



# OUR GLOBAL CHURCH

The Church of the Nazarene's essential character was shaped by the parent churches that had united by 1915. There was an international dimension to this character. The denomination already supported fully organized churches in the United States, India, Cape Verde, Cuba, Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Japan, Argentina, the United Kingdom, Swaziland, China, and Peru. By 1930, it also reached into South Africa, Syria, Palestine, Mozambique, Barbados, and Trinidad. National leaders were essential to this process, such as district superintendents V. G. Santin (Mexico), Hiroshi Kitagawa (Japan), and Samuel Bhujbal (India). This international character was reinforced further by new accessions.

In 1922, J. G. Morrison led many Layman's Holiness Association workers and over 1,000 members in the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Montana into the church. Churches in Australia under A. A. E. Berg united in 1945. Alfredo del Rosso led Italian churches into the denomination in 1948. The Hephzibah Faith Missionary Association's South African work and its center in Tabor, Iowa, united with the Nazarenes around 1950.

The International Holiness Mission, founded in London by David Thomas in 1907, developed extensive work in southern Africa under David Jones. In 1952, its churches in England under J. B. Maclagan and work in Africa united with the Nazarenes. Maynard James and Jack Ford formed the Calvary Holiness Church in Britain in 1934 and united with the Nazarenes in 1955. The Gospel

Workers Church, organized by Frank Goff in Ontario, Canada, in 1918, joined the Church of the Nazarene in 1958. Nigerians formed an indigenous Church of the Nazarene in the 1940s and, under Jeremiah U. Ekaidem, united with the international body in 1988. These various accessions strengthened the Church of the Nazarene's international character.

In light of those developments, Nazarenes consciously developed a model of church that differs from the Protestant norm. In 1976 a study commission was raised to examine the denomination's future shape. Reporting in 1980, it recommended that the General Assembly deliberately adopt a policy of *internationalization* based on two principles.

First, it recognized that Nazarene churches and districts globally constituted a "worldwide fellowship of believers in which there exists full acceptance within their cultural contexts." Second, it identified a common commitment to "the distinctive mission of the Church of the Nazarene," namely "to spread scriptural holiness . . . [as] the key element in a core of non-negotiables which represent the Nazarene identity."

The 1980 General Assembly embraced "international theological uniformity" around the Articles of Faith, affirmed the importance of theological training for all ministers, and called for adequate support of theological education institutions in each world area. It summoned Nazarenes toward maturity as an international holiness community within a single connectional framework in which the colonial mentality that evaluated peoples and nations in terms of "strong and weak, donor and recipient" gives way to "one that assumes an entirely new way of looking at the world: one recognizing the strengths and equality of all partners."<sup>1</sup>

The Church of the Nazarene has subsequently had a unique growth pattern among Protestants. By 1998, half of Nazarenes no longer lived in the United States and Canada, and 41 percent of delegates at the 2001 General Assembly spoke English as their second language or did not speak it at all. An African, Eugenio Duarte of Cape Verde, was elected one of the church's general superintendents in 2009.

## **Distinctives of International Ministry**

Nazarene strategic ministries have centered historically around evangelism, social ministry, and education. They flourish through the mutual cooperation of cross-cultural missionaries and thousands of pastors and lay workers who have indigenized Wesleyan principles within their respective cultures.

Hiram F. Reynolds was strategic in establishing Nazarene cross-cultural ministries and developing a denominational concept of world evangelization. During a quarter-century as general superintendent, his constant advocacy helped raise missions to a denominational priority. Since 1915, Nazarene Missions International (originally the Woman's Missionary Society) has raised funds and promoted mission education in congregations around the world.

Early Nazarenes were a compassionate people and witnessed to God's grace by supporting famine relief in India, and establishing orphanages, maternity homes for unwed girls and women, and urban missions that ministered to addicts and the homeless. In the 1920s, the church's social ministry priorities shifted to medicine, as hospitals were built in China and Swaziland, and later in India and Papua New Guinea. Nazarene medical professionals cared for the sick, performed surgeries, trained nurses, and sponsored mobile field clinics among some of the world's poorest people.

Specialized clinics were established, such as a leprosy clinic in Africa. The creation of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries in the 1980s permitted a wider range of social ministries that endure today, including child sponsorship, disaster relief, AIDS education, orphan support, water projects, and food distribution.

Nazarene Sunday Schools and Bible studies have always been part of congregational life and play significant roles in forming Christlike disciples. The church has invested in basic education and literacy since the early years of Hope School for Girls in Calcutta, founded in 1905. Nazarene schools prepare people around the world for fuller participation in social, economic, and religious life. Most early Nazarene colleges in the United States had grade schools and high schools attached to them until the mid-20th century.

The Nazarene founders invested significantly in higher education, believing it essential for training pastors and other Christian workers and for shaping the laity. The International Board of Education lists Nazarene institutions of higher education around the world, including liberal arts colleges and universities in Africa, Brazil, Canada, the Caribbean, Korea, and the United States, plus Bible colleges and institutes, schools of nursing in India and Papua New Guinea, and graduate schools of theology in Australia, Costa Rica, England, the Philippines, and the United States.

The Church of the Nazarene has moved over time from a church with an international presence toward a global community of believers. Grounded in the Wesleyan tradition, Nazarenes understand themselves to be a people who are Christian, holiness, and missional, and they have embraced the mission statement: "To make Christlike disciples in the nations."

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Twentieth General Assembly, Church of the Nazarene*, (1980): 232. Franklin Cook, *The International Dimension* (1984): 49.