

Historical Statement

From the 2001 Manual of the Church of the Nazarene



One Holy Faith. The Church of the Nazarene, from its beginnings, has confessed itself to be a branch of the “one, holy, universal, and apostolic” church and has sought to be faithful to it. It confesses as its own the history of the people of God recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and that same history as it has extended from the days of the apostles to our own. As its own people, it embraces the people of God through the ages, those redeemed through Jesus Christ in whatever expression of the one church they may be found. It receives the ecumenical creeds of the first five Christian centuries as expressions of its own faith. While the Church of the Nazarene has responded to its special calling to proclaim the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification, it has taken care to retain and nurture identification with the historic church in its preaching of the Word, its administration of the sacraments, its concern to raise up and maintain a ministry that is truly apostolic in faith and practice, and its inculcating of disciplines for Christlike living and service to others.

The Wesleyan Revival. This Christian faith has been mediated to Nazarenes through historical religious currents and particularly through the Wesleyan revival of the 18th century. In the 1730s the broader Evangelical Revival arose in Britain, directed chiefly by John Wesley, his brother Charles, and George Whitefield, clergymen in the Church of England. Through their instrumentality, many other men and women turned from sin and were empowered for the service of God. This movement was characterized by lay preaching, testimony, discipline, and circles of earnest disciples known as “societies,” “classes,” and “bands.” As a movement of spiritual life, its antecedents included German Pietism, typified by Philip Jacob Spener; 17th-century English Puritanism; and a spiritual awakening in New England described by the pastor-theologian Jonathan Edwards.



The Wesleyan phase of the great revival was characterized by three theological landmarks: regeneration by grace through faith; Christian perfection, or sanctification, likewise by grace through faith; and the witness of the Spirit to the assurance of grace. Among John Wesley’s distinctive contributions was an emphasis on entire sanctification in this life as God’s gracious provision for the Christian. British Methodism’s early missionary enterprises began disseminating these theological emphases worldwide. In North America, the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784. Its stated purpose was “to reform the Continent, and to spread scriptural Holiness over these Lands.”

The Holiness Movement of the 19th Century. In the 19th century a renewed emphasis on Christian holiness began in the Eastern United



States and spread throughout the nation. Timothy Merritt, Methodist clergyman and founding editor of the *Guide to Christian Perfection*, was among the leaders of the Holiness revival. The central figure of the movement was Phoebe Palmer of New York City, leader of the Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness, at which Methodist bishops, educators, and other clergy joined the original group of women in seeking holiness. During four decades, Mrs. Palmer promoted the Methodist phase of the Holiness Movement through public speaking, writing, and as editor of the influential *Guide to Holiness*.



The Holiness revival spilled outside the bounds of Methodism. Charles G. Finney and Asa Mahan, both of Oberlin College, led the renewed emphasis on holiness in Presbyterian and Congregationalist circles, as did revivalist William Boardman. Baptist evangelist A. B. Earle was among the leaders of the Holiness Movement within his denomination. Hannah Whitall Smith, a Quaker and popular Holiness revivalist, published *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875), a classic text in Christian

spirituality.

In 1867 Methodist ministers John A. Wood, John Inskip, and others began at Vineland, New Jersey, the first of a long series of national camp meetings. They also organized at that time the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, commonly known as the National (now the Christian) Holiness Association. Until the early years of the 20th century, this organization sponsored Holiness camp meetings throughout the United States. Local and regional Holiness associations also appeared, and a vital Holiness press published many periodicals and books.



The witness to Christian holiness played roles of varying significance in the founding of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (1843), the Free Methodist Church (1860), and, in England, the Salvation Army (1865). In the 1880s new distinctively Holiness churches sprang into existence, including the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) and the Church of God (Holiness). Several older religious traditions were also influenced by the Holiness Movement, including certain groups of Mennonites, Brethren, and Friends that adopted the Wesleyan-Holiness view of entire sanctification. The Brethren in Christ Church and the Evangelical Friends Alliance are examples of this blending of spiritual traditions.

Uniting of Holiness Groups



In the 1890s a new wave of independent Holiness entities came into being. These included independent churches, urban missions, rescue homes, and missionary and evangelistic associations. Some of the people involved in these organizations yearned for union into a national Holiness church. Out of that impulse the present-day Church of the Nazarene was born.

The Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. On July 21, 1887, the People's Evangelical Church was organized with 51 members at Providence, Rhode Island, with [Fred A. Hillery](#) as pastor. The following year the Mission Church at Lynn, Massachusetts, was organized with C. Howard Davis as pastor. On March 13 and 14, 1890, representatives from these and other independent Holiness congregations met at Rock, Massachusetts, and organized the Central Evangelical Holiness Association with churches in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. In 1892, the Central Evangelical Holiness Association ordained [Anna S. Hanscombe](#), believed to be the first of many women ordained to the Christian ministry in the parent bodies of the Church of the Nazarene.



In January 1894, businessman [William Howard Hoople](#) founded a Brooklyn mission, reorganized the following May as Utica Avenue Pentecostal Tabernacle. By the end of the following year, Bedford Avenue Pentecostal Church and Emmanuel Pentecostal Tabernacle were also organized. In December 1895, delegates from these three congregations adopted a constitution, a summary of doctrines, and

bylaws, forming the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America.

On November 12, 1896, a joint committee of the Central Evangelical Holiness Association and the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America met in Brooklyn and framed a plan of union, retaining the name of the latter for the united body. Prominent workers in this denomination were [Hiram F. Reynolds](#), H. B. Hosley, C. Howard Davis, William Howard Hoople, and, later, E. E. Angell. Some of these were originally lay preachers who were later ordained as ministers by their congregations. This church was decidedly missionary, and under the leadership of Hiram F. Reynolds, missionary secretary, embarked upon an ambitious program of Christian witness to the Cape Verde Islands, India, and other places. *The Beulah Christian* was published as its official paper.



The Holiness Church of Christ. In July 1894, [R. L. Harris](#) organized the New Testament Church of Christ at Milan, Tennessee, shortly before his death. Mary Lee Cagle, widow of R. L. Harris, continued the work and became its most prominent early leader. This church, strictly

congregational in polity, spread throughout Arkansas and western Texas, with scattered congregations in Alabama and Missouri. Mary Cagle and a coworker, Mrs. E. J. Sheeks, were ordained in 1899 in the first class of ordinands.

Beginning in 1888, a handful of congregations bearing the name The Holiness Church were organized in Texas by ministers Thomas and Dennis Rogers, who came from California.



In 1901 the first congregation of the Independent Holiness Church was formed at Van Alstyne, Texas, by [Charles B. Jernigan](#). At an early date, [James B. Chapman](#) affiliated with this denomination, which prospered and grew rapidly. In time, the congregations led by Dennis Rogers affiliated with the Independent Holiness Church.

Several leaders of this church were active in the Holiness Association of Texas, a vital interdenominational body that sponsored a college at Peniel, near Greenville, Texas. The association also sponsored the *Pentecostal Advocate*, the Southwest's leading Holiness paper, which became a Nazarene organ in 1910. E. C. DeJernett, a minister, and C. A. McConnell, a layman, were prominent workers in this organization.

The Church of the Nazarene. In October 1895, [Phineas F. Bresee](#), D.D., and [Joseph P. Widney](#), M.D., with about 100 others, including Alice P. Baldwin, Leslie F. Gay, W. S. and Lucy P. Knott, C. E. McKee, and members of the Bresee and Widney families, organized the Church of the Nazarene at Los Angeles. At the outset they saw this church as the first of a denomination that preached the reality of entire sanctification received through faith in Christ. They held that Christians sanctified by faith should follow Christ's example and preach the gospel to the poor. They felt called especially to this work. They believed that unnecessary elegance and adornment of houses of worship did not represent the spirit of Christ but the spirit of the world, and that their expenditures of time and money should be given to Christlike ministries for the salvation of souls and the relief of the needy. They organized the church accordingly. They adopted general rules, a statement of belief, a polity based on a limited superintendency, procedures for the consecration of deaconesses and the ordination of elders, and a ritual. These were published as a Manual beginning in 1898. They published a paper known as *The Nazarene* and then *The Nazarene Messenger*. The Church of the Nazarene spread chiefly along the West Coast, with scattered congregations east of the Rocky Mountains as far as Illinois.



Among the ministers who cast their lot with the new church were [H. D. Brown](#), W. E. Shepard, C. W. Ruth, L. B. Kent, Isaiah Reid, J. B. Creighton, C. E. Cornell, Robert Pierce, and W. C. Wilson. Among the first to be ordained by the new church were Joseph P. Widney himself, Elsie and DeLance Wallace, Lucy P. Knott, and E. A. Girvin.



Phineas F. Bresee's 38 years' experience as a pastor, superintendent, editor, college board member, and camp meeting preacher in Methodism, and his unique personal magnetism, entered into the ecclesiastical statesmanship that he brought to the merging of the several Holiness churches into a national body.

The Year of Uniting: 1907-1908. The Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, the Church of the Nazarene, and the Holiness Church of Christ were brought into association with one another by [C. W. Ruth](#), assistant general superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, who had extensive friendships throughout the Wesleyan-Holiness Movement. Delegates of the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and the Church of the Nazarene convened in general assembly at Chicago, from October 10 to 17, 1907. The merging groups agreed upon a church government that balanced the need for a superintendency with the independence of local congregations. Superintendents were to foster and care for churches already established and were to organize and encourage the organizing of churches everywhere, but their authority was not to interfere with the independent actions of a fully organized church. Further, the General Assembly adopted a name for the united body drawn from both organizations: The Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. Phineas F. Bresee and Hiram F. Reynolds were elected general superintendents. A delegation of observers from the Holiness Church of Christ was present and participated in the assembly work.



During the following year, two other accessions occurred. In April 1908, P. F. Bresee organized a congregation of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene at Peniel, Texas, which brought into the church leading figures in the Holiness Association of Texas and paved the way for other members to join. In September, the Pennsylvania Conference of the Holiness Christian Church, after receiving a release from its General Conference, dissolved itself and under the leadership of H. G. Trumbaur united with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene.

The second General Assembly of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene met in a joint session with the General Council of the Holiness Church of Christ from October 8 to 14, 1908, at Pilot Point, Texas. The year of uniting ended on Tuesday morning, October 13, when R. B. Mitchum moved and C. W. Ruth seconded the proposition: "That the union of the two churches be now consummated." Several spoke favorably on the motion. Phineas Bresee had exerted continual effort toward this proposed outcome. At 10:40 a.m., amid great enthusiasm, the motion to unite was adopted by a unanimous rising vote.

Denominational Change of Name. The General Assembly of 1919, in response to memorials from 35 district assemblies, officially changed the name of the organization to Church of the Nazarene because of new meanings that had become associated with the term "Pentecostal."

Later Accessions

After 1908 various other bodies united with the Church of the Nazarene:

The Pentecostal Mission. In 1898 [J. O. McClurkan](#), a Cumberland Presbyterian evangelist, led in forming the Pentecostal Alliance at Nashville, which brought together Holiness people from Tennessee and adjacent states. This body was very missionary in spirit and sent pastors and teachers to Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, and India. McClurkan died in 1914. The next year his group, known then as the Pentecostal Mission, united with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene.



Pentecostal Church of Scotland. In 1906 [George Sharpe](#), of Parkhead Congregational Church, Glasgow, was evicted from his pulpit for preaching the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian holiness. Eighty members who left with him immediately formed Parkhead Pentecostal Church. Other congregations were organized, and in 1909 the Pentecostal Church of Scotland was formed. That body united with the Pentecostal Church of

the Nazarene in November 1915.

Laymen's Holiness Association. The Laymen's Holiness Association was formed under S. A. Danford in 1917 at Jamestown, North Dakota, to serve the cause of Wesleyan-holiness revivalism in the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Montana. This group published a paper, *The Holiness Layman*. [J. G. Morrison](#) was elected president in 1919 and led an organization with over 25 other evangelists and workers. In 1922 Morrison, together with most of the workers and more than 1,000 of the members, united with the Church of the Nazarene.



Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association. This missionary body, centered in Tabor, Iowa, organized in 1893 by Elder George Weavers, subsequently sent over 80 workers to more than a half dozen countries. Around 1950 the work at Tabor, the South African mission, and other parts of the organization united with the Church of the Nazarene.

International Holiness Mission. David Thomas, businessman and lay preacher, founded The Holiness Mission in London in 1907. Extensive missionary work developed in southern Africa under the leadership of David Jones, and the church was renamed the International Holiness Mission in 1917. [It united with the Church of the Nazarene on October 29, 1952](#), with 28 churches and more than 1,000 constituents in England under the superintendency of J. B. Maclagan, and work led by 36 missionaries in Africa.



Calvary Holiness Church. In 1934 [Maynard James](#) and [Jack Ford](#), who had led itinerant evangelism (or "trekking") in the International Holiness Mission, formed the Calvary Holiness Church. On June 11, 1955, union

took place with the Church of the Nazarene, bringing about 22 churches and more than 600 members into the denomination. The accession of the International Holiness Mission and the Calvary Holiness Church came about largely through the vision and efforts of Nazarene District Superintendent George Frame.

Gospel Workers Church of Canada. Organized by Frank Goff in Ontario in 1918, this church arose from an earlier group called the *Holiness Workers*. It united with the Church of the Nazarene on September 7, 1958, adding five churches and about 200 members to the Canada Central District.



Church of the Nazarene (Nigeria). In the 1940s a Wesleyan-Holiness church was organized in Nigeria under indigenous leadership. It adopted the name Church of the Nazarene, deriving its doctrinal beliefs and name in part from a Manual of the international Church of the Nazarene. Under the leadership of Jeremiah U. Ekaidem, it united with the latter on April 3, 1988. A new district with 39 churches and 6,500 members was created.



Toward a Global Church

The Church of the Nazarene had an international dimension from its beginning. By the uniting assembly of 1908, Nazarenes served and witnessed not only in North America but also as missionaries in Mexico, the Cape Verde Islands, [India](#), [Japan](#), and [South Africa](#) - living testimony to the impact of the 19th-century missions movement upon the religious bodies that formed the present-day Church of the Nazarene. Expansion into new areas of the world began in Asia in 1898 by the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. The Pentecostal Mission was at work in Central America by 1900, in the Caribbean by 1902, and in South America by 1909. In Africa, Nazarenes active there in 1907 were recognized as denominational missionaries at a later date.

Subsequent extension into the Australia-South Pacific area began in 1945 and into continental Europe in 1948. In these instances, the Church of the Nazarene entered by identifying with local ministers who already preached and taught the Wesleyan-Holiness message: A. A. E. Berg of Australia and Alfredo del Rosso of Italy. In developing a global ministry, the Church of the Nazarene has depended historically on the energies of national workers who have shared with missionaries the tasks of preaching and teaching the word of grace. In 1918 a missionary in India noted that his national associates included three preachers, four teachers, three [colporteurs](#), and five [Bible women](#). By 1936 the ratio of national workers to missionaries throughout the worldwide Church of the Nazarene was greater than five to one.



The world areas where the church has entered reached a total of 138 by 2001. Thousands of ministers and lay workers have indigenized the Church of the Nazarene in their respective cultures, thereby contributing to the mosaic of national identities that form our international communion.

Distinctives of International Ministry. Historically, Nazarene global ministry has centered around evangelism, compassionate ministry, and education. The evangelistic impulse was exemplified in the lives of H. F. Schmelzenbach, L. S. Tracy, [Esther Carson Winans](#), [Samuel Krikorian](#), and others whose names symbolize this dimension of ministry. Around the world, Nazarene churches and districts continue to reflect a revivalistic and evangelistic character.

The international roots of Nazarene compassionate ministry lie in early support for famine relief and orphanage work in India. This impulse was strengthened by the Nazarene Medical Missionary Union, organized in the early 1920s to build Bresee Memorial Hospital in Tamingfu, China. [An extensive medical work has developed in Swaziland](#), and other



compassionate ministries have developed around the world.



Education is an aspect of world ministry exemplified early by Hope School for Girls, founded in Calcutta by Mrs. Sukhoda Banarji in 1905 and adopted the following year by the Church of the Nazarene. Outside

North America, Nazarenes have established schools for primary education and for specialized ministerial training. There are graduate seminaries in the the Philippines and in the United States; liberal arts institutions in Africa, Korea and in the United States; one junior college in Japan; two nursing schools in India and Papua New Guinea; and over forty Bible/theological institutions around the world.

The church has prospered as these components of its mission have developed. In 2001 the Church of the Nazarene had an international membership of 1,390,306, distributed in over 12,600 congregations.

As a result of this historical development, the denomination is poised today with an unfinished agenda of moving from “international presence” to an “international community” of faith. Recognition of this fact led the 1976 General Assembly to authorize a Commission on Internationalization, whose report to the 1980 General Assembly led to the creation of a system of world-region areas. The number and boundaries of the original world regions have since changed. The current ones are: the Africa Region, the Asia-Pacific Region, the Canada Region, the Caribbean Region, the Eurasia Region, the Mexico-Central America Region, the South America Region, and eight regions in the United States.*



* A more complete history of the Church of the Nazarene may be found in Timothy L. Smith, *Called unto Holiness, Vol. 1: The Formative Years (1962)*; W.T. Purkiser, *Called unto Holiness, Vol. 2: The Second 25 Years (1983)*; and J. Fred Parker, *Mission to the World (1988)*.