



OUR POLITY

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

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

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

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

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

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