

PETITION

Emergent Philosophy and the Church of the Nazarene

Dear Fellow Nazarenes,

We are looking for thousands of Nazarenes who will join with us in asking the General Superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene to make a clear declaration of the Church's stance on the Emergent Church. If you are aware of the Emergent Church, you have likely formed an opinion of it already. If not, we strongly urge you to educate yourself. We will provide a few information sources, but you will need to do some homework on your own..

There is current controversy within The Church of the Nazarene and other denominations about what the Emergent Church really is, and if it is a good thing or a bad thing. One thing is certain, the Emergent Church is real. In fact, the theology, doctrines, and practices of the Emergent Church are already an integral part of our denomination. Without the general membership being informed or educated in this regard, the Emergent Church has exerted strong influence on Nazarene Youth International (NYI), Nazarene Missions International (NMI), many upstart congregations, and on Nazarene universities, and our seminary.

For example, several workshops on different aspects of the Emergent Church were offered at the 2007 Nazarene Missions Conference. Jon Middendorf, and others who hosted workshops on the Emergent Church, described the phenomenon as a "conversation". Actually, the "conversation" appears to be occurring within a rather elite subgroup of our denomination and has not included the membership at large. We find that disturbing. Is it possible that our well-educated theologians and general church leaders deem most of the membership as too ignorant or uneducated to understand these newer, more sophisticated doctrines?

Considering what we have learned about the Emergent Church, "conversation" seems a puny word to describe a phenomenon so volatile that it has the potential to split our denomination. A common criticism of the Emergent Church is that it eschews traditional Nazarene doctrine and practices in order to gain wider appeal within the world. A phenomenon of this criticality demands more than "conversation" among an elite few. It demands open communication between the General Superintendents and the membership at large. This has not occurred. Rather, Emergent Church theology has quietly and subtly invaded the highest levels of denominational leadership. If this were not so, workshops advancing the cause of the Emergent Church would not be sponsored at denomination-wide conferences.

The Emergent Church accuses traditional religion of being irrelevant to today's post-modern world. While we admit many Nazarenes do not live or worship in a manner that is appealing to anyone, we view this as a spiritual problem – one that can only be remedied by an unhindered move of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals. We believe there is nothing more appealing than spirit-filled lives that truly represent Christ to the world. At present, revival fires are burning in many regions of the world. However, the U.S. and Canada constitute a relatively small percentage of new converts reported each year. What we need is revival and that only happens when individual Christians make *heart* holiness a priority and give of their time, resources, talents, and very selves the way Jesus did.

We hope to provide enough information to pique your interest in the Emergent Church and to motivate you to do your own homework. A simple Google Search for “Emergent Church” will tell you all you want to know and more. You may also go to www.churchofthenazarene.com and do a search for “Emergent Church”. You will have opportunity to listen to audio versions of a few of the workshops on the Emergent Church which were held at the 2007 Nazarene Missions Conference. In the workshop on Emergent Theology, the “Nazarenes” who presented the workshop were self-described as “. . . Nazarenes in some way, shape, or form.” The presenters also discussed their connection to Emergent Village.

To better understand some of the theological concerns that biblical Christians have with Emergent philosophy there are many credible sources. These would include Christian apologists [Roger Oakland](#) and [Eric Barger](#). (View [Barger video](#) and [Oakland video](#).) Eric Barger also attended Emergent leader Brian McLaren’s “Everything Must Change” conference held at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, ID in February, 2008. ([Read more here](#).) We believe many of you will be concerned.

Once adequately informed, we hope you will join with us in signing a petition exhorting the General Superintendents to make a clear statement to the general membership regarding their stance on the Emergent Church. We would sincerely like to know how the General Superintendents reconciles the theology, doctrines, and practices of the Emergent Church with the content of the 2007 General Superintendents’ Report. (You may view the video version of the report, or read it, when you go to www.churchofthenazarene.com) and do a search for “2007 General Board Report.” In our opinion, the report appears to align with traditional Nazarene doctrine, theology, and practice. There is little or no indication that the Board of General Superintendents are *officially* supporting a movement that advances significant departure from the above. We would like an explanation of the discrepancy between official policy and reality.

Please do your own homework and then join us in requesting open communication from the General Superintendents in regard to the Emergent Church. You may copy the following petition, circulate it among church **members**, and mail your completed copy to:

Grace Church of the Nazarene
540 E. Walnut Lawn
Springfield, MO 65807

We will be accepting petitions through **January, 2009**. We would appreciate prompt return of your petitions. If there is need to take the Emergent Church issue to the 2009 General Assembly, we want to be prepared well in advance.

Yours in Christ,
Ramona Andrews
Church Board Secretary
Grace Nazarene Church

Date	Church Name & Location	Your Printed Name	Signature

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