

Set Your Stereo Ablaze: Young Leaders of the United Christian Faith Ministries

Written by Charles James IV



{The Ablaze youth choir jump and sing as they prepare for the upcoming service}

People could not help but to rise. The United Christian Faith Ministries church was *ABLAZE* with the fire of the youth's spirit one recent Wednesday. The youth choir's spirits lifted so high their feet could hardly stay to the ground. This was not their grandparents' gospel music.

The youth choir, Ablaze, of the United Christian Faith Ministries (UCFM) has acted as a bridge towards a younger generation that had a noticeable shift away from church. Their spirit and passion aim to remind people that praise can be fun. They have tailored the contemporary styles of music to promote the gospel. The group ministers each fourth Wednesday and Sunday at the church in East Baton Rouge Parish. Members of the youth choir ranged from ages 12 to 22 years old.

Members of generation Z are immersed in the different genres of secular music such as hip-hop, rap, pop and r&b. The transition between these genres to gospel music can be a stark and conscious transition. Ablaze worked to break through this barrier. There should not be a choice between celebrating the music you love and the faith that you love, the youth explained.

“A beat is just a beat,” said Aniya Hall. “We don’t sing just to sing, we sing because it’s ministering to the people who hear us sing.”

Hall is a member of the Ablaze youth choir as well as their special operations manager.

“I Got It”

In their upcoming music video, “I Got It,” the members of Ablaze have channeled the inspiration of various christian artists that have inspired a progression in gospel music. The narrative for this video began as a normal conversation between Hall and Mark Ellis Jr, the leader of the Ablaze youth choir.

The two were on their way to the church. Mark was behind the wheel. Hall scrolled through her youtube. They perused the various 90s artists. They took notice of the styles of their videos. “Revolution” by Kirk franklin. “Jesus is my help” and “ Every praise” by Hezekiah Walker. The lord dawned upon them with inspiration. They decided to recreate these videos with Ablaze’s spin on their flare.

They met with their team and spent hours picking songs and videos. They discussed how to make them modern and reach their peers.

The group finds it impossible to lose sight of their true goal: to spread the word of God. The majority of songs are written by Ellis Jr. He draws inspiration from sermons Pastor Ellis preaches, scriptures he has read and experiences within his faith. Hall explained that their music always stems from something God has given.

“[God]’s always the focal point,” said Hall.

The song “I Got It” discussed the fruits of the spirit. These fruits- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control- are gifts given by the holy spirit. This song instilled confidence that these gifts are within each listener.

The Ablaze choir took these messages from God and imbued their music with it. They took the “mood” of previous pillars of modern gospel music such as Kirk Franklin and Tye Tribbett and “amplified it” for the younger generation as stated by Hall.

The sweet soothing notes accompanied by upbeat drums are reminiscent of 2000s pop music with the choral facets that gospel music is known for. This exquisite blend makes listeners want to get up and dance.

Kindling the Flame

The name “Ablaze” is a reflection of the members being “on fire for God.” This is the identity that this brilliant band of youths portray to the world.

Media Director of UCFM Sherman Duges attributed the foundation for this movement to the empowerment their pastors showed children. The church would often designate time for the children to come to the stage and dance before the lord. This created an open forum to show their love and faith in their own way.

“A lot of these faces you see today were those young faces,” Duges explained.

The Ablaze youth choir empowers the youth to be vocal and effective leaders in their community. Channeling passion into music and engagement harnesses their potential in a positive and constructive manner. Youth Choir Supervisor Sandra McKinley likened this to harnessing electricity.



{Sandra McKinley speaks to a youth from the choir as he thanks her for her influence}

“Unfettered electricity will kill you, but controlled and directed it will light up the world,” said McKinley. “Unfettered [young people] can destroy themselves, but controlled and directed they can take over the world.”

The Ablaze youth choir is poised to be a key figure in the holy revolution of music. The youth are the ones who will shape this ever-changing world. These young leaders have taken to the forefront and are emblazoned with zeal by God’s glory.

“These young people will take over the world,” McKinley stated proudly.



{The Ablaze youth leads the congregation in Praise and Worship}

The music has been a powerful instrument for their resolve and their video release will be a testament. The group has been inspired to do more. They continue to plan their next step in bringing the community closer to God.

“This is only the beginning of what we are about to do,” said Hall.

Sources:

Aniya Hall, Ablaze choir member and Special Operations Manager 412 506 2287

Sherman Duges, UCFM Media Director 225-921-3918

Sandra McKinley, Ablaze Youth Choir Director/Supervisor 708-852-4353

Photos and Captions



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