

For Immediate Release

Nazarenes in Crisis as Orlando Showdown Looms

Orlando, Florida, June 15, 2009 – Controversy is brewing as thousands of faithful prepare to converge at the Orange County Convention Center for the General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene.

Ministers and laity from around the world will participate in the evangelical denomination's showpiece gathering June 24-July 3.

At stake: the future of their 1.8 million member, 100-year-old movement.

Delegates face controversy that threatens to split the Wesleyan-based denomination, according to some church leaders.

At the center of the discord is the inerrancy of the Bible. Traditionalists claim that a new "emergent" movement within the denomination is questioning the church's long-held view that the Bible is completely without error from cover to cover.

If left unchallenged, traditionalists say, the emergent movement could undermine the core doctrines and practices of the Nazarene church – a denomination with conservative holiness roots.

"This General Assembly will be pivotal in the history of the Church of the Nazarene," predicted Joe Staniforth, a Nazarene pastor from Brownsville, Texas. "Some Nazarene theologians have been questioning the validity of our signature doctrine. Well, this is D-Day."

In 2007, evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* suggested the Nazarene church was facing an "identity crisis." It quoted Jerry Porter, one of the denomination's six General Superintendents, as saying the church was in "theological crisis."

"Our doctrine and much more is on the chopping block in Orlando," said Beverly Turner, a leader of Concerned Nazarenes, a grassroots group opposing changes to the denomination's core beliefs.

Conservatives are pushing the church hierarchy to make a clear statement about Scriptural inerrancy at the Orlando gathering.

Representatives from Indiana have put forward a resolution, urging delegates to affirm the Bible as totally free of error.

Other hot topics, according to the Concerned Nazarenes group, include “to what degree the church's responsibilities are social or spiritual in nature, and whether or not the denomination should embrace a Catholic or Universal view of religion,” Turner said.

During the assembly, the group will be handing out copies of a DVD it has produced titled “The Emergent Church” which leaders hope will bolster their cause.

“Our hope is that this DVD will signal a need for better communication within our denomination as a whole,” Turner added.

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Rev. Eric Barger - author and Christian apologist, www.ericbarger.com (Barger is speaking six times June 25-27 in an Orlando hotel in coordination with Concerned Nazarenes bringing information to counter the Emergent Church movement specifically inside the Nazarene Church)