

‘Clear calls to action’: 350 students make salvation decisions at GA amusement park

More than 350 Georgia students made commitments to Christ at the Wild Adventures amusement park in Valdosta on Thursday and Friday, providing a spiritual grand finale to a year that will be remembered for large numbers of salvation decisions.

More than 2,500 people attended the Georgia Baptist Mission Board’s annual MOVE Conference, a two-day evangelistic outreach for middle and high school students at a venue billed as 170 acres of rides, slides and exotic animals.

In addition to the students who became followers of Christ, another 185 sensed calls to ministry, said Chris Trent, the Mission Board’s next generation catalyst who organized the event.

“It was tremendous because we saw so many decisions made for the Lord,” Trent said. “From the moment we walked on stage, there was just something happening. It felt like the Holy Spirit was moving from the very start. Getting to see that many decisions from teenagers was just simply tremendous.”

The Mission Board organizes the MOVE Conference, the largest winter evangelism initiative for teenagers in Georgia, as a service to the state’s churches, many of which have made it a mainstay of their youth ministries.

Trent, who was a longtime youth minister before joining the Mission Board staff, said he loves seeing churches from across Georgia coming together at Wild Adventures to have fun and worship together while hearing biblical preaching.

“I love getting to be a part of it, and I’m thankful for my team that makes this thing happen,” he said.

‘Gospel proclaimed’

Kevin Stout, student pastor Central Baptist church in Warner Robins, said scheduling the event between Christmas and New Year’s Day, gives students something to do when little else is on their schedules.

“MOVE is a trustworthy event where I can bring students so that I know they’re going to hear the gospel proclaimed,” Stout said. “They’re going to hear phenomenal, engaging worship. They’re going to have a great time. There are clear calls to action for our students to make a decision, whether it’s to accept Christ as Lord and Savior or to accept a call into ministry.”

Church leaders across Georgia reported “a widespread spiritual hunger” since the COVID-19 pandemic subsided. The cumulative results have been eye catching. In 2022 alone, Georgia churches reported a 47 percent increase in baptisms. And anecdotal evidence suggests the moment may have grown stronger in 2023.

EDITOR’S NOTE – This story was written by Roger Alford and originally published by The Christian Index, newsjournal of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board.