Theological Coherence of Church of the Nazarene Youth Pastors in the United States with the Articles of Faith

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Introduction

- Theological coherence
  - Importance
  - Significance
  - Connection
954 Nazarene youth pastors in United States.

Degree of agreement with Articles of Faith as indicator of theological coherence.
Little was known about the degree of agreement 954 Church of the Nazarene youth pastors in the United States had with the Articles of Faith.
Purpose of Research

- Degree of agreement
- Perceived relevance
- Strategic engagement
- Strengthen theological coherence
Youth ministry as critical part of the mission of the church. Youth called to take part in every practice of Christian ministry (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001).

Youth ministry is first and foremost a theological task (Root, 2015).

Decline in evangelicals due to increased biblical illiteracy and inclusive theology (Barna, 2001).
Many youth that have grown up in the church have surprising views of what it means to be a Christian (Powell & Griffin, 2011).

Youth pastors spent too much time on programming issues and too little time on theological issues (Arzola, 2008).

Religions thrive because of clearly articulated beliefs (Gallagher & Newton, 2009).
Millennials not expected to adhere to static set of doctrines and practices (Blomberg, 2006).

Millennials view own conscience as moral authority over God’s law (Farrell, 2011).

No educational or credentialing requirement for Church of the Nazarene youth pastors (Church of the Nazarene, 2013).
Research Question 1

What is the degree of agreement with the Articles of Faith of Church of the Nazarene youth pastors in the United States?
What differences in agreement exist as a factor of youth pastor characteristics?
Research Question 3

How does the youth pastor view the role of the Articles of Faith in youth ministry?
Research Question 4

What differences in agreement exist with the role of the Articles of Faith in local church youth ministry as a factor of youth pastor characteristics?
Based on the degrees of agreement, and view of the role of the Articles of Faith in youth ministry, what recommendations may be made to the Church of the Nazarene for developing theological coherence with the Articles of Faith in youth pastors?
Survey instrument created and pilot tested
- Degree of agreement with 52 mutually exclusive statements comprising the 16 Articles of Faith
- Previous familiarity
- Importance of knowing, teaching and including
- Six-point Likert scale (1 strongly disagree – 6 strongly agree)
Research Design cont.

- Qualitative data collection
- Anonymous and confidential
- Electronic distribution
- Four weekly invitations to all youth pastors
Data Collection

- Church of the Nazarene
- United States
- 954 population
- No limitation based on employment or credentialing status
- Electronic submissions
- Research department
- 324 sample
Participant Summary

- Male (77%)
- White/Caucasian (93%)
- In first marriage (79%)
- Full-time (60%)
- Nazarene college/university educated (59%)
- Church of the Nazarene member for 16+ years (60%)
- Ordained (47%) or in process (45%)
Analytical Methods

- Dependent Variable: Degree of agreement
- Independent Variables:
  - **Education** (some college or less, bachelor’s degree, or graduate degree)
  - **Credentialing status** (no plans or local license, district license, ordained)
  - **Years member of the Church of the Nazarene** (5 or less, 6-15, 16 or more)
- Data treated as interval/ratio due to 15 or more orderings (Salkind 2012)
Analytical Methods

- Descriptive Statistics
  - Means, Variance, and Standard Deviations
  - Histograms
- One-way ANOVAs
- Tukey post hoc
- Qualitative content analysis
What is the degree of agreement with the Articles of Faith of Church of the Nazarene youth pastors in the United States?

- Average mean response of 5.56 (mostly agree to strongly agree)
- Average range of means: .43
- None lower than mostly agree response
- Qualitative content analysis for language improvement and theological clarity
Statement 1: I believe in one eternally existent, infinite God, Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe; that He only is God, holy in nature, attributes, and purpose.

Statement 2: The God who is holy love and light is Triune in essential being, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Findings - RQ2

What differences in agreement exist as a factor of youth pastor characteristics?

- Education – no statistical significance
  \[ F(2,320) = 1.08, \ p = .34 \]
- Credentialing – no statistical significance
  \[ F(2,265) = .020, \ p = .98 \]
- Years Member – no statistical significance
  \[ F(2,264) = .756, \ p = .47 \]
How does the youth pastor view the role of the Articles of Faith in youth ministry?

54. A Nazarene youth pastor should know the Articles of Faith in order to serve in the local church. [comment]

55. A Nazarene youth pastor should teach the Articles of Faith to youth in the local church. [comment]

56. The Articles of Faith should be included in youth church membership class instruction. [comment]
Importance of Knowing – 5.11
(mostly agree to strongly agree)

Figure 54: Youth Pastor Knowledge

A youth pastor should know the Articles of Faith in order to serve in a local Nazarene church.
Importance of Teaching – 4.9
(somewhat agree to mostly agree)

Figure 55: Youth Pastor Instruction in Local Church

A youth pastor should teach the Articles of Faith to youth in a local Nazarene church.
The Articles of Faith should be included in youth church membership class instruction.
Findings - RQ4

What differences in agreement exist with the role of the Articles of Faith in local church youth ministry as a factor of youth pastor characteristics?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowing</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Credentialing</th>
<th>Years Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Credentialing</td>
<td>Years Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Credentialing</td>
<td>Years Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No statistical significance found for any
I had never really read the Articles of Faith before
I was familiar with most of the Articles but not all
I was familiar with all of the Articles
I have studied the Articles and am very familiar with them

Familiarity–Education: $p = .01$
Familiarity–Credentialing: $p = .00$

- I had never really read the Articles of Faith before
- I was familiar with most of the Articles but not all
- I was familiar with all of the Articles
- I have studied the Articles and am very familiar with them

- No plans for ordination/Local License
- District license
- Ordained
Familiarity—Years Member: $p = .00$

- I had never really read the Articles of Faith before
- I was familiar with most of the Articles but not all
- I was familiar with all of the Articles
- I have studied the Articles and am very familiar with them

The graph shows the percentage of members who fall into each category based on the years of familiarity.
Based on the degrees of agreement, and view of the role of the Articles of Faith in youth ministry, what recommendations may be made to the Church of the Nazarene for developing theological coherence with the Articles of Faith in youth pastors?

- Affirmation of youth pastors
- Increase familiarity
- Recognize education, credentialing process, and membership as opportunities
- Develop resources for preaching and teaching
Conclusions

- High degree of agreement exists
- Update language in Articles of Faith
- Educate on language usage
- Resources needed to support Articles of Faith
- Theological coherence within reach
Implications

- Youth pastors as opportunity to teach and preach Articles of Faith
- Denominational leaders should seek opportunities to build awareness and familiarity with Articles of Faith
Recommendations

- Expand study to other United States Church of the Nazarene pastors
- Expand study to youth leaders worldwide
- Strategic incorporation of Articles of Faith in pastoral development
- Update language in Articles of Faith or educate as to usage


References


Limitations

- Heightened focus on theological coherence in higher education
- Development of *Nazarene Essentials* resource
- Confidential and anonymous participation
- Invitation from Director of Nazarene Youth International
- Only United States youth pastors