

CONGRENAGE

Qual a tua essência?

“... *Crito nos amou e deu sua vida por nós, como uma oferta de perfume agradável...*”, Efesios 5.2b

▼ Experiences and insight from Nora

The Congrenaje event, organized by the Lutheran Church in Brazil (IECLB), was an opportunity for youth members of the church to come together for fellowship, worship, and discussion. This report outlines the key takeaways and insights from the event.

The event was held over the course of five days, from July 16th to 20th, and was attended by over 1200 members of the Lutheran Church in Brazil (IECLB). The attendance from the church of Norway consisted of Nora Antonsen. Congrenaje took place in Domingos Martins in Espírito Santo in Belem.

Juventude Evangelica has been a fundamental space of communion and experience of faith among youths through generations in IECLB. Congrenaje has been and is a differentiated and natural space for national meetings, exchange of experiences, training of leaders and exercise of public testimony. Congrenaje is only held every second year, and has the last years been postponed due to the pandemic.

The theme of the event was "What is your essence?," and the various activities and sessions were designed to encourage unity and collaboration among attendees. It was noticeable that the theme of Congrenaje was interesting for the youths. The message for the youth was that each and everyone is created by God in each different way. The theme was a response to what one is noticing among norwegian youths as well, that one do not think they are wonderful but rather tend to believe that others are better than them selves. Each individual has a content inside the packaging, which is the scent of that person. Every person has an aroma that comes from the depth of their soul. The elements the soul consists of that were presented, was self-esteem, generosity, wisdom, gratitude and optimism, authenticity and faith.

This was the first Congrenaje after the pandemic, and the event consisted of a camp for youths along with an Assembly for delegates from the different regions in Brazil. Further, one had a big celebration of 50 years of Congrenaje.

Activities

Throughout the event, there were a variety of workshops, keynote speeches, and worship services that focused on topics such as community building, social justice, and spiritual growth. Attendees also had the opportunity to network and connect with other members of the church from different regions and backgrounds. Even though there was a big age span of the youths that were present, did it feel natural to gather everyone and not divide it into age groups or such.

Shout of the Youth

As a part of the event and celebration of Lutheran presence in Brazil for 200 years (1824-2024), youth were all together marching 3 km from the event venue to the city center of Domingos Martins. Youth were singing and dancing all the way, dressed all in the Congrenaje t-shirt with signatures of their new friends. People were carrying banners, flags of their region, church or country. There were a live band from Espiritos Santo that played during the whole march. Police were present to make sure the match went smooth and secure, and locals were cheering the youth all the way to the city center. In the city center, there were rigged for a service with many hundreds of people with a strong presence of pastors!

Democratic structure

Compared to the Youth democracy in the Church of Norway. According to the vice-president of IECLB, they do not have any way of securing the youth voices through a democratic structure, but they value the voices of youth and do their best to take it into consideration.

Further, the National Youth Council are followed by theologians which provides insights regarding theology. This can be compared to the time in the Church of Norway some of the members in DnkU was chosen based on their education. Compared to DnkU this is something that we have moved away from, trusting that

the youth Synod is able to provide the necessary competence needed by themselves. IECLB has youth councils in every region as we do in the Church of Norway.

Outcome from the international youths

- Very fruitful to meet other youths with the same position as one selves.
- The international youth are strong leaders in their own church. For most of the international youths that were present, it was a new feeling to be a participant during a long event and not have any responsibility.
- All youths got inspiration and motivation to keep in touch. Many will also travel to the LWF General Assembly or Youth Pre-Assembly as either delegates or stewards.
- As internationals present on the event, one inspired many brazilian church members to engage more, also on international level.
- Learned a lot about the history of the church in Brazil and the church's role in the local community. Talked about cultural differences between people and also regions in Brazil.

Overall, the Congrenaje event was a meaningful and impactful experience for all who attended. Happy youth contributed to loud singing, sleepless nights but a lot of fun. The next Congrenaje is held in two years in the southern part of Brazil.

▼ Participants

In total: 1200 youths form all over Brazil.

International attendance from these countries: Norway, Chile, El Salvador, South Africa, Namibia, Switzerland, Paraguay, Uruguay.

Age group: 18-30, but in reality there were youths present which were much younger than that.

▼ Message of the 25th CONGRENAGE

After five years since the last CONGRENAGE, 1,200 young people from the IECLB throughout Brazil and other parts of the world, religious ministers, as well as volunteers, families, exhibitors, advisors, and the local community gathered from

July 16th to 20th, 2023, in Domingos Martins/ES, Espírito Santo a Belém Synod, for the 25th National Congress of Evangelical Youth (CONGRENAGE). Through dynamics, reflections, worship, and fellowship, we sought to answer the Congress's theme question: "What is your essence?", based on the motto: "... Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Ephesians 5:2b).

Contemplating the essence that unites us as Evangelical Youth was thought-provoking. The essence of the Youth Evangelical reflects through unity, gifts, joy, honesty, respect, love, friendship, empathy, patience, partnership, generosity, commitment, and most importantly, our faith in Jesus Christ. This reflection was prompted by the study of the theme, led by psychologist Vilnei Roberto Varzim, and a discussion circle about the Congress's motto with Pastor Ana Isa dos Reis Costella, Catechist Juliana Ruaro Zachow, Missionary Felipe Milani, and Deaconess Arlete Adriana Prochnow. Additionally, on the third day, an experience-focused Bible study was conducted using the Bibliolog methodology — which was the largest in history —, under the guidance of Pastor Adriana Beatriz Dalferth Sossmeier and her team. This was essential for strengthening faith and understanding our essence. In this methodology, participants could put themselves in the place of biblical characters and decide the direction of the study.

Different church groups volunteered to contribute to the event. There were booth with workshops and presentations from the Community Action Department of the IECLB, the Campaign for Youth and Environmental Justice, OASE, FLD-COMIN-CAPA, the Fair Trade and Solidarity Commerce Network, theological training centers, an exhibition of 50 years of CONGRENAGE, Diaconal Network, exchange programs, Martim Lutero Hostel, ADL, ACESA, Mission to Seafarers, Sinodal Publisher, and the "Not So Sweet Home" project, as well as a spirituality booth. Cultural moments also had their space, such as Pomeranian and German folk dances and the Capixaba Congo, a concert of brass instruments by Obra Acordai, and the sharing of cultures and identities from each Synod of the IECLB. Also, to celebrate the 50 years of CONGRENAGE, a themed party of the 70s, 80s, and 90s was held, filled with the scents of friendship, companionship, and the energy of Youth.

The Youth Shout was impactful, with the Evangelical Youth singing and spreading God's love testimony throughout the city of Domingos Martins. To commemorate the 50 years of CONGRENAGE, during the Shout, a time capsule was buried, which will

be opened in 50 years. The celebration of the 200 years of Lutheran presence in Brazil was also integrated into this grand event. This moment featured the presidency of IECLB, public authorities, Synod pastors, ministers of the IECLB present at CONGRENAGE, and the local community. The night ended with fireworks and 200 balloons released into the sky.

Intense moments of interaction and communion at CONGRENAGE encouraged young people to strengthen their faith, revive their protagonism, and awaken vocations to act within the Church. Thus, the fragrance present in each young person due to the love of God, given to us through the resurrected Christ, transforms and provides all the vigor, diversity of gifts, compassion, and good fruits.

And about the question... "What is your essence?" Now, we affirm, the essence is Jesus!

▼ Social Media

During the event, content was published at the Instagram account of Den norske kirkes ungdomsutvalg (@dnkungdomsutvalg). Further, Juventude Evangelica (@jeieclb, <https://www.instagram.com/jeieclb/>) also shared a lot together with Lutheran World Federation (@lwfyouth).

Short summary video of 1-2 min can be found here:

https://youtu.be/VBBb3Z3J79A?si=OMdCB04smHT_NqIW

The whole event was live streamed here: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdvJgPpURpVh8a5CxUmMaUwtgPktvj7bo&si=RzLCwsCrjqM7f7xv>

Article from LWF: <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/brazil-youth-giving-special-flavor-lwf-communion>

Link to home page about the event: <https://www.luteranos.com.br/textos/juventude-evangelica/carta-mensagem-25-congrena>