



Snapshots from the Summer of Ministry



The church members in Southeastern California Conference seized many opportunities for outreach, evangelism, and ministry this summer. Vacation Bible Schools, student literature evangelism, and Family Camps at Pine Springs Ranch spelled fun and fellowship for those craving connections and needing spiritual encouragement.



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Members of the Mt. Rubidoux church help host one of their weekend drive-through Rocky Railway VBS programs.

Vacation Bible Schools engage families in ministry

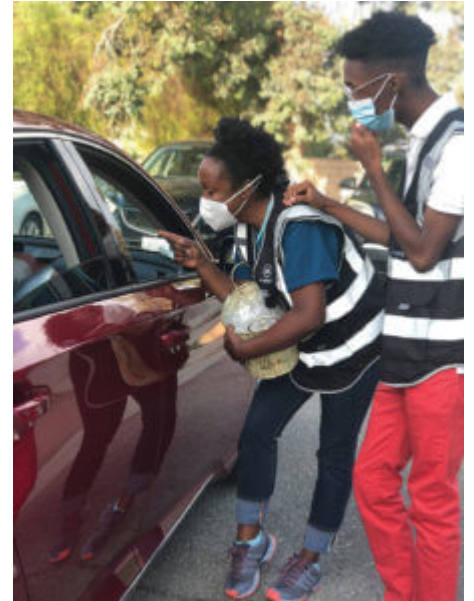
Churches operating Vacation Bible Schools (VBS) once again welcomed young people for in-person, drive-through, and virtual programs.

In Grand Terrace, the Azure Hills church hosted VBS via their YouTube channel, supplying participants with shirts and activity bags during a drive-through VBS pick-up.

The Mt. Rubidoux church hosted two weekend drive-through versions of the Rocky Railway VBS at their Riverside campus and in Moreno Valley. Stations included games, snacks, and a prayer booth, as well as a gift shop and rides on a five-cart train.



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Members of the Mt. Rubidoux church help host one of their weekend drive-through Rocky Railway VBS programs.

“Not only did the children from our church have a great time, but we had families from the community that attended,” shared Jeremiah Green, associate pastor for children at Mt. Rubidoux. “Thanks to all those who volunteered their time and energy to make this event a success!”

Church member involvement played a crucial role at the Arden Hills church in Highland, where they welcomed more than 30 young people to their five-day, in-person VBS program in July. One church member, Ben Garver, decided to stream the program on Facebook for kids to watch from home.

“Ben had a tripod that he connected to his phone, and he would run around to the different groups and provide commentary, helping to make it fun,” said Jeff Harper, pastor at Arden Hills.

One young person watching from home was a seven-year-old girl who, because of health challenges, had previously never participated in VBS programs.

“My friend texted me saying, ‘Thank you so much! My daughter watches it in the mornings, so she gets to see what



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it is like,” shared Crystal, Garver’s wife. “I brought crafts over to their house so they can participate. We had the capability to put it up online, and the cool thing is that it blessed someone.”



The summer 2021 student literature evangelism team.

Student literature evangelism thrives amid challenges

The opportunity to bless others is a driving force for those participating in student literature evangelism—and until mid-May, it was uncertain what would happen to the summer program. With two weeks to prepare, the leadership team praised God for providing everything needed to accommodate 12 students in their modified program.

Though prepared for a hesitant reception at doors, the team witnessed more openness and interest than ever before. Many showed gratitude to the students who offered to pray for them and encourage them during this difficult and uncertain time. “We met many people who lost family members to COVID and were personally affected by the pandemic,” shared Eric Isaia, assistant student literature evangelism director. “Many of them thanked our students for praying with them, and for leaving positive, uplifting, and hopeful literature with them.”

Though the smallest student literature program for the conference, participants set a record high for scholarship earnings in the history of the conference’s Youth Rush summer program. “We have been able to put more literature into homes than in any previous summer,” Isaia shared. “We have seen that ministry is needed and desired more than ever before. Now is the time to seek and save the hurting, confused, and lost!”



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A few of the summer camp veterans who made up the Pine Springs Ranch task force. Thanks to them, PSR hosted four weeks of safe and fun Family Camp experiences.

Family Camps at Pine Springs Ranch

Through modifications, the ministry of summer camp was able to return to Pine Springs Ranch (PSR). A task force of summer camp veterans with knowledge in the medical and ministry fields crafted four weeks of safe camp experiences. Starting on Wednesdays and running through Sundays, PSR hosted up to 30 families for five days of fellowship, worship, and connection in the great outdoors. Family cohorts rotated through outdoor activities, including archery, go-karts, and horseback riding—the first time PSR has had horseback riding since 2013. Also included in the schedule: nap times! “In case you haven’t had one in a while,” the camp shared on their website.

“One family told me that this was the best vacation they’ve ever had together,” said Carmen Ibanez, executive director at PSR. “They appreciated the chance to do activities together, to laugh and have fun.”

By Faith Hoyt