

2019-2020 Florida NYI District President's Report

Greetings from the Florida District NYI Council. I want to begin by recognizing a few individuals that have worked tirelessly to push the mission of NYI forward on our district.

First, I'd like to thank Rev. Ed Leanza for his dedication and heart for teenagers. We, as a council, were proud to be able to award he and Rev. Barb Leanza with *The Timothy Award* at our convention last summer. This award is the highest honor that the Global NYI can bestow and is dedicated to those who have given outstanding service, sacrifice, and personal commitment to youth through NYI at the local, district, regional, or general level.

Secondly, I'd like to thank those who have served in an official capacity on the Florida District NYI Council this year. Our Executive Committee: Rev. Jeff Hinkley (*Vice President*), Mrs. Debra Crawford (*Treasurer*), Rev. Michelle Varnadore (*Secretary*). Our Extended Council: Nick Brown, Paige Burge, and Lydia Hutchison (*College and Young Adult Representatives*), Grace Ayers, Ariana Pagan, and Annikah Tooley (*Senior Youth Representatives*), Benjamin Fink, Wesley Gantz, Daniel Howard, and Simone Thomas (*Early Youth Representatives*).

I'd also like to thank those who have coordinated ministries and events over the past year: Kimberly Heard (*Quizzing Director*), Tyler Gantz and Daniel Gibbs (*Extreme Days/TNT Coordinators*), Rev. Dwayne Adams (*Co-Camp Director*), Rev. Barb Leanza and Rev. Tim Hildreth (*Nazarene Youth Conference Coordinators*). And last, but certainly not least, Michael Crawford, who serves as our communications and administrative lead. There are many others that I could thank and recognize, like all of the local NYI Presidents, Youth Pastors and Leaders. I am so thankful for the opportunity to ministry beside so many amazing people of God.

This past year has seen incredible events and amazing encounters with the living God. From our annual camp being better than ever, to witnessing the multitudes of students from around the region descending on Phoenix, Arizona for NYC, to another amazing year of quizzing where our students dove into the books of Hebrews and James, 2019-2020 was a year to remember. And although the end of the year saw uncertainty from a pandemic, what I have seen is the creativity and ingenuity of local youth workers across this amazing district.

Yes, this district stands upon the blessings of a God who is full of mercy, grace, compassion, and love. And as I gaze into the future, I believe that God has a word for Florida NYI for the coming days. That word is *focus*. Those who quizzed this past year, no doubt, memorized Hebrews 12:1-2. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." The writer is clear that we are to fix our eyes on Jesus; to focus on our Savior. Where is our focus as Florida NYI?

Our council sat down, last fall, to discuss this very thing. I shared with them what I had been feeling in my heart; that too often our focus is on our next event and not on what we've been called to. Events will always be a part of our strategy. But, when we focus on the events and not on the reasons behind them, not on Jesus, we have missed the mark. The question then is asked, what do we do to focus differently? What shifts must be made? Here is what I'd like to propose for a fresh vision for the coming year.



To shift our focus, we must understand the difference between a strategy and the values that we hold. NYI's core values are evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development. Each of our events and everything we do should be able to point to these values. What I believe strongly is that the purpose of the District NYI is to assist and equip local congregations live into these core values.

As our council sat down, we were able to match our strategic events with our core values. We, quickly, saw shifts that needed to be made and began working diligently to do so. We are resolved to this: everything that the Florida District NYI does from here forth, will be to aide local churches in their mission as they care for the spiritual wellbeing of students.

In evangelism, we are working to better incorporate ideas and strategies that will allow for easy access to the gospel for our local congregations. We want to be a resource and a partner with your church as you bring along those who have yet to hear of the hope and love of Jesus. We want to celebrate with you when a student makes that decision, to follow Jesus. This past year, we began a relationship with Universal Studios and the team from Rock the Universe that has given us an opportunity for a strategy that helps local churches leverage music, theme parks, and community for the gospel of Jesus. We are also working to make our summer camp a week that students will never forget and more accessible than ever for students in the very beginning of their faith journeys.

Discipleship is the process by which one becomes more like Christ. We have always supported the equipping of students through our quizzing program and will continue to press forward so that more churches have the opportunity for students to learn the Word of God and become more like Christ through this program. We have a dream to create a strategy that will help students across our district deepen their walk. This weekend retreat will be designed for students to take the *next* step in their faith journey.

Lastly, leadership development will be a major priority moving forward. Each event that our district provides has pieces of leadership development, but it hasn't been a focus. Beginning this fall, Florida District NYI will be introducing a new leadership development program designed for youth workers and student leaders alike. We will also continue to support YES Conference, NYC, and the initiatives within our current events that promote leadership development. But at our core, we want to equip leaders, both adults and students, to do what they've been called to do in their schools, workplaces, local churches, and beyond. This is why we are initiating a new strategy.

I believe that God has incredible things in store for the churches and communities represented on the Florida District. Good days are ahead, if we keep our *focus* on what we've been called to.

Respectfully Submitted,

REV. JOSEPH P. BOCOOK, *Florida District NYI President*