

Throughout **THE YEAR:** First Time Ever!

By Timothy Cokes, a freelance writer and graduate divinity student at Liberty University

Much like many of the events of 2020, the 2021 Youth Evangelism Conference was a virtual livestreamed event, but this actually provided an opportunity for material from the conference to be used in a fresh way.

For the first time ever, the video messages presented at the annual NextGen conference will be packaged together and be available for SBCV churches to use as a resource at any time free of charge. The messages can be found at sbcv.org/yecreplay, and discussion questions related to each message are included as well.

The theme of this year's conference was **RE:ASON**, based upon 1 Peter 3:15 which reads...“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect.”

The event was hosted by **The Heights Baptist Church** in Colonial Heights on Saturday, January 16. The conference featured worship from Red Letter Society, a group comprised of worship leaders serving in Central Virginia, and messages from speaker Ryan Fontenot.

Fontenot presented four scripturally based messages with an apologetics theme about how students can learn



to give a reason for the hope they have in Jesus Christ.

“We live in a generation of why,” Fontenot said. “As Christ-followers, we not only need to know what we believe, but we need to be able to talk about why we believe what we believe...There is great evidence and reason for the hope that we have in Christ.”

The four topics spoken about in the messages included the Bible, evil and suffering, Jesus being the only way to be saved, and how to share your personal testimony.

There were 50 churches who officially registered for the event as well as many more watching live on social media, and three students made decisions for Christ.

SBCV Student Ministry strategist Mike Camire said they began working with Fontenot on a theme for the conference starting in October and wanted a way for students to feel equipped to give the *why* behind their faith to a seeking generation.

“Gen Z is one of the most lost generations spiritually but also one of the most open to spiritual things,” Camire said.

In addition to equipping students for evangelism, Camire said these conference events are also important because they emphasize the partnership of the SBCV and serve as a way to bless student pastors. Churches who registered for YEC through the SBCV website received a gift box of resources from LifeWay, NAMB, and IMB.

“This is our way of saying, ‘We recognize you. We love you. You’re valuable, and we just want you to know that you’re cared for.’”

“Our theme is **Not Alone**, and these events show our churches they are not alone in this...There are other churches out there that we align with and partner with.” ■

RESOURCE:

To access the RE:ASON video, visit:

 sbcv.org/yecreplay