

The larges th a New Apostolic youth conventions are from the district church n Ge y District Apostle Michael Ehrich; a good reason for us to ask him some ques hs for the International Youth Convention 2019 (IYC) and his ideas and concepts for the work amongst today's youth.

The Southern Germany district church is formed from Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. How many New Apostolic youth come from there?

According to our membership data statistics we can assume around 9,300 of the youth are actively involved.

Do you have an explanation as to why there appears to be many more active youth in Southern Germany than the average number Germany-wide?

As far as the church is concerned, there is a general North-South gradient in the population, while Christianity is especially poorly represented in the East, due historically to the former GDR period. Therefore, I believe that we simply lie within the general trend. I see the commitment of our youth in the regular youth meetings, for example and I hold around three to four youth meetings myself in a year, where the youth from one or two districts come together. These young people are focussed; they are interested, they ask questions and they identify themselves with the church.

Internationally seen: Do the youth in the regions which you look after know that the International Youth Convention is taking place in 2019?

Yes, that has been communicated there. I have spoken with several Apostles about how we are going to approach it. From the two countries in West Africa where we have the most brothers and sisters, namely Ghana and Nigeria, we will invite 15 of the youth respectively. A further 70 to 80 participants will be coming from the

Ukraine, perhaps some from the Balkan countries, Israel or the Arabian countries. We will finance a large part of the travel expenses, but the youth must also make a contribution toward the costs themselves. I have agreed my approach with District Apostle Storck, who also has some African countries within his care, that he will be doing similar.

We often receive questions from our brothers and sisters who would like to make it possible for the youth from other countries to take part in the IYC. What can they do?

That is difficult. Trying to help a particular individual, just like that, could be more of a hindrance than being helpful. If one wishes to do something good for our brethren in poorer countries it would be better to do so through the church's help organisation. Our Southern Germany help organisation "human aktiv", for example, gives the opportunity to take on a sponsorship or to give support to a help project.

You have arrived in Düsseldorf. What are you looking forward to the most at the IYC?

The divine service is the highlight, but I am also looking forward to meeting the youth, to talk with them and just enjoy communal fellowship. Apart from that, I will take in whatever comes my way. I will certainly visit our booth now and then and perhaps also those of the other district churches, but I don't have a set programme for the IYC.

How will the Southern Germany district church be presenting itself there?

The district churches won't each be presenting themselves, but rather the District Apostle regions. In the regions where I work, for instance, we are planning a Skype connection with the youth from West Africa and from the Ukraine. Of course, our booth will also be presenting some particular facets relating to Southern Germany, as, for example, our Academy or the conception of "Mindfulness".

Are you passing on information within the district church that the youth can also invite their friends to the IYC?

Yes, I addressed the youth briefly. I do that once a year. I used to write some text for our youth magazine, but now we inform in a short film. I said there that friends should also be included – we have something which we can offer; we can be proud of our church.

Is that an opportune moment to write to the youth who don't come to our services any more?

Absolutely! I believe that is a very important point, but I would suggest that it must be done through the congregations. It would be ideal for me if the young brothers and sisters of the congregations would approach the youth who no longer come and invite them along.

What result would you wish for from this action?

I wish that the motto "Here I am" would become "Here I am staying"

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Text: Andrea Schnizer

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