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Why MEMBERSHIP?

Many people wonder why they should join a church. After all, isn't the important thing that people have a personal relationship with Jesus? Isn't the body of Christ greater than any one denomination? These are important questions, but they speak to only a part of what it means to be Christian. Becoming a member of a church encompasses so much more.

For one thing, Christians were never meant to live out their faith isolated from each other. They are called to look after each other in love. That's what being part of the body of Christ is about—living and loving in community. Becoming a church member makes this a reality through commitment. Joining a church expresses a serious willingness and commitment to walk faithfully in the company of other believers with all the benefits and responsibilities that go with such a relationship.

One of the benefits of being a church member is accountability. Christians need other believers to help them grow, to support them, and to set them on the right path when they stray. These are acts of love, and being a committed member of a local church means submitting to the input of other members for improvement. Without the commitment membership brings, such input could be easily ignored.

Church membership also places a person into a relationship of love and responsibility with others. Though this responsibility may include accountability, it is also expressed through acts of service and compassion and the willingness for self-sacrifice. Church members are family members who practice self-giving and minister to the needs of each other.

Being a church member additionally means uniting with a group of other Christians to accomplish bigger things than any Christian could do alone. By giving financially, volunteering personally, and committing wholeheartedly to a shared vision, church members can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, bring lasting change to many lives outside the church. Along with sharing the gospel, a denominational church can be a dramatic means of transformation in society, locally and internationally.

Church membership has much to offer those who follow Christ. Becoming a member of a church is one of the first acts new Christians can do to align themselves with other believers. Trusting Christ personally with salvation becomes more meaningful when people truly commit themselves to following Christ and acting on that commitment.

An Introduction to **THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

How It All Began

AT THE PILOT POINT UNION IN 1908, THE OFFICIAL NAME OF THE NEW DENOMINATION WAS THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE.

THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE WAS LAUNCHED WITH THREE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS:
P. F. BRESEE (CALIFORNIA)
H. F. REYNOLDS (VERMONT)
E. P. ELLYSON (IOWA)

Coming from all kinds of backgrounds, Nazarenes represent many cultures, languages, and nationalities. Yet as members of the Church of the Nazarene, these Christian believers form a unified international community with a distinct history, organization, and set of beliefs. The exciting story of how all these people with so many differences came to share a common doctrine and mission in many ways begins on the day of Pentecost. But its more recent roots are found in the ministry of an eighteenth-century English cleric.

The industrial revolution of eighteenth-century England brought with it a multitude of hardships for the weakest members of society. Disease, starvation, crime, vice, and unbearable working conditions plagued the poor and disenfranchised. John Wesley, an English cleric in the Church of England, led a revival of faith that did much to change the lives—personally and socially—of many of those suffering from the hardships of this time.

Wesley and his Methodists, as his group of societies came to be called, established schools, prison ministries, hospitals, and other services to help the needy. But underlying these social efforts was, among other teachings, a belief that a person can be cleansed from sin and filled with divine love for God and neighbor. To nurture this internal transformation, Wesley organized groups whose members encouraged each other in this life of holiness. Although more can and will be said about this doctrine, for now it is important to note that through the ministry of John Wesley a revival was sparked that emphasized holiness of both heart and life.

From roots in the Wesleyan revival in eighteenth-century England, the Holiness Movement blossomed in America. Wesleyan-Holiness denominations sprang up in every section of the country. Three such denominations joined in 1907 [in Chicago] and 1908 [in Pilot Point, Texas] to form the Church of the Nazarene.

A Shared Dream

The dream that drew the founders of the Church of the Nazarene together was a missional church in the Wesleyan tradition. Several important traits made this new church different from others.

1 J. B. Chapman, "October Gleanings," *Herald of Holiness*, October 15, 1930, 5; Chapman, "Dr. Bresee, an Apostolic Leader," *Preacher's Magazine*, December 1938, 2.

2 P. F. Bresee, "Editorial: It Is All Right," *Nazarene Messenger*, January 15, 1902, 6.

1. Men and women worked together in ministry. Women were eligible for every office in the new church. The ordination of women was a common practice in the three major parent bodies, and women were ordained at both uniting general assemblies. It was no secondary issue. Bresee insisted that a ministry inclusive of women is apostolic, while one that excludes women from ministry is not apostolic.¹ The key scripture was Acts 2:16-17. Men and women share in proclaiming the gospel in the church that moves by the power of the Holy Spirit!

2. The new church stood shoulder to shoulder with the poor and broken. Orphanages in North America and India, homes for unwed mothers, rescue missions for alcoholics—these were visible expressions of inward holiness. "We want places so plain that every board will say welcome to the poorest," Bresee wrote from Los Angeles, while half a continent away Mary Lee Cagle preached to prisoners—black and white alike—in an Arkansas prison.² The early Nazarenes listened with their hearts to the words of Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor" [KJV]. An identification with the Lord's own mission had led Wesley to England's prisons, slums, and mining communities. Now it was the Nazarene founders' concern. Holiness builds a church with a heart for the poor and broken!

3. The early Nazarenes were energized by a vision of worldwide ministry. In 1908 Nazarenes were already ministering in Cape Verde, India, and Japan. They soon did the same in Central and South America, Africa, and China. Evangelism, education, and compassionate ministries were their characteristic methods. Mission stations, preaching points, colporteurs, schools, clinics, hospitals, and printing presses were dedicated to the global spread of the Wesleyan-Holiness revival.

Tracing the First 100 Years



Parent holiness groups uniting to form the Church of the Nazarene brought with them their mission work. Organized work in eight world areas predates the Church of the Nazarene's 1908 official anniversary.

1887 - First parent congregation begins: The People's Evangelical Church in Providence, Rhode Island.



People's Evangelical Church

1890 - Earliest parent denomination forms: Central Evangelical Holiness Association, 10 New England congregations.

1895 - Local Church of the Nazarene is established in Los Angeles, growing to over 40 churches by 1906.



The "Glory Barn," Los Angeles First Church's first sanctuary

1895 - Association of Pentecostal Churches of America forms in Brooklyn.

1896 - Central Evangelical Holiness Association and Association of Pentecostal Churches of America merge.

1898 - Pentecostal Alliance (later Pentecostal Mission) forms in Nashville.



1898 - Work in India begins through Association of Pentecostal Churches of America.



Baptizing new Christians in India

AFTER A SLOW START FOLLOWING THE 1908 UNION, THE CHURCH HAD A GROWTH SPURT IN OHIO, KENTUCKY, INDIANA, ILLINOIS, MICHIGAN, AND IOWA, MAKING THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY THE CHURCH'S GREATEST FIELD TO THIS DAY.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS THE SUPREME DOCTRINE-FORMULATING AND LAWMAKING BODY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE.

THE NAZARENE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1919 DROPPED THE WORD "PENTECOSTAL" FROM THE DENOMINATION'S NAME.

4. The Christian college was an essential ingredient of a Wesleyan-Holiness church. Denominational colleges were created to support general education as well as doctrinal education. Nazarene communities grew up around these colleges, and some parents moved their families to these communities so that their children could enjoy the benefits of a Nazarene education.

5. Vital piety was central to church life. The Nazarene prayer meeting, testimony service, and altar service were among the ways that the concern for personal, vital piety would be communicated to a new generation. The experience of God's transforming grace lay at the heart of the Nazarene movement.

6. Entire sanctification was the doctrinal capstone. The uniting core was the idea of a believers' church in which God's grace was real in human lives. Justifying and sanctifying grace were central in the experience and thought of the founders, who knew personally the transforming nature of this grace.

For the early Nazarenes, entire sanctification represented a real cleansing—a true grace in this life—that conquers sin. Every other Christian doctrine was related to this entire sanctification, and no method could be employed that contradicted it. A deep awareness of sin, the need for repentance, the regenerating power of the new birth, life in the Spirit, true Lord's Supper celebration—all such doctrines were intimately related to entire sanctification.

The second work of grace was the doorway behind which lay rooms of further experience and life. The founders walked through the door and into the rooms.³ Were they still living, they would surely bid us to follow.

³ The analogy is made in Carl Bangs, *Phineas F. Bresee: His Life in Methodism, the Holiness Movement, and the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995), 282.

1899 - First college by a parent group is opened: Texas Holiness (later Peniel) University (parent of Southern Nazarene University) near Greenville, Texas.

1901 - Work in **Cape Verde** begins through Association of Pentecostal Churches of America.



John Diaz, founder of the work in Cape Verde

1901 - Work in **Guatemala** begins through Pentecostal Mission.



Guatemalan pastors

1902 - Work in **Cuba** begins through Pentecostal Mission.



Leona Gardner, founder of the work in Cuba

1902 - Work in **Canada** begins through Association of Pentecostal Churches of America.

1903 - Work in **Mexico** begins through Independent Holiness Church.



V. G. Santin, first national district superintendent in the denomination, 1919

7. Nazarenes shared a commitment to righteous living.

Early Nazarenes agreed that holy living was an important part of Christian stewardship and witness. They committed themselves to daily avoid the temptations of a worldly and wicked lifestyle. Often their style of dress was plain. They were intentional about this not only to live a simple lifestyle but also to better relate and minister to the poor.

They adopted John Wesley's three rules for the Methodist societies and drew up further rules to guide them. They agreed to avoid entertainments, personal habits, vices, dress, and behavior that would conflict with Christian simplicity.

Keeping rules could not save them. But they knew that ethical conduct is important when it comes to stewardship, discipleship, and witness.

Today, the Church of the Nazarene continues to be committed to kingdom work. We are an international family of congregations on every inhabited continent. No single language, race, or nationality claims a majority of our members.

The Church
of the Nazarene is not a
mission, but a church with a
mission. It is a banding together
of hearts that have found the peace
of God, and which now in their
gladness, go out to carry the message
of the unsearchable riches of the
Gospel of Christ to other suffering,
discouraged, sin-sick souls.

—Flyer, *Church of the Nazarene*, 1895

THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE CONSISTS OF

30,712 churches

2.58 million members

51 colleges, seminaries, and universities in 120 world areas

1.04 million members of Nazarene Mission International

1904 - Holiness Church of Christ forms in Rising Star, Texas.



1906 - Work in Scotland begins.



George Sharpe, founder of the Pentecostal Church of Scotland

1907 - Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene forms at Chicago, a merger of Association of Pentecostal Churches of America and Church of the Nazarene.



1907 General Assembly

1907 - Work in Japan begins through Holiness Church of Christ.



1908 - Holiness Church of Christ merges with Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene in Pilot Point, Texas. October 8 is later selected as the anniversary date.



THE MANUAL CONTAINS THE DECISIONS AND JUDGMENTS OF MINISTERIAL AND LAY DELEGATES OF THE MOST RECENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY. IT IS THE OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH AND IS CONSISTENT WITH THE TEACHINGS OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LARGE PLACE FOR WOMEN IN NAZARENE PULPITS AND CLASSROOMS AS ELDERS, DEACONESSES (NOW DEACONS), TEACHERS AND PROFESSORS, AND MISSIONARIES.

IN 2005 THE DECIDEDLY MALE SOCIETY OF THE BOARD OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS WAS MADE COED BY THE ELECTION OF DR. NINA G. GUNTER.

Celebrating Our Core Values

As a Holiness church and a church fulfilling the Great Commission, the Church of the Nazarene defines itself according to three core values. Together these values express the mission of the church, which is to make Christlike disciples of all nations.

We Are a Christian People

As members of the church universal, we join with all true believers in proclaiming the lordship of Jesus Christ. We are especially called to preach holiness and to remain faithful to the principal Wesleyan-Holiness teachings: God's prevenient grace and the means of grace, repentance, faith, the new birth, justification, entire sanctification, assurance, the Christian community and its disciplines, and the perfection of love.

We Are a Holiness People

God, who is holy, calls us to a life of holiness. We believe that the Holy Spirit seeks to do in us a second work of grace, called by various terms including "entire sanctification" and "baptism with the Holy Spirit," cleansing us from all sin, renewing us in the image of God, empowering us to love God and our neighbors, and producing in us the character of Christ.

We Are a Missional People

We are a sent people, responding to Christ's call and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, witnessing to the lordship of Christ and participating with God in the building of the church, worshiping, evangelizing, discipling, and preparing for service.

1912 - Nazarene Publishing House (NPH) opens, publishing *Herald of Holiness*.



NPH, 1912

1913-14 - General Superintendent H. F. Reynolds tours through Asia and Africa, prompting new era for missions.



Reynolds in China, 1914

1915 - Woman's Missionary Society (now Nazarene Missions International) is authorized.



1919 - Official name is shortened to Church of the Nazarene.

1923 - General Board is created.

Nazarene Young People's Society (now Nazarene Youth International) is authorized.

1925 - Bresee Memorial (China) and Raleigh Fitkin Memorial (Swaziland) become first Nazarene hospitals.



Bresee Memorial Hospital

How the Church of the Nazarene Is Organized

Leadership and organization are essential to a church.

Historically, there are three basic patterns of church government. The first is *episcopal*. Bishops are elected or appointed for life and make the most basic decisions. They appoint pastors. The voice of laypeople is limited in church affairs. This is found in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. It is also found in the Episcopal Church, but here laypeople have a larger voice and participate in electing bishops.

The *congregational* form is used by Congregational, Baptist, and independent churches. Here, the local members or the local pastor has control. There are few ties with other churches within the denomination. There is much independence and little worldwide coordination. Denominations of this type may have a general meeting, but decisions of the general meeting are not binding on local churches.

The *presbyterian* form is representative. There are no bishops. Local churches are part of larger units [presbytery or synod] and are represented at these larger units by clergy and lay representatives. These bodies elect delegates to the general meeting. The decisions of the general meeting are binding on lower bodies, including local churches. Clergy and laypeople cooperate at every level of church government. Presbyterian and Reformed churches are the primary churches of this type.

The Church of the Nazarene draws upon all three models, like most churches in the Wesleyan family. From the *episcopal* model it draws a concept of superintendency at the district and general levels. But district and general superintendents in the Church of the Nazarene are elected for specified terms and must be reelected to continue in office. From the *presbyterian* model, Nazarenes have adapted a system of interlocking assemblies [district assembly and general assembly]. And from the *congregational* model, the denomination employs the right of local churches to call their own pastors. Lay members are represented and exert influence on each of the church's levels.

The General Church

The worldwide Church of the Nazarene is led by a board of six general superintendents. They are elected to four-year terms [a quadrennium]. Each supervises a specific world area in our mission work. Each is assigned to certain departments in an advisory capacity.

General superintendents are elected at the *general assembly*. This is the legislative body of the church. It is composed of clergy and lay delegates from districts around the world. Major decisions and changes in the constitution take place at the general assembly. These changes are binding on the whole church.

Much of the day-to-day business of the general church occurs at its Global Ministries Center in Lenexa, Kansas, where information

1930 - First Easter Offering is received for world missions.



1945 - Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City is first graduate seminary.

Showers of Blessing radio broadcast begins.

1948 - First Alabaster Box Offering for missions is received.



1953 - *La Hora Nazarena* radio broadcast begins.



H. T. Reza broadcasting on *La Hora Nazarena*

1964 - Nazarene Evangelistic Ambassadors (NEA) begins as first mission team of college students.



NEA in Haiti

1974 - First World Youth Conference is held in Switzerland.



1975 - Washington, DC's Community of Hope and New York's Lamb's Theater spark urban ministries emphasis.



and resources for districts and churches worldwide are gathered and disseminated.

The Regional Church

As the Church of the Nazarene has grown, an additional level of coordination has been established. At one time, there were simply three levels: local, district, and global. A fourth level, situated in hierarchy between global and district and called regional, was added to accommodate the increasing demands of a growing denomination. Regions are not as fully orbled or completely staffed as the other levels of church operation. In general, regional administration primarily involves coordinating mission work and church planting.

As of 2019, there are six world regions in the Church of the Nazarene. These are as follows:

1. USA/Canada
2. Mesoamerica
3. South America
4. Eurasia
5. Asia-Pacific
6. Africa Region

Each of the six regional offices is led by a regional director, elected by the Board of General Superintendents and ratified by the General Board for the church. Regional directors coordinate missional strategies for the territories in their regions. They thus work closely with whichever of the six general superintendents currently presides over their regional districts.

The District Church

The Church of the Nazarene is divided into *districts* around the world.

A district is led by a *district superintendent*, who supervises the establishing of new churches, the calling of pastors, and the coordinating of district activities; he or she also gives spiritual guidance and

encouragement. The district superintendent is elected at the *district assembly*. Elected representatives from all churches meet once a year to hear reports from the district superintendent, pastors, and district ministries.

The Local Church

The spiritual leader of the local church is the pastor. He or she is elected by the people and periodically presented to the church board in cooperation with the district superintendent for review and evaluation. The pastor is then affirmed by the board or presented to the congregation for reelection.

Many churches have associate ministers. These individuals are nominated by the pastor, approved by the district superintendent, and elected by the church board. Their duties are supervised by the pastor.

The church board is the official decision-making body of the church. Those serving on the church board are elected by the members each year. These people are [1] spiritual leaders in setting the tone of the church in terms of prayer, faith, love, and joy; [2] church growth leaders as they envision expansion, evangelism, and outreach; and [3] financial leaders in the coordinating and careful use of all church programs, resources, and funds.

The members of the church are the “official” church body and family. As members, we take responsibility for “being the church” and “doing the ministry of the church.”

All members age 15 and older vote on [1] the call of the pastor; [2] the election of church officers, including the church board, chairperson of the Sunday School Ministries Board, missionary president, Nazarene Youth International president, and representatives to the district assembly; and [3] the purchase and sale of all property and buildings.

More important than these official duties, members are involved in supporting the local church financially, participating in the ministry of the local church, and serving Jesus Christ through this body of believers.

1975-76 - Haiti famine and Guatemala earthquake spur compassionate ministries.

1980 - General Assembly embraces “internationalization” and divides denomination into regions.



1998 - USA/Canada Nazarenes become denominational minority.



2008 - Centennial Celebration is observed in local churches by 1.6 million Nazarenes in 151 world areas.



Global Ministry Center is built.

General Superintendents Diehl, Cunningham, Porter, Gunter, and Warrick break ground for the new Global Ministry Center. General Superintendent Middendorf was unable to attend.

2009 - First non-USA/Canada general superintendent elected: Dr. Eugénio Duarte, from Cape Verde.

2014 - First woman elected president of Nazarene Theological Seminary: Dr. Carla D. Sunberg.