



Presence!

Dr. Scott R. Rainey, NDI Global Director

I was 17 years old and a junior in high school. My family lived in Troy, Michigan. I played basketball for Troy Athens High School, and we had a big rivalry game one evening. My dad was in a very busy time at his work, so I wasn't sure if he was going to be able to come to the game. Boy, did I want him to be there!

I will never forget receiving his handwritten note when I woke up on that Friday morning. It said, "I wouldn't miss your game for my life! I will be there, son!" I still have the note today. I don't remember if we won the game or how well I played. I do remember the note, however, and I remember my dad's presence in the crowd! My dad's presence was the difference for me!

Christ's church understands the importance of presence. The incarnation of Christ (God becoming flesh) is for us a reality that changed everything. Showing His love, God became man for a sin-torn world so that you and I could become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). God's presence was the difference for us!

For the last two years, Christ's church has wrestled with the issue of presence. Is it necessary for the Body of Christ to meet together face-to-face? The answer to this question has been a resounding "YES!" Even during the intensity of the pandemic, the church found ways to gather together in small groups, to make disciples, and to physically show the love of Christ to one another and to a hurting community around them. The longer people experienced isolation, the greater the emotional damage they experienced. Some have even fallen away from their faith in God. The presence of the Body of Christ makes a difference in the world!

We are one year away from the convening of the General Assembly & Conventions 2023. Certainly, this NDI general convention will be different than any we have had in the past. The world has changed, and

the methodology of communication remains in flux. Virtual viewing of services has become normal for so many. NDI will even provide a hybrid convention, attempting to make most of our activities available to guests online.

The question of presence, however, remains. What will you miss if you don't come to Indianapolis, Indiana, in person? You will miss hugging your global Nazarene family. You will miss impromptu conversations that help you understand a global church in new ways. You will miss the excitement of being together with thousands of Nazarenes seeking renewal in the presence of Almighty God. You will miss Children's World Quiz—thousands of kids in one room sharing what they have learned from the Word of God in the last year. You will miss the formational moments that have shaped young leaders over the last century. I know this—you won't want to miss the NDI convention in 2023! Your presence will make a difference!

Dr. Scott Rainey is the Nazarene Discipleship International director. He is a strong supporter of Nazarene schools and preschools and Nazarene Educators Worldwide. His wife, Jennifer, is a homeschooling mom. This article is reprinted by permission from the NDI Newsletter, June of 2022.

Note: Nazarene Educators Worldwide will have a presence during the NDI Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, in June 2023. We hope to see you there!