

A LEADERSHIP VISION FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

Ephesians 4:1-3; 25-32

INTRODUCTION

During my 18 years as a Nazarene university president, I was often asked the question: “What keeps you awake at night?” I usually responded that it wasn’t tight finances, although we always wanted to add new programs, personnel, and facilities. And it wasn’t the enrollment - even though we wanted and expected to reach our 3,000 student enrollment goal.

Rather, the questions that drained me of energy by day and sleep at night were these: “Is it possible – really possible – to live in “unity and peace” at our university? Can we live and work together in such a way that our relationships are redemptive, and a witness to non-Christians, of the reconciling work of God in Christ?”

This is a leadership question.

The Apostle Paul is speaking to Christians when he challenges them in Ephesians 4:3 to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Unity and peace. He is talking about living together in Christian community. His words are instructive to us as we launch the Southern Africa Nazarene University.

In the midst of our incredibly rich and the dynamic diversity in the beautiful country of Swaziland and the surrounding countries in the SADEC region of Africa, is there a leadership vision for this university that is *worthy* of the commitment and sacrifice of the faculty and staff? Is there a compelling vision of God and His activity in and through our lives that enables us to believe, really believe, that He can use *us* to impact for eternity **our generation and generations yet to come**? Is there a captivating leadership vision around which the university family, the Church of the Nazarene, and the Swaziland government can unite and live peacefully in the midst of our diversity?

I believe there is such a leadership vision. Permit me to paint the broad outline of this “picture” of who we are as teachers and staff, and what we are called to do:

Southern Africa Nazarene University:
An academic Christian community,
Shaping Christ-like disciples and leaders,
For local witness and global impact.

Listen again to this vision phrase by phrase.

I. Southern Africa Nazarene University is an *Academic Christian Community*.

As an academic institution, our intense desire for excellence drives us as leaders. We desire to graduate from this institution the very best trained and prepared teachers, nurses, and pastors.

We believe that our work on this campus as faculty or staff should represent a passion for excellence. We will never be satisfied with mediocrity. Content is important to us; but equally important is competence, character and context. The focus of our work is on “being” and “doing” as well as on “knowing.” Our concern is for living as well as for learning.

Why do we work on campus with a commitment to excellence? For one profound reason. The excellence with which we do our work at the university becomes a *witness* to the Lord we serve. As Christians, we are motivated by the imperative in scripture (Colossians 3:17, 23-24) that reminds us that “whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...and do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to man, for you serve the Lord Christ.” All of life is sacred for us, including the work we do in the classrooms and the decisions we make in the offices.

We are an academic Christian community. We know whose we are and to whom we belong. We live and work *together* as the People of God in the mission and ministry of *faithful presence* in post secondary education. This is our life and our calling! Christian faith for us is not an intellectualized belief to be learned but a *life* to be lived in and through the way we teach and lead.

We serve the Lord Christ through what we do and say in every relationship in the classrooms and in the offices. We look at students on campus and could see problems. Rather, by God’s grace, we look at those same students and choose to see potential.

Some students are gifted academically and will graduate from this university with honors. Other will graduate without such distinction. We choose to believe, however, that regardless of their academic abilities, the economic conditions of their families or the urban or rural environment from which they come to this school, *every* person can make a profound difference for Christ in this world. And, we affirm to every student “You are that person.” You are a gifted and blessed child of God.

On this campus, we are resolute in our identity: We are an academic Christian community.

II. Secondly, Southern Africa Nazarene University *Shapes Christ-like Disciples and Leaders*.

This University was brought into existence to nurture the life of faith and shape servant leaders for school classrooms, hospitals, clinics, offices, and churches. “Shaping” disciples and leaders is more than instilling information or even equipping our students. And, it involves much more than textbooks used in the classrooms.

I will never forget a professor of education in my post graduate program who was passionate about the concept that “Modeling is the method of Christian education for transformation.” He meant that the life we live before the students, the way we lead and the passion for our

discipline—the example we set before those we teach—are so much more powerful and transformative than what is transmitted to the students only in the formal classroom setting.

Christian leadership on Nazarene universities globally implies that faculty, staff and administrators lead humbly, teach competently, forgive freely, live gratefully, think strategically, listen intently, care deeply, speak gracefully and relate ethically. By modeling *these* qualities of Christian leadership, leaders on this campus shape students as caring Christians who will be outstanding as teachers in public school classrooms, nurses in the hospitals, and pastors in our communities. We model both professional competence *and* faith development.

These leadership character qualities are essential if teachers move beyond information giving to character shaping in the lives of the students we teach. We model in the offices and in the classrooms the faith we profess on Sunday. We pass on to students with excellence the *content* of the class and with passion the *convictions* of our heart.

The transforming mission of shaping Christ-like disciples and leaders gives intense focus to our teaching and administrative responsibilities on this campus. It compels us to guard our words, thoughts, and behavior. We teach powerful lessons of faith through the way we relate to and work with students, colleagues and neighbors. Our faith holds us steady even through the way we discipline those in need of correction. We relate our holiness testimony to the way we lead especially during the times of making and communicating difficult decisions.

To repeat: Our vision for leaders on this campus is for the university to be an academic Christian community that shapes Christ-like disciples and leaders. For what purpose?

III. We do what we do at this university *for Local Witness and Global Impact.*

We believe that every student on this campus should come to the point of viewing herself or himself as a world Christian with a global vision. The world, the whole world, is the arena of God's activity. God's love for humankind does not depend on the color of our skin or the nation of our birth!

To experience people of other cultures—individuals who differ from us in color, race, culture, and language—confronts us with the narrowness of our own cultural blinders. To affirm that God loves "them" as He does us is to broaden our vision of God's love and concern beyond "our" city, country, or region. Individuals in the poorest or richest of countries; people who are far from us or near to us geographically are loved by God and in need of the gospel of grace, hope, and forgiveness.

We respond to global needs in society and the personal pain in others with *biblical compassion* and in fulfillment of the great commission and the great commandment. A passion to serve others *through* teaching, preaching, and healing is rooted in a profound love relationship with the Lord. People do need the saving, reconciling, healing and sustaining grace of God. This is what we teach at SANU; this is the way we live and lead.

This passion for local witness and global impact compels us to relate our classroom material and methodology to the lost, broken, and suffering people around us wherever God leads us to serve.

In Manzini or Manila,
in Johannesburg or Jakarta,
in Calcutta or Karachi.
To the rich or to the poor,
to young or to the old,
to the infants or to the dying.
In the churches or in the streets,
in the hospitals or in the clinics,
in the classrooms or in the board rooms.

This is holiness of heart expressed in holiness of life.

Dr. Nhlengethwa was elected in June 2009 as a member of the 13-member International Board of Education of the Church of the Nazarene. Several months ago she agreed to my request to serve as a consultant with the IBOE Board chair, Dr. Kent Brower to our Nazarene hospital and Nursing College director in Washim, India. She represented this country and your university with distinction.

Her growing influence internationally reflects the impact she is making not only in her home country of Swaziland but throughout the region and around the world. And, she represents what can and will happen in and through the Southern Africa Nazarene University.

You may be surprised to hear that the Church of the Nazarene has 54 colleges, universities and seminaries located in 35 countries on six continents. These schools relate to each other through a vibrant, global system of Nazarene education. The Nazarene university with the largest enrollment is Korea Nazarene University, ranked #1 by the South Korean government in rehabilitation studies for students with special needs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I return to my questions at the beginning of these remarks. In the midst of the conflicts and challenges on this campus, “Is it possible – really possible – to live in ‘unity and peace’ at this university? Can we live and work together in such a way that our relationships are redemptive and a witness to non-Christians of the reconciling work of God in Christ?”

The answer is a resounding YES if we launch this university with a leadership vision that is worthy of our commitment and sacrifice. We can affirm this vision *if* the leadership of this university—faculty and staff—envision the Holy God of scripture as the one who by His Spirit enables His followers to impact eternally the lives of students for whom we are responsible. The answer to our questions is “yes” if every faculty member and each administrator passionately embrace a captivating vision around which the university campus community, the Church of the

Nazarene, and the Swaziland government can unite and live peacefully in the midst of our diversity.

Join me in affirming today, enthusiastically, that we as leaders can and will work together on this campus with this compelling vision of who we are and what we are to do:

Southern Africa Nazarene University:
An academic Christian community,
Shaping Christ-like disciples and leaders,
For local witness and global impact.

E. LeBron Fairbanks
October 22, 2010
Manzini, Swaziland

Next: Litany of Inauguration.

“Dr. Nhlengethwa, please stand by me.”

“I will serve as leader. Each of you please respond in your own language as indicated on the litany.”

Litany of Inauguration

LEADER: We gather on the inauguration of the first Vice-Chancellor of Southern Africa Nazarene University to establish the covenant that exists between the Church of the Nazarene and the University. Our covenant affirms the relationship between academic scholarship and Christian service, between biblical faith and spiritual formation.

ALL: It is good and proper that we do so.

COVENANT OF THE UNIVERSITY (Faculty and Staff): We, the faculty and staff of Southern Africa Nazarene University, make a covenant with the Church, before God, that we affirm the truth of Jesus Christ as the Highest Wisdom. We believe that our students are made in the image of God and destined for eternity. We believe that education must acknowledge God’s activity in the created order and human history. We pledge our faithfulness and service as part of the Church, and seek in turn its trust as we pursue knowledge in the search for truth. To this we make a covenant.

ALL: May God bear witness to this pledge.

VICE-CHANCELLOR: As Vice-Chancellor of Southern Africa Nazarene University, I make a covenant with the Church and the University, before our Lord, that we will cherish the ideals of this University within the Church of the Nazarene. We will seek to be faithful persons in our

desire TO LEARN, in our challenge TO BE, and our determination TO SERVE. To this I make a covenant.

ALL: May God bear witness to this pledge.

COVENANT OF THE CHURCH (Board of Governors, Guest Clergy and Laity in the Congregation): We, the representatives of the Church, make a covenant with the University to choose governors worthy of their calling, and to provide all means of support for the financial, academic, and spiritual health of the University. We pledge to be sensitive to the unique place of the University within the life of faith in the Church. We will encourage and support the University in its commitment to informed faithfulness. This we make a covenant.

ALL: May God bear witness to this pledge.

VICE-CHANCELLOR: I covenant with the Church and the University, before the Lord, that I will faithfully execute the duties of Vice-Chancellor of Southern Africa Nazarene University. In this high calling, I will lead and sustain the academic community as it seeks to integrate a vibrant faith with learning and living. I will nourish the ties that bind the University and the Church, and the Church and University. I will strive to make Southern Africa Nazarene University a place where students are equipped to:

- Care deeply
- Think biblically
- Study passionately
- Live gratefully
- Relate ethically
- Witness faithfully
- Serve competently
- Lead strategically

To this I make a covenant.

ALL: Hear, O Lord, the sacred vows we make before you to one another. Remind us often of our promises. Give us grace that we may be faithful now and always, in helping the University TO LEARN, TO BE, and TO SERVE, for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom. AMEN.

Next: Prayer of Dedication

“Dr. Nhlengethwa, please kneel for this prayer.”

“Those in the platform party will place their hands on Dr. Nhlengethwa.

_____ will lead in the prayer of dedication.”

Next: “On behalf of the International Church of the Nazarene, and, recognizing the commitment and resolve of the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland and the Africa Region to establish a university in this country in the Wesleyan holiness tradition, I install you as Vice-Chancellor of Southern Africa Nazarene University.” (Place medallion around neck.) “Congratulations!”

Return to seat. Present her to congregation.