

International Youth Conference

In 1972 the late Rev. Cato Bush, our District Overseer at the time, and other pastors on the East Coast District of the Apostolic Faith, including the Rev. Leon C. Dicks of Brooklyn, NY, and the late Rev. Mary G. Kelley of Washington, DC, and many of the saints from the churches on the East Coast met at Apostolic Faith, 265 Lafayette Avenue to establish the very first Youth Conference. From that moment on, over the past 44 years, young people from around the country and at times from around the world have gathered together to worship God together, to connect in fellowship and to share effective practices of ministry in their context.

In the early days of the Youth Conference the concept developed where churches through the East Coast district would send delegates to the youth conference. Many visited but delegates were required to come and fully participate in conference activities. Delegates would be the people assigned to participate in services, attend conference teachings, engage in “street meetings” (this is simply an outdoor service that is usually held outside the church gates or on a street corner for thirty to forty minutes. During the service there are usually a few saints are assigned to hand out tracks and engage the people on the street), work around the altars during altar service and platform service by working in the kitchen, cleaning the facilities. Delegates were responsible to come back to their home churches with information, insight, and Holy Ghost fire. Many former delegates often speak of how they were impacted by serving as a delegate, especially being asked to preach, or sing, or give testimony during street meeting.

Of course everyone that comes to conference is not considered a delegate the great majority of people that come to conference simply attend as visitors. They come from many of our sister churches simply to enjoy the teachings, worship services, seek the Lord for deeper experience, and enjoy the Saturday night Gospel concert.

Over the years the highlight of the International Youth conference has been the Saturday evening Gospel concert. In earlier decades, the Brooklyn Youth Choir would be the feature choir singing an entire redention of gospel songs. In addition, churches from around the district would join in by having each church contribute some type of musical selection. And of

course there was a IYC Delegate Choir. This annual concert was truly a wonderful time of spiritual blessing, warm fellowship, and boundless celebration of the glory of God.

For thirty-six years, the Youth Conference has called the “265 Lafayette, Brooklyn branch church home. It started as just a handful of young people desiring to draw nearer to God, to fellowship with one another and to learn more of the Bible and how to be men and women of God doing ministry. Those first few years they met in small room in the upper levels of the church adjacent to the balcony. They call it the “Upper Room.” But even during this period the DNA of the conference was one of multiculturalism. One saint that I recently spoke with shared that even at the very first youth conference there were delegates from St. Thomas, V.I. The late Rev. Penn and his wife were just some of the visitors that year to Brooklyn. The late Rev. Hugo Samms was in attendance as well. The youth conference was born out of desire for deep fellowship throughout the East coast and Caribbean. By the late 1980s hundreds of people gathered annually from around the world, from Nigeria, the Caribbean, the Pacific islands and throughout the continental United States.

In 2008, the youth conference moved to retreat center in North East, Maryland, Sandy Cove ministries. Although away from the traditional church setting the purpose of the youth conference remained- it was still an event where young men and women could draw nearer to God, to one another in fellowship, and could find purpose, value, and skill in continuing the work of the ministry in their Apostolic Faith ministry context. During its time in Northeast, MD the average size of those in attendance was approximately 120 each year.

In 2016, for the first time in eight years for the 44th International Youth Conference returned to Brooklyn, NY where it received a warm welcome from the leaders and saints of “265”.

Our theme for the year of this report was “Are you under the right influence,” with each general and breakout session focusing on an aspect of the fight we all face with worldly influences and looking to God to be the right influence in all our lives. The daily sessions were followed by nightly

spirit filled services. On Saturday, a general evaluation session of the conference was held, followed by night of singing entitled “worshipping Under the Influence”.

We enjoyed having delegates from across the United States from their respective churches, this year we also had the opportunity to enjoy saints from the Dominican Republic and from the British Virgin Islands. It was beautiful to see the young people from their respective places come together to worship our Lord and Savior as one body. We are thankful for the many prayers that were offered up for this year’s conference and we look forward to next year when there will be more delegates and greater outpouring at the 2017 International Youth Conference slated to take place in Brooklyn, NY, Should Jesus tarry.