



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

A speaker spreads the good word during a Friday afternoon talk at the Seventh-Day Adventist encampment in Soquel.

Spiritual renewal

Adventist fellowship gathers for annual camp meeting

Churches - 2000

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SOQUEL — After being bustling between numerous foster homes and winding his way through the bureaucratic child services maze, Justin Vert, now a youth evangelist, finds heartbreak when the people he solicits give his cherished Bible back.

"It makes me sad that some people don't know God's love," explained 18-year-old Vert, speaking over evangelist Shawn Boonstra's speech. "When people give the book back I always ask them if they are sure, because it could be their last chance to accept God into their hearts."

Vert looked past his Seventh-Day Adventist comrades and beyond the throngs of trailers, tents and cars sitting on the 89-acre Adventist-owned Soquel property, and produced a wide, unbridled smile.

"God's love is more everlasting, infinite, pure and uplifting than anything else I have ever known," said Vert with assurance.

It's that dedication that has drawn more than 10,000 people to the Central California Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventists in Soquel over the last 10 days. They've come to renew their faith, learn more about their religion, spend time with friends and family and enjoy the weather.

"This is a family gathering," said Ramiro Cano, vice president of the Central Coast Administration of Adventists. "The fellowship likes to get away from their day-to-day routines. This event is a time



Abena Opoku plays with her baby daughter Nana Troutman in the family's tent at the Seventh-Day Adventist encampment Friday.

where we as leaders are able to cast the vision of the church and give updates about where we are."

With headquarters in Clovis, the Seventh-Day Adventist provide, for a fee, camping, food, and education for their camp meeting that concludes today. The alcohol- and smoke-free event is open to the public and focuses on spiritual renewal, according to Cano.

"Life is pretty tough without the Lord," said Cano. "But, life is awesome when you have faith, hope and peace. People come here to learn about God."

Seventh-Day Adventists

believe Saturday is the official day of Sabbath.

'Up to par'

"I come here every year and always learn something new," said Les Redell, a third-generation Adventist. "Adventism is believing in every word of the Bible. When you start becoming a practicing Adventist, you just don't waver because there aren't other religions that are this up to par with the Scripture."

Equipped with their own Christian market, Adventist book store, security and emer-

gency fire and medical vehicles, the camp meeting is self-contained.

In between sermons, health seminars and family counseling are available. The seminar "Good Sex Doesn't Just Happen" tutors married couples on the art of sex and sexuality.

"We want to promote healthful living, diet and lifestyle," said Cano. "There are a lot of training programs about family, parenting and sustaining healthy marriages."

Camping at the Seventh-Day Adventist Soquel property since

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1948, Adventists send their children to kindergarten and youth programs during the day.

"I like to sing and learn about God," said 4-year-old Daisy Martinez of San Jose with brightly colored face paint, highlighting her smile.

Youth come to the camp meeting to rekindle old friendships, spend time with their families and just hang out.

"We go to the Boardwalk and sing songs," said 12-year-old Joshua Pacua of Milpitas. "We also meet a lot of cute girls, heck ya!" 12-year-old Patrick Nessing of Antioch added with enthusiasm.

This year marked the 126th camp meeting for the Seventh-Day Adventist of Central California. Included in

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ROB WILCOX

the Adventist community are missionaries and evangelists. The Adventist congregation has missionary and youth evangelist groups recruiting all over the world, according to Cano.

"My wife and I are missionaries in Albania," said Rob Wilcox, originally from Modesto. "I believe that the Bible is the true foundation of life. For me, it is like I have found something wonderful that I want to share with everyone."



Enrique Tdeo of Goodlake catches up on some reading outside his tent at the Seventh-Day Adventist encampment Friday in Soquel. This year marked the 126th camp meeting for the Seventh-Day Adventist of Central California.

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