



NAZARENE
ESSENTIALS

WHO WE ARE—WHAT WE BELIEVE

SPONSORED BY THE
BOARD OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

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THE CHURCH OF GOD,
IN ITS HIGHEST FORMS
ON EARTH AND IN HEAVEN,
HAS ITS GATHERINGS,
TEACHINGS, AND
UNITED WORSHIP,
BUT IT IS ALL TO HELP THE
INDIVIDUAL INTO
THE LIKENESS OF HIS SON.

—PHINEAS F. BRESEE

FIRST GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE



W E L C O M E T O
N A Z A R E N E

ESSENTIALS



A new generation of spiritual leaders and an increasing body of believers have requested that basics of the church's teaching, history, theology, mission, funding, and connections be placed in a brief and easily accessible publication—in plain language.

Nazarene Essentials explains why the Church of the Nazarene exists as a worldwide Holiness and Great Commission movement in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition.

For clergy and laity, *Nazarene Essentials* offers a way to better understand the church's purpose of spreading scriptural holiness and its mission to make Christlike disciples in the nations.

Nazarene Essentials is available on the web. Just go to the general superintendents' page at nazarene.org or go directly to www.nazarene.org/essentials. You will find additional resources along with *Nazarene Essentials* in a variety of languages at this site.

As you read and study *Nazarene Essentials*, may you learn more about the Church of the Nazarene and its desire to obediently share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Note: *Nazarene Essentials* is a supplement to and not a replacement for the Church of the Nazarene Manual, www.nazarene.org.



John Wesley, 1703-1791
Founder of Methodist Movement

OUR WESLEYAN-HOLINESS HERITAGE

The Church of the Nazarene confesses itself to be a branch of Christ's "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" church, embracing as its own the history of God's people recorded in the Old and New Testaments and by God's people through the ages, in whatever expression of Christ's church they are found. It receives the ecumenical creeds of the first five Christian centuries as expressions of its own faith.

It identifies with the historic church in preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, maintaining a ministry of apostolic faith and practice, and instilling the disciplines of Christlike living and service. It joins the saints in heeding the biblical call to holy living and entire devotion to God, which it proclaims through the theology of entire sanctification.

Our Christian heritage was mediated through the 16th-century English Reformation and 18th-century Wesleyan revival. Through the preaching of John and Charles Wesley, people throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales turned from sin and were empowered for Christian service.

This revival was characterized by lay preaching, testimonies, discipline, and circles of earnest disciples known as “societies,” “classes,” and “bands.” The Wesleyan revival’s theological landmarks included: justification by grace through faith; sanctification, or Christian perfection, likewise by grace through faith; and the witness of the Spirit to the assurance of grace.

John Wesley’s distinctive contributions included an emphasis on entire sanctification as God’s gracious provision for the Christian life. His emphases were disseminated worldwide. In North America, the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784 “to reform the Continent, and to spread scriptural Holiness over these Lands.”

A renewed emphasis on Christian holiness developed in the mid-19th century. Timothy Merritt of Boston, Massachusetts, spurred interest as editor of the *Guide to Christian Perfection*. Phoebe Palmer of New York City led the Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness and became a sought-after speaker, author, and editor. In 1867 Methodist preachers J. A. Wood, John Inskip, and others, at Vineland, New Jersey, initiated the first in a long series of holiness camp meetings that renewed the Wesleyan quest for holiness around the world.

Christian holiness was emphasized by Wesleyan Methodists, Free Methodists, the Salvation Army, and certain Mennonites, Brethren, and Quakers. Evangelists carried this movement to Germany, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, India, and Australia. New holiness churches arose, including the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). Holiness churches, urban missions, and missionary associations grew from this endeavor. The Church of the Nazarene was born from the impulse to unite many of these into one holiness church.

Unity In Holiness

Fred Hillery organized the People’s Evangelical Church (Providence, Rhode Island) in 1887. The Mission Church (Lynn, Massachusetts) followed in 1888. In 1890 they and eight other New England congregations formed the Central Evangelical Holiness Association. Anna S. Hanscome, ordained in 1892, was the first ordained female minister in the Nazarene lineage.

In 1894-95, William Howard Hoople organized three holiness congregations in Brooklyn, New York, which formed the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. “Pentecostal” was a synonym for “holiness” to these and other Nazarene founders. Hillery and Hoople’s groups merged in 1896, established work in India (1899) and Cape Verde (1901). Missions executive Hiram Reynolds organized congregations in Canada (1902). The group reached from Nova Scotia to Iowa by 1907.

Robert Lee Harris organized the New Testament Church of Christ (Milan, Tennessee) in 1894. Mary Lee Cagle, his widow, spread it into west Texas in 1895. C. B. Jernigan organized the first Independent Holiness Church (Van Alstyne, Texas) in 1901. These churches merged at Rising Star, Texas (1904), forming the Holiness Church of Christ. By 1908, it stretched from Georgia to New Mexico, ministering to outcasts and the needy, supporting orphans and unwed mothers, and connecting with workers in India and Japan.

Phineas F. Bresee and Joseph P. Widney, with about 100 others, organized the Church of the Nazarene at Los Angeles in 1895. They held that Christians sanctified by faith should follow Christ's example and preach the gospel to the poor. They believed that their time and money should be given to Christlike ministries for the salvation of souls and the relief of the needy. The Church of the Nazarene spread chiefly along the West Coast of the United States, with some congregations as far east as Illinois. They supported an indigenous mission in Calcutta, India.

In October 1907, the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and the Church of the Nazarene jointly convened in Chicago, Illinois, to fashion a church government that balanced superintendency with congregational rights. Superintendents were to foster and care for established churches, organize and encourage new churches, but not interfere with the independent actions of a fully organized church. Holiness Church of Christ delegates participated. The First General Assembly adopted a name drawn from both organizations: Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. Bresee and Reynolds were elected general superintendents.

In September 1908, the Pennsylvania Conference of the Holiness Christian Church, under H. G. Trumbaur, united with the Pentecostal Nazarenes. On October 13, the Second General Assembly convened at Pilot Point, Texas, with the General Council of the Holiness Church of Christ to unite the two churches.

Led by J. O. McClurkan, the Pentecostal Mission formed in Nashville in 1898, uniting holiness people from Tennessee and adjacent states. They sent pastors and teachers to Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, and India. In 1906 George Sharpe was ejected from Parkhead Congregational Church in Glasgow, Scotland, for preaching the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian holiness. The Parkhead Pentecostal Church was formed, other congregations organized, and the Pentecostal Church of Scotland was founded in 1909. The Pentecostal Mission and Pentecostal Church of Scotland united with the Pentecostal Nazarenes in 1915.

The Fifth General Assembly (1919) changed the denomination's official name to Church of the Nazarene. The word "Pentecostal" was no longer synonymous with the doctrine of holiness as it had been in the late 19th century when the founders originally adopted the name of the church. The young denomination remained true to its original mission of preaching the gospel of full salvation.





OUR GLOBAL CHURCH

The Church of the Nazarene's essential character was shaped by the parent churches that had united by 1915. There was an international dimension to this character. The denomination already supported fully organized churches in the United States, India, Cape Verde, Cuba, Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Japan, Argentina, the United Kingdom, Swaziland, China, and Peru. By 1930, it also reached into South Africa, Syria, Palestine, Mozambique, Barbados, and Trinidad. National leaders were essential to this process, such as district superintendents V. G. Santin (Mexico), Hiroshi Kitagawa (Japan), and Samuel Bhujbal (India). This international character was reinforced further by new accessions.

In 1922, J. G. Morrison led many Layman's Holiness Association workers and over 1,000 members in the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Montana into the church. Churches in Australia under A. A. E. Berg united in 1945. Alfredo del Rosso led Italian churches into the denomination in 1948. The Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association's South African work and its center in Tabor, Iowa, united with the Nazarenes around 1950.

The International Holiness Mission, founded in London by David Thomas in 1907, developed extensive work in southern Africa under David Jones. In 1952, its churches in England under J. B. Maclagan and work in Africa united with the Nazarenes. Maynard James and Jack Ford formed the Calvary Holiness Church in Britain in 1934 and united with the Nazarenes in 1955. The Gospel

Workers Church, organized by Frank Goff in Ontario, Canada, in 1918, joined the Church of the Nazarene in 1958. Nigerians formed an indigenous Church of the Nazarene in the 1940s and, under Jeremiah U. Ekaidem, united with the international body in 1988. These various accessions strengthened the Church of the Nazarene's international character.

In light of those developments, Nazarenes consciously developed a model of church that differs from the Protestant norm. In 1976 a study commission was raised to examine the denomination's future shape. Reporting in 1980, it recommended that the General Assembly deliberately adopt a policy of *internationalization* based on two principles.

First, it recognized that Nazarene churches and districts globally constituted a "worldwide fellowship of believers in which there exists full acceptance within their cultural contexts." Second, it identified a common commitment to "the distinctive mission of the Church of the Nazarene," namely "to spread scriptural holiness . . . [as] the key element in a core of non-negotiables which represent the Nazarene identity."

The 1980 General Assembly embraced "international theological uniformity" around the Articles of Faith, affirmed the importance of theological training for all ministers, and called for adequate support of theological education institutions in each world area. It summoned Nazarenes toward maturity as an international holiness community within a single connectional framework in which the colonial mentality that evaluated peoples and nations in terms of "strong and weak, donor and recipient" gives way to "one that assumes an entirely new way of looking at the world: one recognizing the strengths and equality of all partners."¹

The Church of the Nazarene has subsequently had a unique growth pattern among Protestants. By 1998, half of Nazarenes no longer lived in the United States and Canada, and 41 percent of delegates at the 2001 General Assembly spoke English as their second language or did not speak it at all. An African, Eugenio Duarte of Cape Verde, was elected one of the church's general superintendents in 2009.

Distinctives of International Ministry

Nazarene strategic ministries have centered historically around evangelism, social ministry, and education. They flourish through the mutual cooperation of cross-cultural missionaries and thousands of pastors and lay workers who have indigenized Wesleyan principles within their respective cultures.

Hiram F. Reynolds was strategic in establishing Nazarene cross-cultural ministries and developing a denominational concept of world evangelization. During a quarter-century as general superintendent, his constant advocacy helped raise missions to a denominational priority. Since 1915, Nazarene Missions International (originally the Woman's Missionary Society) has raised funds and promoted mission education in congregations around the world.

Early Nazarenes were a compassionate people and witnessed to God's grace by supporting famine relief in India, and establishing orphanages, maternity homes for unwed girls and women, and urban missions that ministered to addicts and the homeless. In the 1920s, the church's social ministry priorities shifted to medicine, as hospitals were built in China and Swaziland, and later in India and Papua New Guinea. Nazarene medical professionals cared for the sick, performed surgeries, trained nurses, and sponsored mobile field clinics among some of the world's poorest people.

Specialized clinics were established, such as a leprosy clinic in Africa. The creation of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries in the 1980s permitted a wider range of social ministries that endure today, including child sponsorship, disaster relief, AIDS education, orphan support, water projects, and food distribution.

Nazarene Sunday Schools and Bible studies have always been part of congregational life and play significant roles in forming Christlike disciples. The church has invested in basic education and literacy since the early years of Hope School for Girls in Calcutta, founded in 1905. Nazarene schools prepare people around the world for fuller participation in social, economic, and religious life. Most early Nazarene colleges in the United States had grade schools and high schools attached to them until the mid-20th century.

The Nazarene founders invested significantly in higher education, believing it essential for training pastors and other Christian workers and for shaping the laity. The International Board of Education lists Nazarene institutions of higher education around the world, including liberal arts colleges and universities in Africa, Brazil, Canada, the Caribbean, Korea, and the United States, plus Bible colleges and institutes, schools of nursing in India and Papua New Guinea, and graduate schools of theology in Australia, Costa Rica, England, the Philippines, and the United States.

The Church of the Nazarene has moved over time from a church with an international presence toward a global community of believers. Grounded in the Wesleyan tradition, Nazarenes understand themselves to be a people who are Christian, holiness, and missional, and they have embraced the mission statement: "To make Christlike disciples in the nations."

THE MISSION OF THE
CHURCH OF THE
NAZARENE
IS TO MAKE
CHRISTLIKE
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NATIONS



OUR CORE VALUES

1. We Are a Christian People

As members of the Church Universal, we join with all true believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and in affirming the historic Trinitarian creeds and beliefs of the Christian faith. We value our Wesleyan-Holiness heritage and believe it to be a way of understanding the faith that is true to Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.

We are united with all believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We believe that in divine love God offers to all people forgiveness of sins and restored relationship. In being reconciled to God, we believe that we are also to be reconciled to one another, loving each other as we have been loved by God and forgiving each other as we have been forgiven by God. We believe that our life together is to exemplify the character of Christ. We look to Scripture as the primary source of spiritual truth confirmed by reason, tradition, and experience.

We are united with all believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church, which, as the Nicene Creed tells us, is one, holy, universal, and apostolic. In Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit, God the Father offers forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to all the world. Those who respond to God's offer in faith become the people of God. Having been forgiven and reconciled in Christ, we forgive and are reconciled to one another. In this way, we are Christ's Church and Body and reveal the unity of that Body. As the one Body of Christ, we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." We affirm the unity of Christ's Church and strive in all things to preserve it (Ephesians 4:5, 3).

2. We Are a Holiness People

God, who is holy, calls us to a life of holiness. We believe that the Holy Spirit seeks to do in us a second work of grace, called by various terms including "entire sanctification" and "baptism with the Holy Spirit"—cleansing us from all sin, renewing us in the image of God, empowering us to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, and producing in us the character of Christ. Holiness in the life of believers is most clearly understood as Christlikeness.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit that restores us in the image of God and produces in us the character of Christ.

Because we are called by Scripture and drawn by grace to worship God and to love Him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, we commit ourselves fully and completely to God, believing that we can be "sanctified wholly," as a second crisis experience. We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts, cleanses, fills, and empowers us as the grace of God transforms us day by day into a people of love, spiritual discipline, ethical and moral purity, compassion, and justice. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that restores us in the image of God and produces in us the character of Christ.

We believe in God the Father, the Creator, who calls into being what does not exist. We once were not, but God called us into being, made us for himself, and fashioned us in His own image. We have been commissioned to bear the image of God: "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44a).

3. We Are a Missional People

We are a sent people, responding to the call of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, witnessing to the Lordship of Christ and participating with God in the building of the Church and the extension of His kingdom (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 6:1). Our mission (a) begins in worship, (b) ministers to the world in evangelism and compassion, (c) encourages believers toward Christian maturity through discipleship, and (d) prepares women and men for Christian service through Christian higher education.

A. Our Mission of Worship

The mission of the Church in the world begins in worship. As we are gathered together before God in worship—singing, hearing the public reading of the Bible, giving our tithes and offerings, praying, hearing the preached Word, baptizing, and sharing the Lord’s Supper—we know most clearly what it means to be the people of God. Our belief that the work of God in the world is accomplished primarily through worshipping congregations leads us to understand that our mission includes the receiving of new members into the fellowship of the church and the organizing of new worshipping congregations.

Worship is the highest expression of our love for God.

Worship is the highest expression of our love for God. It is God-centered adoration honoring the One who in grace and mercy redeems us. The primary context for worship is the local church where God’s people gather, not in self-centered experience or for self-glorification but rather in self-surrender and self-offering. Worship is the church in loving, obedient service to God.

B. Our Mission of Compassion and Evangelism

As people who are consecrated to God, we share His love for the lost and His compassion for the poor and broken. The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) move us to engage the world in evangelism, compassion, and justice. To this end we are committed to inviting people to faith, to caring for those in need, to standing against injustice and with the oppressed, to working to protect and preserve the resources of God’s creation, and to including in our fellowship all who will call upon the name of the Lord.

Through its mission in the world, the Church demonstrates the love of God. The story of the Bible is the story of God reconciling the world to Him, ultimately through Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). The Church is sent into the world to participate with God in this ministry of love and reconciliation through evangelism, compassion, and justice.

C. Our Mission of Discipleship

We are committed to being disciples of Jesus and to inviting others to become His disciples. With this in mind, we are committed to providing the means (Sunday School, Bible studies, small accountability groups, and so on) through which believers are encouraged to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and in their relationship with each other and with God. We understand discipleship to include submitting ourselves to obeying God and to the disciplines of the faith. We believe we are to help each other live the holy life through mutual support, Christian fellowship, and loving accountability. John Wesley said, “God has given us to each other to strengthen each other’s hands.”

Discipleship is the means through which the Holy Spirit gradually brings us to maturity in Christ.

Christian discipleship is a way of life. It is the process of learning how God would have us live in the world. As we learn to live in obedience to the Word of God, in submission to the disciplines of the faith, and in accountability to one another, we begin to understand the true joy of the disciplined life and the Christian meaning of freedom. Discipleship is not merely human effort, submitting to rules and regulations. It is the means through which the Holy Spirit gradually brings us to maturity in Christ. It is through discipleship that we become people of Christian character. The ultimate goal of discipleship is to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

D. Our Mission of Christian Higher Education

We are committed to Christian education, through which women and men are equipped for lives of Christian service. In our seminaries, Bible colleges, colleges, and universities, we are committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the development of Christian character, and the equipping of leaders to accomplish our God-given calling of serving in the Church and in the world.

Christian higher education is a central part of the mission of the Church of the Nazarene. In the early years of the Church of the Nazarene, institutions of Christian higher education were organized for the purpose of preparing women and men of God for leadership and Christian service in the global spread of the Wesleyan-Holiness revival. Our continued commitment to Christian higher education through the years has produced a worldwide network of seminaries, Bible schools, colleges, and universities.

COME, LET US SING FOR
JOY TO THE LORD
LET US SHOUT ALOUD TO THE
ROCK OF SALVATION
THE LORDSHIP OF
JESUS CHRIST



OUR MISSION

The mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to make Christlike disciples in the nations.

We are a Great Commission church (Matthew 28:19-20). As a global community of faith, we are commissioned to take the Good News of life in Jesus Christ to people everywhere and to spread the message of scriptural holiness (Christlike living) across the lands.

The Church of the Nazarene bonds together individuals who have made Jesus Christ Lord of their lives, sharing in Christian fellowship, and seeking to strengthen each other in faith development through worship, preaching, training, and service to others.

We strive to express the compassion of Jesus Christ to all persons along with our personal commitment to Christlike living.

While the primary motive of the church is to glorify God, we also are called to actively participate in His mission—reconciling the world to himself.

The statement of mission contains historical essentials of our mission: evangelism, sanctification, discipleship, compassion. The essence of holiness is Christlikeness.

Nazarenes are becoming a sent people—into homes, work places, communities, and villages as well as other cities and countries. Missionaries are now sent from all regions of the world.

God continues calling ordinary people to do extraordinary things made possible by the person of the Holy Spirit.



OUR NAZARENE CHARACTERISTICS

At the 2013 General Assembly, the Board of General Superintendents unveiled seven characteristics for the Church of the Nazarene:

1. Meaningful Worship
2. Theological Coherence
3. Passionate Evangelism
4. Intentional Discipleship
5. Church Development
6. Transformational Leadership
7. Purposeful Compassion

While these descriptors do not take the place of our mission “to make Christlike disciples in the nations” or our core values of “Christian, holiness and missional,” they describe what we believe should characterize every Church of the Nazarene and in large part, should be reflected by Nazarenes everywhere. We urge church leaders to emphasize, and all Nazarenes to embody, these characteristics as we go forward. Let us explore how, over time, they might become realities for the global church.

1. Meaningful Worship

A Call to Worship

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.

The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

—Psalm 95: 1-7a

We may say with confidence that to worship God is to acknowledge Him as the Rock of our salvation, the great God, the great King above all gods, the creator of all things, and the Shepherd who cares for His people.

A. The disciples of Jesus lived in His presence and ministered to others as a result of their relationship.

- Jesus sent His disciples out into the world to minister (Matthew 10).
- He later told them they needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. They waited in the upper room and the Holy Spirit came just as Jesus promised (Acts 2).
- Once the disciples began their ministry to the world, they became God's ambassadors.
- They brought a message of reconciliation along with their mission of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:11-21).
- Paul said it best, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

B. Jesus challenged His followers with the Great Commission.

- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The early church truly began to fulfill this commission in the world following a meaningful worship encounter in Antioch.

-Acts 13:1-4

C. *Meaningful worship* takes place as we practice the disciplines of the Spirit such as fasting and prayer.

- The Holy Spirit then sent them out to win others to their faith.
- This happened in the context of worship.
- Worship inspires us and releases the power of God in our lives.
- Worship reorients our lives to that of Christ. It is an imperative spiritual discipline for all believers, used by God to shape us into the holy image of Jesus.
- We must make both personal and corporate worship consistent practices within our lives.

D. *Meaningful worship* allows time in corporate services for God to move among us in His own way.

- The early church did not conduct business through committees or seminars.
- Rather, they gathered frequently for community worship services and allowed God to work freely among them.
- We must be willing to stop our agendas and allow time for God to complete His agenda among us.
- *Meaningful worship* makes room for God to move freely as we wait for Him with expectation.
- We must allow time for God to reveal himself and to convince, move, touch, save, and sanctify people in His own way and on His timetable.
- We should come to every worship gathering with the anxious anticipation that God will meet us in that gathering and move among us.
- We must anticipate God to move in very obvious ways, to do what only God can do, as we gather weekly to worship. We must never ever be satisfied with the ordinary routine of habitual gathering
- The children of God must gather together weekly so they can be powerfully captivated by the Spirit of God.
- Nothing can substitute for the human spirit being energized by God's Divine Spirit.
- This happens best in times of *meaningful corporate worship*.

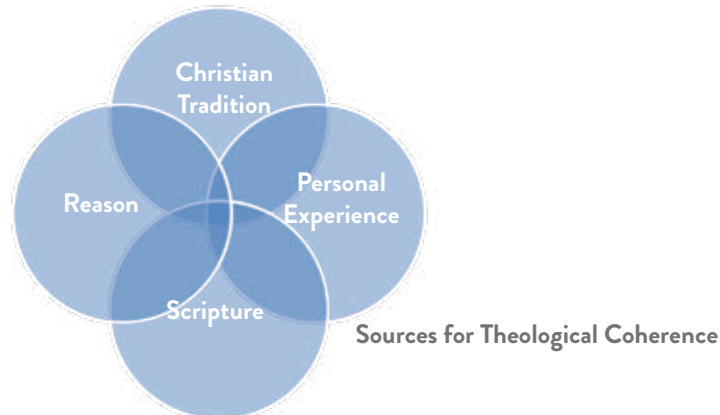
2. Theological Coherence

A. Our Nazarene voice must be heard within the larger Christian church.

- It speaks of who we are theologically.
- This is what we affirm, what motivates us to action, and how we live our beliefs in daily life.

B. These are our sources for *theological coherence*.

- Scripture: We believe the holy scriptures are foundational and vital in forming our identity in Christ.
- Christian tradition: We celebrate the orthodox teachings of 2,000 years of history through various Christian traditions.
- Reason: We believe the Spirit of God works through our intellects and gives us discerning minds.
- Personal experience: We believe God works in and through the lives of individuals and communities who follow Christ.



C. These beliefs give us *theological coherence*.

- We are Christian.
 - We affirm faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
 - We affirm Christ as the second person of the Trinity.
 - We hold to the orthodox creeds and traditions of the Christian church.
- We are Protestant.
 - We believe in justification by grace through faith alone for salvation
 - We give a high place to the authority of Scripture.
 - We believe in the priesthood of all believers.
 - We affirm the sermon as a central feature of the worship experience and place the pulpit at the center of the church platform.
 - We believe the gifts of the Spirit are distributed among all believers in the body of Christ.

- We are evangelical.
We believe in the possibility and necessity of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the forgiveness of sins and transformation of our character into the likeness of Christ.
We believe in the witness to our faith through changed lifestyles.
- We are Wesleyan.
We believe the essential nature of God around which all theology builds—“God is love” (1 John 4:8).
We believe humans exercise free will in order to have meaningful relationships with God.
We believe God exercises grace and mercy toward humanity.
We believe God’s prevenient grace goes before a person, keeps that person from going deeper into sin, and draws him or her back to God.
We believe God’s seeking, redeeming, saving, sanctifying, and sufficient grace works with a person to make him or her into a child of God and gives ongoing victory in the Christian walk.
We believe in the optimism of grace to break the power of sin in a person’s life and transform the individual from a sinner into a child of God who willfully obeys the Lord with a heart of love.
- We believe holiness and sanctification are real possibilities in this life.
- We believe in the witness of the Spirit.
We believe in assurance which lets an individual know his or her sins are forgiven by God and gives ongoing awareness that the blood of Jesus Christ continues to cover sins of the past and give daily victory.
We believe in Spirit-led guidance that lets an individual be led by God for the daily decisions of life. The Spirit of God can lead His children with prompts and checks that provide a sense of direction for life’s journey.

D. We believe there are four essential aspects of a holy life:

- Christlikeness—being transformed daily into the image of Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit as we make ourselves available to God’s work in us. “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind” (Philippians 2:1).
- Lifestyle—being set apart for holy purposes to do God’s work in our world. “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:15-17).
- Temptation and Power to Choose—having the ability to not surrender to addictions or suggestions of the flesh or the evil one but power from God to live the holy life. “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and

his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 1:18-20).

- Fruit of the Spirit—the perfect love of God that manifests itself in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).

E. We believe in the *via media*—the middle way. We attempt to avoid extremes on both sides of many issues. We focus less on the particulars of the extremes and more on the balance in the middle whenever possible.

3. *Passionate Evangelism*

Passionate evangelism is our response to Jesus’ love and grace for humanity. The Church of the Nazarene started with passionate evangelism. It continues to be the heart of who we are. In his call to evangelism, Phineas Bresee, the Church of the Nazarene’s first general superintendent, said, “We are indebted to give the gospel to every [person] in the same measure in which we have received it.” We focus on helping people discover a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ.

A. *Passionate evangelism* was modeled by Jesus:

- “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field’” (Matthew 9:36–38).
- Jesus said, “Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35).

B. *Passionate evangelism* was mandated by Jesus:

- “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation’” (Mark 16:15).
- He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).

C. *Passionate evangelism* was released by Jesus:

- “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).
- The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

D. *Passionate evangelism* is empowered by the Holy Spirit:

- He empowers us individually and corporately to live and witness holiness.
- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

E. *Passionate evangelism* is produced by the Holy Spirit:

- His life in us is evident and productive.
- “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22–23).

F. *Passionate evangelism* brings new life and new energy to both individuals and the church.

- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved

G. *Passionate evangelism* is an expression of our obedience to Jesus:

- One of the most undeniable evidences of the transforming power of the gospel is the life of Paul.
- In one of his testimonies, the apostle said, “I am obligated, both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel . . . for I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:14–16).

H. Passion for Christ is our point of entry to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)—our training and equipping follow:

- In consequence, everyone should know Jesus Christ.
- In congruence, everyone, even the less-gifted in techniques or methods, should respond with passion and share Christ resolutely.

I. *Passionate evangelism* invites us to rely on the power of God’s Word that compels us to share the good news of salvation with others:

- We study the Bible in faith; then we tell others what God’s Word says.
- The power of the gospel message speaks to the hearts of men and women, boys and girls who need a restored relationship with God.
- Jesus provides our example. “For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). “As Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news” (Luke 20:1a).

J. *Passionate evangelism* propels us to knowing Christ more completely:

- It conveys who we are, our lifestyle. Our passion for life is no greater than our passion for evangelism. By choosing to live we choose to evangelize.
- It verifies what we know. As the blind man who was healed by Jesus testified simply, “One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” (John 9:25).
- It tests how grateful we ought to be for the privilege. “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8b).

K. *Passionate evangelism* motivates us to disciple:

- Throughout life’s journey, we seek to influence people we know and people we do not know as we share our walk of faith.
- Every Christ-follower must be passionate enough about his or her relationship with God that sharing a personal testimony flows naturally in conversations with others.

L. *Passionate evangelism* inspires our creativity:

- Tools—A few examples include *JESUS* Film, Evangeball, and Evangecube.
- Methods—Many methods, one message.
- Strategies—Mass evangelism, friendship and personal evangelism, small groups, urban, and many more.

We are indebted to give the gospel to every person in the same measure in which we have received it.

—Phineas Bresee

4. Intentional Discipleship

A. Jesus called the church to *intentionally* make disciples.

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).
- The church has an *intentional* method for making Christlike disciples.
- Christlike disciples are people who dwell in Christ, grow in Christlikeness and do what He does. They deny themselves, love and obey God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Mark 12:30, John 15, Luke 9).
- *Intentional* relational discipleship is helping people develop obedient intimate relationships with Jesus. In these relationships, Christ’s Spirit transforms their character into Christlikeness—changing new believers’ values into kingdom values, and involving them in His mission of investing in others in their homes, churches, and world.

B. We begin by leading individuals into personal relationships with Jesus Christ.

- The faith journey begins with confession of sin and forgiveness by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
- These new creatures in Christ are regenerated and adopted into the family of God.
- Regeneration produces changed hearts and changed lifestyles, testimonies of God's grace to those they know.
- We immediately nurture these new believers into the community of faith teaching them from the very beginning that they have been saved not just for themselves but for those whom they will influence and lead to Christ. They will become disciple-makers who will disciple others who will become disciple-makers.
- Discipleship involves helping someone else follow Jesus more closely.

Intentional relational discipleship is helping people develop obedient intimate relationships with Jesus. In these relationships, Christ's Spirit transforms their character into Christlikeness—changing new believers' values into kingdom values, and involving them in His mission of investing in others in their homes, churches, and world.

C. We *intentionally* develop Christlike disciples through a strong pulpit ministry.

- Our pastors preach instructional sermons on how to grow in our faith in Christ.
- Our pastors preach sermons that are biblically-based and nurture their people toward growth and a deeper hunger for the Bible.
- Our pastors allow the Word of God to become the basis of all discipleship efforts.
- Our pastors teach their people how to study the Bible and think about what the Word means as well as how it applies to their lives.
- Our pastors strive for a balanced scriptural diet of preaching throughout the year.
- Our pastors rely on the Holy Spirit of God to enliven all that they do to come together in a balanced way to form Christlike disciples.
- Jesus preached to the multitudes and carefully taught His disciples in a small group.
- Jesus did not preach without telling a parables (stories) to help the people learn (Mark 4:34).

D. We promote Sunday School classes that nurture and grow Christlike disciples.

- Our Sunday School teachers teach lessons that are aimed at making Christlike disciples both in the exposition of Scripture and in the scriptural application to life.
- Our Sunday School teachers take a personal interest in young believers beyond the classroom to answer their questions about the Christian faith and encourage them to grow in God's grace.
- Our Sunday School system of instruction offers programming from the cradle to senior citizens; it provides the scope and sequence of material that studies the entire Bible in an organized way. "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

E. We develop small group Bible studies that encourage accountability.

- Small group Bible studies provide both group and one-on-one accountability for new believers and those seasoned in the faith.
- In small groups, healthy relationships are developed that move beyond regular meetings to connecting with friends as a way of life.
- These study groups offer a mixture of Bible study and social interaction that is essential for growth in grace.
- Small discipleship groups develop into support systems for in life together beyond Sunday.

F. We encourage spiritual growth of Christlike disciples through a well-planned church schedule.

- Bible quizzing programs.
- Caravan children's ministry.
- Vacation Bible Schools.
- Christmas and Easter outreach programs.
- Compassionate ministry efforts.
- Discipleship ministry to others.
- Ministries for men, women, senior adults, singles, special needs, sports teams, and a variety of other affinity groups are encouraged to help people make the connection to Christ and His church.

G. We urge believers to use every means available to grow and develop their personal faith.

- Read the Bible with study helps; listen to the Bible on audio files.
- Pray daily.
- Listen to Christian music.
- Read Christian literature.
- Find an accountability partner who will pray every day that you will be Christlike.
- Find an accountability partner who loves you so much they will ask you hard questions.
- Develop the discipline of regularly telling others what God is doing in your life.

H. We encourage believers to learn to seek daily the presence of God.

- We best describe the Christian life as a close personal relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- *Intentional disciples* grow best in the likeness of Christ as they spend time with Him.
- Thus, we listen daily for Christ's voice; we feed daily on His Word; we enjoy His daily presence.
- Christlike disciples intentionally seek Him and readily share Him with those whose lives they touch.

Prayer, the Word of God, and intentionally helping each other to be more like Jesus characterize dynamic discipleship in the church.

I. We encourage disciples to *intentionally* make disciples

- The Lord commissioned and authorized us to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).
- We prayerfully invite a mature Christian to *intentionally* disciple or mentor us.
- We prayerfully invite a small group of believers to become a part of our discipleship group.
- We invest our lives in these disciples as together we seek the Lord.
- Story-centered methods of teaching the Bible in small groups provide a solid biblical foundation for enabling disciples to learn the Bible and pass its message on to their circle of influence.
- Prayer, the Word of God, and *intentionally* helping each other to be more like Jesus characterize dynamic discipleship in the church.

5. Church Development

A. The Christian church began with Jesus Christ who started the first community of faith.

- The community of faith gathered regularly to worship God.
- Then it began to grow and multiply as new churches emerged through the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13-14).

B. Paul launched a second missionary journey with plans to plant churches, but the Holy Spirit led Him in a different direction (Acts 16).

- We must always remain open to God's new vision for His work and be led by His Holy Spirit.
- Paul had a vision. It did not come from other people or a community survey. It came from the heart of God. Our vision for planting new churches must come from God's heart as well.

- Paul had a vision of a man. It was not a vision of a blueprint, a strategy, a slogan, a flowchart, or a program. Paul's vision focused on lost humanity. Our vision for planting new churches must remain clearly focused on lost people who need a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Paul had a vision of a person from Macedonia. This was a person of a particular location, culture, language, and history. God will give us a vision of a particular people group or community as well. We need to discover and obey God's vision for us.
- Paul had a vision of a person from Macedonia who was standing. This person was not inferior to Paul. We look at each other eye to eye. This person to whom I go with the gospel is worthy of our respect.
- Paul had a vision of a person from Macedonia who was standing and calling, "Come over and help us!" This is the vision that drives us. We must go to our city, neighborhood, clan, tribe, and family.

We must bring Christ to our world.

C. God's vision involved continual divine leadership as He unfolded His plan for *church development* to Paul.

- The man of Macedonia turned out to be a woman. Lydia of Philippi became the most receptive individual to this ministry opportunity.
- Paul found his most receptive listeners in a group of women who were praying by a riverbank.
- Rather than using a Jewish synagogue as in previous church starts, Paul began this work in a home.
- Lydia, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, led this house church.
- Strategies for *church development* may not involve previously proven patterns.

D. Church planting requires great sacrifice.

- The ministry efforts of Paul and Silas landed them in prison. They made the personal sacrifice willingly. They sang songs of praise to God as they suffered on His behalf (Acts 16:25).
- Today, church leaders and followers of Jesus pay that same price for starting churches. It requires many hours of prayer, tears, toil, effort, money, and sometimes bloodshed to start new churches.
- In spite of the personal difficulty of Paul and Silas, a new house church sprang from the event with the Philippian jailer as its new pastor.

E. We must live in the presence of God so we sense an awareness of His abiding Holy Spirit in spite of our circumstances.

- Paul and Silas did not view their beating and night in jail as a personal loss. Rather, they sensed God's Spirit giving them victory in spite of the negative circumstances.
- Paul and Silas knew they were being directed by God's Spirit; they knew He would care personally for them.
- The earthquake that hit the Philippian jail reminds us that God is still involved in situations like these (Acts 16:25-26). He does not forget us when our ministry efforts are difficult.
- When we obey the Lord and do His will, in God's timing, the Lord will intervene with majestic power. While evil opposes the advance of God's kingdom, God has the final word.
- We are not building or advancing God's kingdom by ourselves; God is building His kingdom.

In the Church of the Nazarene, our definition of a church reads: Any group that meets regularly for spiritual nurture, worship, or instruction at an announced time and place, with an identified leader, and aligned with the message and mission of the Church of the Nazarene may be recognized as a church and reported as such for district and general church statistics (Board of General Superintendents). In other words, a church is a cluster of believers, not a building or property.

F. *Church development* strategies have changed throughout church history.

- The Christian church constructed no church buildings during the first 200 years of church history.
- The concepts of dedicated church buildings, property, and full-time pastors for churches came later.
- The Holy Spirit is now leading the church to reproduce itself in new ways.
- Each church is encouraged to plant a daughter church.
- These daughter churches meet in homes or other available sites.
- Each pastor mentors a co-vocational pastor who is in ministerial training.

- This model requires no funding to start the daughter church; laypeople can respond to God's call to assist in the launch of the new church.
- This model allows God to grow His church in new places around the world; He only needs receptive hearts to catch the vision, respond to the call, and allow God to lead.

G. The purpose of *church development* is to reach new people for Jesus Christ.

- Jesus said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (Luke 4:43).
- We are ambassadors of the kingdom of God who dedicate our lives to *church development*.
- Our efforts are not aimed at sustaining an organization.
- We want as many people as possible to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- We want to then disciple these new believers into the image of Christ.
- Jesus said, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35).

6. *Transformational Leadership*

A. We seek to develop leaders through a model of Christlikeness. Jesus is our example.

A transformational leader is a Christlike leader.

B. *Transformational leaders* are submissive and humble.

- They follow Jesus Christ who subjected himself to the will of the Father (Philippians 2:5-8).
- They fully depend upon God to answer their prayers and supply all their needs (John 15:7).
- They submit to the authority of others and think of themselves less (Ephesians 5:21).

C. *Transformational leaders* are servants.

- They follow the example of Jesus Christ who did not come to be served but to serve others (Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:28).
- They lead from this spirit and attitude of servanthood (Philippians 2).

D. *Transformational leaders* are visionary.

- "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18 KJV).
- "And the Lord answered me, and said, 'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables'" (Habakkuk 2:2 KJV).
- Jesus painted a vision of the kingdom of God; we must do the same in ways that everyone can understand clearly.

- This characteristic is a distinguishing factor between followers and leaders. Visionary leaders search God’s vision for the church and the communities and cast the vision to others.

E. *Transformational leaders* think strategically.

- They have the capacity to translate the vision for their communities into instruments for God’s kingdom.
- They understand the circumstances of our times and find biblical answers as did the children of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32).
- They envision souls that must be won to the kingdom of God.
- They cast the vision into action steps that mobilize believers into the harvest fields.
- They are able to put vision and mission into simple but effective kingdom plans (Luke 14:28-30).

F. *Transformational leaders* are team builders.

- Jesus is our model; He built a team and empowered it, rather than doing all the ministry by himself (Matthew 10).
- Jesus’ disciples were ordinary people, but they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).
- *Transformational leaders* build teams that involve everyone in the church in God’s kingdom work.

G. *Transformational leaders* are compassionately assertive.

- When Jesus launched His disciples into evangelistic work, He instructed them to be “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).
- *Transformational leaders* must know how to balance grace and law, justice and mercy, all with holiness.
- They must be wise decision makers who hold appropriately to their decisions.
- However, their decisions must be tempered with compassion.
- They must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

H. *Transformational leaders* communicate clearly.

- During His earthly ministry, Jesus often said, the one who has “ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:43). Jesus wanted His followers to listen consistently and persistently.
- *Transformational leaders* must attempt to speak with the same clarity and precision as Jesus Christ.
- *Transformational leaders* understand the importance of clear, consistent, and compelling communication: “If the trumpet doesn’t sound clearly, how could God’s army get ready for the battle?” (1 Corinthians 14:8).

I. *Transformational leaders* empower others to raise the next generation to lead the kingdom.

- Joshua's leadership style failed to raise up the next generation of leaders; he led only for his generation (Judges 2:10).
- *Transformational leaders* do not build empires for their tenure; they train both the present and the next generations.
- They identify, train, and develop mentors who equip, empower, and release leaders for the sake of God's kingdom.
- No leadership is successful without leadership succession. "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2).

7. *Purposeful Compassion*

A. *Purposeful compassion* displays the loving heart of God.

- God's sending His Son to the world and Jesus dying on behalf of humanity are God's ultimate gifts of love and compassion.
- John 3:16-17 tells us that God gave us His Son from the overflow of His love so we may have eternal life. Similarly, 1 John 3:16-17 tells us that the love of God for humanity is expressed in genuine acts of compassion of believers towards God's creation.
- Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection illustrate One being moved in love on behalf of another and on behalf of the world (Matthew 9:36).

B. *Purposeful compassion* is always done in the name of Jesus.

- Jesus is our model of compassion. In the Gospels, Jesus was moved within His innermost being to "suffer with" humanity.
- Jesus was particularly moved with compassion in love and care for those who were poor, lost, sick, marginalized, and vulnerable.
- Both fully God and fully human, Jesus is our model of how to live and how to love.

We do every act of service, generosity, or mercy in Jesus' name, and we offer our efforts to reveal Jesus' love.

C. *Purposeful compassion* respects the dignity of each person.

- The people of God offer hope, love, and help in the name of Jesus in ways that honor each person as someone who is made in God's image, as God's creation.
- Compassion does not have a motive other than to extend the love of God in Christ.

D. Purposeful compassion flows naturally from transformed believers.

- The church is called to embody God's own love and compassion in the world.
- The work of compassion is never completed by human effort or social activism alone.
- As the Body of Christ, our compassionate calling touches all areas of life in a holistic way formed by the life of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit transforms the hearts of believers who, in turn, work to bring physical, social, and spiritual transformation to our world.
- Compassion is meant to be integral and active in the life and ministry of every congregation.



E. *Purposeful compassion* is our Wesleyan definition of holistic mission.

- We are sent by God the Father and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into the world to love and serve the Lord.
- We believe that the Father is already working by the power of the Spirit in each person's life, and we are called to come alongside this good work.
- True evangelism brings the call and commitment of entering into and getting involved in the lives of those around us.
- In the name of Jesus, we draw near to suffering and brokenness, and we seek to bring healing, hope, peace, and love to persons who are in need, marginalized, and vulnerable.
- We are drawn toward one another in loving friendship and community, which brings social consequences. This is also how God builds and extends the Body of Christ.

F. *Purposeful compassion* flows from our lives as an expression of our commitment to God's mission to redeem a broken world.

- We seek to see, hear, and respond to broken and hurting humanity in the same way God does.
- We seek to invest all of the resources available to us to alleviate human suffering and seek God's plans of restoration, wholeness, salvation, and peace in and for the world.
- We further attempt to repair the systems of societies in cycles, which create the structures of injustice that contribute to the oppression of people and systemic evil in our world, and we do so in the name of Jesus.
- We seek in all we do to help fulfill the Lord's mission and bring glory to God (Micah 6:8).



OUR WESLEYAN THEOLOGY

The Miracle of Transforming Grace

“Grace that is greater than all our sin.” What a marvelous thought! And that is but the first line of the hymn.

In Jesus, God became incarnate and acted decisively to reconcile the world to himself (John 3:15-16; Romans 1:1-16). While we were still sinners, God offered His own Son “as a sacrifice of atonement” for sin (Romans 3:25). The Lord of all creation took on himself the sin of the world and provided salvation for us all!

In Christ Jesus, the righteousness of God—His salvation—was disclosed (Romans 3:21). Were it not for this action, all humankind would be hopelessly alienated from God (Ephesians 1:5-2:10). As it is, all the powers that would separate us from God have been defeated (Colossians 2:15). Now, “through faith in Jesus Christ” (Romans 3:22), we are set free (Romans 8:2)!

The New Testament forms one continuous hymn of praise to the God who lavishes His riches upon us (Ephesians 1:6-10). In Christ all the fullness of God dwelt bodily, and those who receive Christ will come to fullness in Him (Colossians 2:8-15). After examining the benefits of God's grace, Paul exclaimed, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33). Some of those riches can be identified: forgiveness of sin, the Spirit dwelling in us, formation in Christ's image, eternal life, peace with God, sanctification, the fellowship of the Church, and hope for the Lord's return.

When Jesus spoke, what many people heard was indeed "good news," namely, that God freely reconciles sinners to himself. Even a hated tax collector or a woman caught in adultery, hearing of God's love, can repent, be forgiven and receive eternal life. God gives himself freely to those who acknowledge their own inability to do anything that would merit His favor (Luke 15).

Long before we become aware of it, the Holy Spirit is at work, attempting to draw us to salvation. The psalmist says there is no place where the voice of God is not heard (Psalm 19:3). Paul tells us that, moment by moment, the whole creation depends upon Christ for its existence (Colossians 1:15-17). John declares that Christ enlightens everyone (John 1:9).

In ways matched only by the creativity and faithfulness of God, the Holy Spirit works in both individual and social histories to open pathways for the gospel. He goes before the explicit proclamation of the Gospel and prepares persons to hear—and hopefully receive—the Good News.

In retrospect, all Christians can trace a pattern by which the Spirit brought them to Christian redemption. We refer to this preparatory dimension of God's grace as "prevenient grace," or the grace that goes before.

God is for us. Everything that God accomplished through His Son, He now offers to us through the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the whole creation benefits from the salvation that the Father accomplished in His Son (Romans 8:19-25).

Justification is the name we give to the gracious act by which God actually forgives and reconciles sinners to himself. Justification—being returned to God's favor—is by grace through faith alone.

Justification is but one dimension of God's saving work. A second benefit is that the Spirit of God actually indwells the repentant sinner to establish the life of God. He or she is born anew—regenerated—by the Spirit of God. The New Testament calls this new realization of spiritual life a new creation, a new birth, birth from above, eternal life, entrance into the kingdom of God, walking in newness of life, and life in the Spirit.

Whatever the language, by the miracle of divine grace, the Holy Spirit actually takes up residence in the Christian and effects a transformation. Where once there was death, now there is life; peace with God where once there was warfare; hope where once there was despair. The New Testament

announces: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18a).

The New Testament speaks of Christians as being “in Christ” and of Christ as being in them. On the one hand, Christians are now reconciled to God because by faith they are “in Christ” (Romans 8:1), in him who reconciles repentant sinners to the Father.

But the New Testament also speaks of Christ in us as “the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). Through the Holy Spirit, the resurrected Christ imparts His life—himself—in His people. He abides in them and cultivates within them the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

“But,” many ask, “realistically, what kind of spiritual life can I expect as a Christian? Will not the pull of old sinful habits still set the pattern for my life? Or, does the Spirit of God now within me offer a better life?” The New Testament answers: “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead—making him Victor over death, hell, sin and the grave—now works in us by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:19)! Once the old law of sin and death ruled. But now “through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

The joyous norm for all Christians is that they be filled with Holy Spirit, that they live not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1-8). Have you personally experienced in your life the miracle of God’s transforming grace?

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CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE*

ARTICLES OF FAITH

PREAMBLE

In order that we may preserve our God-given heritage, the faith once delivered to the saints, especially the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace, and also that we may cooperate effectually with other branches of the Church of Jesus Christ in advancing God's kingdom, we, the ministers and lay members of the Church of the Nazarene, in accordance with the principles of constitutional legislation established among us, do hereby ordain, adopt, and set forth as the fundamental law or Constitution of the Church of the Nazarene the Articles of Faith, the Covenant of Christian Character, and the Articles of Organization and Government here following, to wit:



I. The Triune God

1. We 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. The God who is holy love and light is Triune in essential being, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(Genesis 1; Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Isaiah 5:16; 6:1-7; 40:18-31; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19-20; John 14:6-27; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; 1 John 1:5; 4:8)

II. Jesus Christ



2. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead; that He was eternally one with the Father; that He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say the Godhead and manhood, are thus united in one Person very God and very man, the God-man.

We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and that He truly arose from the dead and took again His body, together with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven and is there engaged in intercession for us.

(Matthew 1:20-25; 16:15-16; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1-18; Acts 2:22-36; Romans 8:3, 32-34; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:12-22; 1 Timothy 6:14-16; Hebrews 1:1-5; 7:22-28; 9:24-28; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:2-3, 15)



III. The Holy Spirit

3. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune Godhead, that He is ever present and efficiently active in and with the Church of Christ, convincing the world of sin, regenerating those who repent and believe, sanctifying believers, and guiding into all truth as it is in Jesus.

(John 7:39; 14:15-18, 26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:33; 15:8-9; Romans 8:1-27; Galatians 3:1-14; 4:6; Ephesians 3:14-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:24; 4:13)

IV. The Holy Scriptures

4. We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

(Luke 24:44-47; John 10:35; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21)



V. Sin, Original and Personal

5. We believe that sin came into the world through the disobedience of our first parents, and death by sin. We believe that sin is of two kinds: original sin or depravity, and actual or personal sin.

5.1. We believe that original sin, or depravity, is that corruption of the nature of all the offspring of Adam by reason of which everyone is very far gone from original righteousness or the pure state of our first parents at the time of their creation, is averse to God, is without spiritual life, and inclined to evil, and that continually. We further believe that original sin continues to exist with the new life of the regenerate, until the heart is fully cleansed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

5.2. We believe that original sin differs from actual sin in that it constitutes an inherited propensity to actual sin for which no one is accountable until its divinely provided remedy is neglected or rejected.

5.3. We believe that actual or personal sin is a voluntary violation of a known law of God by a morally responsible person. It is therefore not to be confused with involuntary and inescapable shortcomings, infirmities, faults, mistakes, failures, or other deviations from a standard of perfect conduct that are the residual effects of the Fall. However, such innocent effects do not include attitudes or responses contrary to the spirit of Christ, which may properly be called sins of the spirit. We believe that personal sin is primarily and essentially a violation of the law of love; and that in relation to Christ sin may be defined as unbelief.

(Original sin: Genesis 3; 6:5; Job 15:14; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:18-25; 5:12-14; 7:1-8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Galatians 5:16-25; 1 John 1:7-8 Personal sin: Matthew 22:36-40 (with 1 John 3:4); John 8:34-36; 16:8-9; Romans 3:23; 6:15-23; 8:18-24; 14:23; 1 John 1:9-2:4; 3:7-10)

VI. Atonement



6. We believe that Jesus Christ, by His sufferings, by the shedding of His own blood, and by His death on the Cross, made a full atonement for all human sin, and that this Atonement is the only ground of salvation, and that it is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. The Atonement is graciously efficacious for the salvation of those incapable of moral responsibility and for the children in innocence but is efficacious for the salvation of those who reach the age of responsibility only when they repent and believe.

(Isaiah 53:5-6, 11; Mark 10:45; Luke 24:46-48; John 1:29; 3:14-17; Acts 4:10-12; Romans 3:21-26; 4:17-25; 5:6-21; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Galatians 1:3-4; 3:13-14; Colossians 1:19-23; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:9; 9:11-14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:18- 21; 2:19-25; 1 John 2:1-2)



VII. Prevenient Grace

7. We believe that the human race's creation in Godlikeness included ability to choose between right and wrong, and that thus human beings were made morally responsible; that through the fall of Adam they became depraved so that they cannot now turn and prepare themselves by their own natural strength and works to faith and calling upon God. But we also believe that the grace of God through Jesus Christ is freely bestowed upon all people, enabling all who will to turn from sin to righteousness, believe on Jesus Christ for pardon and cleansing from sin, and follow good works pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

We believe that all persons, though in the possession of the experience of regeneration and entire sanctification, may fall from grace and apostatize and, unless they repent of their sins, be hopelessly and eternally lost.

(Godlikeness and moral responsibility: Genesis 1:26-27; 2:16-17; Deuteronomy 28:1-2; 30:19; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 8:3-5; Isaiah 1:8-10; Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:1-4; Micah 6:8; Romans 1:19-20; 2:1-16; 14:7-12; Galatians 6:7-8 Natural inability: Job 14:4; 15:14; Psalms 14:1-4; 51:5; John 3:6a; Romans 3:10-12; 5:12-14, 20a; 7:14-25 Free grace and works of faith: Ezekiel 18:25-26; John 1:12-13; 3:6b; Acts 5:31; Romans 5:6-8, 18; 6:15-16, 23; 10:6-8; 11:22; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14; 10:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 4:10a; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12-15; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; James 2:18-22; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2:20-22)

VIII. Repentance



8. We believe that repentance, which is a sincere and thorough change of the mind in regard to sin, involving a sense of personal guilt and a voluntary turning away from sin, is demanded of all who have by act or purpose become sinners against God. The Spirit of God gives to all who will repent the gracious help of penitence of heart and hope of mercy, that they may believe unto pardon and spiritual life.

(2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalms 32:5-6; 51:1-17; Isaiah 55:6-7; Jeremiah 3:12-14; Ezekiel 18:30-32; 33:14-16; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 3:1-14; 13:1-5; 18:9-14; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 17:30-31; 26:16-18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:9)



IX. Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption

9. We believe that justification is the gracious and judicial act of God by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believe on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

9.1. We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.

9.2. We believe that adoption is that gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a son of God.

9.3. We believe that justification, regeneration, and adoption are simultaneous in the experience of seekers after God and are obtained upon the condition of faith, preceded by repentance; and that to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

(Luke 18:14; John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 5:24; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:17; 3:21-26, 28; 4:5-9, 17-25; 5:1, 16-19; 6:4; 7:6; 8:1, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 2:16-21; 3:1-14, 26; 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:6-7; 2:1, 4-5; Philippians 3:3-9; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 1:9; 3:1-2, 9; 4:7; 5:1, 9-13, 18)

X. Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification



10. We believe that sanctification is the work of God which transforms believers into the likeness of Christ. It is wrought by God's grace through the Holy Spirit in initial sanctification, or regeneration (simultaneous with justification), entire sanctification, and the continued perfecting work of the Holy Spirit culminating in glorification. In glorification we are fully conformed to the image of the Son.

We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.

It is wrought by the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.

Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by grace through faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

This experience is also known by various terms representing its different phases, such as "Christian perfection," "perfect love," "heart purity," "the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit," "the fullness of the blessing," and "Christian holiness."

10.1. We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace.

We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the divine impulse to grow in grace as a Christlike disciple. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and personality. Without such purposeful endeavor, one's witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost.

Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines, and sacraments of the Church, believers grow in grace and in wholehearted love to God and neighbor.

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; John 7:37-39; 14:15-23; 17:6-20; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; Romans 6:11-13, 19; 8:1-4, 8-14; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:17-18, 25-27; Philippians 3:10-15; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 4:9-11; 10:10-17; 12:1-2; 13:12; 1 John 1:7, 9) ("Christian perfection," "perfect love": Deuteronomy 30:6; Matthew 5:43-48; 22:37-40; Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10;

1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 3:10-15; Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 4:17-18 “Heart purity”: Matthew 5:8; Acts 15:8-9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:3 “Baptism with the Holy Spirit”: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9 “Fullness of the blessing”: Romans 15:29 “Christian holiness”: Matthew 5:1-7:29; John 15:1-11; Romans 12:1-15:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-15; Colossians 2:20-3:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7-8; 5:23; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Hebrews 10:19-25; 12:14; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 1:1-11; 3:18; Jude 20-21)



XI. The Church

11. We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

God calls the Church to express its life in the unity and fellowship of the Spirit; in worship through the preaching of the Word, observance of the sacraments, and ministry in His name; by obedience to Christ, holy living, and mutual accountability.

The mission of the Church in the world is to share in the redemptive and reconciling ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Church fulfills its mission by making disciples through evangelism, education, showing compassion, working for justice, and bearing witness to the kingdom of God.

The Church is a historical reality that organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms, exists both as local congregations and as a universal body, and also sets apart persons called of God for specific ministries. God calls the Church to live under His rule in anticipation of the consummation at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Exodus 19:3; Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 8:11; 10:7; 16:13-19, 24; 18:15-20; 28:19-20; John 17:14-26; 20:21-23; Acts 1:7-8; 2:32-47; 6:1-2; 13:1; 14:23; Romans 2:28-29; 4:16; 10:9-15; 11:13-32; 12:1-8; 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 7:17; 11:1, 17-33; 12:3, 12-31; 14:26-40; 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:1; Galatians 5:6, 13-14; 6:1-5, 15; Ephesians 4:1-17; 5:25-27; Philippians 2:1-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:19-25; 1 Peter 1:1-2, 13; 2:4-12, 21; 4:1-2, 10-11; 1 John 4:17; Jude 24; Revelation 5:9-10)

XII. Baptism



12. We believe that Christian baptism, commanded by our Lord, is a sacrament signifying acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ, to be administered to believers and declarative of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and full purpose of obedience in holiness and righteousness.

Baptism being a symbol of the new covenant, young children may be baptized, upon request of parents or guardians who shall give assurance for them of necessary Christian training.

Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant.

(Matthew 3:1-7; 28:16-20; Acts 2:37-41; 8:35-39; 10:44-48; 16:29-34; 19:1-6; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-28; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:18-22)



XIII. The Lord's Supper

13. We believe that the Memorial and Communion Supper instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is essentially a New Testament sacrament, declarative of His sacrificial death, through the merits of which believers have life and salvation and promise of all spiritual blessings in Christ. It is distinctively for those who are prepared for reverent appreciation of its significance, and by it they show forth the Lord's death till He come again. It being the Communion feast, only those who have faith in Christ and love for the saints should be called to participate therein.

(Exodus 12:1-14; Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; John 6:28-58; 1 Corinthians 10:14-21; 11:23-32)

XIV. Divine Healing



14. We believe in the Bible doctrine of divine healing and urge our people [to seek] to offer the prayer of faith for the healing of the sick. We also believe God heals through the means of medical science.

(2 Kings 5:1-19; Psalm 103:1-5; Matthew 4:23-24; 9:18-35; John 4:46-54; Acts 5:12-16; 9:32-42; 14:8-15; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 5:13-16)



XV. Second Coming of Christ

15. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again; that we who are alive at His coming shall not precede them that are asleep in Christ Jesus; but that, if we are abiding in Him, we shall be caught up with the risen saints to meet the Lord in the air, so that we shall ever be with the Lord.

(Matthew 25:31-46; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 9:26-28; 2 Peter 3:3-15; Revelation 1:7-8; 22:7-20)

XVI. Resurrection, Judgment, and Destiny



16. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, that the bodies both of the just and of the unjust shall be raised to life and united with their spirits—“they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

16.1. We believe in future judgment in which every person shall appear before God to be judged according to his or her deeds in this life.

16.2. We believe that glorious and everlasting life is assured to all who savingly believe in, and obediently follow, Jesus Christ our Lord; and that the finally impenitent shall suffer eternally in hell.

*Scripture references are supportive of the Articles of Faith and were placed here by action of the 1976 General Assembly but are not to be considered part of the Constitutional text.



OUR ECCLESIOLOGY

The Holy Christian Church

We identify with the Scriptural account of “the people of God,” confessing ourselves to be part of “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” Baptism into Christ’s church is a personal and corporate witness to God’s prevenient and saving grace. Our ministers are ordained “in the Church of God,”² and our congregations are concrete expressions of the church universal. We affirm the scriptural account of the holiness of God and God’s church, elected as an instrument of divine grace and called it into being by the Holy Spirit, its life-force, who renders it into Christ’s living body in the world. The Christian church witnesses to the truth that the worship of God is the one true focus of human life.

Therefore, it calls sinners to repentance and the amendment of their lives, nurtures holy living in believers through rich congregational life, and calls believers to the sanctified life. In its holiness and faithfulness, the church exhibits God’s kingdom to the world, so that the church is, in a true sense, the measure of its own message.

Aligned with God’s Mission

God’s mission in the world is primary, and we derive our mission from God, who formed a universe of vast proportions and, within nature and history, created a people to bear the divine image so that divine love might flourish. When sin marred the creation, the mission’s redemptive nature

was revealed, namely “the restoration of all creation to God’s creation purposes.”³ Humanity’s restoration is fundamental.

John Wesley defined this as sanctification, or “the renewal of our soul in the image of God,” characterized as “righteousness and true holiness.”⁴ God’s mission was reflected in the call of Abraham, chosen for blessing that his seed could “be a blessing to all nations” (Genesis 12:1-2), and manifested in the history of the Hebrews, who bore witness to the One God, whose name they proclaimed to the nations of earth.

Christians experience God as a Holy Trinity, in whom God is revealed most fully in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Holy Spirit invites and empowers our participation in God’s mission. The church enters that covenant and continues the blessing and healing of the nations as part of its sanctified life. We join other Christians in God’s mission but embrace a vision that orders our denominational life as an *international* church in which national boundaries do not define ecclesiastical ones, since Christ opens the church to all nations and races.

Ministering as Christ in the World

The basis of Christian ministry is the biblical mandate to bear witness to God’s love in Christ. Believers affirm their ministry at baptism, which announces their intention to bear a public witness as Christ’s disciples. Faithful discipleship is an outward sign of God’s inward grace in us; likewise, it is the sign of divine grace at work in the world that “God so loved.” All members of Christ’s body are equipped for service, and those called to specialized leadership in the church are ordained as apostolic ministers. Their call is rooted in deep personal conviction.

Clergy and laity of the local and district church discern and affirm the presence of the requisite gifts and graces, and, in district assembly, elect those who are to be ordained as ministers. Deacons are ordained to vocational service in a ministry in which Word and Table are not primary responsibilities. Elders are ordained to shape the body of Christ through preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments, nurturing the people in worship, and ordering congregational life.

Superintendents are elected for district or general office by assemblies of laity and clergy. District superintendents direct their pastoral and spiritual leadership toward the churches, members, and clergy of a defined area. General superintendents exercise an apostolic and pastoral ministry toward the whole denomination, maintaining the church’s unity in doctrine and holiness, modeling Christ’s life through collegiality, and casting a vision that the whole church can embrace.

Their vantage point must be international in scope. It falls on them to articulate the vision and need for resources for different parts of the church body, participate in the allocation of resources to the needy areas of our world ministry, and unify the church in mission and message. Through the ordination of ministers at the various district assemblies, and in other ways, they are to maintain the unity of a denomination of immense national, economic, racial, and linguistic diversity.



OUR POLITY

Nazarenes have always recognized their church as one expression of the church universal. Further, we hold that Scripture reveals no specific design of church government, and that our polity can be shaped by common consent, provided that nothing we agree upon violates the Scriptures. In this equation, we believe that *mission should shape structure* (2013-2017 *Manual*, Historical Statement, pp. 17-19).

The Church of the Nazarene embraces a democratic version of the Methodist Episcopal polity that expanded the voice of clergy and laity and imposed limits on the episcopal office. Here are some of the basic elements of Nazarene polity:

- We have three levels of government:
 1. Congregations elect delegates to represent them at the annual district assembly.
 2. The district assemblies elect delegates to the general assembly, which meets every four years.
 3. General assembly decisions are binding on the whole church and all of its parts.
- The general assembly elects general superintendents who guide the denomination's general ministries and exercise jurisdiction over the entire church. They serve from one general assembly to the next and must be re-elected at each assembly. Every general superintendent

is assigned a list of districts and is responsible for conducting the annual district assemblies and ordaining new ministers within his or her area of district responsibility. The number of general superintendents has varied over time but has remained at six since 1960. Collectively, they form the Board of General Superintendents, which meets as a board several times each year.

- The general assembly elects a General Board composed of equal numbers of laity and clergy. It meets annually and elects the church's general officers and departmental directors. It also reviews the policies, budgets, and operations of the church's general ministries.
- The churches in an area are grouped in districts and led by a district superintendent. The district church is organized for missional purposes and meets annually as the district assembly. The district assembly elects the district superintendent, whose responsibility is to nurture the churches and pastors, plant new churches, and nourish the health of the district.
- Churches call their own pastors in consultation and with the approval of the district superintendent and manage their own financial and operational affairs.
- Nazarene districts are grouped into world regions (i.e., Africa Region, Asia-Pacific Region, and so on). The world regions are missional structures rather than governance structures.
- A trust clause makes church buildings and parsonages the district's property.
- Women and men alike may serve in all clergy and lay offices of the church.
- We call our book of order the Church of the Nazarene *Manual*. Changes to the *Manual* are made by the general assembly.

(Genesis 18:25; 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 50:6; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-31; 20:27-38; John 3:16-18; 5:25-29; 11:21-27; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:1-16; 14:7-12; 1 Corinthians 15:12-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 20:11-15; 22:1-15)



THE CHURCH

The Local Church

The Church of the Nazarene wants all people to experience the transforming grace of God through the forgiveness of sins and heart cleansing in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our primary mission is “to make Christlike disciples in the nations,” to incorporate believers into fellowship and membership (congregations), and to equip (teach) all who respond in faith.

The ultimate goal of the community of faith is to present everyone perfect in Christ (Colossians 1:28) at the last day.

It is in the local church that the saving, perfecting, teaching, and commissioning of believers takes place. The local church, the Body of Christ, is the representation of our faith and mission.

The District Church

Local churches are grouped administratively into districts and regions.

A district is an entity made up of interdependent local churches organized to facilitate the mission of each local church through mutual support, the sharing of resources, and collaboration.

The district superintendent gives oversight to a particular district in conjunction with that district's advisory board.

The General Church

The bases of unity in the Church of the Nazarene are those beliefs, polity, definitions, and procedures as articulated in the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*.

The core of this unity is declared in the *Articles of Faith* of the *Manual*. We encourage the church in all regions and languages to translate—widely distribute—and teach these beliefs to our constituency. This is the golden strand that is woven into the fabric of all we are and do as Nazarenes.

A visible reflection of this unity is represented by the General Assembly, which is the “supreme doctrine-formulating, lawmaking, and elective authority of the Church of the Nazarene.” (*Manual* 300)

A second reflection is the international General Board, which represents the entire church.

A third reflection is the Board of General Superintendents, who may interpret the *Manual*, approve cultural adaptations, and ordain to the ministry.

The government of the Church of the Nazarene is representative, and thus avoids the extremes of episcopacy on the one hand and unlimited congregationalism on the other.

The church is more than connected. It is interconnected. The ties that bind us are stronger than a single cord that can be cut at any given time.

What is the source of our common bond? It is Jesus Christ. (Church of the Nazarene *Manual* 2013-2017)



A CONNECTED CHURCH

The Church of the Nazarene is a well-connected “holiness communion.” It is not a loose affiliation of independent churches, nor is the denomination merely an association of churches having some commonality of belief and purpose but no real organic relationship.

The church is unapologetically connectional.

By that we mean we are an interdependent body of local churches organized into districts in order to carry out our mutual mission of “making Christlike disciples in the nations.” The commitment is to be accountable to one another for the sake of the mission and to maintain the integrity of our commonly held beliefs.

As a connected church we:

- Share beliefs.
- Share values.
- Share mission.
- Share responsibilities.

Shared responsibilities include a cooperative financial responsibility for funding the mission through the World Evangelism Fund and mission specials.

Since 1908, Nazarenes have been making *Christlike disciples in the nations* through global ministry. Areas being reached for Christ continue to expand and grow. As you pray and give generously, you

join with others to do more than you could alone. Each offering given to your local church has a purpose in funding the mission.

The Church of the Nazarene holds to the principle of equal sacrifice, not equal giving. This is a biblical position essential to a global church that includes first world economics and developing areas.

The World Evangelism Fund is the denominational funding plan. Sometimes you might hear the term “funding the mission.” This is a broader term than World Evangelism Fund, used to recognize the various ways mission is funded in different parts of the world.

Supporting the mission and ministries of the church is alive and well throughout Global Mission regions. Funding the mission has great significance for the church in terms of sacrificial giving for many.

When we look at the total amount given around the world, on average 86.1 percent is used for ministry in your local church. District ministries use about 4.5 percent of the funding. Your Nazarene colleges educate and disciple students with about 1.8 percent of the funds. This provides 7.6 percent of the money from your church to go to the World Evangelism Fund for missionaries, global ministries, and other approved mission specials.

You can see that your giving provides training, discipling, and brings the Good News to children, youth, and adults. When you give, you join with Nazarenes in a connected church; you love broken people, reach lost souls around the world, and *make Christlike disciples in the nations*.



World Evangelism Fund and mission specials are all part of sharing responsibility—and make it possible for the church to send missionaries, train national leaders, and provide educators to evangelize, disciple, and teach the next generation of Nazarenes.

Christian. Holiness. Missional.

We are witnessing the fulfillment of a vision from our first general superintendent, Phineas F. Bresee. He spoke from the beginning about a “divine panorama” of the Church of the Nazarene encircling the globe with “salvation and holiness unto the Lord.”

Every Nazarene, wherever he or she is, participates in the wider reality of this vision.

Each transformed life is a testimony to the Wesleyan-Holiness teaching of full salvation for all.

The church’s mission “to make Christlike disciples in the nations” reminds us that we are given a spiritual charge, and at the same time we are to be good stewards of all the resources provided by the Lord.

The mission comes from God, which means that our purpose is of the highest order, made possible by the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

While we honor our “goodly heritage,” the church cannot go back—nor can it remain where it is. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to keep moving toward the city “whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

Behold, God is making all things new!

¹ *Journal of the Twentieth General Assembly, Church of the Nazarene*, (1980): 232. Franklin Cook, *The International Dimension* (1984): 49.

² These words are inscribed on each ordination credential.

³ Roger L. Hahn, “The Mission of God in Jesus’ Teaching on the Kingdom of God,” in Keith Schwanz and Joseph Coleson, eds., *Missio Dei: A Wesleyan Understanding* (2011), 58.

⁴ John Wesley, *Sermons, Volume II* (1902), p. 373; John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in J. A. Wood, *Christian Perfection as Taught by John Wesley* (1885), 211.

WE BELIEVE

1

In one God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2

That the Old and New Testament Scriptures, given by plenary inspiration, contain all truth necessary to faith and Christian living.

3

That man is born with a fallen nature, and is, therefore inclined to evil, and that continually.

4

That the finally impenitent are hopelessly and eternally lost.

5

That the atonement through Jesus Christ is for the whole human race; and that whoever repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is justified and regenerated and saved from the dominion of sin.

6

That believers are to be sanctified wholly, subsequent to regeneration, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

7

That the Holy Spirit bears witness to the new birth, and also to the entire sanctification of believers.

8

That our Lord will return, the dead will be raised, and the final judgement will take place.

