

ANNUAL REPORT
of the
BOARD OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS
to the
GENERAL BOARD

FEBRUARY 2005

“THE FUTURE THAT HAS COME”

Mr. Chairman, members of the General Board, officers, directors and staff from International Headquarters, church leaders from the community, and special guests from around the world:

As we begin our report, it is important to remind ourselves that just two months ago today there was an earthquake on the floor of the Indian Ocean off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. Within a range of 1.5 to 9 hours, depending on the location in southeast Asia and east Africa, a tsunami of biblical proportions reached the shores of 11 countries killing nearly 221,000 people.

This horrific devastation shared across the globe by means of satellite broadcast, mobile phones, and the World Wide Web, grabbed our attention and gripped our hearts. The unfolding tragedies over the past 60 days are incomprehensible.

The Board of General Superintendents put out a call for help, and the Church of the Nazarene responded with compassion and characteristic generosity. Our people in Sri Lanka, India, and other locations such as Indonesia and Thailand are the recipients of care and financial support from our church worldwide. Contributions now total \$2.3 million as of this report. Let's take a moment to hear directly from those involved with this disaster (video clip).

Our church's help in this time of great need is a true demonstration of faith and works. It will take a long time to rebuild lives, homes, and businesses in these countries. After the cameras and reporters leave the scene, may we continue to pray for and support the recovery effort.

Nazarenes also supported our congregations in the Caribbean and Florida (USA) when hurricanes struck during 2004. Volunteers and donors helped those whose lives, homes, and church buildings were damaged and in some cases destroyed by these storms.

Someone once said that the acts of the church preach more than the words of the church. We believe this to be so. To all who have prayed and given and worked on the front lines, to Larry Bollinger, Dan Soliday, and everyone at Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, we offer our gratitude for your care and prompt action in the name of Jesus.

Also, our appreciation goes to all pastors, evangelists, missionaries, lay workers, district superintendents, and others in the Church of the Nazarene for their dedication and faithfulness during the past year. To our officers, directors, and staff at International Headquarters and the regional offices we say thank you for your continued commitment to support the work of the church.

With expectations never higher and ministry never harder, we acknowledge that it is by God's grace that we are able to do the work of His Church.

OUR MISSION

The Board of General Superintendents' commitment to the church is to be responsible for our leadership and actions. Each year at this time we give an accounting of our work and that of the General Board Departments. Due to an adjusted schedule for the 2005 General Board sessions, we are hearing about the work of the ministries at International Headquarters and the regions in summary form from the general superintendent in jurisdiction.

With the 26th General Assembly in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, now four months away and as we come to the end of this quadrennium, it is time to look at where we are as a church. A qualitative assessment of the trends and movements within the denomination is necessary since these things are not always discovered in the statistical reports.

To begin, let's turn our attention to the mission of the Church of the Nazarene. Our mission has been manifold from the very beginning:

- To make known to all peoples the transforming and sancti-fying grace of God through the forgiveness of sins and heart cleansing in Jesus Christ
- To make disciples
- To incorporate believers into the fellowship and membership
- To equip for ministry all who respond in faith

(*The MANUAL, p. 56*)

The underpinnings of our lives and ministries are found in our core values:

- We are Christian
- We are Holiness
- We are Missional

We believe Jesus Christ is the hope of the world!

THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS

How we see something determines how we are likely to respond. How do we see God? How do we see the Church? How do we see the world? Do we know what time it is?

Daniel wrote in chapter 2, verse 21: “It is God who makes the times and the seasons” (NKJV). Not only do we need to know who we are and what we believe, we must also be discerning about the moment in which we live.

In his book, *The Future That Has Come*, Dr. Kennon Callahan makes this observation:

We are in a new time not because of a century or millennial change. Nor are we in a new time because of cultural or generational change.

The time is new because God has once again given us new possibilities for the Kingdom and His church.

For all the talk about the future, Dr. Callahan concludes, it has already come.

He adds:

We look to the future. We discover it is already here. It has already happened. We look to the future so we know what to do in the present. The purpose of looking ahead is not to know what to do tomorrow, or even that one might know what to do next year—but to know what to do today.

We find these words in Isaiah: “Behold, I will do a new thing. Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it?” (Isaiah 43:19, NKJV). The Living Bible expresses it this way: “For I’m going to do a brand new thing. See, I have already begun! Don’t you see it?”

Sometimes we look right past what is in plain view. The writer William Gibson noted, “The future is already here. It is just not uniformly distributed.” So it is with the Church of the Nazarene—the future has arrived, but it is unevenly spread over the denomination.

ALL THINGS NEW

In light of this situation, how can we be visionary? How do we make connections between the present and the future?

One option is to examine those things already underway that are creating the future. Today there are five interrelated movements or forces shaping the look of the Church of the Nazarene:

1. **New churches—new disciples**

Starting new congregations is a proven way to reach people for Christ. The Church of the Nazarene is in a renewed effort to start churches. It is a core tenet of our denomination that the local church is the primary but not exclusive unit of mission. We have to grow healthy churches to have a future.

In 2004 the Church of the Nazarene organized 601 congregations in World Mission areas. A large percentage of this

total is a result of the *JESUS* Film. These six geographic regions welcomed almost 76,000 new Nazarenes.

A record number, 34,660, joined the Church of the Nazarene in the USA and Canada in 2004. And the weekly worship attendance of 525,000 is an all-time high. The USA and Canada districts report a net gain of 23 in active works, the second consecutive year of net gain in congregations. This figure is a combination of organized churches and NewStarts. This is significant since it is the second consecutive year of net increases after several years of net losses.

Additionally, USA and Canada registered the 1,000th NewStart since beginning the program in 1994. Churches starting churches is a growing grassroots movement. Nazarene pastors, laity, and district superintendents are moving out in faith proving God true to His Word.

People such as Sukamal Biswas in Bangladesh and missionary Howie Shute in the Horn of Africa are starting churches to evangelize and nurture people in the faith. Linda Pasute, a former opera singer in the city of Neurbrandenburg in what was East Germany, is using musical performances in hopes of beginning a new work there.

Others such as Robin Rogers and her husband John in Loveland, Colorado, Dorzell King at Risen Lamb Church in Kansas City, Kansas, and Steve Ottley in

Whitby, Ontario, Canada, have also turned passion for lost people into new church reality.

Against great odds these leaders, along with many others, are using creative ways and hard work to establish Nazarene communities of faith.

Thanks to our churches in Amman, Jordan, College Church in Bourbonnais, Illinois, and the Wollaston Church in Massachusetts, there is now one organized congregation in Iraq, and Baghdad is planning to organize this year. The Baghdad group had over 80 people in their New Year's service. We also have two preaching points.

These stories are inspiring and remind us that God is always at work even in the worst of times.

The goal, however, is not congregations or converts alone. The goal is making disciples of Jesus Christ—"Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded" (Matthew 28:20, NIV). The overwhelming challenge is in the follow-through.

At the General Assembly in 1952 the Board of General Superintendents made a similar assessment of the church. It noted the continued gains in membership and finances but also asked this question, "Why do people often join the Church of the Nazarene but not stay?"

Part of the answer to this question lies in our willingness to take personal responsibility for discipling and assimilating new Christians. If our mission is weighted only with evangelism and not balanced with discipleship and strategies for assimilation, then we fail the new believer and lose members needlessly.

What we have become as a church is traceable to the disciple-making carried out by a preceding generation. The future look of the Church of the Nazarene is being determined today by how well we carry out this same responsibility. Our colleges, universities, and seminaries play a vital role in this process.

As Dr. Michael Henderson, author of the book, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, reminds us—"We cannot be a disciple unless we are making disciples." Disciple-making is somewhat harder to measure than membership, attendance, and giving. Yet it eventually shows up when we measure our progress through year-end and decadal statistics. The data are a result of something, not its cause.

As God continues helping us start congregations, may our expertise in and commitment to discipleship and assimilation grow as well.

2. A new generation of spiritual leaders

Since 1994 there has been an increase in church membership of nearly 360,000, a gain of 31 percent. In 1994 we reported receiving fewer than 80,000 new Nazarenes. In 2004 that figure jumped to almost 111,000—94,000 of which were by profession of faith.

What does this mean to the Kingdom and the church? These members represent the potential for a new generation of spiritual leaders. Discipleship is the way to make this happen. In fact, new church leaders—pastors, laity, college administrators, faculty, compassionate ministry workers, Sunday School teachers, and church board members—are not on their way; they are already here.

These individuals to whom I am referring are bringing energy, passion, and talent to the Church of the Nazarene. They were born into globalization and welcome its reality. Having mastered technology, they will use it to help increase the church as an international community of faith.

One of the most important needs the church has is for these emerging leaders to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led as they come into positions of responsibility and authority. The church must find ways for gifted individuals to have meaningful involvement, authority, and responsibility within the denomination. They need the right kind of experience in local, district, and general areas of service. Leadership needs to reflect “the body” if we are to be a global church.

There is much work to do here, but it is on our Board’s agenda. Transferring the message, mission, and administration of the Church of the Nazarene is already underway—whether we see it or not.

3. A new map of the world

We are witnessing a realignment of the Christian world in our lifetime. As Dr. Philip Jenkins and others have noted, it is highly probable that Africa, South America, South Asia, and China will become the next centers of the Christian faith.

What are the ramifications for the Church of the Nazarene inside these shifts? How and where should we deploy our global missionaries? How should the church allocate financial resources in light of these changes? And how will we function as a denomination? These questions need a prayerful and considered response.

This new map under realignment reflects a new movement of God. Are we open to these possibilities for our church?

Facing financial setbacks, world wars, and an economic depression in the late 20s and early 30s, the leaders of the Church of the Nazarene made a critical decision. Instead of giving up, they continued toward the goal of becoming a local church around the world. In some ways our church is helping rearrange the map of world Christianity.

4. **New realities**

One of the duties of a leader is to define reality. Inside these forces of change are some new realities worth noting in our assessment:

- The essence of the church

There is a price for expansion. It is the possibility of diffusion and the potential loss of original identity and vision. Faith groups have always faced this reality. However, the price of standing still is slow death. We cannot stay where we are. We cannot go back. We can only move forward if we are to have a viable future.

There are nearly 1.5 million members in almost 17,000 congregations in 148 established world areas. Three-quarters of a million people attend Sunday School each week. The church has 57 colleges, universities, and seminaries. It operates the largest company dedicated to producing holiness materials—Nazarene Publishing House.

There will be a Church of the Nazarene far into the future. There is no doubt about that. The real question is this: What kind of church will we be? How to expand and remain committed to our Nazarene core beliefs is the number one critical issue for the Board of General Superintendents.

- Funding the mission

Money follows mission, and record giving was achieved in 2004. The World Evangelism Fund totaled \$45.9 million with Mission Specials adding \$23.9 million. This brings the total to \$69.8 million for world evangelization, an increase in tough economic times of just

over 2 percent. There was a record 97 percent payment toward the World Evangelism Fund in 2004.

All of this represents a significant commitment and sacrifice for the people called Nazarenes. We are grateful to God for those who place such a high priority on giving to others.

Funding the mission has evolved. The base of support continues to be tithes and offerings. Faith Promise joined the Easter and Thanksgiving offerings. Now add to this partnership programs, foundation support, and a steady increase in major gifts and you can see that an expanded model of funding is coming into place.

This includes our own Church of the Nazarene Foundation which acquired \$8.3 million in new planned giving agreements, donor-advised funds, and investment management in 2004. It is a new look that is right for the times.

Financial stewardship is not about money—it is about discipleship. Therefore, the basis for giving is not an appeal for money. It is an expression of God's grace in our lives. All we have belongs to Him.

- Communications

One of the more important components of becoming a global church is that of communications. The World Wide Web and Internet are transforming the way in which people across the globe communicate for business and personal needs.

Our own Web site, www.nazarene.org, has developed into one of the leading sites of any category. This report will be posted to our Web site, and the world will know about the General Board before we leave Kansas City.

Like all technology down through the ages, these new realities are tools that we can use in helpful ways. For example, there are Nazarene chat rooms for connecting with the Muslim community. Web links provide resources to the church that even a short time ago would have been impossible to find. Prayer

requests flow daily for needs everywhere. Emergencies are communicated for instant responses. Tsunami aid workers rely on satellite phones and global position-ing systems to communicate and coordinate their activities.

However, our focus should be on content. What is essential is creative communication that clearly represents the church's beliefs and values. Technology will change—who we are should not.

The Board of General Superintendents intends to increase its use of the Web site in 2005. This will help improve our communication with the church. Plans are already underway to make this happen.

5. A new work of the Holy Spirit

In the work of ministry nothing is possible and sustainable without the Holy Spirit. What was the difference in the disciples between the Gospel of Mark and the book of Acts? Pentecost.

“Out of a full church the world shall receive salvation, but never out of an empty one,” wrote Charles Spurgeon. “The power of the church for external work will be proportionate to the power that dwells within,” he went on to say. The Holy Spirit is empowering and generous—everything we need to be Christlike.

Is there a movement of the Spirit within the Church of the Nazarene? The answer is, yes. There are revival and renewal within the community of faith. God is sanctifying a new generation of believers. The Holy Spirit is a present-day reality among our people.

A STORY OF FAITH AND COURAGE

Is there a way to illustrate the kind of emerging leader our Board sees in its travels? We mentioned earlier our new works in Iraq. Here is a way to get a glimpse of the future.

One of our Iraqi pastors wanted to attend his first official Nazarene gathering at the Eastern Mediterranean Field Conference in Amman, Jordan, last November. He carefully made plans to

be driven from his city in Iraq across the war-torn roads to the Iraqi border and then on to Amman. Even though it was extremely dangerous, he took his wife and two school-age children along so that the entire family could benefit from the conference experience.

Somewhere between his city and the border, his car was stopped by a band of robbers. They stole all this Nazarene pastor's money as well as the couple's wedding rings. Fortunately (or miraculously), they were not shot and killed! Instead of turning back, this committed couple continued to their destination—Amman, Jordan. By the grace and power of God, they made it safely!

Once the story about their trials and hardships got out at the conference, various individuals—from the general superintendent to new-found pastor/friends—gave them money for their return trip. It was a scene in the hotel lobby never to be forgotten as “the Nazarene family” gathered around the Iraqi pastor and family praying for God's protection, grace, power, and peace to go with them as they returned across the same dangerous roads to their home and congregation. It took on the feeling of the book of Acts.

We continue to pray for the safety of pastors such as these, their families, and their congregations. This sacrificial and courageous pastor and family give us a glimpse into the type of leaders who are emerging in the Church of the Nazarene. As the next general superintendent in jurisdiction for this part of the world, I look forward to the privilege of meeting them some day. Their story represents countless others who are answering the call of God in their lives and are choosing to build the Kingdom through the Church of the Nazarene. We praise God for such dedicated leaders.

SUMMARY

This is the world of new possibilities for the Kingdom and for His Church. This is the future that has come—where the old and new often sit uncomfortably side by side. Where God uses dis-order to bring order. Where the church is moved and sometimes shaken out of its comfort zone in order to help complete the work of Christ.

He has never failed us, and we must do whatever it takes not to fail Him. We are moving ever closer to our Centennial Celebration. As we do, let us be unwavering in our commitment as:

- People of prayer—the source of all strength
- People of faith—without which it is impossible to please God
- People of obedience—the act of full surrender to His will and way
- A holy people—blameless before the Heavenly Father through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ

We close with the words of the hymn-writer, Charles Wesley:

Finish then Thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see Thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in Thee.
Changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.

Respectfully submitted,

Board of General Superintendents

James H. Diehl
Paul G. Cunningham
Jerry D. Porter
Jim L. Bond
W. Talmadge Johnson
Jesse C. Middendorf

Prepared and presented by Paul G. Cunningham