

Baptist Youth Ministry and Its Contribution to Mission Enterprise of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

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Abstract

One vibrant organization of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) is the Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference (NBCYC). The conference with the coordination of the officers at the Youth Ministries Division (YMD), Baptist Building, Oke Bola, Ibadan, Nigeria which serves as its national office has done many tremendous activities in promoting the mission enterprise of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. These activities are parts of the youth ministry of the Convention. This paper aims at highlighting some of these activities. Oral and written interviews were conducted with some selected past national leaders of the NBCYC and the YMD. The only available published history book of the NBCYC was also consulted. Findings revealed that the Nigerian Baptist youths have been contributing to the missions endeavours of the Convention and other international organizations over the decades through their national body and other bodies. It is, therefore, recommended that the Convention, its mission board – Global Missions Board, the national youth body, missiology scholars and other stakeholders should delve more into the youth ministry and their mission endeavours to have more records these activities, and encourage the Baptist youth to be more involved in missions to fulfil the mandate of the Great Commission.

Keywords: Baptist youth ministry, Global Missions Board, mission enterprise, the Great Commission, the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference, the Youth Ministries Division

Introduction

The youth ministry (including their contributions to mission) of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) predated the emergence of the Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference (NBCYC) as an organized body of the youths of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in Iwo, Osun State in 1973. The Nigerian Baptist youths are not left behind in the Great Commission of taking the gospel to the unreached and discipling the believers. This treatise aims to highlight some of the mission activities of the NBCYC as the organized national body of the Convention youths. The body is one of the missionary organizations of the Convention. Missions is one of the cardinal programmes of the NBCYC. The organization has taken missions endeavours as one of its priorities from its inception. Nevertheless, the full-blown mission activities of NBCYC commenced during the era of the late Rev Josiah Adegoke Adeleke as Youth Coordinator of the Nigerian Baptist Convention between 1996 and 2001.

Limitations

Unfortunately, there are very scanty written documents on this subject, especially at the Youth Ministries Division, Baptist Building, Oke Bola, Ibadan, Nigeria which is the national office of the NBCYC. This writer could access only the printed revised edition of the history of the Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference. So, most of the information in this treatise is based on the personal experience of the writer between July 1, 1999, and August 31, 2004, as a former denomination officer at the national office of the conference, the Youth Ministries Division, Baptist Building, Oke-Bola, Ibadan, Nigeria. The writer also interacted with some past national officers of the conference and some past coordinators and officers of the national office. So, the list of people interviewed that are included as part of the bibliography takes a larger chunk of that section.

Youth Contributions to the Missions Activities of NBC

Apart from contributions of the youth of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to the mission enterprise of the Convention, individually, through churches, associations and state conferences, they contributed, and are still contributing through the Convention national youth body, the Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference (NBCYC). The Evangelism and Mission activities of the NBCYC are coordinated mainly by the Evangelism and Missions Committee of the conference headed by a chairman who is a statutory member of the Executive Committee of the conference and the officers of the national office, the Youth Ministries Division, Baptist Building, Oke-Bola, Ibadan, headed by the National Coordinator. Among the missions activities are:

Members' Mobilisation and Sensitisation: this is done on the importance of mission and evangelism during the Youth Night (at the Convention session), NBCYC Annual Session and the Leadership Retreats.

Literatures on Missions: there are annual productions of literatures on missions and evangelism. Some of these productions are *The Biblical Youth* (used for weekly Bible studies), *The Wise Youth* (used as missions guide for the youth), *The Praying Youth* (a prayer bulletin for monthly prayer that promotes praying for the Convention's efforts in Home and International Missions fields, unreached people groups, etc.), *The Teaching Youth* (used annually during the Youth Night at Convention session), *The Excelling Youth* (a biannual magazine cum newsletter that gives reports of the NBCYC activities, including missions activities) and *Youth in Mission* (a pull-out magazine devoted to reports of NBCYC missions outreaches).

Production of Evangelistic Tracts: these tracts are produced to facilitate the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The tracts are distributed to state conferences, associations, churches, and individuals for sharing during evangelistic outreaches and other engagements.

ORA Annual Mission Explosion: the NBCYC actively participated in the Annual Mission Explosion conducted by the then Operation Reach All (ORA)-organized missions explosions in the 1990s. This was done through financial and personnel contributions to the programmes.

Annual Mission Outreaches: these week-long activities (in collaboration with the Global Missions Board) are done to selected missions fields of the Convention where the gospel is preached to the people on these fields. The mission activities that are carried out during the week-long activities include house-to-house evangelism, crusade/revival programmes, rallies, discipleship/leadership development seminars, medical missions, and distributions of tracts and the Bible. The outreaches aim at witnessing Jesus Christ to the unbelievers within the vicinity of the mission engagement; empowering the workers on the field; engaging in discipleship programmes among the believers on the field and attending to the physical wellness of the people on the field. This writer partook in at least two of such outreaches when he was an officer at the Youth Ministries Division, Baptist Building, Oke-Bola, Ibadan, Nigeria. Some of these outreaches are international as the conference collaborates with the Global Missions Board to visit some of the international fields of the board. Many of the interviewed past youth officers also shared some of their experiences during such international outreaches.

Medical Mission Outreach: this is conducted annually to villages on missions fields of the Convention where the gospel is shared with the villagers through meeting their health needs and caring for other needs like the provision of clothes and other essential needs. The Evangelism and Missions Committee of the conference organises and executes these annual missions outreaches and presents reports to the house during the annual session.

Counselling and Follow-Up of New Converts: the Evangelism and Missions Committee of the conference supervises counselling and follow-up of new converts in the mission outreach programmes and during the annual sessions and other gatherings of the conference. These new converts are handed over to the churches located where souls are won during the annual sessions and outreach programmes.

Provision of Palliatives to Religious Violence Victims: the NBCYC, as part of its missions endeavours, had in the past provided palliatives to the victims of religious violence especially those who were Christians in the northern part of Nigeria.

Support for Local Missions Work: the NBCYC usually encourages its members to support the mission works of their local churches, associations and conferences as the need arises.

Board Membership of GMB Board: past and current NBCYC Presidents, the National Youth Coordinators and the Directors, Student/Youth Ministries of the Convention have been members of the board of the Global Missions Board. These youth officers/leaders have taken part in making many laudable decisions during the board meetings that have advanced the missions endeavours of the Convention. This writer represented the National Youth Coordinator during meetings of that board where these decisions were made.

The Youth Week Programme: this is an annual week-long event in the first week of June where youth are given the opportunity to take over the leadership of local churches has been a training ground where many youth of the Convention have practiced being pastors, deacons and other officers of the church. The week-long experience has made many youths answer the call to pastoral ministries and become missionaries, mission volunteers and mission promoters. This has tremendously facilitated the missions endeavours of the Convention.

The Youth Week Offering: A proposal on the usage of the Youth Week offering was presented to the Convention in the 1990s that the offering collected during the annual Youth Week in various churches of the Convention be sent to the NBCYC and be designated purely for missions. This is now tagged missions offering to be remitted to the NBCYC.

The Translations of The Celebrating Youth: this is the manual for the annual Youth Week programme. Its translations into Yoruba and Hausa languages have been seen as a missions endeavour to reach the interiors of the Yoruba land and many other parts of northern Nigeria

and even beyond where there are no other languages to reach the inhabitants apart from these two indigenous languages. This writer was a Yoruba translator when he served in the Youth Ministries Division of the headquarters of the Convention.

Ajayi Dahunsi Baptist Youth Camp: this campground is built by the NBCYC on the spot where the late Rev. Dr Emmanuel Ajayi Dahunsi, the one-time Convention President (1964-1969) and later second indigenous General Secretary (chief executive officer) of the Convention (1975-1979), died in a ghastly auto accident along Oyo-Ogbomoso Old Road, Busari on January 30, 1979. The campground is a retreat centre for missionaries, pastors, youth leaders and other Christians. It is considered one of the missions endeavours of the NBCYC.

Financial Membership of International Bodies: the NBCYC is a major financier of the All Africa Baptist Youth Fellowship and Baptist World Alliance Youth Conference. These international bodies are involved in missions and other humanitarian activities. The NBCYC takes active roles in these bodies to carry out missions activities.

Attendance of International Gatherings: the NBCYC is sponsoring its president every year to the gatherings of the All Africa Baptist Youth Fellowship and Baptist World Alliance Youth Conference. The organization also encourages its members to attend these international gatherings. The Nigerian Baptist Convention, on many occasions, has sponsored National Youth Coordinators to such gatherings. The international gatherings have afforded the NBCYC officers and members to showcase their leadership potential and reach out to other people from other parts of the world. Many NBCYC officers and members have become officers of these international bodies and led the bodies to be involved in missions and humanitarian activities at the international levels. Attendance of these international gatherings predated the emergence of NBCYC in 1973. It is noted that the Nigerian Baptist youths were united to have a national body through some of those gatherings before 1973.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Undoubtedly, the Nigerian Baptist youths have been contributing to the missions endeavours of the Convention as highlighted above over the decades through their national body and other bodies. Youths have more responsibility in missions endeavours due to their God-given strength. They are fulfilling these responsibilities as they join the Convention to fulfil the mandate of the Great Commission. It is of note that the Convention leadership is now recognizing the strength of these young people in the affairs of the Convention. Therefore, based on this treatise, this writer has these recommendations for the Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference, the Global Missions Board, and the Nigerian Baptist Convention:

1. A committee should be set up to come up with a fuller history of the activities of the missions endeavours of the Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference;
2. The Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference through its national office, the Youth Ministries Division, Baptist Building, Oke-Bola, Ibadan, Nigeria, should make concerted efforts to keep the records of their missions endeavours and publish these reports from time to time;
3. The Nigerian Baptist Convention Youth Conference should increase missions endeavours to reach more people for the gospel;
4. The leadership of the Convention should recognize more youth in the Convention that have zeal for the things of God, especially missions endeavours;
5. The national office of the Youth Ministries Division, Baptist Building, Oke-Bola, Ibadan, Nigeria, should be more fortified with personnel and financial resources; and
6. More youth officers especially at zonal levels should be involved in decision making of the Global Missions Board to extend their involvement and relevance in missions endeavours of the Convention.

7. Missiology students and other scholars should delve more into the missions endeavours of the Nigerian Baptist youths and come up with more recommendations for further endeavours among the youths.

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