

AN ORIGINAL PODCAST SERIES PRESENTED BY SECC YOUTH

Dear CHURCH,



Episode 9: Abel

Official Transcript

Aren Abel, what year were you born?

Abel I was born in 2004.

Aren And so what generation does that make you?

Abel Gen. Z.

Aren Okay. Do you know what year I was born?

Abel No.

Aren What would be your guess?

Abel '92?

Aren So, I was born in 1989, so I'm 34 years old. Do you know what generation that makes me?

Abel Are you technically a millennial?

Aren I am a millennial, that's right. So, what comes to mind when you think of the millennial generation?

Abel [LAUGHS] So, my first instinct whenever I hear the word millennial is the word “cringe.” But like, like, but—

[LAUGHTER]

Aren Wow...

Abel That's just the first instinct. But it it's just like, you know, I think about, I guess, the quote unquote like “hipster wave” kind of thing. Like, back when Instagram was just a picture platform. That kind of thing.

I think about inflation a lot, I guess, like, you know, those kind of things.

Aren Yeah, that's funny. I love that the first word is cringe.

Abel It's not personal though.

Aren I'll decide if it's personal.

[LAUGHTER]

Aren The reason I ask is generations often have labels put on them and all of our generations get their fair share of criticism. Some of the words that I hear associated with Gen Z'ers are words like “entitled,” “anxious,” “fragile.” But you are Gen Z, Abel. The people saying those things are not Gen Z'ers. What words would you use to describe your generation?

Abel I think the first word that would come to mind is like “inquisitive.” You know, I won't say that there's not truth to some of those criticisms. I think they all have a

shade of truth somewhere in there. But I think at large, like through conversations I've had with so many of my friends, the general like general feeling is that like they're interested about like why things are the way they are, and if it's something they don't like then they want to then they feel like they want to do something to change it. But I think where that entitlement comes from is like a lot of us aren't necessarily at the age to have the resources or the capacity or even like the wisdom to enact those changes.

Aren Welcome to episode 9 of *Dear Church*, a podcast series that elevates the voices and stories of young adults in the Adventist community. I'm your host, Aren Rennacker. Today marks our eighth and final young adult guest—and, in case you can't already tell, we've got a good one. Abel is a young man of just 20, a member of the Gen Z generation, which may come with certain assumptions for some, but I invite us all to set those aside, and listen and enjoy as Abel shares his story of purpose, passion, and deciding whether or not he's Seventh-day Adventist.

Abel Hi, I'm Abel and this is *Dear Church*.

...

Abel I always grew up in a religiously centered household. My parents are, I believe the term is first generation immigrants from India. So being very religious and then also being like torn between Indian-American while going to like public school, I think for—well, something I'm realizing now was that was kind of challenging to navigate growing up.

Like, you know, going to school and hearing my friends talk about all these different things that they would do with their families, like, you know, skiing here, like going on these kind of trips and those kind of things. Whereas like at home, my parents idea of fun with us was more so that like, okay, hey, we're going to learn how to like multiply and divide even though you're not in kindergarten yet.

Aren [LAUGHS]

Abel When I look back and even like right now in my life, I see this like such a strong support system that I have with my family that even when I feel isolated and I feel like I don't have a lot of friends sometimes like I, I can look around me to all my family members, all my cousins, and just feel a sense of security and belonging.

Aren Young Abel, what were his favorite things?

Abel I absolutely loved playing outside. I was really into basketball for a little bit. Basically, anything I could do outside is something that I really loved. I also really liked *Thomas the Tank Engine*. Yeah, that was, that was my favorite show growing up.

Aren Why?

Abel I couldn't tell you.

[LAUGHTER]

Abel I, like, when I look back at it now, I'm like, that show was like creepy. It's uncomfortable to look at. But growing up, that was just my hyper fixation. I would wake up before *Thomas the Tank Engine* played on the TV just so I could catch the beginning. And then I would run to wherever my brother was sleeping and I'd wake him up. I was like, "Hey, it's Thomas time." We would both go running and like sit right in front of the TV and watch *Thomas the Tank Engine*.

Another thing I really loved was cheese. I still really like cheese, but I loved cheese growing up. So, I had a cousin and, you know, his family come over from England one time and I was pretty young. And when they came, they showed us this breakfast, which was like, I mean, I don't know how nutritious this is, but it's just a slice of toast with like cheese shredded on it. And then you like, you know, melt the cheese on it. I mean, it's just like cheese on toast. And that used to be my breakfast for like three years straight.

Aren Three years straight?

Abel Yeah, something like that. 3-4 years. I was just like, "I want cheese and toast for breakfast." That's what I was doing. And then goldfish crackers cleared.

Aren Quite the diet you had as a child, Abel.

Abel Yeah, yeah.

Aren Wait, why did you stop after three years? Did you get tired of cheese on toast?

Abel Then I switched to waffles.

Abel I remember every Friday night and every Saturday night my family, like in the nuclear family, would gather together in the living room. And we would spend some time like singing some worship songs and then reading a devotional book

We followed like the Sabbath guidelines, like, you know, you turn off the Wii like Friday evening to Saturday evening. And I remember like, you know, growing up I was like, man, I hate the Sabbath. You know, it's like, that sucks I want I want to play Ben 10 on the Wii. But you know, as I've gotten older, I'm like, okay, I actually like this intentional break and rest from other aspects of my life.

Aren So then what about at church? Was there anything that you liked about going to church when you were young?

Abel I think one thing that I was always drawn to in the church services was always the music. The messages were hard for me to stay awake, you know, as a kid. But I remember, I couldn't even play piano, but I pretended like I could every time I heard

like, the organ or something, something like that. That was always the most engaging part of the service.

Aren What do you mean you would pretend? Like you would—

Abel Yeah, on the pew in front of me, I would just start like, you know, pretending like I knew what I was doing, you know?

Aren Abel's interest in music continued to grow, especially in fifth grade, when his older brother got a saxophone. Abel thought, "So what's my instrument?" It couldn't be the same one, it had to be something unique. And then he thought of it.

Abel I actually decided to play the harmonica first. So, we got these dollar store harmonicas from like Walmart or something like that. And then I was playing the harmonica. Horrible technique, but I was just getting so tired. I was like, man, this is so much work. I want to play something that isn't going to make me tired, like not use my mouth. And I was like, you know what I'm gonna play. I'm going to do percussion.

So then I got like those little xylophone, little bell set. I played on xylophone a little bit. Then I played on the practice pad and I was like, man, the like who would want to play the drums? This isn't music. Like, this is dumb.

And then just one day in middle school my teacher said, "Hey, could you play this instead?" Like, "We need it for the song." So then after I did that, I was like, I fell in love right then and there.

Aren Abel had found his instrument. Now he needed to own a set. Which isn't the same as asking for a xylophone. But his parents were surprisingly on board, and bought a second-hand drum set from his mother's co-worker for \$200 to put in his room. Abel could now play without having to rely on a pew or a practice pad.

Aren I mean, were your parents okay with the noise in their house now that it just invaded their quiet home? Like, were they fully supportive from day one or was there any resistance?

Abel My parents were truly like fully supportive from day one. They really didn't mind anytime that I would be practicing day or night.

Aren Okay, I found this slightly hard to believe. His parents did not mind him playing the drums at all, they were that supportive. And so, as any pastor moonlighting as a journalist would do, I had to verify this with my sources.

[PHONE DIAL AND RING]

Haroon Yes?

Aren Hi, is this Mr. Massey?

Haroon Yes. Who's calling?

Aren This is Pastor Aren Rennacker. I'm from the conference youth department.

Haroon Oh, Conference. I see. Our Seventh-day Adventist Conference?

Aren Yes, sir.

Haroon Oh, okay. How may I help you?

Aren Yeah, I, I'm not sure if Abel mentioned, but...

Aren We were off to a great start. Haroon Massey is Abel's dad. He came to America in 1989 and got married four years later to Abel's mom. Both were raised by Adventist parents in India. For over 20 years, Haroon's worked as a mental health nurse. He's a busy man—so I decided to get to the point.

Aren ...but was there any part of you that wanted to say no? It's a very noisy instrument. You know, this noise entering your house. Was there any part of you that didn't want to say, you know, yes to this?

Haroon No, not even a trace of that. Not at all. Absolutely not. I was like a thousand percent. You know, it comes all the way from the Bible, you know? If the child is doing something positive. You must encourage that and nurture and nourish that skill and talent and the desire.

Thinking of the cost of the physical noise or so, even if we say one negative thing, at the back of their mind, it's going to be holding back their potential of putting forth their hundred percent effort into what gift and talent they have.

Abel I have like, you know, some relatives that come over to visit sometimes and sometimes I'd be practicing during then. And one time one of them complained, they said, don't you guys ever get like, you know, tired of hearing all this like bashing and banging all the time. And then my dad responded with, I'd much rather know that like he's at home safe, doing something that he's passionate about and using his talents for God, then know that he's like out on the streets doing XYZ.

Aren This is a bit of a strange question, but—

Haroon Not a problem.

Aren Do you happen to remember a phase when Abel was young, when he particularly loved cheese?

Haroon Loved cheese?

Aren Yes.

Haroon Yeah, he always loved these goldfish. Yeah, for a snack to school he would always ask the mother to make sure there were goldfish in his snack. [LAUGHS] I have never had any love or liking for cheese. Even now, I don't eat cheese.

Aren Not at all?

Haroon Not at all.

Aren I did not expect cheese to be a bigger issue between Abel and his father than drums. But, as Abel said, his parents were fully supportive. From sixth grade on, he began practicing more, and started to receive invitations to play at churches. Which meant—he would also quickly learn about the complicated relationship between the Church and his new passion.

Abel I think the first thing that I experienced for myself that I didn't enjoy about the Seventh-day Adventist Church was some of the condescending language thrown around certain lifestyles or certain talents, even.

So there is one experience in particular I can think of. I was playing drums at this more conservative retreat that I was at. I had to be either 6th or 7th grade. I was just playing drums, I was practicing with the rest of the band. And then there is a little bit where we stopped practicing, but I feel like I still needed to like work a few things out. So I was, I was just there, I was working it out on my own.

Then one of the members of the church came up to me and says like, “Hey, that's, that's enough noise now. Like, we, we can stop. Like, we need to take a break from this,” you know?

Aren How, how did you feel when that person said that to you?

Abel The first feeling was like fear a little bit. I was like, is everyone here in attendance of this event, are they enjoying what I'm doing? Is what I'm doing actually adding to the service? I was fearful that I was taking away from people's experience instead of enhancing them.

And in the moment, I was just like, "Oh, okay, sorry, sorry." But you know, that's something that that was an experience that really stuck with me for a couple of years as I was trying to navigate like, where is my place in the Church? Like, where does my talent and gift fit in in this context?

Aren As he entered high school, Abel found himself unsure of what role drums should take in his life. He loved to play—but he knew getting to the level he wanted would take countless hours of practice, on an instrument some saw as irreverent. But then, like for so many in his generation, the Pandemic became a defining moment.

Abel You know, I was looking at my life and I was thinking, okay, there's two ways that I think these next X amount of years could go. There is one where it's like, you know, I just end up playing a lot of games with my friends, which there's totally nothing wrong with that. And that is something that I did do, to an extent.

But then the other side was like, okay, I've kind of enjoyed playing drums. I've played drums for a couple churches here and there. I've played for school, it's been a lot of fun. I feel like if I really apply myself over these Covid years, I can start becoming really proficient at the drums and I decided to do that. I set, like, you know, strict goals for myself during Covid. It was like a minimum of two hours a day during Covid.

Aren After a year, the chance came for Abel to put his extra practice to work. The first Adventist young adult gathering in Southern California since the Pandemic began was set to take place, a popular event called One Life. A week before, the band's drummer came down with Covid. Abel's phone rang. Technically, he should have been in the crowd with the other high schoolers—but he wasn't. I was there to see it.

[WORSHIP BAND PERFORMS "COMMUNION" BY MAVERICK CITY MUSIC]

Abel That experience was a turning point for me too, actually, because the person who was supposed to play drums is actually like, you know, one of my biggest mentors when it comes to drumming. And then, you know, getting the call to fill in for him made me feel like really, I don't know, it's kind of like a full circle moment for me.

Aren Were you scared?

Abel Yeah. Yeah, totally.

Aren So now you play a lot for worship teams?

Abel Yeah, primarily.

Aren How do you how do you like doing that? What's that experience like for you now when you play drums for worship?

Abel It's wonderful. It has been one of the most meaningful ways for me to connect with both God and so many people around me. A lot of my friendships and most meaningful relationships now have come from playing music with these other people in church settings.

Another thing that I really have found a lot of value and meaning in is seeing how it affects so many members of the congregation. There's been so many times where people would come up to me and tell me like, hey, what you're doing really, really, truly does matter. Like, I want you to know that the way that you're leading out on stage is like tangibly affecting my relationship with God. And that's been something that has really encouraged me to keep trying to pursue this craft to keep trying to pursue excellence and has kind of validated my feeling that this is my calling in life.

Aren Can you just tell me like, what was one of the most enjoyable drumming experiences you've ever had?

Abel I'll say the first, most impactful moment that comes to mind was when I played for my Junior/Senior Bible Camp my senior year of high school. That was the first time that I like had ever cried during the worship set and was like, you know, I was never planning on—it was actually the song, I remember it was “Make Room.” And the bridge of that song says something along the lines of like, “Shake up the ground of all my tradition, tear down the walls of all my religion. Your way is better.”

And that message in particular was one that was just really speaking to me at that point in my life. I was feeling really uncertain, like, because this was towards the end of senior year when I was deciding, like, I don't really know what I want to do with my life, like after high school, I don't know where I'm going next.

Like that song to me is just total surrender to God. And with that, like there's so much uncertainty, so much fear, but at the end of the day, me playing and believing that song, like believing it down to the core was such a such a moment of release for me. And I felt like even though I didn't know exactly what is going to happen, I knew that I could rest in knowing that I put it in God's hand and I could trust His timing and His promise.

Aren In the two years since that moment, Abel has found himself more in love with drumming than ever—while being caught in the space of choosing between a career and a passion. Despite his calm affect, I got the sense during our conversation that we were speaking at a time when the tension between those two felt especially strong.

Abel I've been in a space for a little bit of like trying to do music full time. And you know, it's been, it's been fun so far. You know, it's only been a couple of months. Right now, I'm looking forward to starting nursing school very soon.

But this is what I've told a couple people in my family. For me, it's not a matter of like, if I'll be able to do music full time, now it's a matter of, like, when I'm going to be able to do music full time. And you know, right now for this season, I'm feeling more called to, you know, go be a nurse to pursue that element of my life. But doing music full time is definitely, I'll say a dream of mine, but it's like it's something that I'm determined to make happen.

Aren In ten years, what would be the dream?

Abel Honestly, that's something that I feel like I could have answered maybe like six months ago, but right now I feel like I, I can't exactly like put a, put a pin on exactly what I want out of my life. For me, the thing that I love most at the end, at the end of the day is just being able to play.

Haroon He talked to his mother one day, he said, "I'm going to go to the park and take my Bible and pray about it, what I should do." So he went, prayed, and then he came back the next day in the morning, he told us, "I have made-up my mind what I'm going to do." So he joined the nursing school program.

So we just pray to God that wherever God leads him, and we tell him, no matter what you do, where you go, what your ways and means are, just stay with God, and the rest will be taken care of in the light of Matthew 6:33.

Aren In the NIV, Matthew 6:33 and 34 reads, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Abel There's times when I'll be talking to friends that are, you know, they have everything like plotted out for their next season of life. And then I tell them it's like, yeah, no, I actually took a break from school and I'm trying to do like music full time, but I don't really know what that looks like. It's tough to, not play the comparison

game. I feel like I'm falling behind or wasting my time. That was like a big amount of guilt that I was wrestling with, especially at the start of this year.

One thing that I think really did contribute to that, and this isn't necessarily anyone's fault, but I think. As I was saying earlier, like that culture of judgment and like condescending nature, especially within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, has been something that has caused a lot of that feeling of guilt and uncertainty. It's awesome that a lot of Seventh-day Adventists are like, you know, health care workers, high achievers. But it's something that I've been wrestling with, has been feeling just as complete or just as whole while not pursuing something that looks like what everyone else is, you know?

Aren I think the comparison game is something everybody's faced, but I do think Gen Z'ers face it in a bit of a different way because so many people's lives are so public. With the ubiquity of social media and such. So I think what you're saying is very relatable. But it's also—you're 20, and you had the courage to pursue your passion in a new way. And to me, 20 years old is the time to do that. And yet, even the fact that you did that at 19 and 20, you just said you felt the pressure of, "I'm falling behind."

Abel Yeah.

Aren I'm curious where that pressure is coming from. Was it coming from external forces? Was it coming from yourself? Was it coming from society? Where were you feeling the pressure of falling behind at 19, at 20 years old?

Abel Definitely a mixture of both external and internal, I would say. I would say a lot more of it though was external, like hearing person XY or Z talk about their life plans. I've had other people tell my parents and my parents have told this to me too, that, you know, other people say like I'm wasting my time, I'm wasting my potential. I'm kind of throwing my life away by trying to go this route. And that's something that I've had to wrestle with for a long time. Yeah.

Aren That's hard to hear.

Abel Yeah.

Abel I had this conversation with a mentor I think maybe a week or two ago and he told me, and this is something that I really needed to hear. This mentor of mine is someone who is currently doing music full time and has his whole life. He told me that there's no less dignity in me being a musician and a nurse. Like, me being a nurse full time doesn't mean I'm any less of a professional musician. He said, like, you're totally still both. And he told me that the only person you need to convince of that is you, because other people are going to think whatever they want to think about you. If they're going to discount you for being a nurse, that's them, and you're not going to change that.

I think hearing that from him was, yeah, it was just a really powerful point of encouragement for me.

Aren And you believe what he said?

Abel Working on it. But, yeah.

Aren That's fair, that's fair. So in addition to maybe some of the flexibility nursing offers, why else does nursing appeal to you?

Abel One thing that I've been very fortunate to do is be able to touch people through the gift of music. Being able to see people walk away from a shared experience that we have feeling like spiritually healed.

And then one thing that I realized was like, how awesome would it be to be able to do that like on the physical side of things too. To actually administer care to someone

and show someone God's light in this avenue. Then like I can do them in both avenues and just really holistically help a person.

Aren That's amazing. When I hear you share, it sounds like whether it's through music or through healthcare, you really want to help people.

Abel Yeah.

Aren That sounds like you're a Gen Z'er. Because those are the qualities I see in Gen Z. Are that they want to make a difference. You guys want to help people.

Abel Yeah.

Aren What about Abel are you proud of as a father?

Haroon Both my wife and myself, we always say we are the grateful parents. He is a thoughtful person. He does not speak too much, he speaks very little. But when he speaks it makes sense.

Instead of saying we are proud parents, lot of the time people say, well, you must be proud of your sons. Yeah, so we say we are the grateful parents. And we thank God.

Aren Abel, what would you say to somebody who is a Seventh-day Adventist? Let's just say maybe somebody a little older who doesn't feel that drums are reverent and don't belong in church. What would you say to that person?

Abel I think where I would start would honestly be "Why?" And I say that not to be confrontational or anything. But from my perspective the reason why I say "why" is because I struggle to see how someone could have that could have that opinion. So I ask why because I think the first step for me would be to understand where that person's coming from. Then I think we could work from a place of understanding each other and then work towards that.

Aren So you would be inquisitive?

Abel Yeah, I guess so.

Aren So then thinking about the Church now. So, you're 20 years old. You're a grown man, you're an adult who's stepping into a career path. You help lead in worship. But you're at a time in your life where you're making a lot of decisions, Abel, about what you believe, how you want to live, your own identity. I guess this is a bit of a broad question, but do you want to continue Seventh-day Adventist as an adult now, and why or why not?

Abel Yeah, this is actually a question that I had the interesting opportunity to work through just a couple weeks ago, actually. I was invited to play this, this new church that hadn't played out before. And three of the members on the worship team were ex-Adventists.

Aren Wow.

Abel Yeah, three of them. And then they were asking me like, you know, where do you go to church? I start by telling them where I'm at most Sundays like which church I'm at, but I always make sure to include like, I'm actually like a practicing Seventh-day Adventist. And immediately when I said that, like the tone of the room kind of shifted. You know, they start saying like, yeah, I'm like, I had a grandma that was Adventist. Like, you know, I grew up Adventist. And then I realized that their experience of Adventism was like so, so different from my experience of Adventism.

My parents have been, you know, they're very conservative, very traditional, but they've always tried to be forward thinking, whatever that looks like for them. And I've been very grateful for that because that's really informed my perspective on the Church and Adventism nowadays. But these other people, like their idea of Adventism was like the super strict, almost like militant-esque, like if you break this

rule, like if you break the Sabbath, you're going to hell kind of Seventh-day Adventism.

My biggest, I suppose, critique of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is I think too often we missed the point of what our religion is trying to accomplish. As I was telling them, I was like, you know, there's certain fundamental beliefs of the Adventist church that I myself currently struggle with. Like, for example, you know, I don't think the state of the dead is something that anyone should lose sleep over because like, you know, you can't do anything about it. One of the ones that I struggle with is like the remnant. I'm not sure if I necessarily believe that it's the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But then even on certain topics like LGBTQ+, like those, those conversations. There's just so many instances where the Church lets things like that get in the way of other people's salvation and feeling the presence of God.

But what I realized for myself is like the reason why I think I'm called to be an Adventist and stay within this Adventist faith tradition is because I'm fortunate enough to not have experienced some of the more toxic things first-hand. Like, even though, you know, I've definitely had my experiences of church hurt along the way, at the end of the day, I feel like I can still look at the faith tradition and see its value in my life.

So, the reason why I stay is because I feel like I can be that light for someone in the Church who is maybe on their way out or has already been on their way out. Calling myself a Seventh-day Adventist, I think gives me a way to reach these people through example.

Aren Abel, I asked if you would write a letter to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and I would love to hear that.

Abel

Dear Church,

Thank you for being an inspiration. You've inspired me to strive for excellence in all that I do and use that excellence to glorify God. I'm grateful to have experienced your willingness to seek my heart and to have found a place of belonging and a sense of purpose with you. Without you, I'm confident in my life would look nothing like it does today.

There are many lessons that I've learned from you, all of which I'm incredibly grateful for. Many were beget by kind-hearted deeds and conversations, but many of the more pertinent lessons have been learned through reconciling with the hurtful experiences that I and many of my peers have had.

Because of this, my plea is to be careful to not miss the point. I'm proud to be part of a Church that feels strongly convicted in its message and purpose. But our ultimate calling is to love all. Truth, tradition, religion, all of it matters, but not nearly as much as love.

Is it really truth if what we say denies someone feeling as if they're loved by God? Do our traditions matter more than the hearts of the hurting? Does our religion welcome all, not only in doctrine and language, but in practice? You who are listening to this are the Church. The responsibility to understand, answer, and act on these questions lies with all of us.

Speaking specifically to my Gen Z peers within the Church, be skeptical. Have your doubts. Have your barriers to take careful care to protect yourself. Uphold mercy, but not at the cost of justice. I believe that doing so is necessary to have a healthy, functioning and growing church. But lest we contribute to a cycle of hurt, let's first lead with love. Let the tension of leading with love be what upholds our skepticism.

The Church can change, but not without us. So let's do our part. Let's love.

With gratitude, sincerity and excitement,
Abel

Aren How did it feel to write that?

Abel Great actually. I won't lie, I was kind of dodging this whole experience for a little bit because I felt so uncomfortable about it. But then a couple weeks ago, when I had that experience at that church, being able to talk about Adventism, I feel like I was finally given the space and the language to share in a meaningful way what I've wanted to share about the Church.

It's been a tough couple months. There's been a lot that's gone on in between my relationship and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the past couple of months and then having that experience and then now this, like finally being able to sit down and write that from a place of not pure criticism, but really of love felt freeing, felt refreshing.

Aren It took courage for you to have this conversation today and to be here. I hope you know what a joy it is to even talk with you, Abel, and to hear your story. It's not something I take for granted. And thank you so much for talking with us today. Truly, really, really appreciate it and thank you for making our Church a better Church.

Abel Thank you.

Aren What are you doing the rest of today?

Abel I've got a graduation party for one of my cousins graduating from nursing school this weekend. That's at 7pm.

Aren That'll be your nursing school graduation party one day, won't it?

Abel Ahh yeah, I guess so. I guess so, yeah.

Aren Will you be eating any cheese this weekend?

Abel Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

Aren Without hesitation. I love it...

...

Aren *Dear Church* is a production of SECC Youth and the Southeastern California Conference. It is engineered by JO Cordero and hosted and edited by me, Aren Rennacker. Music courtesy of Blue Dot Sessions, cover art by Taji Saleem. So much gratitude to Stew and Zach at LLUC Media for letting us record in their studio.

Thank you to our guests today, Haroon and Abel Massey. Since we spoke, Abel has played for a whole bunch of churches, and is preparing to begin nursing school this fall. Two weeks ago, I got to see Abel again, at One Life, and enjoy watching him do what he loves most.

[WORSHIP BAND PLAYS "KING OF MY HEART" BY BETHEL MUSIC]

If you are interested in hiring Abel to play for your church or event, you can reach him on Instagram, @Abel.Massey.

Thank you all so much for listening. We have one more episode in this series, our finale, episode 10, coming next week. That episode will be a bit different from the others you've heard, and we'll also talk about what comes next with *Dear Church*. We still appreciate you subscribing and leaving ratings and reviews. If you haven't yet, it would mean a lot. You can also visit our website, secc.com/dearchurch, and check out a new article on *Dear Church* published in the Pacific Union Recorder's September issue. It's pretty cool.

Okay, thanks everyone. We'll see you here next week.