

Student Reporter

My Experience at the ANC Church Retreat



Theo Lim
Grade 9
Crescenta Valley High School



According to the packing list, I put everything I needed in a duffel bag, and I was good to head out to the ANC Church Retreat.
[Source: Author, Theo Lim]

Despite the heavy rain, more than a hundred students arrived at All Nations Church to check in for the 2023 winter retreat. We were gathered with our friends, excited to spend quality time with them and the church crew. After checking everyone's COVID test results and role-calling, students loaded

the bus with their bags and proceeded to the retreat center.

This retreat's name was Agape, which means God's unconditional love towards humans, in Greek. Through various activities such as skits, sermons, and small group discussions, we got to know about agape and God.

As we arrived at the retreat center, we unloaded the bus and turned in our electronic devices. Getting rid of distractions helped to enhance focus on the activities. There was an orientation on the rules and schedules, and we were given a booklet where we could take notes and easily check any information.

There were many opportunities for students to get to know each other better and meet new people. We started our activity with an

icebreaker to introduce ourselves to the group. It reminded me of an interview, as we asked each other about the group member's school, grade, favorite food, and more. After the timer went off, a random person was chosen as a different partner, and the game continued. Next was the scavenger hunt, where we had to find a group member that could perform a unique talent, such as introducing themselves in four languages, citing all the book names in the bible, and spinning a basketball on a finger for 10 seconds.

After getting a bit closer to the people around, it was time for us to listen to the pastor's sermon. Our guest speaker, Joseph Lee, was specially invited from the Disciple Community Church in Irvine. Joseph was an amazing storyteller who did not forget to make connections to God's mes-

sage. I was fascinated to see him going around shaking our hands and trying to familiarize himself with us.

On the second night, we had a group prayer session. This was the night when people got the most emotional, as we shared our prayer requests with the group and prayed for each other. From stress to wrongdoings, there was a huge variety of topics shared and prayed for. The group members and I were able to become even closer after sharing our concerns and thoughts.

Overall, my time at the All Nations Church Retreat was a great experience where I was able to learn about God and get to know the people in church better; I would definitely think about going to the summer retreat as well.

Student Reporter

On Stage and Behind the Scenes



Rachel Chung
Grade 10
Archer School for Girls

"But then we looked at the rushing stream, and there, sitting on a rock, was a fairy," and so begins the play "The Light Burns Blue" by Silva Semerciyan. This play is a true story based on the Cottingley Fairies in England in 1917. It is about two cousins, Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths, who were able to convince the world into believing they had photographed fairies in their garden in the midst of World War I. A reporter, Winifred Douglas, sets out to expose them as a hoax but finds that there is more to these photographs than what meets the eye. The Archer middle school performers take on the challenge of telling an emotional story about grief, friendship, and hope. They worked on this show for nearly four months and displayed a great deal of dedication and discipline in order to make The Light Burns Blue possible.

This play showcased com-



The theater set reflects the time period of the story, adding to the ambiance of the show.
[Source: Grace Whitney]

munity and enthusiasm, which I was able to experience as one of the two stage managers for this middle school play. Before this position, I was always on stage and didn't pay attention to many of the technicalities of producing a show. As a stage manager, I worked closely with the director, assistant director, actors, and technical crew to organize the production of the show. We

were responsible for sending out weekly informational emails and communicating all details with the parents. What I didn't know about being a stage manager was that I would also be the makeup and hair artist, shoe and clothing repair, and responsible for half of Target's sales of makeup wipes and hairspray. Students had done a range of things in this show: we hot-glued broken

heels, safety-pinned a pair of split pants in the middle of the show, helped with quick changes and tied many ribbons into the performers' hair. We helped the actors to best become their characters in the play. Before each show, I curled everyone's hair in tight sausage curls to mimic the hairstyles of 1917 with only one available hair curler. In the meantime, my co-stage manager was assisting the rest of the cast with their hair, makeup, and clothes. On stage, the actors used vintage props, such as a camera and phone from the late 1910s that we found in an antique store. I helped to transform the stage into another world for the audience to experience. Overall, I learned that a stage manager isn't someone that is just there to work on the technicalities but is someone that the actors can rely on backstage. They are committed to producing a show worth being proud of.

Student Reporter

Hiking—Healthy and Harmonious



Sarah Kim
Grade 7
Marlborough School

Picturesque views, stunning sunsets, and nature all around. That is the beauty you can find while hiking in Los Angeles. A great place to hike that's in our backyard is Griffith Park. With 4,210 acres of nature, it is five times larger than Central Park in New York City and four times larger than Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Griffith Park has 11 peaks and 67 trails with fantastic destinations and beautiful forests.

A great place for beginners is a hike to the Griffith Observatory. With only a one-mile hike, you can reach the Griffith Observatory and gaze at the sunset or the stars up above. A slightly more challenging trail is the Wisdom Tree trail. Although it is the same distance as the hike to the Griffith Observatory, it is much steeper. It may be difficult, but the hike is

rewarding once you reach the top. By the tree is a small notebook in which you can write about your experience on the hike, notes for future hikers, or anything you feel like writing about!

Another location is the Angeles National Forest. It is a bit further than Griffith Park, but the drive is definitely worth it. You can hike to the rushing sound of tranquil water and reach your final destination...a waterfall. Switzer Falls is a 4.5-mile hike leading to a 50-foot waterfall in a beautiful, deep gorge. It is definitely something you would not expect in the city of Los Angeles, but that's what makes it all the more gorgeous. In the summer, you might end up finding a big puddle of water, with a soft stream flowing down. However, if you visit after it rains, or closer to the rainy season, you



Sisters watching the sunset on the trail to the Griffith Observatory
[Source: Author, Sarah Kim]

will find yourself with a wondrous waterfall. The best part of all is that you are allowed to swim in it! After hiking on a difficult trail, a quick dip in the cooling, crisp water is just what you need.

When hiking, not only do you get to experience the beautiful scenery, but there are health benefits as well. Hiking is a great source

of cardio exercise, which can reduce the risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure, help strengthen muscles and bones, improve sleep, and help arthritis. Therefore, if you want to reduce anxiety and lower stress, make memories, and get some fresh air, all the while watching Mother Nature's creations at work, take a friend and take a hike.

Student Reporter

These Chocolates Will Melt You This Valentine’s Day



Alexis Choi
Grade 10
South High School



This Valentine’s Day, treat your significant other (or yourself) with unique chocolates from these stores in L.A. [Source: Author, Alexis Choi]

Not everyone appreciates the sentiment of Valentine’s Day. But of all the Valentine clichés—obnoxious Cupids, cheesy Hallmark cards, and overpriced flower bouquets—chocolate is the one most people can’t resist. Chocolate truffles, chocolate-dipped strawberries, and boxes of assorted bonbons where you can have a lovely time trying to avoid the one that tastes like toothpaste (now, if that isn’t romantic)—there is no other

February tradition nearly as delicious that can be enjoyed by even the biggest anti-Valentine’s Day-ers. To make this February extra special, avoid buying your chocolate at the same old See’s Candies and Godiva. Instead, try visiting these unique chocolatiers in Los Angeles for new flavors and experiences!

The first is Marsatta Chocolate, a family-owned shop located in Torrance. They sell freshly made bonbons, artful truffles, cacao-dipped cookies, chocolate-covered strawberries, and sipping chocolate (drinkable chocolate! Who can resist?). With unique flavor combinations like the Lunar New Year green tea and sake bonbons, Marsatta Chocolate is the perfect place to visit for distinctive flavors, not to mention their fresh baked goods like madeleines, brownies, and specialty coffees and teas.

Next is andSons Chocolatiers. The store is located in Beverly Hills, which just about sums it up. andSons Chocolatiers is a multi-generational family business that has been selling handcrafted chocolates since 1983. Their collections of artisanal bonbons are as gourmet as you can get. Though they offer traditional square chocolates, there are also unique bonbons that look like halves of speckled easter eggs in vivid shades of greens, blues, yellows, reds, and more. andSons has traditional flavors such as peanut praline, hazelnut, and single-origin darks, as well as modern flavors like double yuzu, speculoos cookie, pop rocks, and passionfruit. The shop also includes a cafe and offers other treats like chocolate-covered orange peels and salted caramel.

Finally, there is Compartes Chocolate, the luxury brand of the chocolate world. Despite be-

ing featured in Vogue, Allure, and other well-known magazines, the family business still makes every piece of chocolate from scratch. The shop, located near Melrose, looks more like a museum, with shelves displaying chocolate bars packaged in bright, wallpaper-like wrappers. The chocolate, too, looks like art, with truffles printed with colorful patterns. They offer a wide selection of flavors, as well as boxes of dipped apricots, oranges, and more. With delicious chocolates and elegant packaging, it’s the perfect gift that will impress even your most aesthetically discriminating friend.

Whether it’s for your significant other or just something sweet to get you through the atrocities of Valentine’s Day, try visiting some of these handmade chocolate shops this February! They’ll turn any regular person into a chocolate lover.

Student Reporter

Vista Del Lago, An Important Place for Californians



Ethan Chang
Grade 11
Stockdale High School



The Pyramid Lake reservoir near the Vista Del Lago Visitors Center. [Source: Author, Ethan Chang]

If you take the I-5 north of Los Angeles for one hour, you will find a mostly ignored building near Pyramid Lake. Not many drivers pay attention to this, but it is an interesting and important place for Californians. The Vista Del Lago Visitors Center is a facility where visitors can learn information regarding California’s water supply and usage. This center is under the Department of Water Resources, along with the Lake Oroville and Romero Outlook centers in California. These centers provide information about the department’s enormous water program, the California State Water Project. It

is the largest state-built and operated multipurpose hydropower program in the United States. Through the California State Water Project, the Vista Del Lago Visitor Center’s main goals are to raise awareness about California’s water needs and the benefits of hydroelectric power, to provide aquatic wildlife protection to the nearby Pyramid Lake, water delivery to contracting agencies, and recreational activities.

The visitor center facilitates people’s understanding of how California has utilized water to serve daily needs. Tour guide Mary Ad-

ams says, “This center is to educate people about how water is delivered throughout Southern California. Back in the 60’s, the state’s task was to teach new generations how we use and preserve water in the environment.” Additionally, the visitor center also teaches how the State Water Project helps run and maintain the state’s 705 canals and pipelines, 444 miles of the California Aqueduct, and 36 storage facilities. These assets produce six billion kilowatt-hours of free hydroelectricity. This power is enough to supply 780,000 average households in California. This project was designed to reduce greenhouse emissions by building renewable energy products and partnering with energy providers. The project’s commitment to clean energy is also followed by its commitment to financing the conservation of aquatic environments and organisms. The State Water Project administers funding in order to enhance the protection of fish and wildlife habitats through urban and agricultural

management of water mandated by state legislation. The project follows a stewardship model of environmental conservatism in which the project’s duty is to manage the environment for our own benefit, but also to take an ethical responsibility when caring for nature and preserving the local wildlife. This includes the protection of fish, marine plants, and aquatic birds. The State Water Project also promotes recreational activities such as boating, fishing, swimming, and camping to ensure the public can enjoy water-based activities in various locations in California. At the Vista Del Lago Visitors Center, Pyramid Lake provides wonderful scenery and multiple water-based recreational opportunities to have fun.

While California has suffered from drought in the past years, the recent sudden downpour can also teach us about the importance of water management. We must be more aware of these resources in our state.

Student Reporter

Shoelaces, Milliseconds, and Varsity Blues



Sean Kim
Grade 11
Los Alamitos High School

All sprinters have a superstition, a good luck charm. Some wipe off their shoes, tuck in their necklaces, or say a few quick prayers right before they start. In my case, I’m very particular about my shoelaces; I only tie them when I’m one turn away from running. As the heat before me took off, I tied my shoes firmly, single-knotted, and finally settled into my starting blocks. As I waited in position, I shook with anticipation as the starter prepared the blank. All that was on my mind was finally earning those Blues.

At Los Alamitos High School Track and Field, only the Varsity runners are awarded blue uniforms for races. The majority of runners wear red jerseys and look up to the Blues with a kind of wistful admiration and possible regret. Earning Varsity means

beating the competition at an athletically competitive school. Most seniors find themselves at graduation looking back on their high school racing careers. When I first joined Track, I promised I would make the Varsity team and rid myself of the comparably mundane red shirt. The track meet was my opportunity to fulfill the goal I set two years prior.

But making the Varsity team would be challenging. This track meet offered the 60-meter dash in lieu of the 100, which was advantageous for me since I specialized in acceleration. My time from the last race hadn’t been fast enough to qualify, and I was looking to set a new personal record. I was short by only a few milliseconds, so I trained vigorously and made the most out of my practice time to maximize

my chances for the next race. When I arrived at the school, I shook off the morning daze and used a foam roller to warm up my muscles. I jogged two miles and studied how other competitors warmed up. Soon it was time to line up. I felt nervous but excited to finally show off all the hard training I had done.

I can say with pride that my dedication was not for nothing. I shaved off 0.08 seconds from my 60-meter time and placed 63rd out of 200 entries. While my placing wasn’t fantastic, all that mattered to me was how I fared against my own Los Alamitos teammates. Coach had said the top seven runners would get their Blues, and thankfully, I got second!

With my new jersey, I’ve

FINISHED RESULTS			Event List
59			johnthan edwards UNA 7.70 (7.699) -0.1 m/s
60			Rodney Cheatham UNA 7.71 (7.702) +1.0 m/s
61			Malachi Holt UNA 7.71 (7.705) +0.6 m/s
62			Logan Murr UNA 7.71 (7.708) +0.3 m/s
63			sean kim UNA 7.72 (7.711) +0.2 m/s
64			charles agbonkpolor UNA 7.72 (7.718) +1.0 m/s
65			Keion Liburd UNA 7.72 (7.719) -0.4 m/s
66			nathan herman UNA 7.74 +0.6 m/s
67			joshua yu UNA 7.75 +0.6 m/s

I was only 0.01 seconds off from my Los Alamitos rival! Luckily, it was enough to secure my place on the Varsity team. [Source: Author, Sean Kim]

crossed off one more goal from my high school bucket list. What’s next to accomplish?