

Turning Points in Nazarene History

An Outline of Major Trends

Period One: The Search for Foundations, 1887-1915

The founding of the parent bodies.

EASTERN UNITED STATES: THE NEW ENGLAND MOVEMENT

- The People's Evangelical Church, Providence, Rhode Island (1887)
- The Pentecostal Church, Lynn, Mass., (1888)
- Other New England Churches.
- Central Evangelical Holiness Association (1890), first organization of churches in the Nazarene lineage.

SOUTHERN UNITED STATES: THE TENNESSEE MOVEMENT

- New Testament Church of Christ originates in Tennessee (1894)

EASTERN UNITED STATES: THE BROOKLYN MOVEMENT

- Three congregations in Brooklyn founded by William Howard Hoople, beginning with Utica Avenue Pentecostal Church (1894)
- Association of Pentecostal Churches of America organized (1895) as an association of New York City area holiness churches.

WESTERN UNITED STATES: THE PACIFIC MOVEMENT

- Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene established (1895). It becomes the mother church of the western branch

SOUTHERN UNITED STATES: THE TEXAS MOVEMENT

- The Independent Holiness Church originates in eastern Texas (1901).

REGIONAL BODIES CONSOLIDATE & GROW

- The New England and Brooklyn movements unite in 1896. The united body retains the name of the Brooklyn movement and is called the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. By 1907, it stretches from Nova Scotia, Canada, to Iowa.
- The Tennessee and Texas groups unite in 1904, creating the Holiness Church of Christ. By 1908 the Holiness Church of Christ reaches from New Mexico to Georgia.
- By 1907, Bresee's Church of the Nazarene extends from Southern California north to Seattle and east to Illinois.

A major turning point is the *unity movement*, which culminates in mergers in 1907, 1908, and 1915. By the latter date, what had once been seven distinct groups in the United States, and one in Scotland, had coalesced into a single international denomination with churches in the Caribbean, Central America, South America, Africa, Asia, and Cape Verde.

- First General Assembly in Chicago, Ill., (1907) unites the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and the Church of the Nazarene. The name “Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene” is selected as the church name.
- Second General Assembly at Pilot Point, Tex., (1908) brings the Holiness Church of Christ into the united body. The Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene now exists in most areas of the United States and in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.
- Two key mergers in 1915 add the Pentecostal Mission (Southeastern U.S.) and the Pentecostal Church of Scotland to the church.
- The Fifth General Assembly deletes the word “Pentecostal” from the church name because the rise of modern tongues-speaking Pentecostalism has given the word new popular meanings.
- The Sixth General Assembly (1923) chooses 1908 as the official anniversary date for the united church.

A critical turning point occurred with the creation of the Nazarene Publishing House by action of the Third General Assembly (1911). This action replaced three regional publishing companies with one central company, and it replaced three regional papers with one strong denominational paper, *Herald of Holiness*, which began publication in Spring 1912 and continued through 1998, when it was replaced by *Holiness Today*.

Another highlight was the *development of a network of liberal arts colleges* to educate ministers and a Christian laity. Early Nazarenes leaned toward the Methodist model of higher education, which included a broad education in science and the humanities. Methodists also believed that each annual conference should have its own college. By contrast, the Baptist model emphasized Bible colleges with a narrow curriculum. Early Nazarenes chose the Methodist model because (1) it allowed them to educate their clergy and laity together, and (2) it provided the clergy with a broad education.

Missionary enterprise. The earliest work outside the United States and Canada was in India, followed by Cape Verde, China, Japan, and Mexico. The Pentecostal Mission, which merged with the Church of the Nazarene in 1915, added mission work in Cuba, Central America, and South America. The development of the Nazarene missionary enterprise became one of the defining characteristics of the church in the generations that lay ahead.

Period Two: The Era of Organization, 1915-1945

Women organize for missions. The Woman’s Missionary Society was authorized in 1915 as an auxiliary of the church. At a later date, it opened its membership to men and became the Nazarene World Missionary Society.

The General Board was created by action of the 1923 General Assembly and began functioning immediately. It replaced a system of independent boards that often competed with one another for the church dollar. These independent boards became departments of the General Board.

The 1923 General Assembly authorizes the *Department of Church Schools*, and for the first time the Church of the Nazarene began detailed and systematic planning of Christian education curriculum.

The Church of the Nazarene's international program suffered greatly from the social and economic consequences of the Great Depression and the subsequent World War. "*Retrenchment*" became the watchword as the church was forced to marshal its resources carefully. At the same time, church leaders laid plans for a significant expansion of missionary efforts in the post-war era ahead.

Period Three: The Era of Evangelism, 1946-1970

Period three is marked by an *explosion of missionary activity* that took the church into new areas, such as Korea and the Philippines. It also entered Australia and Italy when significant indigenous works in these countries united with the Church of the Nazarene. The Mid-Century Crusade for Souls and other revivalistic efforts characterized the church in North America and on other continents.

The church undertook *graduate theological training for ministry* when Nazarene Theological Seminary was founded in 1945. There are now several graduate institutions of religion that provide specialized training.

Radio broadcasts were authorized and the "*Showers of Blessing*" program begins, soon followed by "*La Hora Nazarena*" and broadcasts in other languages.

The church *responded to the Youth Movement* of the 60's by creating Student Mission Corps and youth-oriented singing groups, such as Lost and Found. The Maranatha Church of the Nazarene in Paramus, N.J., typifies the outreach to hippie culture.

Period Four: Searching for Identity in an Era of Change, 1971-Present

The church took seriously *internationalization* as it coped with the growing demands of size and cultural diversity.

Compassionate ministries returned to the heart of the church, as an aspect of evangelism and as a sign of the Kingdom of God at work in our midst. This occurred first through the founding of urban ministries, particularly the Community of Hope in Washington, D.C., and the Manhattan Church of the Nazarene in New York City. Later by the Office of Compassionate Ministries at the international headquarters.