

Nazarene Theology Conference
April 4-7, 2002
Guatemala City

Concept Paper

Theme: “Memory, Mission, Holiness, and Hope: A Gathering of Theologians to Converse as the Church for the World.”

A Gathering of Theologians to Converse.

- The conference is to be, in one sense, the Ninth Theology Conference of the Church of the Nazarene. In another sense, it is the sincere hope and prayer of the planning committee that this event will be the First-Ever Global Nazarene Theology Conversation.
- The conference is intentionally planned to be authentically conversational and fully representative of all the “theologians” in the denomination.
- The Church of the Nazarene is a global denomination. Her theologians are pastors, administrators and members of the religion faculties of colleges, universities, and seminaries around the world. It is with this in mind that Guatemala City will be the venue for the conference.
- The theological voices of the Church are diverse. We need to take with equal seriousness the voices of men and women, North Americans and those from other corners of the globe, academics as well as pastors and Church leaders — all who speak the church’s faith with thought and passion.
- Believing that theological discourse takes place best in community, we intend to allow “space” for unstructured conversation on significant topics relevant to the mission, memory, holiness, and hope of the Church.
- We call upon the entire Church to join us in prayer that the Holy Spirit will fill the space we offer, enliven our minds with the mind of Christ, and enable us to converse better than we know, so that we may leave to serve God and the world more effectively.
- Formal paper presentations will be comparatively few and brief. Participants will commit themselves to reading a selection of short papers before the conference begins. Because we will come prepared, three-fourths of each of the four two-hour long concurrent sessions will be spent in conversation around the themes of the conference.

- A diverse cohort of twelve to fifteen theologians will move together through each of these conversation sessions.
 - There will be few plenary sessions:
 - o Morning and evening prayers under the leadership of representatives from the seven world-areas of the Church of the Nazarene will invite us to enter into the presence of God so that we may serve the world in the power of the Spirit.
 - An “endnote” session will highlight the essential issues raised in our conversations.
 - Cultural immersion will broaden our worldview.
 - A concluding worship celebration will send us out to continue the conversations in our respective contexts.
- We hope and plan to participate with the Church in Guatemala in times of worship and service.
- Our conversation has two major contexts — the Church and the World.

As the Church:

- We intend to converse “as the Church,” although we will not presume to speak for the entire Church.
- We will speak as members of the Church of the Nazarene with the privileged and responsible vocation of “theologians,” in the broad sense of the term, who have devoted our professional lives to the service of the entire denomination.
- We will also speak with an awareness of our membership in and allegiance to the universal Church of Jesus Christ.

For the World:

- Although we are members of the Church, we cannot ignore that we are inevitably also citizens of the world.
- We must speak with an awareness of our daunting calling to serve all those outside the Christian church, who are nonetheless the objects of God’s loving care.
- This calling requires us to respond to the world as it really is — torn by division, war, famine, disease, and oppression — social, political, and economic.
- We are committed to serving the world as faithful followers of Jesus Christ, and thus, to serve without ulterior motives — regardless of whether or not those we

- serve ever come to share our faith.
- Our conversations will have four major themes: memory, mission, holiness, and hope.
 - Our conversations will consider the implications of proclaiming the gospel faithfully in the present age, without abandoning the heritage that shaped our past.
 - Our conversations will also take seriously our belief that faithfulness to the gospel may call us to make adaptations that reflect an awareness of cultural diversity and to embody the gospel message in deeds of love.
 - Our conversations should help us clarify our core values — to identify who we are as members of the Church of the Nazarene, one of many Christian churches around the world.
 - Our conversations will allow us to speak *frankly* about our heritage and how our past has influenced who we are as a denomination in the present.
 - Our commitment to the doctrine of entire sanctification requires us to speak with honesty and earnestness about our reasons for existence as a distinct denomination.
 - Our convictions about who we are should inspire us to fulfill our God-given mission.
 - Our perspective is forward, envisioning and pursuing a future that is faithful to who we are and to the hope God has inspired within us.
 - We intend that our conversations be more than talk. Theology is to be done, not just discussed. We intend to offer our entire beings in the worship of God — to give bodily expression to who we are and why God has called us into being.

The four themes — memory, mission, holiness, and hope — are the basis for our conversations.