



WHITTIER AREA COMMUNITY CHURCH

2023 CHURCH LEADERSHIP CANDIDATE BIOS

CHURCH BOARD CANDIDATES

CONTINUING BOARD MEMBERS: Denise Watkins, Hector Gonzalez, Kim Songer,
Olga Garate, and Rick Williams



NAME: Jack Wong
SPOUSE: Liz
OCCUPATION: Registered Nurse
COMPANY NAME: Surgery Partners
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 1996

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

At the age of twenty-one, my best friend from college became a Christian and began to witness to me about Christ. At the same time, a co-worker, a messianic Jew, also began to witness to me. Soon, I gave my life to Christ.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I taught high school Sunday school for four years at Eastside Christian Church. I coached youth sports at WACC for six years and have refereed youth basketball at WACC for fourteen years. Professionally I was the general manager of a small, privately owned business for sixteen years and currently work as a recovery RN.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

WACC is advancing God's love in reaching the unsaved and in caring for the people in the local community by fostering and developing in and through its members a heart for our fellow human beings. WACC gives all credit and glory to God and believes in His Word, The Bible. WACC nurtures and cares for the health and spiritual well-being of its members.



NAME: Mike Takacs
SPOUSE: Jessica
OCCUPATION: Senior Investigator
COMPANY NAME: Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: Attending since 1997, member since 2016

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

My parents taught me about Jesus and I was raised in the church. I think, however, I continually "come to faith" through constant renewing and maintenance.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

Having been a police officer for 12 years, I've been gifted with the trust and opportunity to see people at both their best and worst. Those incidents have afforded me the chance to lead in many different situations, in all stages of life. Aside from work, I do my best, and often fall short, to lead my family the best I can with a lot of help and guidance from others. I

also currently serve on the security team at WACC (go figure).

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I think WACC is growing into the uncomfortable places. The church has always been a place full of broken people trying to do the best they can to follow Jesus in an imperfect way. Sometimes that process is messy and uncomfortable. I see WACC being used as a place for all people to come and know they are not alone in their journey of loving God, others, and loving themselves as Jesus does.



NAME: Dr. Kathi Lundstrom
SPOUSE: Ed Lundstrom
OCCUPATION: Retired teacher, Gifted Education expert and public speaker
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 1972 (Charter member)

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

My parents and I attended Bethany Baptist Church in Whittier, and at the age of 4 in Children's Church I gave my heart to Jesus. I remember the day clearly and understood well what the decision meant. I grew in my faith over decades and although I am not perfect, I am sustained and upheld by His mercy, forgiveness, grace, and love.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I currently serve as president of the Journey of Faith Adult Sunday School class, a role I have held twice for several years. In my work life I have chaired many committees, both at the school site and district level. In addition, I currently serve on the National

Association of Gifted Children publications board. In the past I also served on the Board of Deaconesses for WACC, as well as many other ministry leadership positions and Jr. High staff.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

Having witnessed the changes, growth, and blessings at WACC over a period of 50 years, I have seen miracles bestowed on our church. There have been ups, downs, and growing pains, but under the leadership of wonderful Godly pastors and staff, our church has seen thousands of people come to faith in Jesus. The new WACC en Español ministry is much needed in our community, and God is blessing those efforts. It is such a joy to see children flock to VBS, sports ministries, and family nights, hundreds of women participate in the women's ministry events, and of course, so many global partner couples working for God around the world.



NAME: Jacey Cimino
OCCUPATION: Accountant
COMPANY NAME: Guaranteed Rate
MEMBER OF WACC: 2019

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

During a difficult time in my Parents' life, they enrolled me at Calvary Chapel Christian School in Downey. I was 9 years old when I made the decision to accept Jesus into my heart during a Sunday school class.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I have been serving on the WACC Welcome Team since 2018. I currently serve in Guest Central welcoming new guests, answering questions and offering individuals ways to get connected. In 2018, I took on a leadership role for a community group originally formed with women from the Rooted program that I attended here at WACC. Professionally, I

have had a position as a supervisor in an Accounting Department where I trained all new employees, resolved conflicts, and supported my team with resources needed to successfully complete their work.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

Having the opportunity to serve in Guest Central, I am privileged to not only make new guests feel welcomed but I also get to hear a little about their lives and what brought them to WACC. On multiple occasions I have been told by a new

guest that the sermon really spoke to them and that they would be making WACC their church home. I believe God brought them to WACC at the right time. I continually witness the blessings bestowed from the church through events like The Rack at WACC, Home Project, the fostering and sponsorships of children. Every year I see our church family stepping up to be the Hands and Feet of Jesus by giving of their time and hard work with our Love Whittier projects. I believe God is working through WACC in the support of our Global Missions allowing missionaries to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus. God is working through the facilitators of our support groups so that they can walk with individuals going through a difficult season in their life.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CANDIDATES



NAME: Monica Wilson

SPOUSE: Jeff

OCCUPATION: Retired from 28 years of teaching

MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 1981

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

When I was 12, I attended a Youth Evangelical Meeting in Buffalo, NY and accepted Jesus as my Savior that evening.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

Over the past 40 years, I have served in many capacities at WACC. Currently, I am a member of the Community Engagement Team with the Book Ministry I started seven years ago, sharing books with foster teens and families transitioning out of homelessness. In my retirement, I have also started serving with MOPS as a mentor mom and with Marriage Core as a small group facilitator. In the past, I have coordinated Women's Bible Study for the church, been co-leader for a Bible Study group, served on the Women's Ministry Team, planned socials for our Sunday School class, and organized house building ministry trips to Tijuana.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

WACC is in a unique position right now to reach out to our surrounding communities and open our doors to our neighbors. With our beautiful new building, we are ready to welcome many new attendees and bring them closer to Jesus. Our new Spanish ministry is also a great outreach to the community. After the pandemic years, it is so exciting to once again see Bible Studies, our sports ministry, community groups, and various ways of serving available to all who call WACC their home. God is doing amazing things at WACC!



NAME: Spencer Sahagun

SPOUSE: Kristin

OCCUPATION: District Leader

COMPANY: PetSmart

MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2003

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

I grew up a believer, however did not regularly attend church. I accepted Jesus as my Savior after I began attending WACC in 2003.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I have served in various ministries at WACC, including; Women's Ministries, Sports Ministries, Alpha, Men's Ministries and currently serve primarily with the Welcome/Parking Team. Professionally I am responsible for leading a team of 600 leaders and associates, where I am responsible for leader identification, development and overall performance. I have previously served a three year term on the nominating

committee where I worked with fellow members to prayerfully identify and nominate candidates for church leadership positions.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I am blessed with the opportunity to connect with many church attendees each Sunday and I am fortunate to hear firsthand the connections we as a church make with the individuals in our community. I hear from both children and adults the genuine impact and encouragement our pastors give through the weekly message. I believe we are living in the most challenging times of our lives, and through WACC we continue to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus.



NAME: Mona Valdez
SPOUSE: Daniel
OCCUPATION: Admissions Advisor
COMPANY NAME: Cengage Learning
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2018

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

Ms. Rose in Sunday School, at the Foursquare church I grew up in, extended an invitation when I was 10 years old. I prayed with her, accepted Jesus into my heart, and Ms. Rose and the class celebrated my decision.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

6 years ago, I had the privilege to serve at the Welcome Center, and the last 4 years I've been a part of Next Steps to help others explore ways to connect at WACC. My husband, Daniel, and I have been committed to our community group for just over 6 years, and we couldn't be more grateful to do life with them. Since 2020, we've had the privilege to lead Rooted groups for their 10-week experience, both online and in-person. Most recently, I've become a part-time volunteer to cast vision to help assimilate new attendees into the life of our church. Professionally, I've worked in admissions for post-secondary education for over 18 years which has allowed me to be the first impression for students, at various institutions, along with creating opportunities to promote outreach and community partnerships.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

It's been encouraging to see first-hand, from Next Steps and the small groups my husband and I have facilitated, how there's a genuine response from the congregation to build community within our church. This has also given us a chance to hear from our WACC friends how they want to be the hands and feet of Jesus for the people around them outside our church walls. These responses come from their own experience, starting with a warm welcome as soon as driving and walking on our campus. Our congregation gets real opportunities to grow, be connected and supported wherever they're at. For many, this means more now than ever in the times we live in.



NAME: Beth Miller
SPOUSE: Chad
OCCUPATION: Speech Language Pathologist
COMPANY: East Whittier City School District
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 1996

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

My faith in God began with my earliest memories that were filled with experiences of His love and grace, including decisive moments in my youth, in college and in my mid-twenties. By the grace of God, I continue to experience growth in my faith day by day, sometimes in daily "manna" moments and other times in monumental seasons.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

My first experiences serving at WACC began 22 years ago when I joined Jr. High staff. I transitioned to High School staff and continued mentoring the same group of girls as they journeyed through high school. The year after my students graduated, my husband and I served together in college ministry for seven years. More recently, I have had the joy and privilege of teaching first graders in

Sunday School and serving on the Church Board as a member and then as Chair. My occupation as a Speech Language Pathologist has given me a passion for special needs ministry in our church as well as an opportunity to minister in “ordinary” ways each day as I work with children and families.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

God is clearly present and at work in our church. My experiences with different groups within our church body have shown over and over again that God is moving here. I see WACC as a faith community that is expressing God’s Biblical truth and grace through weekly teaching and worship experiences, focusing on smaller groups that foster community and life change, and reaching out to our community with a message of the hope in Jesus. There’s no place I’d rather be.



NAME: Ashley De La Torre
SPOUSE: Adam
OCCUPATION: Office Manager
COMPANY NAME: Joobilo Academic Community
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2018

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

I grew up in a Christian home and in the church. I made my own decision to follow Jesus and was baptized when I was 14 years old after attending FAD and attending the junior high ministry at WACC.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I have volunteered in the junior high and high school ministries as a small group leader. More recently, I helped lead a Rooted Group with my husband. At my previous church, I volunteered with the women’s ministry as a co-leader and served as the Children’s Ministry Director. At my current job, I lead a team of four staff that

assist with administrative tasks for the company.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I believe God is using WACC to further his kingdom and purpose, both in the local community and in the world. I see the WACC community practically showing Jesus to people through love, generosity, service, and teaching His word. I believe God has a special purpose for WACC in the city of Whittier and surrounding cities. I know God is using WACC to change lives for His glory and will continue to do so.



NAME: Steven Murphy
SPOUSE: Jovana
OCCUPATION: Financial Planner
COMPANY NAME: Sterling Wealth Partners
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2018

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

I grew up attending WACC so faith has always been a part of who I am. In high school, my faith really became my own after going to Hume Lake and re-committing my life to Christ.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I have been a part of numerous organizations that have given me leadership experience. I was a lead usher as part of our Welcome Team and was able to help facilitate coordination amongst ushers and greeters. I also was able to work alongside Chereen Florea as an assistant league director for WACC Sports where I was able to help lead volunteers including coaches, refs and scorekeepers. In my current role, I help lead our service team for any client requests.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I believe that God has allowed WACC to take a stronghold in Whittier and become a mainstay of the city. WACC is the

church that comes to mind for many in our community. I know quite a few people who are unchurched but yet they all know of WACC or someone that attends WACC and bring up that if they were to attend a church in the future, WACC would be where they go. I believe that God is working through the current congregation as a light and an outreach in this community to show His goodness and in turn, to grow the body of the church.



NAME: Holly De La Torre
SPOUSE: Aaron
OCCUPATION: Project Manager, Landscape Designer
COMPANY NAME: MIG, Inc.
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2020

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

Growing up in a community of believers, I had mentors who invested their time and showed me the love of Jesus. It was this authentic display of love in the church that led me to embrace my own faith in the Lord early on in my life.

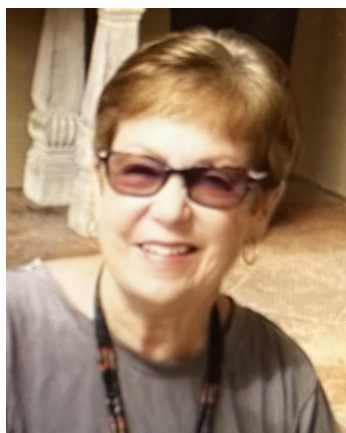
WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

At WACC, I've been honored to serve in the Access Ministry for the last few years as well as at special events like the Night to Shine. I also volunteer as a co-leader of a dynamic group of Brownie Girl Scouts. Professionally, I help facilitate public outreach events, focus groups, and stakeholder meetings to gather information from the

community on their needs and desires that help inform park designs.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I believe God is continually using WACC to further His kingdom through all the amazing ministries offered, through community engagement with youth and sports, through the church partnerships with local organizations, and so on. It's exciting to be a part of a vibrant church community that God has chosen to spread His love, healing, and salvation far beyond the walls of the church all the while using our unique personalities and abilities to glorify Him.



NAME: Ginny Edwards
SPOUSE: Keith
OCCUPATION: Retired Elementary Teacher (taught 1st-5th grades for 19 years)
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 1974

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

Keith and I believed in God so we chose to find a church together after we were married. We took a membership class in a Presbyterian church after we moved to Las Cruces, NM. The pastor came for a visit and said I can see you love God but you haven't taken the step to receive Christ as Savior. We prayed together and did in Oct., 1966.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

In the early years of WABF, I was elected to be a deaconess, serving members of the congregation, was a shepherd over small groups called Circles of Concern, and led the Pioneer Girls' program. In later years as WABF became WACC, I was part of the SERVE weekend and Love Whittier planning committees and a co leader for Tuesday morning Bible Study. Most recently my husband and I have headed up the marriage ministry called MarriageCORE for 11 years. We've also been active ministering overseas 2-3 times per year for over 20 years.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

As a member of WACC for 48 years, I have been a witness and a participant in ways that God is using and growing this church. I have seen Him use the leadership and congregation to change and grow spiritually, grow in size, in ethnicity, in outreach to the community, and to the world through opportunities for members to be involved at many levels.

Congregants are growing and thriving in their faith and bringing Jesus to people and people to Jesus here and abroad, so people recognize WACC as a loving, caring congregation.



NAME: Edd Eller
SPOUSE: Ginnie
OCCUPATION: Sales – Commercial Flooring
COMPANY NAME: CG Flooring
BEEN A MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2003

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

Raised in a Christian household. Accepted Christ at age 7 (Baptized same time as my father) and re-professed my faith for God at age 13 when I was able to truly understand what it meant.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I have previously served on the Nominating committee 4 times. In our 20+ years at WACC I have come to know many of the members. Mostly through Volunteering with WACC Sports, Union Creative, Mission trips, etc....I love our Church and will do my best to lead Jesus to people, and people to Jesus.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I love seeing how God is moving through WACC...From the way people volunteer at WACC or are getting out into the world and our own community to make it a better place...to the wonderful messages by our incredible Pastors and also the modern Worship with cutting edge technology. All of these things seem to bring people through the doors. I feel that WACC is a safe and Loving Community that people want to be a part of.



NAME: Andrew Swanson
OCCUPATION: Electrical Engineer
COMPANY NAME: Southern California Edison
MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2015

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

I first made the decision to follow Jesus after attending VBS at WACC, and I recommitted my life to Christ while volunteering with the High School Ministry.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I currently volunteer with the WACC Junior High Ministry as the leader of the Tech Team. In this role, I provide technical mentorship and training to a group of junior high students to enable them to serve their peers by providing audio/visual support to WACC JHM events. I have overseen the team's growth from 0 students in 2020 following the COVID lockdown to 19 students as of 2022.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I believe that God has demonstrated His love for people through WACC, and I can see that WACC believes that the love of Jesus is for everyone. I am encouraged by the launch of WACC en Espanol, which demonstrates both God and WACC's willingness to break through cultural and language barriers. I have also gotten to witness firsthand the work that God has been doing through WACC in Estonia, and I am proud to belong to a global church.



NAME: John Nakamura
 OCCUPATION: Human Resource Manager
 COMPANY NAME: Finline Architectural Millwork
 MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2018

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

I became a Christian during my senior year in High School in Cypress CA. As most young adults do, I was struggling with life. I was fortunate to have a classmate and teacher who were Christians and not only brought me to the Lord but helped mentor me as a young adult.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

I have almost 20 years' experience as a Human Resource Professional for a variety of companies. During that time my responsibilities included leading by example, organizing and conducting trainings, creating and implementing processes and procedures for screening and hiring employees from entry level to executives.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I believe that God is doing amazing work in the local community by creating opportunities for the WACC congregants to serve their local community. The Pastoral staff communicates God's word in a completely accepting and faith-based approach. I see WACC working side by side with other organizations, denominations, and businesses in support of improving the lives of those families that comprise the living, breathing soul of the local community.

AUDITOR CANDIDATE



NAME: Steven Haugen
 SPOUSE: Jessica Haugen
 OCCUPATION: Analyst
 COMPANY NAME: Capital Group
 MEMBER OF WACC SINCE: 2019

DESCRIBE HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH

I was raised in a Christian household and accepted Jesus as my Savior when I was 4, but I really started to comprehend what it means to make my faith my own during my Sophomore year of college when I got involved with Campus Crusade for Christ.

WHAT AREAS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU HAD THAT WOULD QUALIFY YOU FOR THIS EXPERIENCE?

Joining WACC's Finance Committee a year ago has given me a deeper understanding of WACC's financial reporting and a greater appreciation for the seriousness that WACC's leadership team places on strong financial stewardship. I've also been involved in WACC's Youth and Men's Ministries as a high school leader since 2018 and the Men's Ministry leadership team over the past year. Outside of WACC I've been serving since 2018 on Young Life Greater Whittier's Committee where my primary role as the Treasurer is to manage the finances and guide the rest of the Committee on financial decisions.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS DOING IN AND THROUGH WACC?

I started going to WACC when my wife and I moved to Hacienda Heights in 2015 and I regret that it took me until 2018 to finally get involved because I missed out on experiencing 3 years of God's work within our church! Since 2018 I've seen lives transformed by the Gospel message within our High School & Men's Ministries and it makes me excited to witness WACC's mission on display in bringing Jesus to people and people to Jesus. I have seen healthy growth over the past year from the ministries I'm involved with and look forward to how WACC will continue to utilize the generosity of our congregation to serve the needs of our church as well as the surrounding community.