



CONNECT: the annual ACF leadership conference in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference

The latest CONNECT conference was held on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus, February 25-27, 2011. Created for Adventist students who attend public universities and colleges, the weekend's purpose is to grow students now for present and future leadership on their various campuses and in their lives beyond school.

This year, we were blessed by special guests



Adrienne Townsend, chaplain in the US Navy; Nate Dubs, pastor in Greenville, Tennessee; and worship artist, Chris Picco.



Each focused our fellowship on Christ as we explored the weekend's main question, "Who/se Are We?" The question was a result of last year's survey on which many students wrote that they wanted to know more about who we are as Adventists.



And what better time to explore our identity than with roughly 65 other Adventist students who asking the same question?

In addition to worship services and wonderful food, the weekend included workshops and handing out notes of encouragement, bottled water and cookies to UTK students, giving attendees an example of simple outreach. "It made one guy's day—he almost cried," said Tyler Eller, senior Mechanical Engineering major from UTK. Not everyone was receptive to the giveaways; it was really meaningful to see one student react so positively.

Students also painted the infamous rock. The huge bolder sits in the middle of campus and can be painted at any time by students. The workshops focused on going deeper in our walk with Christ, the relationship/tension between Postmodernism and Adventism and how to grow ACF chapters.

What did the students think about the weekend? "I loved it!" said Lewis Dortch, junior Atmospheric Science major from UNCA. "...seeing all these kids so on fire for God is great!" And it's true, they are on fire for God, determined to do His will.

Venice Fisher, senior Psychology major from the University of West Georgia, said she especially enjoyed bonding with her family group. Family groups were new to CONNECT this year, offering students a more intentional time within which to get to know each other.

Justin Marino is a young adult from North Carolina. He's not in school but that didn't stop him from coming with his friends. And we're glad he did. He said, "Something I took back from the weekend was John 1:19-23. John is being asked, by some people

*For we are God's handiwork,
created in Christ Jesus to do
good works, which God prepared
in advance for us to do.
Ephesians 2:10*

sent to watch him preach, who his is. Instead of replying with his name he tells them his mission in life. He defines who he is as a son of God and he derives who he is by what he does for Christ. His identity is in Christ and that is what I want my identity to be in also. So when people ask who am I, I can say now that I am a son of the Living God."

And this is why Adventist Christian Fellowship exists—to help students get to this truth.

MTSU & UTK CONNECT

On November 20, 2010, members of the ACF group at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville visited Middle Tennessee State University's ACF group, taking some time to strengthen bonds and build faith. The two groups enjoyed a small worship service held in the Business and Aerospace building on MTSU's campus. The worship service consisted of special music performed by both groups, student testimonies from UTK, and a dedication prayer led out by Robert Brown, the president of the MTSU group. The service ended with a short thought from both groups' directors, Michaela Lawrence Jeffery and Rebecca Davis who admonished everyone's leadership, fellowship and devotion. The worship service was followed by lunch and a campus tour.



When asked what key values she finds in connecting the two groups, Davis said, "the building up of faith, and community. I believe that students find encouragement in knowing that they are part of something that extends beyond their own university. There is encouragement in knowing that they are a part of a greater community of believers, student believers. And faith is built naturally where there is a sense of identity, belonging, support and encouragement, common beliefs and just simply a common ground. And I pray for the sake of our students that attend public universities that ACF will catch like wildfire!

Both groups plan to embark on future trips and hope to include other ACF groups.

For more information on Adventist Christian Fellowship in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference:

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Starting an ACF Group

1. Pray!

God has resources, knowledge, and power beyond all human abilities, and He is the only One who can make your efforts fruitful.

2. Ask for help.

Talk to the pastors of churches near the campus. Find out if they know of any other Adventist students in the area, or if they know any groups already meeting.

3. Find others.

Be creative. Search Facebook, put up a table at student orientation, advertise in church bulletins, advertise in the school newspaper, and talk to the chaplain's/dean of students office.

4. Get together.

When you find others who are interested in worshipping and fellowshiping as Adventist students, start hanging out.

5. Get organized.

Become an officially recognized student org and get access to school resources: meeting rooms, web space, and more! Also connect with student government and the religious life office.

6. Get connected.

Get recognized as an official ACF group. Contact acflink.org to get your group listed on the site, hooked into the larger ACF network, and more.

7. Enjoy the journey!

Growth takes time. Don't focus on the numbers--rest in the knowledge that you're following God's will and allow God to determine success.

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Psalm 34:1

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