

SOUTH DISTRICT CONFERENCE
California-Pacific Conference
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MAY 10, 2025
VIA ZOOM



Resident Bishop
Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank

South District Superintendent
Rev. Luis A. Garcia

Assistant Director
Rev. Dr. Lui Tran

District Lay Leader
Michael Mitchell

Administrative Assistant
Emilie Penuelas

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South District Conference

May 10, 2025

AGENDA

9:00 a.m.	Log On, Slides - Announcements, Chat Questions, Music	
9:10 a.m.	Gathering Worship <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be Still Ministry Worship Video- Opening Prayer and Scripture Reading- Devotional	Michael Mitchell <i>District Lay Leader</i> Rev. Luis A. Garcia <i>District Superintendent</i>
9:30 a.m.	Call to Order	DS
	Election of South District Conference Secretary	DS
	Adoption of the 2024 Minutes District Conference Minutes	DS
	Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none">- District Lay Leader- Assistant District Director- South District Union- District Youth- District Mission Committee- Superintendence Committee- District Committee on Ordained Ministry- District Planning & Strategy Committee	Michael Mitchell Rev. Dr. Lui Tran Jason Tucker Pastor Jennifer Scott & Rev. Matt Hambrick Pastor Jeri Newell-Davis Rev. Drew Davis Rev. Lori Leopold Rev. Kristie Grimaud
	Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none">- District Leadership- South District Lay Members to Annual Conference	DS LL
10:30 a.m.	Annual Conference Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Intro to Annual Conference (video)- Budget Overview (video)	
10:45 a.m.	Recognition of South District Clergy & Laity	DS & LL
11:00 a.m.	Closing Prayer - Adjourn	

South District Conference Minutes - May 11, 2024

9:00 a.m.	<i>Log On, Slides - Announcements, Chat Questions, Music</i>	
9:10 a.m.	<i>Gathering Worship</i>	
9:30 a.m.	<i>Call to Order</i>	<i>Rev. Sandra K. Olewine</i> <i>District Superintendent (DS)</i>
	<i>Election of South District Conference Secretary</i> <i>Emilie Penuelas VOTE APPROVED</i>	<i>DS</i>
	<i>Adoption of the 2023 Minutes District Conference Minutes</i> <i>VOTE APPROVED</i>	<i>DS</i>
	<i>Reports</i> - District Youth - District Mission Committee - District Committee on Ordained Ministry - District Planning & Strategy Committee - Assistant District Director - South District Union	<i>Jennifer Scott & Rev. Matt Hambrick</i> <i>Pastor Jeri Newell-Davis</i> <i>Rev. Christian DeMent</i> <i>Rev. Kristie Grimaud</i> <i>Rev. Paige Eaves</i> <i>Jason Tucker</i>
	<i>SEE 2024 BOOKLET FOR WRITTEN REPORTS</i>	
	<i>Elections</i> - District Leadership <i>VOTE APPROVED (SEE BOOKLET FOR FULL LIST OF LEADERSHIP)</i>	<i>DS</i>
	- SD Lay Members to Annual Conference <i>Youth Lay members - VOTE APPROVED</i> <i>Young Adult Lay Members – VOTE APPROVED</i> <i>At-Large Lay Members – VOTE APPROVED</i> <i>(SEE BOOKLET FOR NOMINATION SLATE)</i>	<i>Michael Mitchell, Lay Leader</i>
	- Vote to empower DS to fill remaining Youth/YA to serve as members to AC <i>VOTE APPROVED</i>	
10:30 a.m.	<i>General and Annual Conference</i> - WJ Bishops General Conference Overview (video) - Budget Overview – Bishop Escobedo-Frank (video)	<i>DS Intro</i>
10:45 a.m.	<i>Recognition of South District Clergy & Laity</i>	<i>DS & LL</i>
11:50 a.m.	<i>Introduction of Incoming South District Superintendent Rev. Luis Garcia</i>	
11:00 a.m.	<i>Closing Prayer – Adjourn</i>	

Respectfully submitted by Emilie Penuelas, District Secretary

SOUTH DISTRICT COMMITTEE REPORTS

Lay Leader Report

Michael Mitchell

It has been a blessing to serve as the South District Lay Leader this past year. Our district is filled with dedicated laity and clergy who continue to work faithfully in ministry and mission. My focus this year has been on strengthening connections among churches, supporting lay leadership, and encouraging spiritual growth.

One of the year's highlights was the in-person Certified Lay Minister and Lay Servant Ministries training on April 27, 2025, at Hope UMC in San Diego. Partnering with Cathy Wilson, Melissa Bosch, and DS Rev. Luis Garcia, we welcomed new and returning lay leaders for a full day of training, fellowship, and worship. The energy and engagement from participants affirmed the importance of continuing this work.

Another key part of my ministry was offering devotions during the 2024 South District Charge Conferences. I focused on lifting up the essential role of the laity in the life of the church, encouraging them to use their spiritual gifts in leadership and service. These messages reminded congregations that a Spirit-led laity is vital to the church's mission.

Throughout the year, I also helped lead a monthly South District Prayer Session, held virtually on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. These gatherings created space for shared prayer, reflection, and encouragement among laity and clergy across the district.

In addition, I supported churches through visits, attended district meetings, and offered care and guidance to lay leaders navigating transitions. I've continued to advocate for improved communication and for raising up young, bilingual, and culturally diverse leadership to reflect the richness of our district.

Looking ahead, I remain committed to equipping and encouraging the laity across the South District. I'm grateful to serve in this role and am always available to support our churches in whatever way I can.

Assistant District Director

It is a great honor to serve as the new Assistant District Director for the South District. Over the past seven years, my predecessor, Rev. Paige Eaves has been doing excellent work, helping local churches in many different ways, particularly with property development. With a sense of trepidation and humility, I recognize that I have big shoes to fill and a steep learning curve ahead of me. It will take me some time to get to know the churches and people of the South District.

Apart from my new role, I'm currently the Senior Pastor of Garden Grove UMC, a multicultural inclusive congregation with four language ministries (English, Korean, Samoan, and Vietnamese) in Orange County. I have been in ministry for over twenty-five years, twenty of which in the local church. Garden Grove UMC is my fifth appointment.

Prior to that, I worked as a government lawyer in the Swiss Federal Justice Department and later as a missionary with Wycliffe Bible Translators, managing translation projects in Africa. It was in northern Ghana in the summer of 2000—*sitting in a Jeep that broke down on a dusty road in the middle of nowhere*—when I received the call from God to enter the ordained ministry, which is proof that the Lord must have a great sense of humor.

Beyond the local church, I'm also a member of the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church, first elected in 2016 for a term of 8 years and re-elected in 2024 for 4 years. The Judicial Council is the supreme court of our denomination, deciding cases on questions of Church law arising from around the global connection.

Born in Vietnam and raised in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, I attended the University of Bern, Harvard Law School, and Claremont School of Theology, and hold a Ph.D. in constitutional law from McGill University. I'm married to Traci, a pharmacist. We have two teenage sons, Benjamin and Timothy, a border collie (Oreo) and a cat (Kitty). Hadn't God called me into the ministry, I might have pursued my dream of becoming a guitarist playing in a rock band.

Thank you for your prayers, patience, and support, which I certainly will need. I am looking forward to working with you in the coming months.

Rev. Dr. Lui Tran



South District Union

Jason Tucker

The South District Union has had a year of transitions since our last district conference! We welcomed Rev. Luis Garcia as our new Superintendent and said farewell to Rev. Paige Eaves as she moved into her new role as Assistant to the Bishop. We're also very grateful for Jan Newton filling in during Emilie's parental leave! We're also very excited to welcome Rev. Lui Tran as our Assistant District Director. His graces and talents will be a huge asset to our District in new ways this year.

As you may know the District Union stewards approximately \$4 Million in invested assets, whose earnings are used for the benefit of our ministries here in the South District. Our primary vehicles to serve our churches include 1) Strategic grants for new/improved ministries, in conjunction with District Planning & Strategy Committee and CalPac New Ministries, 2) Educational grants for pastoral candidates, and 3) Emergency grants and loans for congregations. We also have funding available to bridge clergy housing and health care needs for congregations receiving new pastors in the middle of their budget years.

In addition to our funding initiatives, the District Union has become much more involved in property transitions throughout our region, often serving as an intermediate custodian of church properties after congregations are discontinued. Managing this transition process helps to keep the assets and funds in service to the other churches in the district.

This year, we've continued learning in our role as "intermediate property custodians," and have been most heavily connected with property work at Surf City UMC, Winchester UMC, the Imperial Beach Neighborhood Center project, and Holtville UMC. Our goal in all these matters is to make sure that these assets are put to the highest and best use for our local ministries here in the district.

I am deeply grateful for our members, both lay and clergy from churches throughout the district, as well as our fantastic District staff. We are especially in debt to our board secretary, George Harris, our board treasurer, Marion Folkner, and our board investment advisor John Folsom. These three lay leaders are truly the backbone of the District Union!

District Missions

Pastor Jeri Newell-Davis

In this past year, the South District Missions Committee worked in a variety of ways alongside District churches as well as Conference committees. We came together as the body of Christ to assist in ways that offered support to local, regional, and binational communities. Here is some of what we accomplished along with our partners, Volunteers In Mission, United Women of Faith, Border Ministries, and Cal-Pac Disaster Task Force.

Border Ministries Donations:

Local churches and individuals have been instrumental in collecting and transporting items to sustain those in Tijuana who were waiting for immigration and asylum appointments. These items included infant, children, and adult clothing, diapers, assorted toys, toiletries, and hygiene kits, as well as food, water, and warm blankets. Although the work is not as robust as it was last year, it is still essential for those who wait on the margins. Your help is still needed to collect and transport items into Tijuana and Calexico. Please contact the District office if you would like to help.

Community Support:

May 2024, District churches went out with an emphasis of supporting their community's needs. These offerings included food collections for local food pantries, trash pick-up, collecting and making hygiene kits for those in need and baking cookies for First Responders. We continue to encourage local churches to choose a time and activity that impacts their local neighbors.

July 20, 2024, six South District churches walked in the San Diego Pride Parade as the UMC South District supporting our LGBTQ+ community. We hope you'll join us this year on Saturday, July 19th in San Diego and on Saturday, September 27th at the OC Fair Grounds.

May 1, 2025, the District offered its first Interfaith National Day of Prayer Service. This service of worship brought Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Jewish leaders together to pray for hope in our nation. We are grateful for San Carlos hosting and livestreaming this event.

Cal-Pac Support:

Many local churches offered gift cards, financial and physical support for neighbors in Altadena and Palisades after the devastating wildfires. This work continues and we are still assisting.

As we look forward to the coming year, we will continue to work collaboratively as we plan our District Harvest Walk. If you are interested in joining us, please contact the District Office.

District Committee on Ordained Ministry

Rev. Lori Leopold

This has been a season of transition for the South District Committee on Ordained Ministry. In the last year, we said farewell to the Reverends Christian Dement and Melissa Rusler, who served as chair and registrar, respectively. They provided outstanding and faithful leadership over a period of many years for which we are grateful. Rev. George Hooper graciously agreed to take on the responsibility of registrar for DCOM and I stepped in as chair. We were joined by a new District Superintendent, Rev. Luis Garcia, and together we have leaned into this new season and the meaningful work of DCOM. This committee is served by busy people who give of their time, energy and wisdom because they care deeply about the church as well as those who are exploring their sense of calling to ministry within the UMC. The committee is currently made up of 15 members, including clergy and lay people...elders, deacons, licensed local pastors and certified lay ministers. I am deeply grateful for their commitment to this important work, and I am honored to serve alongside them.

The South DCOM meets approximately six times per year, depending on the number of individuals in our care and where those individuals are in their process. We offer introductory meetings for exploring candidates at the beginning of their ministry journeys. We meet with candidates seeking initial certification as well as the annual renewal of their certification as candidates for ministry. Likewise, we meet with those seeking approval or annual renewal as Licensed Local Pastors. We meet bi-annually with Certified Lay Ministers for licensing and relicensing. And in the fall, we meet with those seeking to be recommended to the Board of Ordained Ministry for provisional membership.

Currently the South DCOM has within its care:

9 Exploring Candidates

10 Certified Candidates

15 Licensed Local Pastors Under Appointment

13 Certified Lay Ministers + 1 Candidate for CLM

Two additional candidates from South District, Maria Longley and Mark Maddix, will be commissioned at Annual Conference in June. We give thanks for God's grace and their hard work that has brought them to this place. We celebrate with and for them as they come for commissioning.

While the work of DCOM is not always easy, we seek the guidance of the Spirit and welcomes your prayers as we do our best to listen, to guide and to support each individual who comes into our care.

District Planning & Strategy Committee

Rev. Kristie Grimaud

I consider it an honor to serve as chair of the District Planning and Strategy (DPAS) Committee because true leadership begins with service. Just as Jesus came not to be served but to serve, I feel called to guide this team with a servant's heart—listening deeply, discerning faithfully, and working alongside others to help our churches flourish. Instead of having a spirit of competitiveness between the churches, I embrace our deep roots of connectionalism. It is a sacred joy to support ministries as they experience regeneration and resurrection.

I serve with a dedicated group of laity (5) and clergy (6) who nurture and resource our churches and ministries. Through microgrants, Georgia Lynch grants, and Equitable Compensation support, DPAS helps churches grow, thrive, and reach their communities in meaningful ways.

With hearts for revitalization, DPAS also sends out teams to walk alongside congregations using the appreciative inquiry process—helping them rediscover their strengths and imagine fresh paths forward. This year, we have deepened our partnership with New Ministries at the Conference by joining them in their revisioning process.

Since our last District Conference, we have approved the following grants:

Microgrants:

- Chollas View – Spanish and Haitian Ministry: Translation equipment – \$5,000
- Good Shepherd Westminster – Xcavation Youth Ministry – \$5,000
- Julian – Community Café – \$2,700
- Normal Heights – Diversity and Inclusion Consultant – \$5,000

Georgia Lynch Grants:

We were also able to award 20 Georgia Lynch Grants totaling \$111,416 to support ministries for women, children, and youth in the district.

Equitable Comp Grants:

We recommended 5 Equitable Comp proposals to the Equitable Comp Committee.

A heartfelt thank you to each DPAS member for your time, care, and vision in helping to shape a more vibrant and connected church across our district. What a gift it is to serve together.

District Buildings and Locations Committee

Alan Hay

The Building and Locations Committee reformed at the beginning of 2025 with Alan Hay appointed Chair.

Our first meeting took place in February, and we discussed various ongoing and new property opportunities. Time has been spent putting together a draft plan for when congregations sell property and how they can invest the proceeds and use the investments for Missions and Ministry. More work will take place on this in 2025 as well as creating packages of information which detail the process to follow.

Rev Lui Tran was recently appointed Assistant District Director and he is currently transitioning into the support role for congregational development.

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am pleased to present this report on the important ministry being carried out through the Wesley Foundation San Diego at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

Under the dedicated leadership of Rev. Scott Young, our campus minister, the Wesley Foundation continues to embody a faithful ministry of presence on the UCSD campus. Collaborating closely with the Office of Student Affairs, Rev. Young has been instrumental in addressing several critical areas impacting the student body:

- Navigating Complex Global Issues: In response to heightened tensions surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict, Rev. Young has facilitated spaces for open dialogue, helping students process these events through a lens of faith and compassion.
- Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing: Recognizing the increasing mental health challenges faced by college students, the ministry has prioritized initiatives that support emotional and spiritual wellness, aligning with UCSD's commitment to student mental health care .
- Integrating Faith and the Arts: Through various programs, including a retrospective film screening series, the ministry encourages the campus community to explore the intersection of their faith and creative expression, fostering a holistic approach to spiritual development.
- Fostering Interfaith Dialogue: By participating in the Student Interfaith Council and co-sponsoring quarterly interreligious dialogues with the Office of Student Affairs and the Center for Spirituality and Ethics, the Wesley Foundation actively promotes understanding and cooperation among diverse faith traditions on campus .

Looking ahead, we remain committed to supporting the spiritual growth of UCSD students, nurturing a community where faith, intellect, and service intersect. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the United Methodist Church and the broader district community in this vital ministry.

SOUTH DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Assistant District Director – Rev. Dr. Lui Tran	lui.tran@gmail.com
District Board of Ordained Ministry Liaison – Rev. John Griffin-Atil	johngriffinatil@yahoo.com
District Building and Locations Chair – Alan Hay	alanjhay55@outlook.com
District Chancellor - Karl Lindegren	klindgren@fisherphillips.com
District Hispanic Committee Chair – Rev. Baldwin Avendaño	pastor.avendano@gmail.com
District Lay Leader - Michael Mitchell	sdlayleader@gmail.com
District Associate Lay Leader – TBD	
District Lay Servant Chair – TBD	
District Mission Taskforce Chair – Rev. Jeri Newell-Davis	jeri@lindavistaumc.org
District Superintendency Chair – Drew Davis	pastordrewdavis@gmail.com
District Youth Coordinators - Jennifer Scott	jennifer@92104church.org
- Rev. Matt Hambrick	
District UMM President - Dennis Olson	pastormatt@costamesafirstume.com
District UWF President – Lynette Hayes	engrolson@aol.com
District Union Chair – Jason Tucker	lyn.hayes123@gmail.com
District Planning and Strategy Chair – Rev. Kristie Grimaud	jtucker@fumcsd.org
District SD Wesley Foundation Co-Chairs – Rev. Hannah Ka	kristiegrimaud@gmail.com
– Rev. Benjamin Camp	revhannah@fumcsd.org
	ben@fumcescondido.org

DISTRICT UNION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Cheryl Allen	Jason Tucker (chair)	Rev. J.T. Greenleaf
Rev. V.J. Cruz-Baez	Marian Folkner	John Folsom
Nancy Turk	Denise Serino	George Harris III
Rev. Craig Dorval	Julie Elkins	Kent Raysin
	Doug Gillen	Eric Swanson

*EX-OFFICIO District Lay Leader, DPAS Rep, UMW President, District Superintendent,
Assistant District Director, Bldg. & Locations Chair, District Chancellor*

DISTRICT PLANNING & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Rev. Kristie Grimaud (chair)	Lynn Nguyen	Rev. Brent Ross
Dakota Koenig	Rev. Broghan Hunt	Rev. Baldwin Avendaño
Suzanne Morgan	Todd Vosper	Rev. Kim Ports
Rev. Dr. Mark Maddix	Rev. Steve Petty	Tim Fritts

*EX-OFFICIO: DLT Chair, Bldg. & Locations Chair, District Superintendent,
Assistant District Director, Lay Leader*

BUILDING & LOCATIONS COMMITTEE

2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Judy Bohlen	Jim Geddes	Alan Hay (chair)
	Rev. Lui Tran	Eric Naslund

EX-OFFICIO: District Union Chair, DPAS Chair, District Lay Leader, District Superintendent

DISTRICT COMMITTEE ON ORDAINED MINISTRY

2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Rev. George Hooper	Rev. Lori Leopold (chair)	Rev. Cathie Capp
Rev. Adiel DePano	Rev. Khuong Chau	Rev. Diane Davis
Rev. Brian Parcel	Rev. Dr. Joel Hortiales	Rev. Josh Zuleta
Rev. Tim Ellington	Rev. Michelle Andrews	Rev. Donnie Bae
Rev. Hannah Ka	Pastor Jeffrey Grant	Rev. Craig Dorval

*Laity: Susan Naslund (23-24; Foothills La Mesa); District Superintendent
BOM rep appointed by Bishop: Rev. John Griffith-Atil*

SUPERINTENDENCY COMMITTEE

2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Dione Taylor	Polly Petersen	Rev. Sylina Kidd
Rev. Jeannie Moon	Rev. Drew Davis (chair)	Rev. Jaime Pangman
Pastor Mateo Mamea	Johnnie Braxton	Rev. Jeanette Bragunier
		Pamela Reynon

SOUTH DISTRICT HISPANIC COMMITTEE

2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Rev. Baldwin Avendaño (chair) Calexico UM Mission	Rev. Dr. Joel Hortiales Park Hill UMC	Rev. Saul Montiel Fallbrook UMC
Rev. Ruben Torrez-Diaz FUMC Escondido	Pastor Nelly Schettler Brawley UMC	LPA Vidal Garay Exodus UMC
Marco Salinas Chollas View	LPA Lourdes Muratalla El Getsemani UMC	

EX-OFFICIO: Associate Lay Leaders and District Superintendent

LAY SERVANT COMMITTEE

2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Susan Jeffries	Barbara Eveland	Melissa Basch
Will Tupou	Johnnie Braxton	Dakota Koenig

EX-OFFICIO: Associate Lay Leaders and District Superintendent

MISSIONS TASK FORCE

Rev. Jeri Newell-Davis (chair)	Susan Naslund	Rick Cook
Rev. Rick Malick	Denise Hilbert	Mikael Lindahl
Karl Ports	Jerome Roberts	Laddie Perez-Galang

EX-OFFICIO: District Superintendent

WESLEY FOUNDATION – GREATER SAN DIEGO

Rev. Dr. Hannah Ka, Co-Chair FUMC San Diego	Dr. Benjamin Camp, Co-Chair FUMC Escondido	Linda Cree, Treasurer Foothills UMC
Rev. Matthew Hambrick FUMC of Costa Mesa	Nicole Bennet-Iaccio First UMC Escondido	Susan Farnsworth Lemon Grove UMC
Eric Swanson First UMC of Chula Vista		

EX-OFFICIO: Campus Liaison: Scott Young; District Superintendent

SOUTH DISTRICT LAY MEMBERS TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

YOUTH LAY MEMBERS (5)

NAME	CHURCH	EMAIL
Timothy Tran	Garden Grove UMC	Lui.tran@gmail.com
GiaHan Chau	Good Shepherd UMC Westminster	Duykhuongdhgd@gmail.com
Kaylee Kroker	Escondido First UMC	stephanie.j.kroeker@gmail.com
Harold Camp Romero	Escondido First UMC	Ben@fumcescondido.org

YOUNG ADULT LAY MEMBERS (5)

NAME	CHURCH	EMAIL
Samantha Nason	Shepherd of the Hills UMC	Snason@sothumc.org
Emilie Penuelas	Shepherd of the Hills UMC	epenuelas@sothumc.org
Deanna Guaghan	St. Paul's UMC of Coronado	Deannagaughan.spministries@gmail.com
Sarah Hansen	Vista UMC	s.hansen1504@gmail.com
Catarina Paton	Laguna Beach UMC	Cpaton15@apu.edu

SOUTH DISTRICT LAY EQUALIZATION MEMBERS (10)

NAME	CHURCH	EMAIL
Jeff Lashmet	Chapel of the Hills UMC	Jlashmetecfd@yahoo.com
Burnetta Tate	Laguna Beach UMC	Tatebl@ymail.com
Lorilyn Teasdale	Temecula UMC	Lorilyn117@gmail.com
Will Tupou	Santa Ana UMC	Willtupou002@gmail.com
Dawn Christensen	Julian UMC	pastordawnc@gmail.com
Ron Jessee	Pacific Beach UMC	Jesseeron@gmail.com
Lourdes Muratalla	El Getsemani UMC	purpleflower787@gmail.com
Eketone Tosi	Garden Grove UMC	eketonetosi@yahoo.com
Pam Fisher	Sun City UMC	pamfishh@gmail.com
Josh Ryoo	University UMC of Irvine	irvinekumc@gmail.com

Alternate: Suzanne Barron