2. Seating of Delegates
 - 3. Declaration of a Quorum/Opening of the 66th Session
 - 4. Seating of Parliamentarians
 - 5. Instructions by Parliamentarians
 - 6. Presentation of New Congregations
 - 7. Acknowledgement of Delegates from New Congregations
 - 8. 65th Constituency Session Minutes
 - 9. 66th Constituency Session Agenda
 - 10. Recognitions
- C. Session Reports
 - 1. Officers' Combined Report (Video Presentation)
 - 2. Conference Finances Audit Report
 - 3. AdHoc Committee Report
 - 4. Project Reports
- D. Advance Committees' Reports
 - 1. Nominating Committee Report
 - 2. Prayer of Dedication
 - 3. Bylaws Committee Report
- E. Cultivating a Healthy Future
- F. Adjournment

RECOGNITION OF RETIREES

The delegates were invited to pay tribute to denominational workers who served in this conference and retired during the last quinquennium; their photos and names were shown on the screen as delegates responded with applause. *(Appendix G)*

REMEMBRANCE OF DECEASED

The Session chair paid tribute to SCC employees who went to sleep in Jesus during the last quinquennium. After a PowerPoint presentation with their names, the delegation was asked to stand for a minute of silence, giving respect to those church members and employees. *(Appendix H)*

ADVENTIST HEALTH

Elder Salazar welcomed to the platform Adventist Health executives. He mentioned that it is a privilege

to serve alongside these individuals who are committed to the Seventh-day Adventist message and carry on this mission in our territory. Kerry Heinrich, CFO and President for Adventist Health, said a few words about the mission of the core constituents they serve in SCC territory in keeping with the ministry of Jesus to bring hope and healing. Alice Issai, Adventist Health Glendale (AHG) President, spoke about the mission of AHG to bring physical, mental, and spiritual healing since 1906 followed by a video demonstrating that mission at AHG. A video about the healing ministry of Adventist Health Simi Valley was also shown. John Raffoul, President of Adventist Health White Memorial (AHWM), greeted the delegates and noted that AHWM and White Memorial SDA Church have been doing God's work together in East Los Angeles and Boyle Heights for more than a hundred years, living God's love by inspiring health, wholeness, and hope. A video was shown about this healing ministry at AHWM. Elder Salazar ended by thanking each Adventist Health executive for partnering with SCC.

OFFICERS COMBINED REPORTS

Instead of each of the SCC officers (the President, Executive Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President, and Vice President for Education) reporting through individual presentations, a combined 28-minute video report covering each ministry was shown. The video was produced by the SCC communication and media production team in the SCC studio. The Session chair expressed appreciation for all the ministry accomplished by each church and each person in SCC and gave thanks to God.

VOTED To accept the report from SCC officers.
09-24

AUDITED CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 & 2023

Ms. Catalina Grigore, representing the General Conference Auditing Services (GCAS), gave the report of the Audited Consolidated Financial Statements of the Southern California Conference for the years ending December 31, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. Ms. Grigore gave a brief background of the four types of opinions that GCAS issues after a financial audit. The highest one is called the "Unmodified" or "Clean" opinion. This opinion is issued when an auditor determines that each of the financial records provided by the organization is free of any misrepresentations. In addition, it indicates that the financial records have been maintained in accordance with the standards known as Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). Therefore, for the years ended December 31, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, GCAS was pleased to report that the Southern California Conference has attained the "Unmodified" or "Clean" opinion, the highest opinion given to an organization, on the consolidated full financial statements for those years, and for the year 2019 received a "Clean" opinion on the balance sheet and the disclaimer of opinion on income statement because of some missing information on locally funded employees for that year.

VOTED To approve the Audited Consolidated Financial Statements of the Southern California
10-24 Conference for the years ending December 31, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, as presented. This audit report is labeled as "Unmodified," which means it is in compliance with denominational policy. *(Appendix I)*

ADHOC COMMITTEE REPORT

The Session chair gave background on a report that responds to a direction that constituents have submitted to SCC administration regarding education subsidies and how this topic was addressed, which committees participated, what surveys were completed, and what town halls were offered to discuss this topic. The Session chair thanked Dr. Karen Cress for leading this study. A video was shown to share results and gave several recommendations by the SCC Subsidy Study Committee. Dr. Cress was asked several follow-up questions by the Session chair and the Ad Hoc Subsidy Study Committee were thanked. The Session chair noted that SCC Executive Committee reviewed the recommendations of the subsidy study and voted an official recommendation that was brought to the Session floor for discussion.

VOTED 11-24 To accept the SCC Education Subsidy report and empower the SCC Executive Committee in collaboration with the board of education to further evaluate this report and create a subsidy system that replaces the current “1993 Subsidy Proposal” document, as a pilot program to be implemented by the 2025-2026 school year. *(Appendix J)*

SCHOLL CANYON ESTATES REPORT

A brief video on the ministry of Scholl Canyon Estates was shown to share about the 18-year operation of a retirement center on SCC-owned property.

NEWBURY PARK PROJECT

A video report was presented to inform about the long-time Newbury Park Project, 41 years to date, to update on what has transpired within the last five years. Elder Velino A. Salazar informed that an investment in road improvements were completed in August 2019. A new buyer was identified for the North Campus, and SCC entered into a buying agreement with the Ventura County Housing (VCH) developer. Several requests were made by the buyer, and some were agreed to, but not all, and the two parties fell out of negotiations. Later, at a City of Thousand Oaks council meeting, the property was labeled as “Industrial Zone” property, which was a surprise, given that this is the least valuable designation. In 2021, SCC took several decisive steps such as including local advisors to this project, terminated contract with consulting and developing agencies, paying off \$1.2 million to Ridgewood and Associates, replaced real estate agents, and obtained new appraisals of the North Campus. In October 2021, SCC entered into agreement with VCH after eight months of hiatus and this buyer submitted an application with the city to reclassify the North Campus to “residential.” On August 27, 2024, the city council voted against the request. To date, an internal deficit of \$22 million remains, along with a loan to Pacific Union Conference for \$14 million, but an outstanding loan interest balance of \$772,000 was paid off just the previous week before the session. Elder Salazar noted that we wait for the Lord’s leading for future steps and will move prayerfully in the future. Aaron Ramirez was recognized with a plaque and thanked for his insight and strong contributions to this project.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOGNITION

Members of the SCC Executive Committee were asked by the Session chair to come forward to be

publicly acknowledged and to receive a certificate of appreciation.

OTHER RECOGNITIONS

Elder Salazar recognized and appreciated Cherie Vendouris and Esther Salazar.

RECOGNITION & APPRECIATION

Elder John H. Cress took time to show appreciation to Elder Velino A. Salazar, who served 45 years in SCC, and Elder James G. Lee Jr., who served 48 years in SCC, upon their upcoming retirement. Dr. Gerard Kiemeney and Janet Lui shared a few words of appreciation representing SCC. Sandra Roberts and Bradford Newton shared appreciation on behalf of the Pacific Union Conference, and Elder Kyoshin Ahn on behalf of North American Division. Ms. Kathleen V. Diaz presented a crystal award to Elder Lee, Elder Cress presented one to Elder Salazar, and their spouses received gifts as well to enthusiastic applause.

LUNCHTIME DELAYED

VOTED That the Session continue instead of breaking for lunch.
12-24

REPORT OF THE BYLAWS COMMITTEE

Dan Dik, SCC Bylaws Committee Chair, gave a report of the Bylaws Committee, which presented several bylaws changes to the Session as one recommendation.

VOTED To adopt bylaws changes as presented by SCC Bylaws Committee. *(Appendix K)*
13-24

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

**Indicates returning committee members*

As a final function of the Session chair, Elder Salazar turned over the proceedings to Elder Bradford Newton, Pacific Union Conference President, who, per the SCC Bylaws, chaired the SCC Session Nominating Committee. Elder Newton shared that the Nominating Committee gathered according to SCC bylaws, and met a total of three times, including a meeting to receive any concerns from delegates. Ms. Tracy Garnett, elected as secretary for the Nominating Committee, was asked by the Nominating Committee chair to read each nomination which would be voted by majority.

VOTED To accept the recommendation of the Nominating Committee to elect the following persons to serve as Executive Officers and the Vice President for Education for the 2024-2029 quinquennial:
14-24

President	John H. Cress	271 ayes	61 nays
Secretary	Daniel Chan	301 ayes	27 nays
Treasurer	Kathleen V. Diaz	310 ayes	31 nays
Vice President	Royal Harrison	299 ayes	47 nays
Vice President for Education	James P. Willis II	315 ayes	56 nays

VOTED 15-24 To approve the recommendation of the Nominating Committee that the following persons serve as members of the SCC Executive Committee for the 2024-2029 quinquennium:

Administrative Members

- President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Vice President
- Superintendent of Schools
- Region Directors:
 - Asian Pacific Region*
 - Greater Los Angeles Region*
 - Hispanic Region*
 - Los Angeles Metro Region*
 - West Region*

Non-Administrative Members

Asian Pacific Region (3)

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Paulette Park (Educator) | L.A. Central Korean Church |
| Patricia Hokama* | Central Japanese-American Church |
| Gabriel Sipi Jr. | Compton Samoan Church |

Greater Los Angeles Region (4)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Lawrence Dorsey Sr. (Pastor) | University Church |
| David Harrington | Normandie Avenue Church |
| Anita Brewer | Delaware Church |
| Beryl Rodney | Berean Church |

Hispanic Region (7)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Samuel Del Pozo (Pastor) | San Fernando Spanish Church |
| Fabian Aristizabal | Central Spanish Church |
| Myrna Sanchez | Panamericana Spanish Church |
| Norma Roldan | Monrovia Spanish Church |
| Ruby Meneses* | Lincoln Heights Spanish Church |
| Rosa Yanira Parada | San Gabriel Spanish Church |
| Saul Ramos | Lincoln Heights Spanish Church |

Los Angeles Metro Region (4)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Eustace Laurie III (Pastor) | All Nations Church |
| Lewston Morris | Whittier Church |
| Robert Sherer | Rolling Hills Church |
| Christina Ceballos* | Alhambra Church |

West Region (3)

Isaac Nevarez (Pastor)	Canoga Park Community Church
Jonathan Wheeler	The Place Adventist Fellowship
Karen Oi	Santa Monica Church

VOTED 16-24 To approve the recommendation of the Nominating Committee that the following persons serve as members of the Bylaws Committee for the 2024-2029 quinquennium:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Church</u>
Asian Pacific	Dennis Imai*	Gardena Japanese-American Church
	Johmy Fajilan*	Glendale Filipino Church
Greater L.A.	Greer Bosworth	Breath of Life Church
	Tammie Lindsey (Pastor)	Berean Church
Hispanic	Jaqueline Flores	Pasadena Spanish Church
	Josue Brito	Glendale Spanish Church
L.A. Metro	Ross Calkins* (Pastor)	Bellflower-Lakewood Church
	Daniel Benitez	West Covina Hills Church
West	Neville Salvador	Hollywood Church
	Teddy Flo	The Place Adventist Fellowship

ACT OF DEDICATION

The newly elected conference leaders with their spouses were invited to the platform and received boutonnieres. The spouses of the newly elected leaders were presented with bouquets, while members of the SCC Prayer, Spirituality, and Renewal Team prayed for each officer and their family. Elder Leon Brown, Pacific Union Conference Vice President, offered a prayer for the newly elected leaders and their families.

A WORD FROM THE NEW SCC PRESIDENT: "CULTIVATING A HEALTHY FUTURE"

Former SCC President Elder Velino A. Salazar passed the ceremonial baton of leadership to the new SCC President, Elder John H. Cress, who then shared his vision for the new quinquennium, titled "Cultivating a Healthy Future."

ADJOURNMENT

As business was concluded, the meeting was adjourned. The benediction was offered by Jonathan Fox, Principal of Linda Vista Adventist School.

Velino A. Salazar, Chair
John H. Cress, Secretary