

District NYI President's Report - 2021

I want to get up here and not talk COVID and about the hardships that we have faced within NYI over this past year in half. But the reality is that this past year and half has forced us into so much more than we could have imagined. I wrote in my report from last year how resilient we were through the lockdown and how we pulled through with coming up with new and inventive ways to do church. As I wrote those words last year, I honestly believed that we were on our way back from this and about to get back to normal. We all know that was not the case and we are still working our way back even to this day. Our teens had to deal with zoom burnout, modified worship and retreats, as well as still face the unknown in every aspect of their lives.

Usually when I am preparing this report I do so with excitement. Excitement from everything that has been accomplished over the past year and ready to come share these reports with all of you. But this year, I found this report unusually difficult to prepare. Not because I lack the excitement from what we accomplished which I will share with all of you in a few moments. But, difficult because of the heavy burden that I feel for our teens and the position this world and this pandemic has placed them in. The fact is that the enemy has our younger generations on full attack. It is important for us as Christians to continue to support, pray for, and encourage our younger generations. I want to give each of you a challenge but, before we get to that challenge allow me to report on some of the victories, we have seen this past year.

When I last left you, we were literally leaving you. We were loading up on buses and heading to Phoenix Arizona in the heat of July for the Nazarene Youth Conference. Two years ago, we went into that arena with 9,000 other NYI delegates not knowing that this event would be the last mega attendance event we would attend for almost 2 years. We worshiped, laughed, and served without a care in the world. Only to be locked down 7 months later.

This past year many of our usual events were cancelled, after tirelessly postponing and rescheduling camp it as well fell victim as well. This was a decision that hit me exceptionally hard because after all that was taken away from our teens, I so desperately wanted to give this this victory. Where it was a difficult decision, I

stand firm with knowing that the right decision was made. But this is about victories and things that we gained this past year. Because camp was cancelled it opened the door for us to have a fall retreat. If COVID had not canceled camp, we would not have had this amazing opportunity. One hundred teens and sponsors wore masks, went through temperature checks, and screens just to gather and worship together as a district family. Many accommodations were made to help us stay safe and with it being a smaller and more intimate event it gave opportunities for some on our district to use their gifts and talents to lead music and direct this retreat. I challenged our youth to refresh their lives and to unplug from the things of this world so that they can plug more into God and hear what he is calling them to. We were able to evaluate this retreat and because we had this opportunity and saw the success it had we have decided to make a district retreat part of our yearly events. This retreat is being planned for the winter this coming year.

This past May marked the return of Extravaganza. We were all eager and ready to get back to Southern Nazarene University. Our numbers were down from previous years but with it being in May we had new obstacles such as graduation that interfered. But as soon as we got on campus it was evident that it was not the competitions that mattered, it was the gathering that had everyone excited. After almost two years removed from seeing everyone the victory was in the smiles and hugs as friendships were rekindled once again. Then again during worship where we were able to worship together 600 people strong. I can't speak for everyone, but I think I can speak for most that when service kicked off there was an overwhelming sense of emotion. Our students once again represented your district with the utmost of respect. They were such a pleasure to get to walk along side with and worship along side them. Again, a victory with not taking that setting for granted and getting lost in worship once again.

We just returned from camp, camp as it has been in the past. I am pleased to let you know that we had 180 people make it to Scottsville and have a great time at camp together. We were able to loosen the reigns and implement what we learned from this past year and a half and have a successful camp once again. They were challenged by Gary Young to live a life that is in complete surrender to God. A life that is humbled and reduced as we elevate Him in our lives. We had a great representation from Southern Nazarene University as they sent us two SNU crews and Remedy to lead worship. The victory was once again found in the gathering

understanding that these events are not a given and should not just be taken lightly. When we have an opportunity to worship together, we should do so with everything we have within us.

Back to my challenge for each of you. As I stated I have a heavy burden for our youth as I feel their generations are under attack. The enemy is at work against our younger generations. This gives us a perfect opportunity to have conversations with them. Opportunities to sit with them and show grace and mercy. Opportunities to come along side them and study the word with them and to have difficult soul-searching conversations with them. Conversations that bridge the gaps and leads to understanding. The challenge is this, **Be!** Be available, Be willing, Be gentle, Be Open, Be honest, Be humble and Be love. We are all about the one, and to do this we need to Be sure we are including our youth in all of this to become unified. In a world filled with disjointed and misguided unity we need to now more than ever work towards being unified with our younger generations and to do this means we need to Be willing to have the conversations with them and it means we do not have to have the answers we just need to listen and be available.

I invite each of you to be with me in prayer for one another, to help lift up our younger generations and allow them to continue to see the love of God through our love and actions. To be unified together to help these younger generations resist the attacks of the evil one.

In closing I am reminded of the scriptures found in Romans chapter 15:13

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The power of the Holy Spirit is enough to give us hope and through the Holy Spirit I know that we can Be what these younger generations need us to Be for them.

Respectfully Submitted

Chip Lee, North/East Texas District NYI President