



**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOARD OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS
TO THE
91st GENERAL BOARD
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

23 February 2014

“For Such a Time as This”

INTRODUCTION

I greet you tonight on behalf of the Board of General Superintendents (BGS) in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We come together for the 91st session of the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene and the first session of the new quadrennium. To our guests who are here and to those who are watching online we extend warm Christian greetings.

This second plenary meeting of the 2014 General Board Session is a time of accountability for the General Superintendents to report on the past year and to consider the future direction of the church.

Just eight months ago we bid farewell to our retiring colleagues, Jesse C. Middendorf and Stan A. Toler, at the 28th General Assembly in Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A. We already miss their unique perspectives and strengths. At that same assembly we elected our first Latino general superintendent, Gustavo A. Crocker, and our first Generation X general superintendent (by one month), David A. Busic.

Speaking personally, I have greatly appreciated the warm welcome of my colleagues. I have found the BGS to be a wonderful chemistry of combined experiences and giftedness that contribute to the Board of General Superintendents specifically and to the Church of the Nazarene globally. I feel privileged to work side by side with these capable, Christ-centered spiritual leaders.

It takes a lot of work to make General Board possible. Our deepest appreciation is extended to General Secretary David Wilson and his staff; to the officers, directors, and administrative personnel at the Global Ministry Center (GMC); to the regional office staffs; and to the Board of General Superintendents' office for keeping the general superintendents on track and on time—to the extent that is possible. We want you to know that we greatly value what you do. You are a dedicated group, and we could not accomplish the mission without your sacrificial service.

Would you join me in expressing thanks to all who co-labor on our behalf?

Finally, to our pastors, missionaries, evangelists, district superintendents, educators, chaplains, compassionate ministry directors, and laity, we want to recognize your faithfulness and contribution to the work of the church. We pray God's grace and blessings upon your ministry. Truthfully, this is *your* report.

As this report is presented, it is my prayer that it will bring honor and glory to God for what He has done, is doing, and will do in the life of the Church of the Nazarene. Whatever is good, holy, and fruitful in the church is only from God and comes to us by His grace.

This is another way of saying that our motivation for mission and ministry is not derived from a calendar of denominational programs and promotions designed by human effort. It comes from a divine appointment that we are given, as Daniel 2:21 suggests, within the “times and seasons” designed by our good God.

And so I say to each of our 52 General Board members—27 laity and 25 clergy—from all Global Mission regions, you are serving not just by ballot election, but by divine appointment. Although 31 members of the General Board are new (60 percent), let me remind you that all of us are here for a time and a season appointed by the *Lord*. It is a sacred calling that we approach with utmost earnestness and humility.

THE PAST YEAR

General Assembly

The international church family gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A., in June 2013, for the denomination’s 28th General Assembly and Conventions. It was a time of celebration, worship, prayer, learning, making new friends, and renewing old relationships.

The attendance for the five worship services ranged from 7,000 to 20,000.

The Board of General Superintendents called for limiting General Assembly costs to \$5.5 million drawn from the World Evangelism Fund (WEF). We are very pleased to report that the net expenses for the 2013 General Assembly came in under budget by \$1.3 million dollars. Many thanks to David Wilson, Marilyn McCool, Judy Veigl, Susan Metcalf, and Diane Miller for carefully managing the administrative and financial responsibilities of General Assembly.

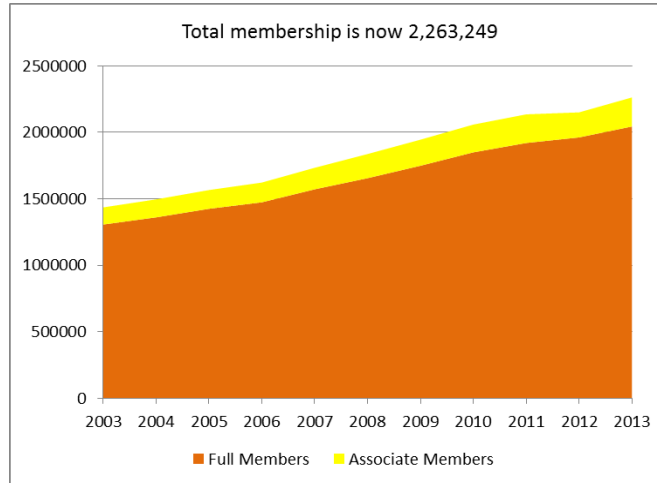
There were other noteworthy actions at Indianapolis:

- Nazarene Compassionate Ministries had a record 1,117 sponsors step forward to support children in need.
- The use of electronic tablets instead of hard-copy notebooks was implemented to access resolutions and other documents.
- A record \$300,000 in cash and pledges was received in the corporate worship services and in plenary sessions of General Assembly to help cover the cost of the events.
- Almost every action item put forth by the Nazarene Future Study Report was adopted.
- Of those responding to the first global General Assembly survey, 90 percent said it had a positive impact on their personal spiritual life.

Statistical Highlights

Other firsts took place during 2013 that are worth noting:

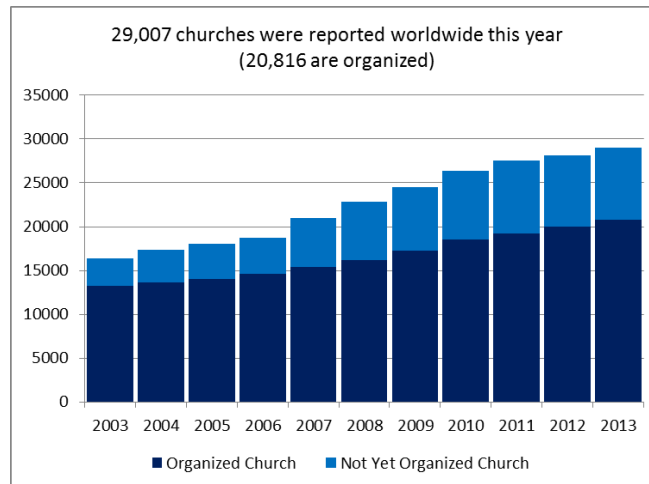
- The church reached its largest membership level in our history—2.3 million, which is a 5 percent increase from 2012.



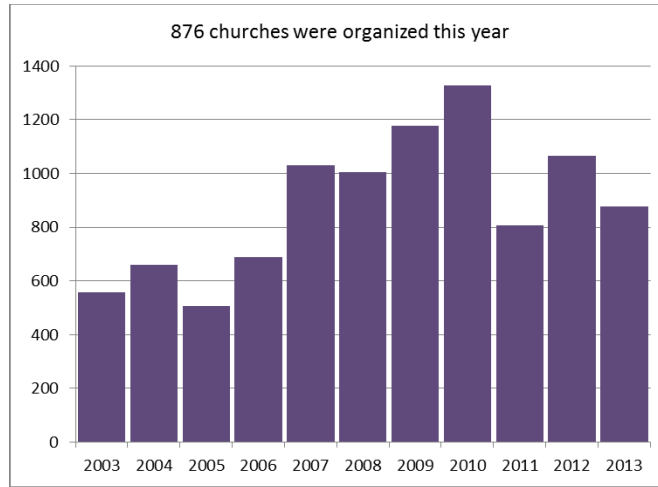
- Full membership exceeded 2 million for the first time, representing a 4 percent increase.
- The denomination averaged our highest worship attendance—1.5 million.
- We also averaged the highest number of people being disciplined—1.7 million.

In addition we can report that:

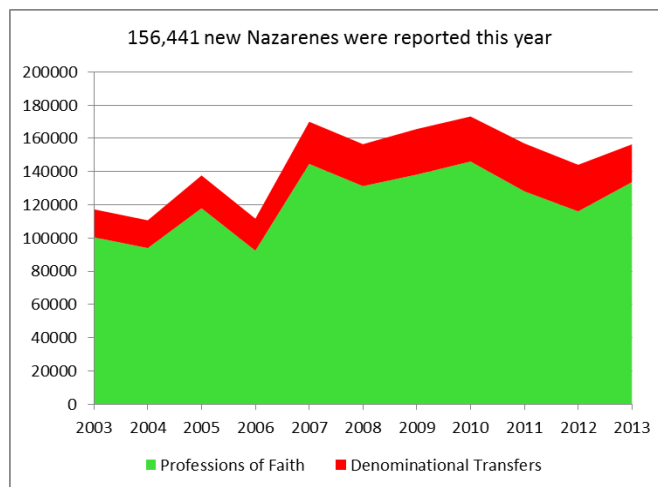
- There were 29,007 churches worldwide (20,816 organized)



- 876 churches were organized in 2013 (nearly 2.5 per day)



- There were more new Nazarenes than last year—156,441 (9 percent increase).



When the totals are broken down and we look at the percentage of membership for each region, we begin to see an emerging picture of the future church. At the end of 2013 the distribution of *membership* and *giving* reflects the following:

<i>Region</i>	<i>Membership Percentage</i>	<i>Per Capita Spending</i>
• USA/Canada	28.8 percent	\$1,186.00
• Africa	26.5 percent	\$ 13.00
• Mesoamerica	15.8 percent	\$ 60.00
• Eurasia	12.1 percent	\$ 34.00
• South America	11.7 percent	\$ 182.00
• Asia-Pacific	5.1 percent	\$ 280.00

The narrowing gap in membership between USA/Canada and Africa is now a mere 2.3 percent.

Projections of reaching 5 million church members by 2030 continue to be on course.

Funding the Mission

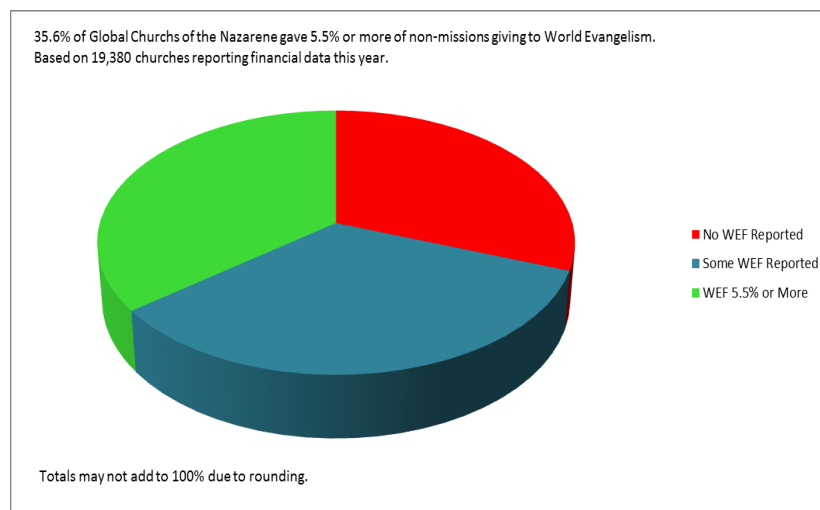
The Board of General Superintendents holds to the principle of equal sacrifice, not equal giving. This concept, first publicly stated by a late general superintendent, John A. Knight, is a biblical position essential to a global church that includes First World economies and developing areas.

The BGS has sometimes referred to the “mission dollar,” a broader term than World Evangelism Fund, to recognize the various ways in which mission is funded in different parts of the world.

While it is harder to track mission dollar giving, we know it is alive and well. The general superintendents acknowledge its value and significance to the church.

However, according to official reports from the general treasurer and general secretary, the majority of mission funding still comes from WEF giving, which the denomination tracks quite well.

One of several highlights from the past year is the fact that the proportion of churches contributing 5.5 percent or more of non-missions giving to the World Evangelism Fund increased to 35 percent. That percentage has grown from less than one-fourth to more than one-third in the last four years. This is very good news.



An example of the dedication and sacrifice of our people comes from the Mesoamerica Region, where I had the privilege of serving in my first jurisdictional assignment. A report from Nazarene Missions International (NMI) shows that churches across that region received nearly \$437,000 for WEF last year.

To further challenge Mesoamerican Nazarenes, each field strategy coordinator sent emails encouraging district superintendents to promote generosity. As a result, WEF giving on the region increased to almost \$485,000. NMI leader Ana María Crocker de Díaz wrote: “We in the region are doing our best to extend the work of God through missions across the Church of the Nazarene.”

For all regions, World Evangelism Fund reported giving from pastor’s annual reports was nearly \$39 million, a 1.4 percent increase over the prior year. Global missions reported specials were \$37.7 million, a 19 percent increase from last year. World Evangelism Fund and Missions Specials combined, from the general secretary’s global database of pastor’s reports, totaled \$76.7 million, a 9.3 percent increase in reported giving from 2012.*

Additionally, the General Board received over \$2 million in planned gifts, including one gift of \$1 million (US).

The global economic recession has been hard on many, but there is a semblance of recovery underway. The general superintendents are grateful for the continued generosity and sacrificial spirit of giving from our churches. Please extend our deepest gratitude to your pastors and laypersons.

Missionaries

The Church of the Nazarene remains committed to the missionary spirit that has characterized our denomination from the very beginning. Because our God is a missionary God, missions must remain at the heart of all that we do as a church.

Once again, it is the church’s connectional system of mission and giving that makes it possible to deploy 687 salaried missionaries and contracted volunteers supported by the World Evangelism Fund.

Some receive salaries; others, such as contracted volunteers, receive support from the systems and structures that are in place because of WEF. Missionaries, volunteers, systems, and structures are all essential to the evangelism strategy of the church worldwide. National leaders continue to increase in numbers, as they must, but they do so from our missionary base of teaching, mentoring, and overall support.

Our deep gratitude is extended to Global Mission Director Verne Ward and the entire Global Mission team for their outstanding leadership in this past year.

On Monday evening of this General Board Session, the church will commission two couples as global missionaries:

- David and Betsy Scott (Croatia)
- Milton and Olga Gay (Guatemala)

We pray the Lord's blessing on them as they go out to serve.

Compassionate Ministries

Compassion is one of the primary results of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that has been a part of Nazarene DNA from the beginning.



One of our church's founders and the first general superintendent, P. F. Bresee, wrote in his journal, "It had been my long-cherished desire to have a place in the heart of the city, which could be made a center of holy fire, and where the gospel could be preached to the poor."

Several years later he preached a sermon in which he referenced Acts 4, "The first miracle after the baptism of the Holy Ghost was wrought upon a beggar. It means that the first service of a Holy Ghost-baptized church is to the poor; that its ministry is to those who are lowest down; that its gifts are for those who need them most. As the Spirit was upon Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor, so His Spirit is upon His servants for the same purpose."

In the face of nationalistic politics, leaders of the church must continue to promote our distinct value of biblical compassion and justice for the poor and needy. It is at the heart of who we are.

In that regard we have good news to report.

This year Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM) reached its highest number of child sponsorships ever—nearly 12,000.

Two years after Syria erupted in civil war the Church of the Nazarene is working to keep kids in school. Four Nazarene schools have taken in 300 children who will be supported by contributions from the church around the world.



In early December of last year Typhoon Yolanda devastated much of the Philippines. A FedEx MD-11 filled with relief supplies donated from Heart to Heart International and Direct Relief arrived shortly thereafter with more than 200,000 pounds of relief supplies. It arrived in Cebu, the second-largest city in the Philippines, located 64 kilometers (40 miles) from some of the hardest-hit areas. This relief operation was more challenging because the Philippines is comprised of 7,100 islands. Transportation between many of these devastated islands is limited to boat or helicopter.

The Philippines-Micronesia field strategy coordinator, Rev. Stephen Gualberto, has given excellent leadership to this area in crisis. After returning from some of the country's most destroyed areas, he emphasized that despite the incredible ruin, residents' spirits remain high, and Nazarene compassion is making a difference.

Here is a short video clip designed by the Asia-Pacific communications team:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4AjeHqdTJo> Together We Are (1:31)

That is an example of Nazarene compassion in response to a disaster. But Nazarenes are also exhibiting compassion as a lifestyle. On my recent visit to the Philippines one of the highlights for me was to visit the Rowenas Community Development Project (RCDP).



The RCDP is an outreach envisioned by Nazarene Korean missionary and professor, Dr. Dong-Hwan “Bill” Kwon, and students at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS). It is a strategy to go “beyond the walls” to reach those who are hurting.



The community of Rowenas, literally built against the outer wall of the seminary, is home to nearly 3,000 people. The outreach, which started as a project to alleviate Dengue Fever, has grown to include community restrooms, a small pharmacy, a health center, a children’s community center, fresh water projects, a child sponsorship program with more than 130 students currently sponsored, and now an organized church with a regular worship attendance of 120–150 worshipers.



At the grassroots level plans are also underway for an awareness and education campaign on human trafficking. Nazarenes want to know how they can become involved in helping to stop this blight on society.

These are all encouraging signs of Nazarene compassion.

Pensions & Benefits USA

During the 2013 fiscal year, Churches of the Nazarene in the United States contributed a record high of \$13.8 million—an increase of almost 8.5 percent over the \$12.7 million received in 2012. This amount reflects the faithful giving of our U.S. congregations and a generous response to the one-fourth percent increase in the Pensions & Benefits USA (P&B) Fund allocation that became effective during the year. Such giving allows P&B to serve almost 14,000 active and retired ministers and church-employed laypersons. Their service includes retirement benefits, life and disability insurance benefits, and benevolence assistance. This giving has also enabled us to make significant progress toward full funding of the Basic Pension Plan.

Global Wesleyan Digital Library

A Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library collaboration is forming that includes the *Books for Pastors* taskforce, Global Mission, Nazarene Publishing House, Nazarene Archives, Global Clergy Development, International Board of Education (IBOE) schools, and others. They are working to develop the largest electronic library of holiness resources in the world. This digital library will provide global access to Wesleyan-Holiness resources for theological education. It will be fully functional and searchable in five languages; more languages are being added.

IBOE Director Dan Copp says, “Theological formation is one of our strategic priorities, and the Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library helps resource our global church in this important work.” Before his retirement, General Superintendent Jesse Middendorf was quoted as saying, “This is one of the most exciting projects I have seen in the 12 years I have served the global church.”

Global Ministry Center



A study by Best Christian Workplaces Institute (BCWI) was commissioned to help evaluate the workplace environment of the GMC. This process of focus group interaction was led by Al Lopus (president and chief executive officer of BCWI) and was well represented across the GMC. It also included several hours of debriefing with the BGS.

While the results were not surprising, they are not up to our desired standard. As we move forward, we are committed to making the culture of the GMC a priority. The general superintendents take responsibility as leaders to be sure we do our part in making the GMC a healthy and productive workplace. To reach this goal, we are taking steps to improve internal communications, beginning with an informal statement at our all-GMC Christmas gathering and following up with a communications update at the end of the year.

We believe that the people who minister at the GMC are some of the finest supporters of our church. We desire to bless and encourage them in their Kingdom work.

General Editor



David J. Felter gave the church outstanding service as the denomination's first general editor, serving from 2001 until his retirement in July 2013. The BGS elected Frank M. Moore to serve as the new general editor, and his election was ratified by the General Board in September 2013.

Having authored thirteen books and hundreds of articles, Dr. Moore brings a combination of high scholarship, devoted churchmanship, and editorial expertise to this assignment. We are already seeing a positive impact of his influence on *Holiness Today* and on other important projects. We are delighted to have him as part of the Global Mission Team.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Moore and his wife, Sue.

Eurasia Regional Director



The election of Gustavo Crocker to the Board of General Superintendents necessitated the selection of a new director for the Eurasia Region. A thorough search process led by the jurisdictional general superintendent for Eurasia, Jerry Porter, and the Global Mission director, Verne Ward, was conducted. Arthur W. Snijders, a native of the Netherlands, was elected to the position.

Snijders is a missional leader and gifted scholar with excellent knowledge of this very diverse and challenging region. He assumed the position in November 2013. Let's welcome him and his wife, Annemarie, to the position of director of the Eurasia Region of the Church of the Nazarene.

Nazarene Theological Seminary



In January of this year, the Board of Trustees at Nazarene Theological Seminary (NTS) elected as president Carla D. Sunberg, a 2004 NTS graduate. For obvious reasons, I have had a great

personal interest in this election. It came as the culmination of significant discussion by the Board of Trustees about a reenvisioning of the seminary to create a new and sustainable ministry model with an increased focus on preparing pastors for the future of the church.

The Board of General Superintendents believes President Sunberg's contagious spirit and extensive experience as a pioneer missionary, pastor, and district superintendent will serve our seminary well. Let us welcome Carla and her husband, Chuck, to this key assignment.

DIMENSIONS OF TIME

Up to this point nearly everything in the General Board Report has been in the context of the Gregorian or Christian calendar, an almost universal way of looking at time. However, the ancient Greeks had two words for time: *chronos* time and *kairos* time.

Chronos is chronological or sequential time. This is how we live, work, schedule activities, and establish routines. *Kairos*, however, signifies "the time in between," or a moment in time in which something special happens. It is an appointed time in the purposes of God.

THE APPOINTED TIME

The Book of Esther is a love story about an orphaned Jewish girl raised in Persia by a cousin Mordecai. The subplot is that she eventually becomes the wife of King Xerxes by winning the equivalent of a beauty contest. But the main plot is a story about how God intervened through Esther's life to create a "supreme moment in time."

As the story goes, Haman is the king's right hand man. He hates the Jews and wants to see them destroyed, so he goes to the king with his request. This could mean the annihilation of Esther's people.

Meanwhile, Mordecai confronts Esther with the reality of her "kairos" moment: "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14, NIV)

Until this time Esther has not revealed that she is Jewish. However, she decides to courageously approach the king and plead for the lives of her people. She enters the king's presence uninvited—but not unprepared.

She says, "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16, NIV).

With this dependence on God and the support of God's people, Esther makes her case before the king. King Xerxes agrees to call off the massacre and orders that Haman, who plotted against the Jews, be hanged from the same gallows Haman had built for Mordecai.

Haman was executed. Mordecai was exalted. And God saved His people through the stature and strength of His servant, Esther.

It was a *kairos* moment.

There are several applications here for the church:

1. God's providence is economical. He does not waste training or experience. God knew where Esther was, what she was doing, what she was learning, and how He was going to use all of that when her appointed moment came. While we are focusing on a plan for our lives or plans for our church, God is concentrating on our preparation. (*International Bible Study Series*, Thomas Nelson)
2. While God's preparation is individualized, He brings people together ... at just the right time ... building on each other's strengths. Think of the important roles played by Esther, Mordecai, and even King Xerxes. God knows every Nazarene ... where they are ... and what they are doing. And more importantly, what He needs them to do at the appointed time.
3. Often moments of significance cannot be planned or foreseen—they can only be received. Esther was the recipient of a moment in time when an open door appeared, and she went through it with spiritual, not human, force. This is the work of the Spirit in our lives.
4. God's timing is perfect and God's will is good. The LORD is always better to His church than we could ever hope or imagine.

AN ASSESSMENT

Do we know what "time" it is in the Church of the Nazarene? What is the "season" in which we find ourselves?

As the church grows and our system of mission increases in complexity and cost, it is important to look at where we are and where we should be going.

With so much good news from 2013, you might think it unnecessary to pause and examine where the church is right now. There will be those who suggest that we should keep moving ahead since many key indicators, such as membership growth, appear to be pointed in the right

direction. Surely these are positive signs that God is working through the people called Nazarenes.

Why an assessment now?

Attaining goals is a cause not only for celebration but also for new thinking. Rapid growth can change the way the church understands itself. Any community of faith that grows nearly 60 percent in a decade, as our church has with an increase of 827,468 members from 2003–2013, has likely outgrown many of its earlier assumptions about the environment, its mission, and its capabilities. This includes an articulation of beliefs, which is as important as the beliefs themselves.

The Church of the Nazarene's mission is *to make Christlike disciples in the nations*. Of that we are sure.

Our core values are Christian, holiness, and missional. Of these we are convinced.

And our emphases on prayer, the Word of God, holy living, world evangelism, education, compassion, and shared responsibility are all building blocks for holistic ministry to a needy world. Spread over 159 world areas our culture, polity, priorities, and connectional relationships make us uniquely “Nazarene.”

These are the enduring aspects of our church.

But we also recognize that these are unprecedented times for all denominations. Rapidly changing cultural shifts, new economic realities, religious pluralism, and the shifting center of gravity for worldwide Christianity away from the West are only a few conditions we cannot ignore.

Indeed, these are the kinds of times in which technical, and perhaps even incremental changes, will not do—at least not entirely, because technical change assumes that the answers to our problems are within our usual reach. The most recent literature regarding leadership during times of rapid social transitions, especially the writings of Harvard Professor of Public Leadership, Ron Heifetz, speak of something called “adaptive change.”

In a stimulating article on strategic planning during times of transition, Nick Carter, president of Andover Newton Seminary, writes, “Adaptive change recognizes that we are in an entirely new situation, where little of our previous experience applies; it therefore asks us to address problems for which we don't yet know the answers.” (Nick Carter, “Adaptive Leadership: Planning in a Time of Transition” in *Theological Education*, Volume 46, Number 2, 2011)

He goes on to note that there is a difference between long-range planning and strategic planning. If the model is working and your core assumptions of operations are accurate, then the plans you develop are largely projections from where you are into the future.

This is not a transformative plan—it is a long-range plan. It is fine if the organization is fine. But if not, as Carter alludes, it may simply be “nice dressing for a funeral.” Therefore, adaptive/transformative planning calls for a “genesis moment” whereby leaders process the envisioning of a new future and design the means to create that future.

Among other things, this means that in order to be adaptive we must plan to “stop” doing much of what we are doing now, otherwise it is not transformative. We must break free from “institutional physics,” because it starts not from where we have been but from where we want to be.

That does not mean we must stop being who we are. Rather, we must find ways to continue being *who* we are in ways that take seriously the times in which we live. We must prayerfully organize our *chronos* time as we prepare for God’s *kairos* moment.

From that vantage point, we turn our attention to some strategic thoughts that are more adaptive than technical. The Board of General Superintendents believes that our pressing need is to come to terms with the facts facing the church and to have faith to believe they can be addressed with God’s help. This is at the heart of spiritual leadership.

There are major theological, organizational, and financial challenges on our denominational doorstep that the Nazarene Future Study Group was not charged with addressing but which cannot be ignored. Those critical issues include ensuring theological clarity and coherency, adapting a system of mission already stretched thin, and figuring out how to expand the church while carefully managing limited financial resources.

The tasks of educating pastors, internationalizing the church, and building mission infrastructure to accommodate a growing membership are ever-present realities that need ongoing attention.

The church is almost halfway through a transition decade: 2011–2020. By the time it reaches the year 2020 the church will have become a new version of itself in terms of leadership, membership, and perhaps culture. Memories and relationships linked to earlier days will be greatly diminished and in some cases completely gone.

That was somewhat true of previous Nazarene transitions, although the international dimension was not nearly the presence it is today. The first step in realistically dealing with it is to be consciously aware that this change is underway.

What does the next generation think about being Nazarene? We need to know the answer to that question.

To respond to increasing evangelistic and disciple-making opportunities, Wesleyan-Holiness teaching and living in their simplest forms must be prevalent throughout a socially diverse church. How will that happen?

As Gordon Gee says: “If you don’t like change, you’ll like irrelevance even less.”

Leadership, including members of the General Board and the Global Mission Team, must be in prayer seeking the Lord’s will for our church and identifying what changes need to be made to remain spiritually, missionally, and financially strong.

If our church is called “for such a time as this,” and we believe it is, our more than 2 million members, 29,000 churches, 461 districts, 53 educational institutions, 191 compassionate ministry centers, and general interests must prepare for making Christlike disciples in the nations in different ways.

Jesus said: “New wine calls for new wineskins” (Mark 2:22, NLT). So as long as the methods do not compromise the church’s message or mission, we must consider some adaptive changes.

CRITICAL ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

For the past decade the general superintendents have periodically created lists of challenges facing the denomination. At this General Board we are creating a new list that includes God-given strengths upon which to build.

STRENGTHS

- **Scriptural Holiness.** The Church of the Nazarene has been given a biblical mandate and a dynamic theology of a pure heart and life transformation. We need to do a better job of articulating just what that means. Generalizing is not enough.

Nazarenes must be clear in our teaching and practice that the Holy Spirit does not merely modify our behaviors—the Holy Spirit transforms us! God gives us a new heart and spirit (Ezekiel 36:26) that lead to an optimism of enabling grace, holy living, and love for one another. This is our hope not only for after death, but it is also our promise now for this life.

Let Nazarenes proclaim that truth more clearly than ever. Without a doubt, the most important condition of effective mission is personal and corporate holiness.

- **Global membership.** The number of new Nazarenes and total global membership were up this year by 8.5 percent and 5 percent respectively. The continuing increase in membership, whatever the level of participation expected or experienced, is another important indicator of strength in carrying out the evangelistic mission of the church.

- **Increase in churches.** This past year was a milestone in that there are now more organized churches in Eurasia than in any other region of the world, and at the current growth rate, Africa could also have more organized churches than USA/Canada by 2015. This is historic news for our denomination! This is what was hoped and prayed for when our founders made missions central to our focus. Thanks be to God!

The local church is at the heart of our mission. The church is where people are saved, sanctified, and find their place of Kingdom service. That is why we must give our full attention to church planting wherever we may be. We must plant churches in the city, in the suburbs, in rural areas, and everywhere in between. If the number of churches is not expanding then we are diminishing as a denomination.

- **Sacrificial giving.** The proportion of churches giving 5.5 percent or more of non-missions giving to the World Evangelism Fund is growing. This increase is vital to our global system of mission. Lowering the base for WEF giving to just 5.5 percent requires broad participation from all regions to sustain adequate funding of the church's mission.
- **USA/Canada Resources.** This region continues to be a strong supporter of the church's global mission by providing 95.4 percent of World Evangelism Fund giving. Furthermore, giving is now being connected to going, as numbers of short-term volunteer teams (in addition to Work and Witness) are on the rise.

Giving from other regions is increasing. There are exciting stories of generosity to share from around the world. But until other regions become financially able to carry a larger part of that responsibility, it is especially important that we find ways to enhance the spiritual and financial strength of USA/Canada.

- **Nazarene educational system.** Our schools (whether they are Bible colleges, liberal arts schools, nursing schools, seminaries, etc.) play a vital role in developing Nazarene theology, identity, socialization, and connectedness. They are a large part of our denomination's discipleship strategy for 18–30 year olds. To invest all that we do in children and youth ministries and then to send our young adults to institutions where Christian faith is mocked simply makes no sense. If we expect to have thinking, productive, faith-formed people in our pews, we must embrace and celebrate our Nazarene schools.
- **Focus on compassion.** Most Nazarenes are aware of a variety of activities, including student trips, volunteerism, and specialty groups such as medical teams, disaster response teams, etc. What some people may not realize is that this impulse is at the core of the gospel and the Wesleyan-Holiness concern for issues of biblical justice.

This is an enormous strength on which we can build. Previous generations often understood Christian holiness through Western or American standards of dress and pietistic behavior. Compassion flowing from sanctified hearts will appeal to a generation who also sees holiness through the lens of caring for the needs of the world.

CHALLENGES

- **Clergy education and training.** Education Commissioner Dan Copp mentioned to me recently that in 1985, 80 percent of all ordination candidates received all their training or a portion of it at a Nazarene school. By 2012 that number had dropped to 60 percent—a decrease of 20 percent, even though the number of people seeking ordination has never been higher.

We thank God for the increase, but it needs to be stated that the Course of Study for ministers has always been intended to upgrade the quality of preparation for those who could not receive it any other way. Now it is becoming the norm. Sociological trends bear out that where the level and quality of education in clergy preparation is lacking, fundamentalism and theological incoherency will rise.

More and more ordained elders and deacons are coming to us from other faith traditions, and they may not understand our history or theology. A lack of adequate training often results in a watered-down, filtered-out doctrinal and philosophical paradigm for ministry.

We must keep the Course of Study standards high for those who cannot attend a Nazarene institution, just as we encourage all ministers who are able, to pursue their preparation with our best scholars and teachers.

Having been a pastor for 18 years and a seminary president for nearly two, I have a keen interest in the intersection of orthodoxy and orthopraxy for our ministers—right thinking and right practice go hand in hand. We must continually ask, “What kind of pastors are we training to lead our churches worldwide?”

- **Global Leadership Development.** Globalization within the Church of the Nazarene has created a desperate need for leadership development—clergy and laity. In both jurisdictional assignments I have had in the past six months as a general superintendent, every field strategy coordinator I have spoken with has said that leadership development is the number one need.

General Secretary David Wilson has informed us that in the USA/Canada Region 50 percent of our district superintendents will retire in the next ten years. Given that some will not wait until the *Manual*-mandated retirement of age 70, those numbers could be much higher. Where will key leaders come from to replace them?

And considering the increase in organized churches, do we have the organizational capacity to develop the leaders that are needed around the world?

- **Engagement in discipleship.** Because making disciples is fundamental to our mission, indicators of effectiveness in involving new believers in that process suggest some reason for concern. The ratio of members to average weekly discipleship attendance has been around 50 percent globally throughout the past four years. A number equal to just over half of the members is involved in discipleship in an average week. This is a significant shift from past generations of Nazarenes.

Conversions and additions to the membership are not enough to accomplish the mission of making Christlike disciples in the nations. Nazarenes need discipleship training that clarifies their understanding of the church's theology, challenges them to involvement in our shared mission, and develops communal accountability that nurtures a maturing in Christlikeness.

- **Women in ministry.** In the 2013 Quadrennial Address presented by General Superintendent Eugénio Duarte on behalf of the Board of General Superintendents, he stated: "The church needs to dedicate anew its original commitment to women in ministry ... The Church of the Nazarene supports the right of women to use their God-given spiritual gifts within the church and affirms the historic right of women to be elected and appointed to places of leadership ... including the offices of both elder and deacon." (Section 903.5, *Manual*, Church of the Nazarene)

How can we help Nazarene women clergy? The BGS and district superintendents must take a leading role in building awareness of and rationale for engagement of women in all areas of the church. We must then set an example for local churches by making general, district, and local church decisions that affirm that position. This is fundamental to our ecclesiology, and we will not back down from this core conviction.

- **Small churches.** Like other Protestant denominations, the church has a large number of small churches. Small churches have been the backbone of the denomination from our inception. We have never believed that small churches are necessarily weak, just as we have never believed that large churches are necessarily strong. A church can be small and healthy, and a church can be large and dysfunctional. However, due to new financial realities there is a significant increase of bi-vocational ministries in our small congregations.

For example, in the USA/Canada region two-thirds (66 percent) of the pastors serving churches with fewer than 50 people in worship in an average week (2,059 churches) say they are bi-vocational. One-third (35 percent) of the pastors of churches with 50–99

(1,296 churches) are bi-vocational. These statistics do not include those pastors whose spouses have to work in order to make ends meet.

Research suggests that the preparation of most of these pastors did not include planning for a strategic or necessary second vocation. Since it does not appear that this trend will be changing soon, we must give new attention to the way we prepare and resource the hundreds of pastors needed to serve our churches.

- **USA/Canada in slow decline.** Reporting worldwide statistics gives everyone a quick look at the combined reach of the church. Evaluating top-line numbers is one way to measure overall progress. But for further perspective it is necessary to examine Global Mission regions non-symmetrically to look at net gains and losses. Each region contributes uniquely to the mission of making Christlike disciples in the nations. Their spiritual health and strength are a priority of leadership.

Membership growth continues to be uneven among the regions. Declining interest in organized religion is a condition facing all faith groups in the United States, so the Church of the Nazarene is not alone in this trend.

While 2013 full membership stands at 650,579 in USA/Canada, membership declined for the year by 106 or -0.02 percent. While this may seem miniscule, weekly average worship attendance has been in steady decline, dropping from 528,073 in 2005 to 490,328 in 2013. Thirty-four thousand in total membership gains were offset by a similar number of total losses. USA/Canada membership is not keeping up with population growth nor is annual giving keeping up with inflation.

This is certainly not reflective of all areas in USA/Canada. There are pockets of exciting growth and dynamic impact, but we are seeing some signs of an aging church. Sociological research tells us that the lifespan of the average church is between forty and sixty years—a reality that we cannot ignore. Of 5,242 churches reported in USA/Canada this year, 3,505 (67 percent) were started more than forty years ago. Churches can be renewed, and many are. But that is the exception, not the rule. If the majority of our USA/Canada churches are coming to the end of their life cycle we must confront that reality head on. Those are matters to which we must continue to give our prayerful attention.

Nevertheless, there are hopeful signs of recovery. Under the leadership of Bob Broadbooks and Bill Wiesman, new church starts in USA/Canada are showing great promise. Because they have made this a key emphasis on the region, there is a new enthusiasm for church planting across these two nations. Literally hundreds of pastors are

being trained in district church-planting seminars. We thank God for helping us renew and revitalize the church in North America.

- **Urbanization.** Urbanization is the demographic transition from rural to urban. It is associated with shifts from an agriculture-based economy to mass industry, technology, and service. The World Health Organization states that for the first time ever, the majority of the world's population now lives in a city, and this proportion continues to grow.

One hundred years ago, two out of every ten people lived in an urban area. By 1990, less than 40 percent of the global population lived in a city, but as of 2010, more than half of all people live in an urban area. The World Health Organization further projects that by 2030, six out of every ten people will live in a city, and by 2050, this proportion will increase to seven out of ten people. (World Health Organization Website http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/)

These projections will almost double the global urban population to 6.4 billion people!

Seven of the ten most populous cities of the world are in the Asia-Pacific Region. Overall, megacities (those cities with population over 10 million) and metropolitan areas (with populations between one million and ten million) are home to 40 percent of Asia's urban population.

The *Associated Press* reported in June that for the first time in a century the U.S.A. census data indicate that most of America's largest cities are growing at a faster rate than their surrounding suburbs.

Cities are centers of cultural diversity. Cities drive regional and global economies. Cities are the educational, artistic, and technological shapers of society. More and more young people want to live in cities and are moving there by the thousands. We must find a way to reach our cities!

But cities are a challenge for churches because they are expensive, complicated, and overwhelming, and many city dwellers no longer see the value of religion to solve modern problems. In fact, hundreds of downtown churches moved to the suburbs long ago, and as a result, the majority of cities are vastly underchurched today.

Our most common methodological approaches to reaching our cities have been through compassionate ministry centers and multicultural congregations. These continue to be important models for reaching certain groups of people.

But what about the multiplied thousands of young adults who conduct business on their laptops in Starbucks? How will we reach them? What about the businessman who labors in the financial sector? What about the young, professional, single woman working 80 hours a week in the corporate world to make ends meet? How will we reach her for Christ?

Every region must give attention to the way we impact our great cities if we want to reach the next generation. And there are some courageous, young pastors who are leading the way.



Lauren and Kourtney Seaman



Derek and Ketley Diehl

God gave Lauren and Kourtney Seaman and Derek and Ketley Diehl a burden for a city. They left good-paying, secure jobs and moved their young families into the Lincoln Park and Roscoe Village neighborhoods of Chicago. They are planting a church there to reach young professionals and to share the gospel with secular non-believers who otherwise might not hear.

The Chicago Central District, under the leadership of Superintendent Brian Wilson, now has five church-planting couples in the city, all working bi-vocationally, with an organic approach to church planting. They are hoping to add five more couples in 2014.

These pioneer church planters have become my new spiritual heroes. They are showing us a way to reach our cities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

At the 2013 General Assembly the BGS unveiled Seven Strategic Priorities for the church. They are:

- Meaningful Worship
- Theological Coherence
- Passionate Evangelism
- Intentional Discipleship
- Church Development
- Transformational Leadership
- Purposeful Compassion

These do not take the place of our mission statement or our core values. Perhaps they are better stated as characteristics instead of priorities. They are simply phrases describing what we believe should characterize every Nazarene church, and in large part should be reflected by Nazarenes around the world. We will continue to emphasize these characteristics as we go forward and urge our church leaders to explore how these characteristics might become realities for the global church.

LIVING IN HOPE



In our closing moments I want to share with you why I love being a Nazarene. It is a story filled with holiness and humility. It is what it means to be called for “such a time as this.” It is why you and I can live in hope.

Cuba is a difficult place to be a Christian.



After 40 years of heroic endurance (1946–1986) our Nazarene family in Cuba consisted of only 18 churches. Rev. Pedro “Hildo” Morejón was our steadfast denominational representative and district superintendent for 26 years following the departure of our missionaries in 1960.



During 15 years (1986 to 2001) of leadership by District Superintendents Miranda and Galvez, the church grew from 330 to 3,421 members and from 18 to 35 organized churches as it took advantage of lessening restrictions. During this time the government authorized religious meetings of up to 12 people in private homes and the licensing of “house churches” in private homes that had space and amenities for group meetings. Such authorization often required a year or more to obtain.

Permission to have religious meetings in private homes at a time when denominations could not purchase properties or open new churches led to an “explosion” of witness and personal evangelism. Today Bible study, prayer, and preaching in private homes are the “cutting edge” of Kingdom building in Cuba!



Rev. Leonel Lopez was elected district superintendent in January 2001 at the age of 33. He has been mentored by his regional director, Carlos Saenz. Leonel and his wife, Migdalis, are prototypes of the young, educated, highly motivated, and very loyal Nazarene leadership in Cuba today.

Rev. Lopez is wise beyond his years. He has earned respect at the highest levels of Cuban government.

Leonel just organized six new churches, bringing our official total to 87, with total membership of 8,273. We have over 20 church-type missions awaiting organization, 34 Churches of Children (led by children 12 and younger, including preaching), and over 650 preaching points and house churches in private homes.

After 55 years we had 3,421 members in 35 churches; in the last 13 years under Leonel’s visionary and courageous leadership we have added 4,852 members, 52 organized churches, and hundreds of preaching points. That is sustained and solid growth!

“CUBA FOR CHRIST” is God’s vision for Cuba and the entire world, and right now there are unexpected opportunities in Cuba that Leonel Lopez and his District Advisory Board want to take advantage of for rapid growth and development of the church.

There is more to the story.

Cuban Nazarenes have a compassionate spirit. When they heard that Hurricane Yolanda had devastated the Philippines, they had to do something. Leonel Lopez said, “When we Cuban

Nazarenes learned of the great disaster caused by the typhoon in the Philippines, we purposed in our hearts to collect an offering of love for our brothers in the Philippines.”

I was there in November for the Cuban Holiness Summit. I listened as District Superintendent Lopez shared the need with a packed-to-overflowing tabernacle. He said, “When Hurricane Sandy hit Cuba last year, there were Philippine Nazarenes who prayed for us and sent funds to help. Now we have the chance to do the same for them.” When he told them that, the entire congregation of more than 1,000 people stood to their feet and cheered.



During the offering time they could not sit still. Hands in the air, they were shouting and laughing and weeping with joy. There were so many people there that night that dozens of people had to worship outside the tabernacle, looking in through the open air windows. At some windows they were five or six deep. I will never forget watching hands appear from the darkness, reaching through the bars, clenching money to drop in the buckets.

Keep in mind that in Cuba, a worker’s average salary is \$20 a month, and a pastor’s average salary for full-time service is only \$15 a month. The love offering that night was \$290 US. Several pastors in the Havana area then challenged their congregations to join in this spontaneous offering. Their participation provided another \$450, for a total of \$740. That is the equivalent of 37 months of a worker’s salary.

When I heard what they had given, I stood to tell them that I would be in the Philippines to hand-deliver this offering. Once again they stood to their feet and praised God.

I could not help but remember the Thessalonian church that was praised by the Apostle Paul for their grace in giving. In fact, I inserted their name: “And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the [Cuban] church. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify

that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: they gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us" (2 Corinthians 8:1–5, NIV).



After that service Leonel told me, “This offering is small in amount but big in our love for our brothers and sisters in the Philippines.” Then he pressed something else in my hand.

I had the privilege of delivering that message to the Metro Manila district assembly this past January. And with it I gave them the verse that Pastor Leonel handed me before I left: “My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NIV).

This could never have happened without a connectional church like ours.

FINAL THOUGHT

Nazarenes, this is our appointed time.

I believe God raised us up more than 100 years ago for such a time as this. This is our time. This is our *kairos* moment.

We must expect great things *from* God ... and we must attempt great things *for* God.

Jesus is Lord! Our hope is in Him! And so we continue *to make Christlike disciples in the nations*.

Respectfully and prayerfully submitted,

Board of General Superintendents

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- * Reported assembly-year statistics differ from the general treasurer's totals of WEF and Mission Specials, which are receipted in the prior fiscal year.