

Nazarene Youth International

“Even now,” declares the LORD, “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.” Joel 2:12-13

Steve Scott, Sacramento District, NYI Council, pastors, youth workers, students, family & friends, this will be my eighth report as Sacramento NYI President. I continue to be humbled by the opportunity to lead such a great group of young people and leaders across this district. To the team of NYI leaders, volunteer youth leaders, youth pastors, and pastors across our district who work week after week to remind young people that there is hope in Jesus... you all are amazing! I am incredibly proud of the students who show Jesus to their peers and who live their lives in pursuit of our God.

Below are a few highlights from the year:

- **NYI General Convention 2023:** The 30th General Assembly brought 164 world areas together under the Indiana Convention Center. We proclaimed that Jesus is Lord together, with over 10,000 people present at the convention center and more attendees online watching. NYI celebrated 100 years of service to youth all over the 6 regions represented; Asia Pacific, Africa, Eurasia, South America, Mesoamerica, and USA/Canada. The Convention featured workshops, business meetings, kid's events, and an exhibit hall. Each day ended with the general assembly worship service where we gathered together and worshiped as one body. The General Assembly was just phenomenal on all rounds, both the NYI portion of the convention and the Assembly as a whole. Not many get to experience the global church. To have 164 world areas under one roof, I cannot explain how awesome it was to walk down the hall of the convention center and hear various languages spoken and to understand that all that were in attendance because proclaiming that Jesus is Lord above all things. Some personal highlights for me included the worship songs sung in different languages, NYI having sermons in different languages with a translator, breakout sessions about Nazarene history, and ultimately my call to ministry. I will never be able to forget the deciding moment of being all in for what God has called me to. I was hesitant to accept the call, but I knew that God was pulling me towards Him and that I should walk forward and lean into the call that He has in store for me. It is an honor to be part of the NYI voting and have a deeper understanding of the business side of the Nazarene Church. Seeing the various Nazarene based colleges and ministries that are all over the world brings life to those in attendance and encourages our brothers and sisters across the nations. Wherever you are in the world, there are those serving on behalf of God's Kingdom. God is at work no matter the world area. If you have not been to the General Assembly I would highly recommend attending this opportunity. -Submitted by James Ibanez

- **NYI/NMI Youth Mission Trip 2023:** – In July, our district sent a team of seven adults and six teens on a work and witness trip to Mezcala, Mexico. We cleaned and prepared the Roca De Salvation church grounds for the construction of new buildings. We also hosted a Vacation Bible School, in Mezcala which averaged 65 kids per night. The children were so excited that they would travel whether rain or shine to take part in VBS. Each night we arrived, the children were already lined up filled with anticipation for the

evenings activities. Adults and Students from different churches in our district served together with members of the local and regional leadership assigned in Mexico. Through work and service, they built strong relationships with their peers and with our host team. The youth shared testimonies with their home congregations speaking of how much the trip changed them and grew their faith. This year as we travel to Costa Rica, we will have even more students and leaders from other churches participating in the mission trip. We will partner with Encuentro and work alongside teams from 17 different states. I believe it will be an experience that strengthens not only student's relationships with God, but also their relationship with their peers from other churches and states. These strong and healthy relationships that will last well after our time on Mission 2024 has concluded. Submitted by Ron Armenta

- **NYC 2023**– This past July of 2023 I had 3 students of mine (along with myself and another leader) go to NYC. This was my first year or so working at the church and so I did not know much about it besides some of the basic facts like location and that it was a youth conference we had in the Nazarene denomination. I tried to come in with as little expectations as possible and allow room for the Lord to move in the lives of our students. I was amazed to see how hungry people were to not only experience God independently but also collectively as a community of Christ followers. One of my students came back with her heart convicted for seeing people come know Jesus. In her words, “To see so many young people like myself gather together to worship God left me knowing my purpose. My goal is to evangelize and lead others to Jesus till the day I die.” Hope was felt, conviction grew, and an overall love for the capital C Church was established. Moreover, it was great to have my students serving the city of Tampa Bay and share in the love and joy that comes with the unity of the saints. -Submitted by Ezequiel Gasca

- **She Matters 2023** – Hope Point Naz hosted the annual She Matters conference in August. This conference is open to teen girls and women and was the most well attended She Matters to date. Teen girls had the opportunity to hear from speakers on a variety of topics centered around finding their identity in Christ. As always, She Matters had great food, fun activities and prizes, including the 360 camera photo booth and much more. We are thankful for Hannah Maddalena for hosting yet another great She Matters event! – Submitted by Tara Phillips

- **SAC NYI Youth Leaders Retreat** – We kicked off our first retreat in September of 2023 in the Palisades Tahoe. This retreat was our largest attended yet and incredibly impactful. When we started this retreat 8 years ago, there were five of us youth leaders gathered of us around a table in a lobby together. This year, we had almost 40 youth leaders and their spouses join us. Dr. Mark Lehman, the LA District Superintendent. Mark encouraged each of us by reminding us what it means to be called by the Lord. We are already looking forward to being together next year. Submitted by Austin Bender

- **Fan the Flame 2023** – On October 6-7, Bethesda Youth Ministry in partnership with Sacramento District NYI hosted their annual youth conference, Fan the Flame. Fan the Flame is designed as a space for encounter and spiritual growth through worship, preaching, teaching, fellowship, fun and food. With just about 150 students and leaders in attendance over the weekend, all of us went home blessed from powerful moments with the Holy Spirit. Our team of preachers and workshop teachers came from all over the Sacramento region, including faculty members from William Jessup University, speakers from neighboring churches in Sacramento and from our very own Sacramento District Church of the Nazarene. The event built up to a special moment in prayer where youth pastors and leaders prayed with their students in the power of the Spirit. The theme for 2023 was “I AM”, answering the question “Who Is God”. We can say confidently that the question was answered through the different elements of the

event, but ultimately it was answered by God's presence being with us. We'd like to thank and acknowledge the team who organizes and hosts the event every year at Bethesda, the volunteers from Bethesda church who sacrificed time and made donations to support the event and Sacramento District NYI who has always contributed and made itself available to Fan the Flame for support. – Submitted by Cesar Corleto

There are so many other events and gatherings that have taken place this past year from District Camps, Elevate at PLNU, retreats, concerts and many more. All of the exciting things that have taken place this past year would have not been possible without our amazing team of leaders around this district. NYI Council members – your commitment to our Sacramento

District is so humbling. The time you have spent gathering together, sharing ideas, brain storming, and most importantly, praying for our youth leaders and teenagers is truly invaluable. Thanks, Tara Phillips (Vice President/Sutter Creek), Ron Armenta (Secretary/Sonrise-New Life), Jon Velasquez (Treasurer/Lodi Faith Community), Grace Greeno (District Rep/Stockton Horizon), Colby Middlebrook (District Rep/Yuba City Hope Point), Cesar Corleto (District Re/Bethesda Elk Grove), James Ibanez (District Rep/Sonrise-New Life), Jon Fitzpatrick (District Rep/Yreka) Anna Tatman (District Rep/Centerpointe Naz), and Grace Greeno (District Rep/Stockton Horizon) Connor James (District Rep/Sonrise-New Life)

MY FAMILY - To Amber, Marley, Reagan, and Titus ...no doubt, the greatest sacrifice has been made by you. You've handled the extra hours in the office, a few more trips away for daddy with grace, understanding, and unwavering support. Amber, not a day goes by where I am not grateful for the opportunity God gave me to share life with you. I am so thankful for your partnership in ministry.

There are so many of you of all ages who take part in NYI. You give your time, money, and most importantly your love so that young people know that they matter to God and know that following Him is the only way they can LIVE their life. Youth Workers on this district - don't the enemy tempt you into believing you aren't making a difference. YOU ARE! Keep fighting for the hearts of our youth. For the youth worker who is out of ideas, barely hanging on week-to-week, remember the verses from

Joel 2:12-13 that I opened with. God reminds you, "Return to the Lord!" To the pastor from a church who is feeling discouraged because they have only a handful of teens and no one to lead them: can I encourage you? Return to the Lord! For the veteran youth worker who has seen it all and wondering, "Can I still connect, am I making any difference, is it time to give it up? Return to the Lord! To the student who is overcome with doubts about being committed to God, the temptations of this world, the fear of the future... above all, return to the Lord! God's character is to be faithful, and that includes faithfulness to US, here and now, on the Sacramento District. I'm still struck by a COVID era quote that I read a few years ago. "In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth getting back to." I don't know that God's interested in us returning to normal... He's interested in us returning to HIM.

Respectfully Submitted by your NYI Council and Austin Bender (President)