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Leading with Brave Hearts

Adventist Young Professionals Convention Equips Young Adults From Across North America

By: [Cinthya Molina](#)

ROCKVILLE, MD - On July 29-31, 2022, [Adventist Young Professionals](#) (AYP) met for their second annual convention in Hurst, Texas, located in the heart of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Brave Hearts: Lead with Your Life was a 3-day leadership intensive weekend filled with inspiring stories, rich and practical ideas, and engagement with leadership experts. The vision of the convention was to break through the intimidating stigma many young adults face about leadership being tied to status or position, and to empower them to embrace the Biblical model that leadership is centered on: having a brave heart for Christ.

As a global organization that fosters a Christ-centered culture of community, faith, and service, AYP welcomed nearly 250 attendees from various industries united with a longing to network with each other and grow in leadership. From dynamic keynote sessions that spoke to Biblical principles of leadership to workshop sessions that deep dived into those principles, attendees were infused with actionable leadership insight. The experience of the young adult professionals that gathered from all over the country was nothing short of meaningful and empowering.

Accompanied by the Younger Generation worship team that opened up Friday evening with a vibrant and expressive worship, Dr. MyRon Edmonds, keynote speaker, pastor, author, and leadership coach, set the tone for the rest of the convention. He addressed the importance of integrity with self and strengthening one's mental fitness as a precursor to leadership: "God is looking for people with issues who have acknowledged they have issues who are brave enough to confront and deal with their issues." Dr. Edmonds shared vulnerably about a past that had affected his leadership potential, authentic connections with his family and friends, and spiritual growth. He closed the evening with a powerful statement for young adult professionals to ponder on: "As leaders, you will either influence people with your saboteurs [fears] or with your sage [faith and love]."

The weekend carried on with the same vitality that it began with, packed with enriching talks to help attendees grow personally, spiritually, and professionally, and with deliberate networking opportunities for young adults to develop authentic connections. There were various workshops led by leaders who shared their insights and expertise. Dr. Craig Foster, a practicing dentist from Florida, discussed leading with purpose and calling. Pierre Monice, a hospital president from Illinois, navigated through leadership lessons centered on leading like Jesus. Victoria Okotie and Mildred Mibirzi, engineers by trade from Texas, shared the difference between management and leadership. Reuben Covarrubias, the Capacity Development Advisor for Adventist Disaster Relief Agency

(ADRA) and certified emotional intelligence coach from Maryland, discussed the importance of emotional intelligence as a foundation for self-leadership in order to lead others.

“I was excited to see the keynote speaker Myron Edmonds and the rest of the presenters not only talk about leadership but [also] what it means to be a leader from a Christian and practical standpoint focusing on character development and resiliency,” shares Gabriel Saldana, an attendee from Alabama. Young adults in attendance were able to take away leadership principles and useful skills to use in their contexts of influence, regardless of their professional fields. And for young adults seeking ways to bridge leadership opportunities, there were many exhibition booths from global ministries that AYP hosted that people could visit and possibly get involved with.

AYP's innovation has grown beyond its original form three years ago. It has had an incredible global impact as a grassroots organization, engaging a community of over 6000 Adventist young adults from six continents.

“When AYP launched in fall of 2019, we never imagined that an [Instagram page](#), focused on connecting young professionals, would grow to a global organization with thousands of members, dozens of AYP chapters & groups, and an annual convention that unites and grows servant leaders for Christ,” shared Tim Kosaka, the President and founder of AYP. “God took a desire to help fellow young people actively engage in faith and multiplied it beyond our wildest dreams. He equipped AYP with the people and resources needed to support young Adventists professionals during an unexpected pandemic. And as our world re-opened, He brought us together through grassroots gatherings that instilled community, faith, and service. As we reflect on the past three years of ministry, and embark on the season ahead, we are excited for what God has planned for the next chapter of AYP.”

With a vision to thrive as a global hub of local communities that unites, engages, and inspires Adventist young adults, AYP has expanded their programs and resources for people to be plugged in through a discipleship and mentorship framework. Activities and events are grounded in the values of AYP which are centered on growing in faith, living in integrity, and serving in love together.

Caleb Haakenson, a convention attendee from Maryland, shares his personal experience with AYP in general: “We realize that we can still be professionals in the world in all sorts of different fields but still have a unified purpose for reaching others for Jesus’s love. I just think it’s great.” Many other attendees from across North America expressed their gratitude for the convention's promotion of a positive culture, for equipping spiritual leaders with practical toolkits to takeaway, and especially the opportunity to fellowship and network with other Adventist young professionals.

AYP returns to Hurst, Texas on July 28-30, 2023, for their third annual convention “[Thrive: The Next Level](#),” which is expected to welcome nearly 400 young adults from across the globe. “I think the AYP conference is a great gathering of like-minded individuals who are really focused on growing their careers and just going further with their professional journey,” shares Pierre Monice. “I am looking forward to seeing the results [of this year’s leadership convention] and being back next year.”

Until Thrive, young adults looking to be part of a Christ-centered community where they can thrive in their spiritual and professional lives may consider joining a [local chapter](#), participating in an online [small group](#), or acquiring faith resources and ministry toolkits offered by AYP. With many opportunities to get involved regardless of one’s profession or location, AYP truly is a community with space for each and every young adult. Visit www.AYP.me to join the international community.

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