



**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOARD OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS
TO THE
93rd GENERAL BOARD
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

**28 February 2016
Ede, Netherlands**

**“VISION 2020 –
Multiplying Christlike Disciples”**



INTRODUCTION

Where there is no **vision**, the people perish ... (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd ...
'this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour
out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young
men will see **visions**, your old men will dream dreams'
(Acts 2:14, 16–17, NIV).

We, the global Church of the Nazarene, yearn for this prophesy to be fulfilled again. Our sons and daughters will prophesy Kingdom truth with loving courage. Our young persons will embrace bold **VISION 2020 Faith Projections** with humble enthusiasm. Our senior leaders will dare to dream of a transforming global holiness movement for the glory of God.

In the majestic name of our liberating Lord, I welcome you on behalf of the Board of General Superintendents (BGS) to the 93rd General Board Session of the Church of the Nazarene.

The desire to further internationalize general meetings and an invitation from General Board member Robert Kegel set in motion the decision for Ede, Netherlands, to become the setting of the first General Board Session in our denomination's 108-year history to be held outside the United States of America. We have gathered here to praise and worship God for all that has happened and for all that is yet to come in and through the Church of the Nazarene.

To God be the glory!

The General Board is convened not only for organizational purposes; we also pray that this unique General Board experience in the Netherlands will be a means of grace in your lives. You are a vital part of an international community of faith, focused on making Christlike disciples in the nations.

The Beginning Days

Our church's history in Eurasia dates back to the arrival of our first missionaries to India to 1898, sent there by the general missionary secretary, Hiram F. Reynolds. By 1915, nearly 25 Nazarene missionaries had served on that field. Reynolds visited the churches and missions in India in 1914—the first superintendent to do so.

Our second point of entry on the Eurasia Region dates to 1906, when Rev. George Sharpe and 80 others established Parkhead Pentecostal Church in Glasgow, Scotland. It was the mother church of the Pentecostal Church of Scotland, which merged in 1915 with the Church of the Nazarene.¹

A Nazarene presence in the Netherlands became possible in the 1960s through Jeanine van Beek, a Dutch Nazarene from New Zealand, who was on her way to pastor a church in West Germany.

She was joined by Cor and Miep Holleman, Hetty van Houweninge, Willem and Ria deVries, and Jerald Johnson in planting the Church of the Nazarene in a country which would become the 17th largest economy in the world.

It was Jerald Johnson, as district superintendent of the Middle European District, who organized the first church in Haarlem in January 1967 with seven charter members. He temporarily assigned himself as pastor and commuted 482 kilometers (300 miles) from Frankfurt, Germany.

In 1976, Cor Holleman was appointed as the first national district superintendent for the Netherlands.² To his son, District Superintendent Antonie Holleman, to Eurasia Regional Director Arthur Snijders, and to the 2,300 Nazarenes in the Netherlands, we say *dank u wel* for hosting the 2016 General Board!

Appreciation

It is one thing to organize and plan a General Board less than 14 kilometers (nine miles) from the Global Ministry Center, Lenexa, Kansas, USA. It is quite another to work out the details of that process 7,730 kilometers (4,493 miles) away.

To General Secretary David Wilson, Susan Metcalf, Diane Miller, Elizabeth Kuhns, Shirley Marvin, Allison Bergerat, Jeff Beam, and the Global Ministry Center information technology staff, the Board of General Superintendents offers its deepest appreciation for careful facilitation of this historic General Board Session.

To Renee Rotz and the BGS office staff for the preparation required for the Board of General Superintendents, thank you.

And to Dale Jones, Rich Houseal, and the Global Communications Office for their professional assistance, ¡Muchas gracias!

2015 IN REVIEW

Part I: External

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world
(John 16:33, NIV).

Our denomination serves in 159 world areas and in countless cultures and subcultures. The external environment for our internal core values—Christian, holiness, and missional—varies dramatically over the earth’s estimated 7.3 billion inhabitants.

Most of the populace is connected by some form of media, social or otherwise, which permeates nearly every aspect of life. What happens in one part of the world, such as the terrorist attacks in Paris, San Bernardino, Istanbul, or a Starbuck’s coffee shop in Jakarta, Indonesia, immediately gets our attention.

Social Change

Nazarenes in certain countries continue to see increased social change, breaks from long-held cultural norms, and decreased freedom of religion. Changing laws relating to human sexuality pose serious challenges to churches, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and businesses that uphold biblical standards of marriage and the sanctity of human life.

On 26 June 2015, the general superintendents released a statement regarding decision of the Supreme Court of the United States to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide:

We remind our people that while the civil law of yet another country has changed, divine truth has not changed ... Our commitment to the orthodox biblical Christian faith remains the same. We continue to call Nazarenes around the world to a life of holiness, characterized by holy love and expressed through the most rigorous and consistent lifestyle of sexual purity. We further call our people to a generosity and graciousness of spirit that extends kindness to those who do not share our belief. We pray that God will help us be examples of His truth in a world that needs to see God’s love demonstrated in word and deed more than ever.

On 14 February 2016, through participation in Freedom Sunday, Nazarene congregations around the globe took a stand against human trafficking. Last year, more than 200 congregations worldwide participated in the event through prayer, worship, preaching, and support of church-based anti-trafficking ministries. This is the third year the Church of the Nazarene has joined other denominations in observing Freedom Sunday.

It is when the world seems upside down that God strengthens our faith and opens new doors of opportunity:

At present you may be temporarily harassed by all kinds of trials. This is no accident. It happens to prove your faith which is infinitely more valuable than gold (1 Peter 1:6–7, Phillips).

Christians are called to prevail in prayer when reaching the lost and engaging the culture. Writing to the church at Colossae, Paul says:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:2–6, NIV).

“Take heart,” Jesus said to His disciples. “I have overcome the world.”

The Refugee Situation

For many, it is hard to comprehend the scope of the current refugee situation, as rarely in modern history have so many been so desperate to flee in search of refuge.

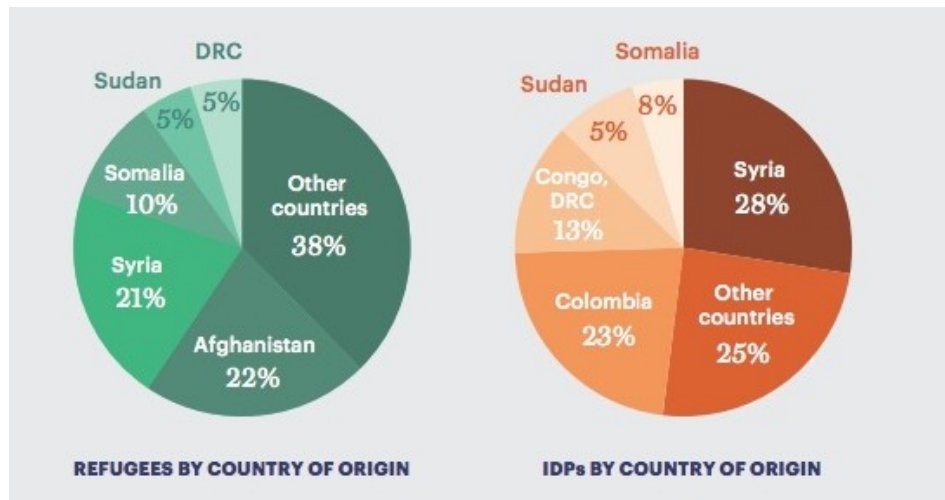


Perhaps the most shocking image last year was that of the body of a Syrian boy, three-year-old Aylin Kurdi, washed up on the Turkish shore.

The Kurdi family was making a final, desperate attempt to flee to relatives in Canada. Syria was already at war when Aylan Kurdi was born. He died, along with his five-year-old brother, Galip, and mother, Rehan. Their father, Abdullah, survived.

The scope of the refugee situation is staggering.

According to 2014 figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, right now there are almost 60 million refugees and internally displaced people around the globe—one in every 122 people worldwide, the equivalent of the entire population of Italy being forced from their homes.³



During this refugee situation that is reshaping Europe and the world in which ministry takes place, the Board of General Superintendents called on the Church of the Nazarene to respond.

Nazarenes are among those who have had to flee their countries to escape violent conflict ... Nazarenes are also among those who have had to flee because faith in Jesus has put their lives in danger. And Nazarenes are among those who have been ministering to refugee families who are seeking safety and hope.

The denomination is working through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries to support care for refugees through sensitive and generous local churches.



Middle East Field Strategy Coordinator Rev. Khalil testifies of bold Jordanian and Lebanese Nazarenes who are ministering to hundreds of Muslim Syrian families, offering them love and basic provisions. Nazarenes are also providing education for refugee children who are unable to enroll in local schools. As they embrace faith in Christ, scores of these displaced persons have asked to be included in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.



In Hungary, Nazarenes have been providing food, blankets, and tents for refugee families caught in transit in both Budapest and Roszke on the Hungarian/Serbian border. Now that the border has closed, a team of Nazarenes on the ground in Serbia is partnering with another denomination to meet emergency needs of refugees there.

Many refugees headed for Europe come from cultures that place much value on hospitality, so there could be no greater expression of love and welcome than the community hosting an abundant meal for their new neighbors.



That is exactly what happened on 17 October 2015 when a network of churches and organizations in Gottmadingen, Germany, including the Church of the Nazarene, welcomed 60 refugees to their community by hosting a banquet with international foods, live music, cultural presentations, and plenty of conversation.

“The refugees gave testimony of where they came from. There was a big map of the world and they showed the places they had gone through to reach Germany,” said Ludwig Duncker, pastor of the Gottmadingen church. “There were several activities to show the local people what the refugees had experienced.”



When leaders on the West Texas District, USA, were contacted by a nonprofit organization in need of space to house 200 immigrant and refugee children from Central America, they did not hesitate.

“It was a unanimous decision,” said the district superintendent, David Downs. “We are honored to receive these children while they are awaiting placement in the United States.”

The boys, ages 13 to 16, stayed at the district campground, Camp Arrowhead. Some will be reunited with their families in the United States, while others will go into foster care.

Word Action, an imprint of Nazarene Publishing House, in response to the refugee situation, has developed two free small group lessons that explain how Christians can engage in the social needs of today's world.

During this refugee situation, we remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 25: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was *an immigrant* (translation of Greek word: *xenos*) and you welcomed me." The BGS, in a December 2015 letter, said, "We are asking our global church family to pray and minister to those in need." This is a wonderful opportunity for the Church to demonstrate and embody Kingdom values.

Part II: Internal

Jesus said, "I will build my church ... you make disciples"
(Matthew 16:18, 28:19, NIV).

Jesus expected His disciples to reproduce His likeness in others. He imparted the message and mission to the disciples in order that they would reproduce themselves in others and make disciples who would make disciples, even in the midst of great strife. As we intentionally make disciples, Jesus builds the Church.

Christendom has become a 2.3 billion-member movement today, after starting with only twelve disciples. The analogy of the Vine in John 15:1–17 speaks to our mission. The purpose of the Vine (Jesus) and the branches (us) is to bear fruit. Christians are to work for and expect a harvest (Matthew 9:37–38, Luke 10:2).⁴

The Harvest

Churches of the Nazarene continue to be characterized by their evangelistic fervor. Evangelism is the first step in multiplying Christlike disciples. In 2015, pastors reported just over 209,000 conversions. Praise the Lord!

These new Christ-followers are embraced by the church in the sacrament of baptism. Likewise, Jesus was baptized by his cousin John: "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John" (Matthew 3:13, NIV).

In the Great Commission, we are commanded to baptize these new disciples:

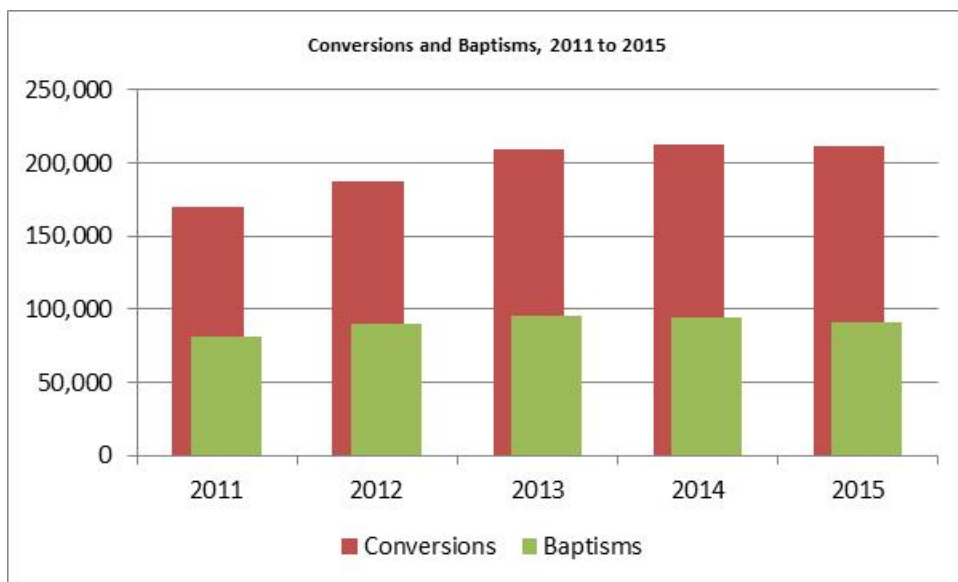
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ... (Matthew 28:19–20, NIV).

John Wesley had this to say about baptism:

By baptism, we enter into a covenant with God, an everlasting covenant, are admitted into the church, and made members of Christ, made children of God.⁵

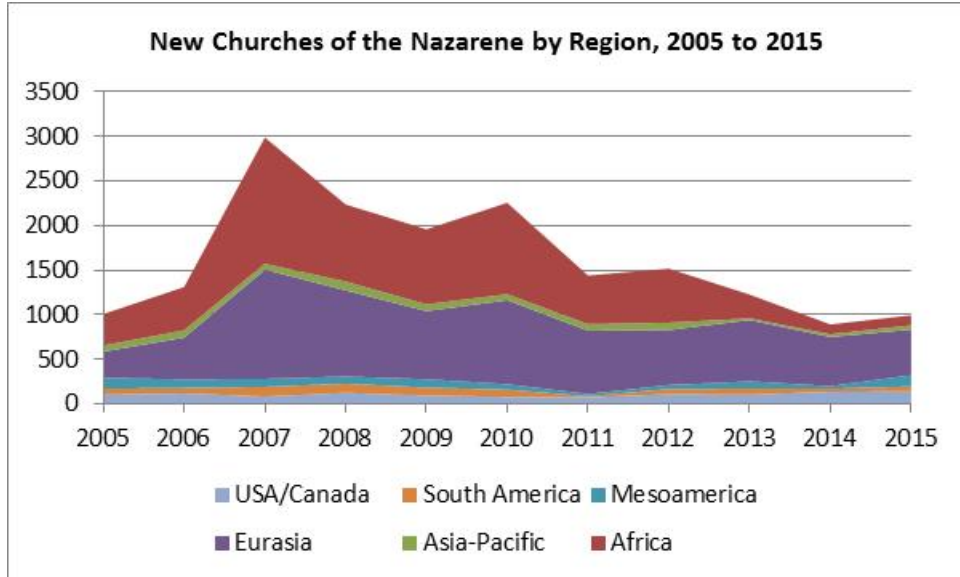
Charles Haddon Spurgeon, often referred to as the Prince of Preachers, said that up until the time he was baptized, he was afraid to confess Christ. Thereafter, he lost all fear of man and never again hesitated to boldly profess his faith.⁶

The 89,000 Nazarene baptisms in 2015 are testimonies to the church embracing and welcoming new believers.

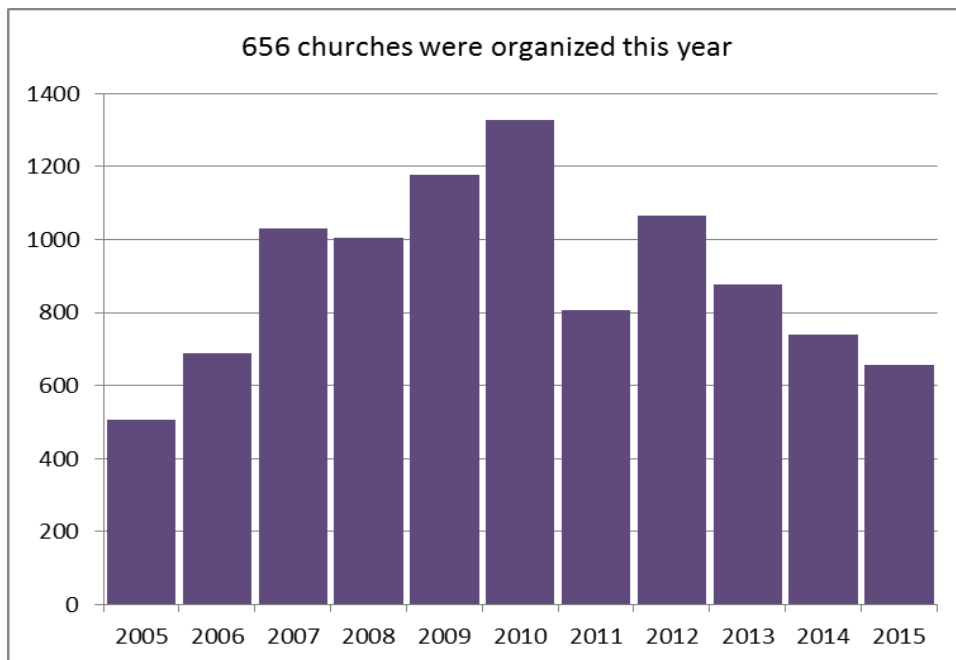


The General Secretary's 2015 report also testifies to the addition of new congregations.⁷

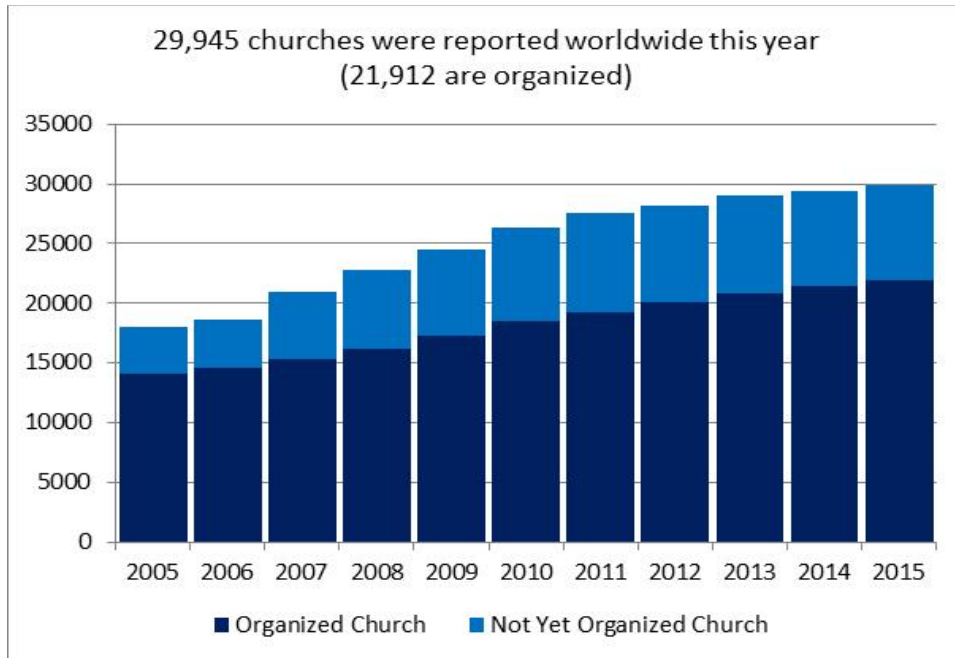
- 994 new “centers of holy fire”



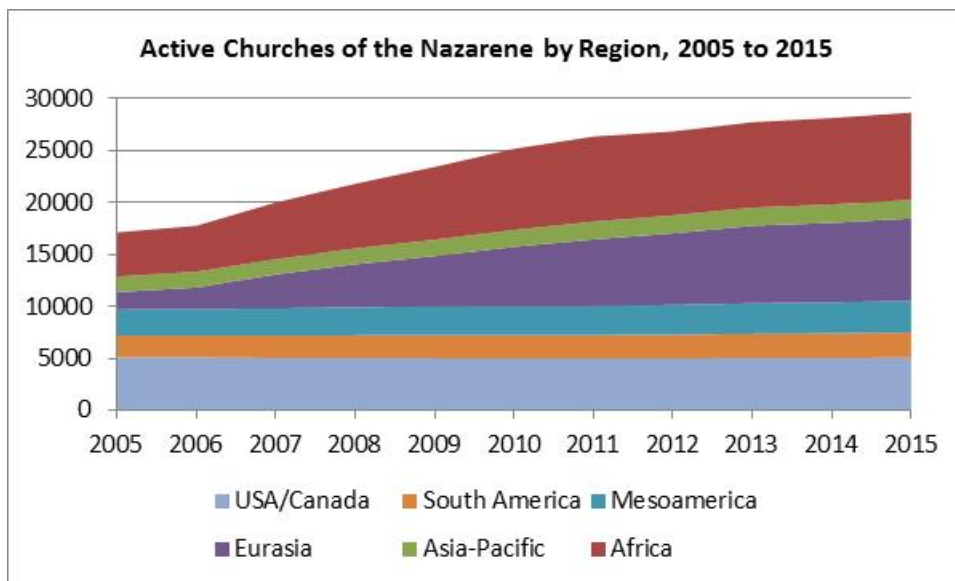
- 656 churches organized



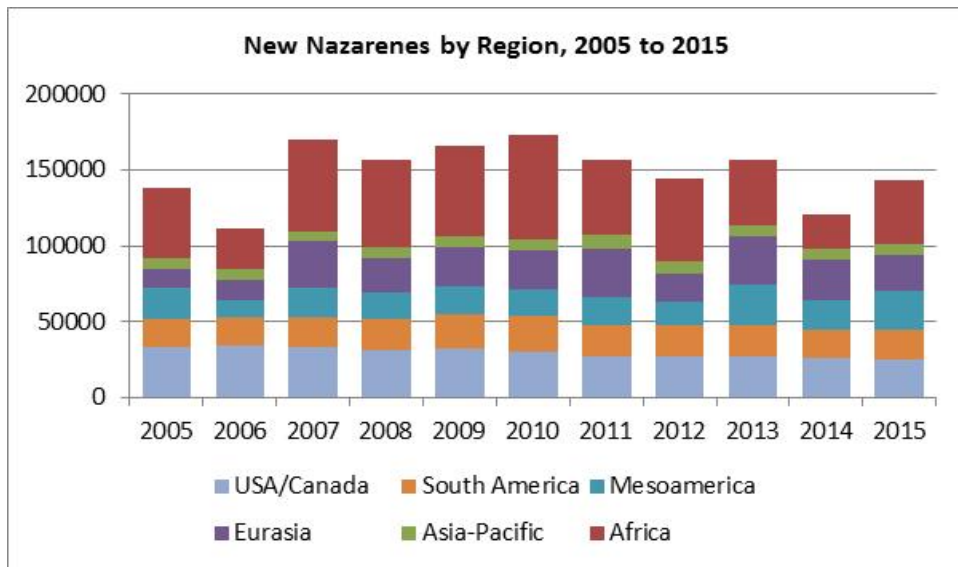
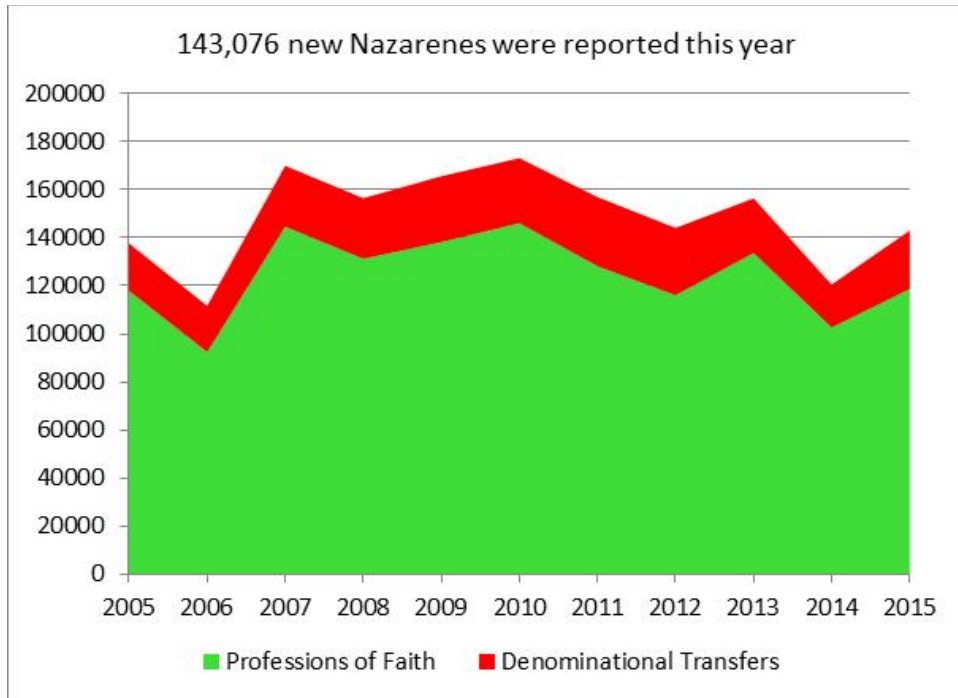
- 29,945 churches worldwide, with 21,912 organized



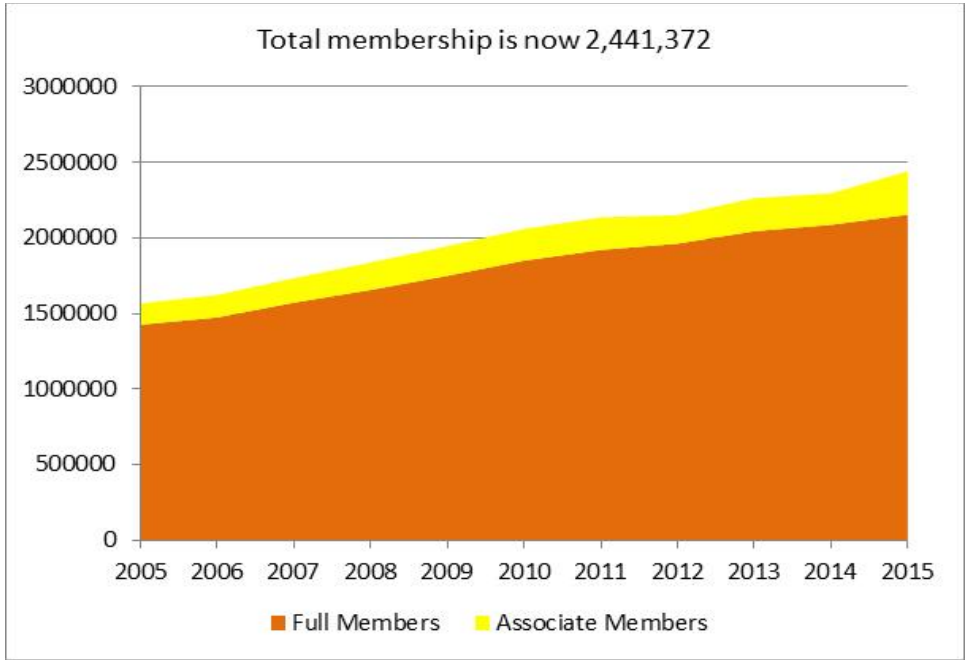
- 28,658 active churches, up 517 from the previous year.



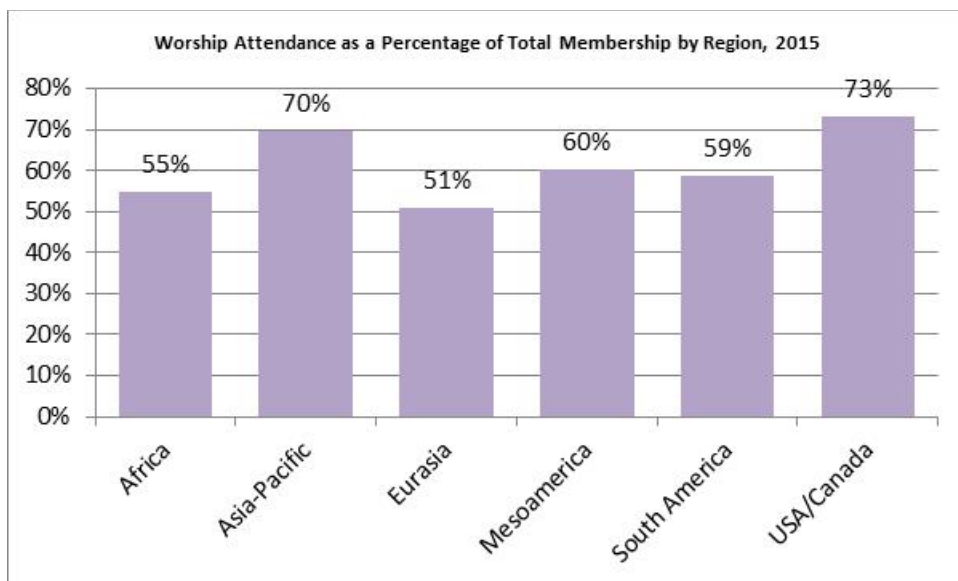
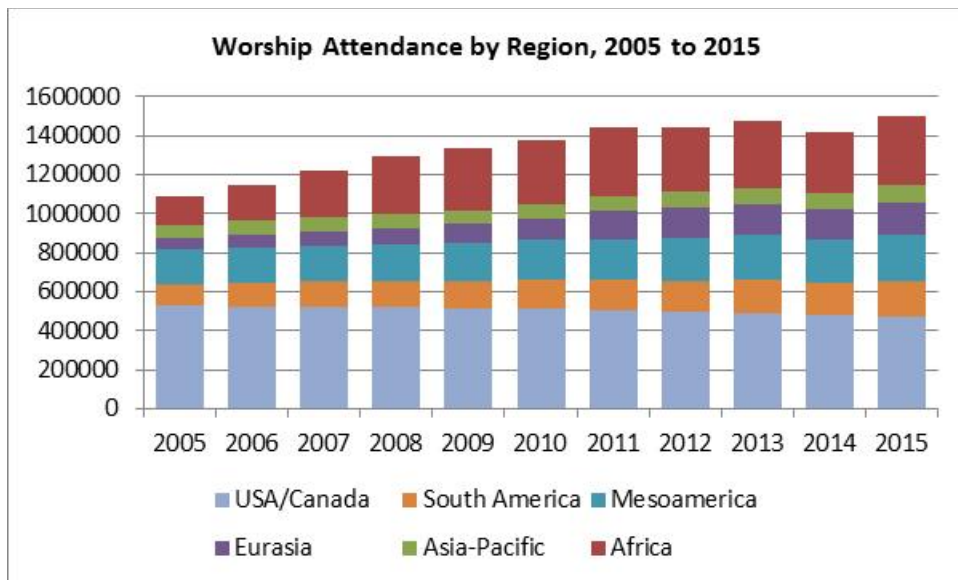
- 143,076 New Nazarenes



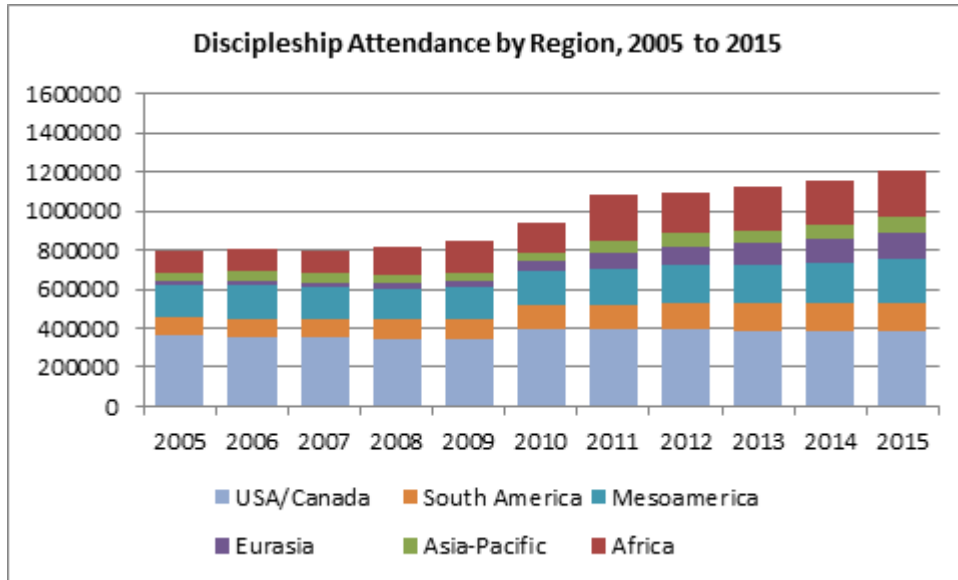
- A record total global membership of 2,441,372



- Average weekly worship attendance of 1,498,482



- A record average global Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries attendance of 1,210,871. The Church of the Nazarene Statement of Mission is “to make Christlike disciples in the nations.” We celebrate the continued attendance growth at Bible studies and fellowship groups.



It is important for new disciples

- to join the fellowship as members.
- to regularly participate in worship.
- to be joined into small classes in order to grow into Christlikeness.
- to be personally, continually discipled, while intentionally discipling others.

We will obey the Lord’s instructions to make disciples! Who is discipling you? Who are you discipling?

Summary

The Annual Pastors’ Report records quantitative indicators of health and growth. Even these measurements are inadequate because of the creative access areas where it is difficult and dangerous to count disciples and churches. What is more difficult to measure, however, is the qualitative evidence of holiness, Christian maturity, and the spiritual power that God expresses in and through us to carry out the work to which we have been called.

In John 5:17 (NLT), Jesus responds to the complaint about healing the beggar on the Sabbath by saying, “My Father is always working, and so am I.” Our hope is in Christ who never ceases

working and who never fails. This same Lord now sends us to work when He says, “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard” (Matthew 20:1, NIV).

To our pastors, laity, district superintendents, educators, Sunday school teachers, evangelists, compassionate ministry workers, chaplains, JESUS Film crews, and those who represent the mission of the Church of the Nazarene—the general superintendents express heartfelt gratitude for your faithfulness and your fruitfulness. Ultimately, you serve for the approval and applause of an audience of one, the Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate your prayers, your labor of love, your passion to bring others to Christ, and your obedience in personally and intentionally making Christlike disciples in the nations.

For what is recorded and unrecorded, we say:

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

—Thomas Ken, 1674

Missionaries

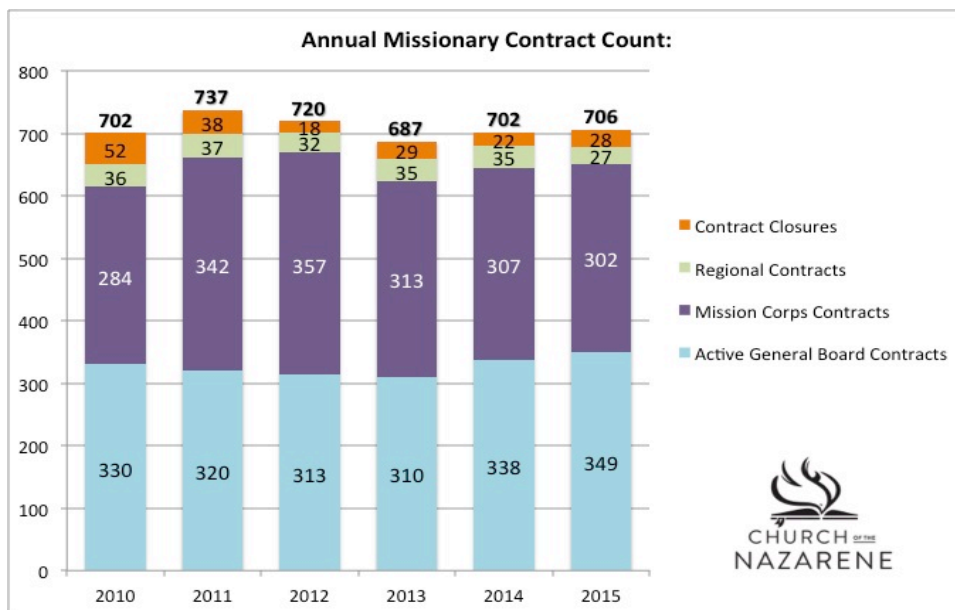
Phineas F. Bresee, one of the founders of our church and its first general superintendent, often said, “We are debtors to every man to give him the gospel in the same measure as we have received it.” That statement became the clarion call of the denomination. Out of it grew a flourishing world mission enterprise that has been the hallmark of the Church of the Nazarene.⁸

With an ever-increasing number of indigenous leaders, in 2015, the denomination reported 706 missionaries and their 327 children deployed from 50 world areas, including 302 Mission Corps volunteers, 301 short-term volunteers, and 8,484 Work & Witness team members. All of these missionaries receive support from World Evangelism Fund through Global Mission and other offices of the Global Ministry Center.

During recent years, Extreme Nazarene has helped to mobilize over 300 missionaries from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Perú, Scotland, the United States of America, and Venezuela to work in church planting.



These are four pastors of newly launched congregations in Ecuador, Chile, and Argentina.



On Monday evening, fourteen candidates will be presented for missionary appointment, and two couples, Lindell and Kay Browning along with Jim and Kaye Williams, will be honored for their many years of service as they move into retirement.

Nazarene Publishing House Turnaround

Nazarene Publishing House (NPH) continues to make significant progress since the 2015 General Board met. NPH is making great strides toward regaining financial stability while maintaining its long-standing tradition of providing Wesleyan resources in the areas of discipleship curriculum, books, and music. The leaders have prayerfully restructured as they focused on increased efficiencies and cost savings.

As a result of the 2014 staff reduction and a changing business model, the NPH Board has approved the sale of the administrative offices located at 2923 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri, USA. That transaction will take place in early 2016 with administrative offices located close to the present site.

In another move forward, NPH announced the relaunch of Lillenas Publishing Company, which was founded in 1924. The production of new product was halted in late 2014.

The leadership team, led by Chief Executive Officer Mark Brown, is creating a new future for the 103-year-old NPH. The Board of General Superintendents expresses deep appreciation for the NPH turnaround. Special thanks goes to the loyal customers across the Church, the committed NPH employees, and the NPH Board, comprised of Chair Bob Brower, Monte Chitwood, Keith Pardue, and David Graves.

NPH is vital to the overall global ministry of the Church of the Nazarene as Wesleyan holiness content continues to be produced, translated, and distributed worldwide. NPH currently has no debt, and it is anticipated that when the 2015 financial audit is released, NPH will have operated in the black for the first time since 2004.

NMI 100th Anniversary

October 2015 marked 100 years of Nazarene Missions International mobilizing the church. The anniversary culminated with the NMI 100th Anniversary Project.

Ninety districts around the world joined the celebration, adopting 283 initiatives submitted by the regions, and pledging more than \$4 million. Projects included, among other things, flashlights to show the JESUS Film south of the equator and support of a Russian orphanage. Districts could adopt more than one project. The Netherlands District adopted 16 projects, providing poultry and sheep so that Armenian women could better care for their families.



One of the most adopted initiatives included districts purchasing motorcycles to help pastors show the JESUS Film and build Nazarene churches in remote areas. West Virginia North District (USA) provided six motorcycles for Nazarene workers in Nepal.



The Papua New Guinea Kudjip hospital was another well-supported effort. The hospital was started by Nazarenes in 1967 to provide preventive and curative medicine, as well as spiritual healing through the message of the Lord Jesus Christ. Initiatives were submitted in hopes of raising \$100,000 to provide housing and water for the hospital. Districts gave more than \$200,000, which, through matching grants and other means, God multiplied to actually reach \$2 million.

Thank you, Nazarene Missions International.

A GLOBAL SYSTEM OF MISSION—BETTER TOGETHER

“One of the practical reasons for the church lies in her cooperative service accomplishing that which cannot otherwise be done.”⁹
Samuel Young, General Superintendent (1948–1972)

Our History

The Church of the Nazarene has a storied history:

Our church is a Wesleyan denomination whose organization on a national basis took place at Pilot Point, Texas, USA, in 1908. Its membership at that time was drawn from associations of churches which had appeared within the previous two decades.

These parent bodies were products of a spiritual awakening which during the previous half-century had cultivated the doctrine and experience of Christian perfection, or entire sanctification.

The history of the Church of the Nazarene, therefore, properly begins with the story of what was called the “holiness movement” of the nineteenth century. The holiness movement was born of great revivals. It prospered from the newly employed energies of lay men and women preachers. And it was in large measure centered in the cities.

That is how a commission of Nazarene historians summed up the beginnings of our church ahead of the denomination’s 50th Anniversary in 1958.¹⁰

Creating a System of Mission

No religion can live without organization. It requires form and order.

As Oswald Sanders wrote in his classic work, *Spiritual Leadership*, “Subtle dangers lie in organizations, including an overreliance on structure as a substitute for the Holy Spirit. But lack of method and failure to organize has spelled doom for many promising ministries.”

Someone once characterized the Church of the Nazarene as having a “knack for organization.” In the early days, that gift became evident during a series of financial crises in which young leaders used those critical moments to reshape the church’s unique system of mission.

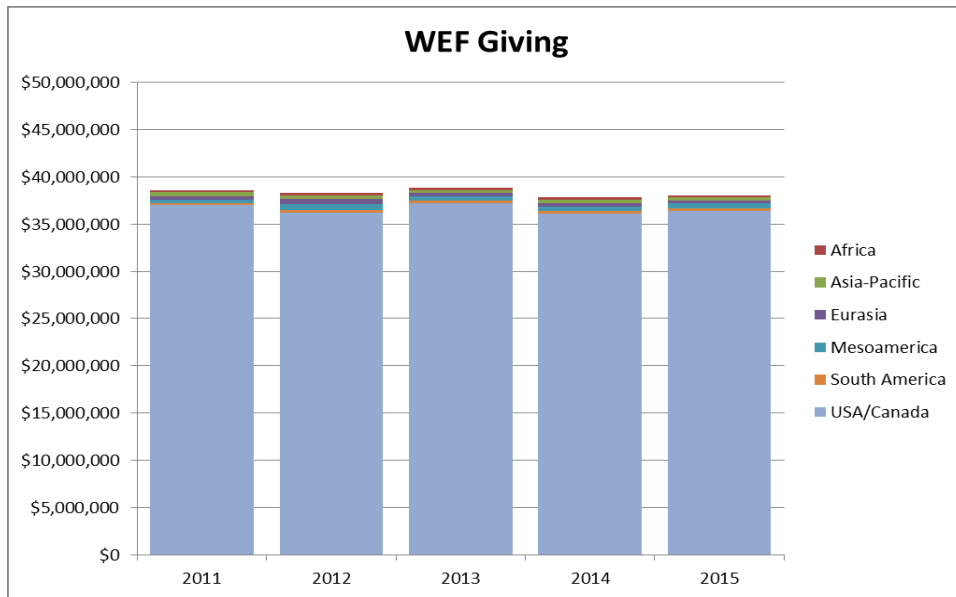
In the 1920s, leaders such as R. T. Williams, E. A. Girvin, E. J. Flemming, J. G. Morrison, and Mervel S. Lunn were instrumental in creating the General Board and General Budget and gaining stronger footing for “foreign missions.”

The ten board structures that predated the General Board’s creation in 1923 were consolidated into what was first called “General Council,” then “General Board.” That body consisted of six clergy and six laity chaired by the BGS. The recommendation from the general superintendents to create the General Board was approved by the 1923 General Assembly. “The assembly demolished with one blow” the old board structures, writes historian Timothy Smith.

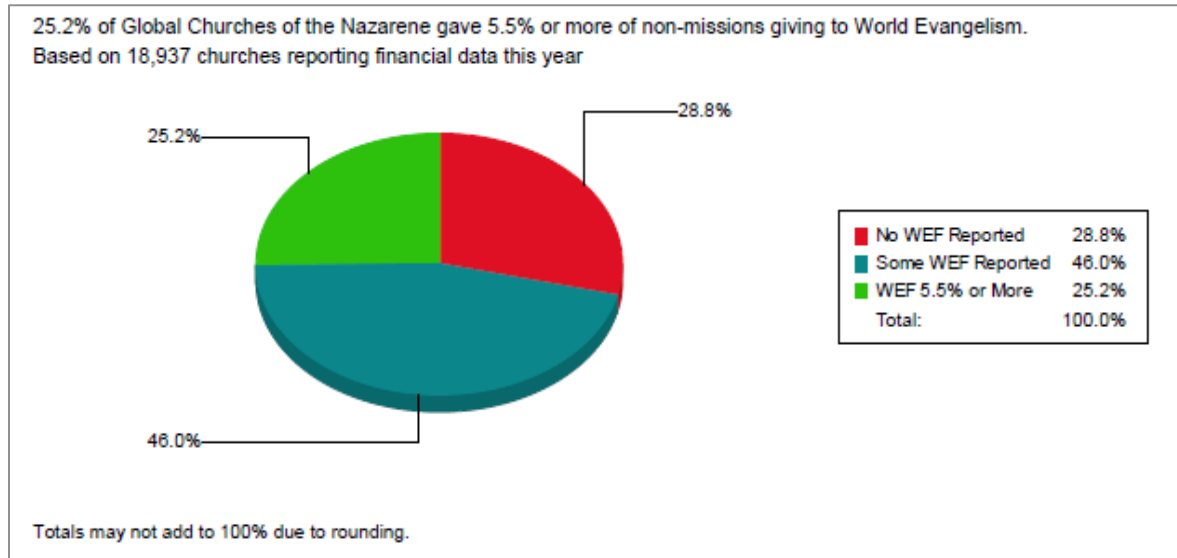
Nazarenes responded accordingly, showing strong financial support in response to a “spiritual rejuvenation” taking place within the denomination during that time.¹¹

Funding the Mission

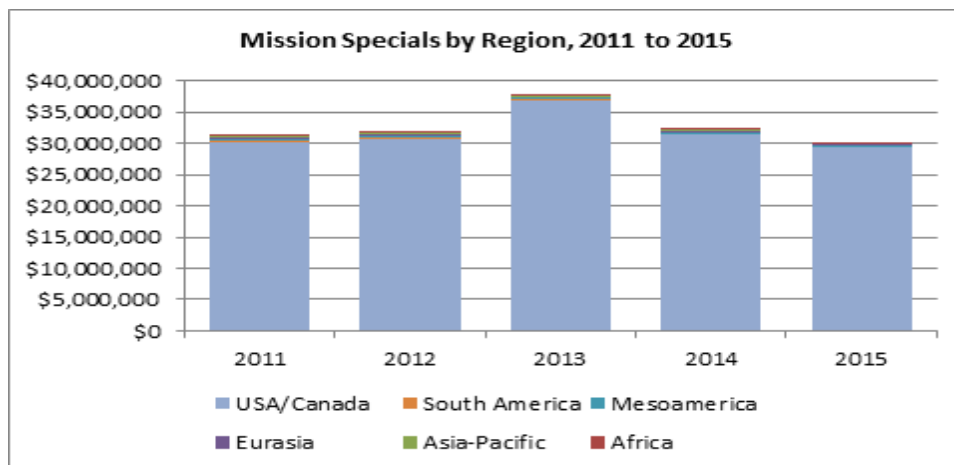
In 2015, Nazarenes gave \$38.1 million to World Evangelism Fund (WEF).¹²



Based on 18,937 churches reporting financial data, 25.2 percent gave 5.5 percent or more to WEF, 46.0 percent gave something to WEF, and 28.8 percent reported no WEF giving. We celebrate this generous support of the Church of the Nazarene.



- \$30.1 million was given to Mission Specials.



- The \$68.2 million combined total for World Evangelism Fund and Mission Specials came from generous and sacrificial Nazarenes who know that one cannot out give God. Thank you for unselfishly funding the mission.

It was never the intention of the BGS or the General Board to ask local congregations to take 5.5 percent of their income and remit it to fund the global mission. The 5.5 percent global

World Evangelism Fund is ONLY a way to calculate a generous visionary goal that will be reached by offerings such as Faith Promise, Easter, Thanksgiving, Prayer and Fasting, and other WEF contributions. We say thank you to every congregation that has invested in these Great Commission offerings. Is it time for every local church to embrace a 5.5 percent missions giving goal for this year? Is it time for every Nazarene congregation to testify to the reality of our Lord's Kingdom principle that "it is more blessed to give than to receive"? (Acts 20:35, NIV)

Distribution of Funds

During the 2009 General Board Session, the BGS made a commitment to provide greater access to general church finances. Since funding the mission is built on trust, transparency, and accountability, the General Board and Nazarene donors need to know how much is given and where those funds are invested.

The General Treasurer's Office and Stewardship Ministries publish numerous information pieces in print and online to show the distribution of donor gifts from World Evangelism Fund and Mission Specials. The Distribution Report, which you have received, shows that 86.1 percent went toward field ministries, and 13.9 percent went to support and delivery.

The Mission Infrastructure

The purpose of financial and administrative infrastructure is to support the spiritual infrastructure. The general church has had several funding models since its inception in 1908. Originally, multiple boards raised their own funds; then a unified system of giving called "General Budget" was created in 1923 and renamed "World Evangelism Fund" in 1997. The church has had a long history of managing the healthy polarity of unified and designated giving.

World Evangelism Fund, under general supervision of the BGS (*Manual* 317.11), continues to be the "lifeline" of discretionary ministry and organizational support. WEF is the basis for the general church budgeting process and provides needed assistance for the denomination's long-term viability.

Mission Specials plays a vital role in ministry fulfillment as well. Mission Specials gives Nazarenes the opportunity to support Alabaster, LINKS, JESUS Film, Mission Corps, Work & Witness, and Compassionate Ministries, all of which are essential to the health and strength of the denomination. Mission Specials giving exists in tandem with World Evangelism Fund, making it possible for donors to personally engage in urgently needed, effective, specific opportunities.

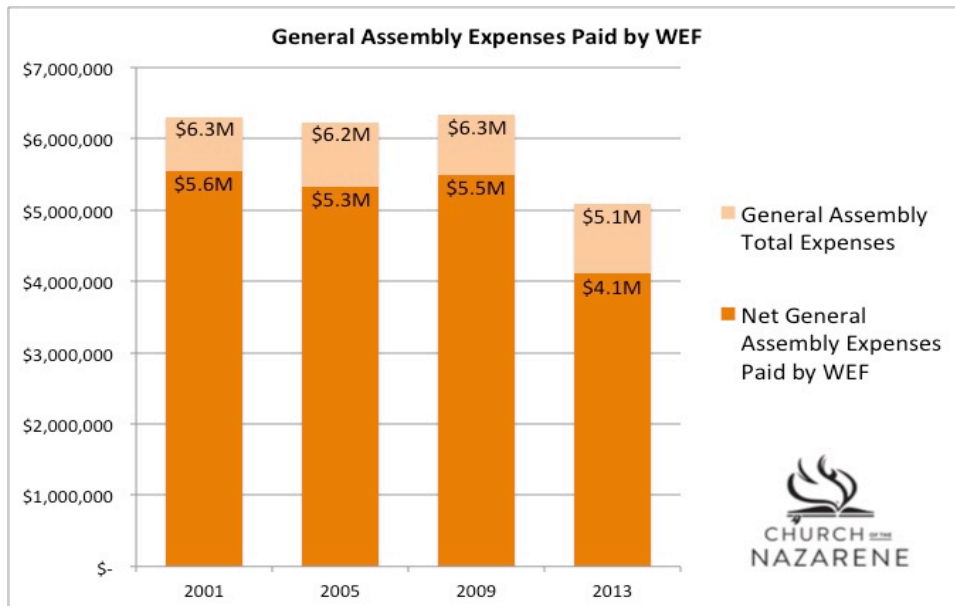
The Church of the Nazarene Foundation, which was begun in 2004, distributed \$5.1 million for Kingdom work in 2015. Donor Advised Funds and Charitable Gift Annuities each now approach

\$5 million dollars. Endowments that will provide revenue well into the future increased to over \$7 million dollars (13.54 percent). We are grateful to districts and local churches that have invested over \$65 million in assets for ministry under Foundation management.

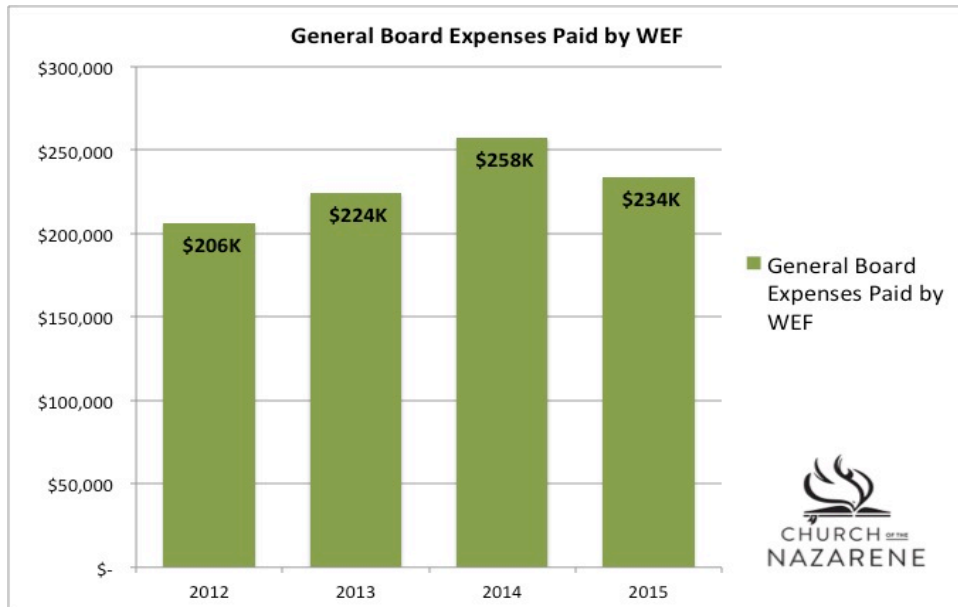
Donors give through a system built by World Evangelism Fund, which ties together local churches, districts, regions, educational institutions, and compassion. For nearly eleven decades, Nazarene generosity has made missionaries, indigenous leaders, and wider ministry possible.

What Nazarenes often see and experience as an international church is the fellowship and inspiration of general assemblies, General Board sessions, and regional conferences. What they do not always see is that World Evangelism Fund is largely responsible for making those venues come to life.

For example, here are expenses for the 2001 through 2013 general assemblies:¹³



This chart represents total expenses of General Board sessions 2012 through 2015:¹⁴



And here is a summary of expenses for Global Mission regional conferences held in or scheduled for 2015–2016:¹⁵



General assembly, General Board sessions, and Global Mission regional conferences are all made possible because of generous WEF giving. (Not in reading copy: General Assemblies, General Boards and Regional Conferences are funded with annual accruals for designated purposes.)

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, JESUS Film Harvest Partners, and other global partnerships make critically important contributions to the church. Those entities exist and collaborate because there is a WEF-funded system in place to make Christlike disciples in the nations.

Here are two questions: Will succeeding generations of Nazarenes continue to value this “co-operative service accomplishing that which cannot otherwise be done”? Are we truly “better together”? That idea was at the heart of a mission funding discussion held at 2015 General Board. The focus of our time during the Monday morning plenary here in the Netherlands will be to look at next steps in crafting the right mission funding strategy. In doing so, it is essential that storehouse tithing (*Manual*, paragraph 33.1) be seen as foundational in support of the whole church.

The BGS will again want your feedback in Part 2 of this important discussion on financial stewardship.

BETWEEN TWO TRUTHS

As children, we enjoyed singing and doing the motions of the chorus, “Deep and Wide.” We sang, “Deep and wide, deep and wide, there’s a fountain flowing deep and wide.” This chorus may have been inspired by the prophecy of Isaiah:

Wilderness and desert will sing joyously, the badlands will celebrate and flower ... God’s resplendent glory, fully on display. God awesome, God majestic ... Tell fearful souls, “Courage! Take heart! God is here, right here, on his way to put things right ...” Springs of water will burst out in the wilderness, streams flow in the desert. Hot sands will become a cool oasis, thirsty ground a splashing fountain ... There will be a highway called the Holy Road. No one rude or rebellious is permitted on this road. It’s for God’s people exclusively ... (Isaiah 35:1–8, MSG).

The glory and the beauty of God’s majestic fountain is that it flows both **DEEP AND WIDE**. If it only flows deep, it is limited to the few who are near and can draw from the deep well. If it only flows wide, it is too shallow to go very far, and it will dissipate in the desert sands of life.

VISION 2020 foresees a gracious movement of God throughout the Church of the Nazarene that is both **DEEP AND WIDE**.

I remember that one of my theology professors, Rob Staples, warned us about the dangers of heresies. “I have no doubt you students will preach and teach a heresy from time to time. I just want you to know when you are doing so. It will allow you to make the necessary correction the next time you teach or preach. Good theology is usually two truths in tension. If you exaggerate one truth too much, you fall into a heretical ditch. You stay on the orthodox path when you maintain both truths in healthy tension.”

We can see this in our cardinal doctrines. Is God one or is God three? If we emphasize “one” or “three” too much, we are teaching heresy. Is God one or is God three? That is a trick question because it tempts a person to emphasize one half of the theological truth. So, is God one or is God three? The only correct answer is YES!

Was Jesus Christ divine or human? If we emphasize either truth and diminish the other, we have fallen into one of the many Christological heresies. Is Jesus Christ all God or all man? YES! Is God sovereign or are we responsible for our choices? YES! Some denominations have emphasized one half of the theological truth and have fallen into the heresy of teaching that God predestines some persons to be saved and some to be cursed. Other movements teach the heresy that God observes and reacts to our decisions but has no sovereign divine will.

When I was a seminary director in Costa Rica, I participated in many faculty discussions about how best to prepare women and men for ministry. Usually our heated and sincere exchange of ideas emphasized one strategic truth while undervaluing another. Should we emphasize resident or extension theological education? Do we want to graduate practitioners or theologians? Do we prefer single or married students? Do we recruit young, immature students or older, more mature students? Do we want high quality ministers or a great quantity of ministers? YES to all the above!

VISION 2020 must be **DEEP AND WIDE**. We are not satisfied with a small, dwindling, global huddle of deeply committed, entirely sanctified Nazarenes any more than we are satisfied with a growing mass of shallow believers. As we invite every Nazarene pastor and congregation to embrace numerical **VISION 2020 Faith Projections** of membership, worship attendance, Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries attendance, and church multiplication, do we only care about the numbers? NO! **VISION 2020** is an invitation to affirm again that quality and quantity are not mutually exclusive. In fact, if we decide to emphasize either half of this healthy tension, we will fall off the “Highway of Holiness.”

The worship of numbers is idolatrous and arrogant. The study of numbers may also be diagnostic and celebrative. When I go to the doctor, I expect exact numbers that indicate my weight, cholesterol level, blood pressure, sugar level, etc. If my doctor tells me he does not worry about numbers but is only interested in my state of mind, I will change doctors. The Old Testament

records a census of the Israelite nation that was condemned by God because of the arrogance of the King.

On another occasion, Jehovah mandated a census, as recorded in the book of Numbers. Some of the very persons who dislike numerical goals for evangelism, discipleship, and church planting are the same ones who carefully scrutinize the financial reports. We need to be as concerned about numbers of persons as we are about numbers of dollars.

As the BGS envisions a global church membership of 3.5 million Nazarenes in 50,000 congregations by 2020, do we emphasize evangelism or discipleship? YES! Do we emphasize strengthening existing congregations or launching new “centers of holy fire”? YES! When we embrace the faith projection of 2.5 million persons in worship and 2.5 million in discipleship groups, which of these is most important? YES!

The BGS and our representatives at every district assembly have been sharing global **VISION 2020 Faith Projections**:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>
Total Membership	2,441,372	3,500,000
Worship Attendance	1,498,482	2,500,000
SDMI Attendance	1,210,871	2,500,000
Total Churches and Missions	29,945	50,000

The BGS has invited every local Nazarene pastor and congregation to humbly embrace its own **VISION 2020 Faith Projection**. Our hearts have been deeply moved by the faith and vision of these godly leaders. Here are the current **VISION 2020 Faith Projections** from the Global Mission regions:

VISION 2020 Faith Projections

	Members	Worship Attendance	SDMI Attendance	Total Churches*
Africa	1,012,000	658,000	708,000	10,270
Asia-Pacific	200,000	200,000	100,000	2,510
Eurasia	423,000	324,000	229,000	11,330
Mesoamerica	569,000	427,000	476,000	4,870
South America	550,000	350,000	400,000	4,655
USA/Canada	796,000	719,000	547,000	9,000
TOTAL	3,550,000	2,678,000	2,460,000	42,635

*Total churches = new church goal plus existing churches.

The local church faith projections match or surpass the BGS vision, except in the area of new congregations. We trust every Nazarene church to embrace the **VISION 2020 Faith Projection** of at least one new outreach ministry cell during the next four years.

The BGS invites the General Board to join us in prayer for a mighty Holy Spirit revival that would sanctify, empower, and mobilize our global family in the seven characteristics of a Nazarene:

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

What motivates our work of “making Christlike disciples in the nations”? Why are we so desperate to reach the **VISION 2020 Faith Projections**?

There once was a rich man ... wasting his days in conspicuous consumption. A poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, had been dumped on his doorstep ... Then this poor man died, and was taken up by the angels to the lap of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ‘Father Abraham, mercy! Have mercy! Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool my tongue. I’m in agony in this fire.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child ... there is a huge chasm set between us ...’ The rich man said, ‘Then let me ask you, Father: **Send him to the house of my father where I have five brothers so he can warn them ...**’ Abraham answered, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets ... Let them listen to them.’ ‘I know, Father Abraham, but they’re not listening.’ Abraham replied, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the Prophets, they’re not going to be convinced by someone who rises from the dead’ (Luke 16:19–31, MSG).

VISION 2020 is urgent because the eternal destiny of our generation depends on us.



In November 2014, I joined over 500 Peruvian Nazarene pastors who gathered in Chiclayo, Peru, as part of the Centennial Celebration of the Church of the Nazarene. We rejoiced to see all that God had done in raising up a glorious church of over 65,000 Nazarenes.



I told my Peruvian brothers and sisters that we had four basic options:

1. **Shrink the church:** Let's get rid of some Peruvian Nazarenes who are not genuinely sanctified. No pastor agreed with that option.
2. **Maintain the church:** Let's do whatever we have to do to maintain our current number of Nazarenes. No pastor agreed with that option.
3. **Grow at the current rate:** Let's continue making slow, steady progress in evangelism, disciple making, and church planting. Again, no pastor agreed with that option.

4. **Grow by multiplication:** I told each pastor to tell his or her neighbor, “¡Pon la moto en segunda!” Shift the motorcycle to second gear!

We have been enjoying steady growth, adding believers and congregations. Would the Lord be pleased if the Peruvian Nazarene church moved to multiplication? Will the global church move to multiplication?

Luke records that there was a similar shift in the New Testament church. “The word of God spread, and the number of **the disciples multiplied** greatly in Jerusalem ...” (Acts 6:7, NKJV). Later in the narrative, Luke reports the same shift took place with the churches: “Then **the churches** throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were **multiplied** (Acts 9:31, NKJV).

When we shift the motorcycle into second gear, the motor does not rotate any faster, but the wheel turns faster. When we go to third gear, the wheel turns even faster. It is time for the Church of the Nazarene to no longer be satisfied with adding and subtracting disciples and congregations. By the grace of God and with the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, we will not rest until we multiply disciples and churches.

If we experience the multiplication of disciples and congregations, will they truly be Nazarene? Which do we prefer, qualitative growth in Christlikeness and holiness or quantitative growth by multiplication? YES!

Growth by multiplication must be by two or more. If we multiply by zero, we end up with zero; multiply by one and the number is the same. If the New Testament church was multiplying disciples, that meant that Luke saw 3,000 become 6,000; then there were 12,000 disciples who became 24,000! The New Testament churches were also indefinitely reproducible. They were not dependent on property, buildings, funding strategies, or ordained clergy.



I was deeply moved when the Brazil district superintendents announced their **VISION 2020 Faith Projection** of doubling the Brazilian Church of the Nazarene by 2020. They want to see every disciple make a new disciple and every congregation launch a new church.

My wife and I have been honored to serve the Church of the Nazarene as pastor, missionary, seminary director, regional director, district superintendent, and general superintendent for 44 years. We have seen this church in all her glory and her occasional lethargy. As we move toward our retirement as general superintendent in 17 months, we celebrate the amazing advances of our beloved Zion around the world. We also yearn to see our church step into the full stream of the Holy Spirit's activity in this amazing global harvest.



Last November my wife and I traveled to Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary. In the Spiritual Formation class, she taught awesome students from the Philippines, South Korea, China, Papua New Guinea, the United States, and Myanmar about prayer. Meanwhile, Clark Armstrong, Bill Wiesman, and I taught a class, “Urban Church Multiplication.” With more than 50 percent of the world’s population now living in towns and cities, we must find a way to multiply congregations in the urban areas. So, which is more important—prayer or church multiplication? YES!



You and I have a choice to make. Will we embrace the new vision and shift to multiplication? Will we dare to believe that the Church of the Nazarene can grow in holiness while it also grows numerically?

Walls of Unbelief

[Jesus] returned to his hometown . . . On the Sabbath, he gave a lecture in the meeting place. He made a real hit . . . “We had no idea he was this good!” they said . . . But in the next breath they were cutting him down: “He's just a carpenter—Mary's boy. We've known him since he was a kid . . . Who does he think he is?” They tripped over what little they knew about him . . . **Jesus wasn't able to do much of anything there**—he laid hands on a few sick people and healed them, that's all. He couldn't get over their stubbornness (Mark 6:1–6, MSG).

The Lord could not do what he wanted to do because of the unbelief of the “Nazarenes.” Of course, they were Nazarenes because they lived in Nazareth, but we may also be guilty of unbelief. Do we ever put handcuffs on God, limiting the Lord's activity? Yes, the Holy Spirit respects our free will. We will never be forced to pray, to have faith, or to obey the Lord's mandates. We can quench, resist, or even disobey the Spirit. When we choose to be negative, critical, or cynical, we limit what God can do in us, in our family, in our church, and in our community.

My Faith Releases God

As Jesus entered the village of Capernaum, a Roman captain came up in a panic and said, “Master, my servant is sick. He can't walk. He's in terrible pain.” Jesus said, “I'll come and heal him.” “Oh, no,” said the captain. “I don't want to put you to all that trouble. Just give the order and my servant will be fine . . .” Taken aback, Jesus said, “I've yet to come across this kind of simple trust in Israel, the very people who are supposed to know all about God and how he works . . .” Then Jesus turned to the captain and said, **“Go. What you believed could happen has happened.”** At that moment his servant became well (Matthew 8:5–13, MSG).

In this passage, Jesus was amazed at the faith of the Gentile Roman soldier. The word that Matthew used to describe the Lord's reaction in this passage is the same word that Mark used when describing the Lord's amazement at the unbelief in Nazareth. While the military captain magnified Jesus' action, the Lord's hometown folks resisted, thereby diminishing the Lord's activity.

Today we have a choice. Some have commented that the BGS should not set high faith projections. Some feel it is laughable to envision the gain of one million Nazarenes in only five years. The truth is, if we knew the Lord was coming back in 2020, we would all become bolder

and more desperate in sharing the good news with those around us. If each Nazarene brings one person to Christ and the church, we will surpass the 5 million mark, to the glory of God!

What Is Our Motivation

Nine-tenths of the bickering and fault-finding and suspicion and criticism among us, laymen and preachers, general and district superintendents, would disappear if we were properly *joined up in an all-out crusade for souls*.

— J. B. Chapman, General Superintendent, 1928–1947

Perhaps the right question is, who is our motivation? The **Vision 2020 Faith Projections** are motivated by Christ's love for the lost that overflows in our hearts.



Last month, I was honored to preach at the newly launched Ibarra, Ecuador, Open Door Church of the Nazarene. The response was heartwarming as over 30 persons embraced saving faith in Christ. Among them was a woman sitting next to my wife, Toni. She was weeping during my message on the new beginnings that Jesus Christ offered the Samaritan woman (John 4). Toni prayed with her as she moved from spiritual death to life. That is what stirs our hearts and motivates our evangelism, disciple making, and church multiplication.

Why is VISION 2020 so urgent?

The destiny of our generation is in our hands.

We are not satisfied with the results thus far.

We invite the General Board, the Global Ministry Team, district superintendents, pastors, and leaders around the world to take the handcuffs off the Lord by being persons of faith, obedience, and availability. If we describe what God cannot do, we become part of the reason the Lord's activity is limited. However, if we embrace bold **VISION 2020 Faith Projections**, intercede for the lost and the church, and become radically obedient to the Spirit's leading, we will bring to the Lord a precious harvest that is both **DEEP AND WIDE!**

I prepared this report while visiting our brothers and sisters in Cuba. During the last two years, 800 lay leaders accepted the challenge to dedicate their Saturdays to training and church planting. Six hundred new cell churches have been launched. Today, 111 pastors are training 2,272 lay church planters.

May we all join the faith, commitment, and vision of our Cuban colleagues.

Every region has VISION 2020 stories. I encourage you read and be inspired by the account of these miracles of God's grace when this report is posted on Nazarene.org.

Remember this:

Anything that God has ever done ... He can do now!
Anything that God has ever done anywhere ... He can do here!
Anything that God has ever done for anyone ... He can do for you!
—A.W. Tozer

Joel prophesied: "What a day! Wine streaming off the mountains, milk rivering out of the hills, water flowing everywhere in Judah, a fountain pouring out of God's Sanctuary, watering all the parks and gardens!" (Joel 3:18. MSG)

There is a fountain flowing **DEEP AND WIDE**. With God's help, we will do our small part. And God will majestically intervene allowing us to participate in a gracious multiplying harvest of a host of radically committed, Christlike, Nazarene disciples who make disciples. Amen!

Prayerfully and respectfully submitted,

Board of General Superintendents

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Footnotes

1 Nazarene Archives, Global Ministry Center

2 Mission to the World, J. Fred Parker, Nazarene Publishing House, 1998

3 The Atlantic 2015

4 Christian Research Institute

5 John Wesley, *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion*, p. 146-150, as quoted in *Millennial Harbinger*, Volume 1 by William Kimbrough Pendleton and *Theological Writings on Various Subjects* by Peter Nead.

6 Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon at His Best*, comp. Tom Carter (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 20.

7 For consistency and accuracy, the general superintendents draw from the General Secretary's Annual Statistical Report. The source of that information is the Annual Pastor's Report (APR).

8 Mission to the World, J. Fred Parker, Nazarene Publishing House, 1998

9 The Nazarene Pastor, August/September 1961, Vol. 14, No. 6, page 2

10 Called Unto Holiness, Vol. 1, Timothy Smith, Nazarene Publishing House, 1962

11 Ibid

12 Cash receipts from general treasurer's office for each of these categories may be different from general secretary's report.

13 General Treasurer's Office

14 Office of the General Secretary

15 Global Mission Finance