Just Claim It prayer conference offers spiritual development, community service

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A prayer conference in North America earlier this month highlights the Seventh-day Adventist Church's commitment to the spiritual development of its youth and young adults.

More than 2,500 met for the Just Claim It 3 conference at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, North Carolina, United States, for prayer, group Bible study and community service March 7 to 11.

Church leaders said that while youth should grow spiritually with weekly church services, a special event can offer additional times of reflection and a more intimate examination of their faith.

"I believe in events. The Bible is full of events," said Manny Cruz, associate youth director for the Adventist Church's North America Division. "When you come together with fellow believers, we believe God does something. The Holy Spirit touches people."

Youth rallies are typically sponsored by a local church or conference, but Cruz said a division-wide event offers more of a mix in styles of preaching, music and ministry. A large event, Cruz said, also gives youth an understanding that the denomination is larger than their own church or city.

"We are a very diverse territory and you're going to get a little bit of everything with events like this," Cruz said. "I think Adventist young people discover that their church is greater and more diverse than they thought. It gives them a larger view of the church."

Workshops offered participants the opportunity to learn about conducting ministry and outreach at their home churches, including community services.

Eighteen-year old Nathaniel Melville said he enjoyed the "Playground Ministry" workshop, which taught participants to organize games in public parks for fun and witnessing opportunities.

"This took outdoor ministry to another level," said Melville, who is from Worcester, Massachusetts, and a Freshman at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. "It's not about pressuring people to come to church, but just hanging out with them to have fun. But if they see a difference in your character, they might want to come your church and see what you do," Melville said.

Workshops also helped participants examine issues in their own lives, including practical Christianity, relationships and sexuality, and emotional health.

Many participants also offered service to the community, with some helping repair homes of low-income residents, while others visited a center supporting people with disabilities.

The Just Claim It conference is held roughly every two years.