

ANNUAL REPORT  
of the  
BOARD OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS  
to the  
GENERAL BOARD  
FEBRUARY 2004

Mr. Chairman, members of the General Board, church leaders, and all of our esteemed guests:

It was a difficult time for the nation. National leadership was in a state of confusion and change. There were severe threats to the stability, perhaps even to the survival of the nation. Those people who had begun to grasp the gravity of their situation were in fear; the majority of people, however, seemed oblivious to the threats.

The religious life of the nation was a confused mixture of the worship of the true God and deplorable idolatries imported from nations around them.

It was a desperate time, and a desperate man sought the face of God.

Isaiah entered the temple in anticipation of participating in the customary rituals of worship in the face of this disturbing and unsettling national crisis. He was intent on engaging in prayer, perhaps on offering a gift for sacrifice. He had been here before. But it was never like this time. This experience altered his personal world forever.

The description of Isaiah's visit to the temple "in the year that King Uzziah died" has been the subject of sermons, commentaries, and study for well over two-and-a-half thousand years. It has never lost its ability to fascinate us, to disturb us, to warn us, or to encourage us.

Neither has it lost its ability to challenge our easy and safe assumptions, to disturb our religious securities, and to confront our own dilemmas and fears.

In reflecting on Isaiah's life-changing event, we may characterize it in three ways. We may speak of his:

- Encountering the Presence of God

- Experiencing the Holiness of God
- Embracing the Mission of God

### ENCOUNTERING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The God of Israel is the God who has willed to reveal himself in space and time. He is more than a mere abstraction or a philosophical necessity. This is the living God who chose to create for himself a people who would reflect His character. He brought them into being, established an everlasting covenant with them, defended them, cared for them, led them, fed them, confronted them, disciplined them, and redeemed them. He spoke to them through the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms. He made himself known to this people in a variety of manifestations of His grace, His love, His patience, and His wrath and judgment.

He has made himself most fully and finally known in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the divine son of God; “very God of very God, very man of very man.” He has revealed himself as the Holy One of Israel, the living God, the redeeming Savior, the sanctifying fire.

This is “The King,” who in the absence of an earthly king reveals himself to Isaiah as the ultimate King. He is “the LORD of Hosts”; God—who made himself known to a discouraged man in the precincts of the Temple in Jerusalem. It was a stunning experience. This God who speaks is the God who is terrifyingly holy. He is the God who is awesome in power, majestic in being, and utterly other than mortals by any measure of His being.

And yet He made himself known to this prophet of Israel in the midst of crisis and uncertainty.

Much like Isaiah in his time, we who live now in a world characterized by war, terrorism, moral degradation, economic imbalance, and political uncertainty, need to see God.

Ours is a world in which the promises of the Enlightenment are in irreversible decay. Those once grandiose promises have been subdued by a century of world wars, the threat of nuclear annihilation, and the global scourge of HIV/AIDS. Those promises were forever dismantled by the image of collapsing World Trade Center towers. Both literally and figuratively, the landscape was permanently altered.

Now we know that no nation is exempt from the potential horrors of terrorism. No people can live in isolation from the hopelessness of nations long subdued by despots, totalitarianism, religious systems gone awry, and economic deprivation.

It is into this world that God wills to reveal himself again. He has always had a people who were intended to be the embodiment of His gracious purposes of restoration and reconciliation to himself. He has made clear through the ages that His people are a people of purpose. They are to be the living, physical embodiment of the character and purposes of God. They are the people of hope!

This report is intended to make a fervent plea and an audacious claim. The plea is that we, the people of God, again acknowledge our desperate need for a transforming encounter with the Holy God. The claim is that when we do, the Holy One of Israel will once again break into the circumstances of the world through His people with transforming grace, with sanctifying fire, and with awesome, restorative power.

The Church of the Nazarene is a vital and authentic part of the holy people of God. Scattered as we are around the globe—hardly significant in terms of overall numbers in a world of six billion people—yet we have an immediacy of access to the All-sufficient One which belies our numbers. The hope of our mission lays not so much in the magnitude of our numbers as in the authenticity of our encounter with the living God.

We on the Board of General Superintendents wish to bring you the report of our stewardship of these holy mysteries. Marveling in the purposes of His grace which have shaped our church over the past century, we see unprecedented responses to the gospel. We see open doors too numerous to name, and we see transformations occurring in persons and people-groups that are the stuff of either legend or grace. We choose grace as the explanation of that for which there is no other plausible explanation.

It has been our distinct pleasure as a Board to work with the dedicated members of the Headquarters leadership team. To a person, they are committed to this holy encounter that transforms the way in which they see the world they serve. The multitude of needs and challenges they face demands resources beyond the merely human and intellectual. It is only as we encounter God's presence that we can adequately and effectively act as stewards of ministry resources entrusted to us, ensuring their unbroken and timely distribution.

When we encounter the awesome presence of God, our perspective is altered; our vision is magnified. Our pastors and missionaries, regional administrative teams, educators, and local church leaders—along with the vast community of faithful members of our churches—look to all of us in leadership for evidence of this encounter.

The everyday experiences of Nazarenes around the world subject them to the poignant realities of spiritual darkness, rampant materialism, and the malaise of a thousand other detrimental influences. Nothing short of renewed encounters with the awesome presence of God will equip us for response to a world like ours.

The Church is intended to be nothing less than the physical representation of God in the world. Having said that, however, we must hasten to say that this is only true when the Church is living in the overflow of this divine encounter. The Church represents the compassionate grace of God to lost and needy people. The value of the divine encounter is in direct proportion to the scope of our strategic response. When we've encountered the Divine in His ineffable glory, majesty, and grace, only then are we empowered and motivated for resource-stretching ministry to our world.

The Church of the Nazarene must never be occupied with small things. Our vision must stretch beyond the visible horizons of fixed comfort zones and palatable situations where the endless flow of creature comforts anesthetizes spiritual sensitivities. Only when the encountered Presence of God has captured the gaze of our upturned eyes can we see the poverty behind the clutter of the trivial and the litter of the irrelevant.

Chronologically, we are mere minutes into the third Christian millennium. Our advance as a denomination, however, shows signs of intentionality and determined progress. Indeed, it is only in the warm glow of the ineffable glory of God that we receive the courage to step up to the challenge of being authentically the people of God. In retrospect, this year has been characterized by the following:

- Our local churches responded by receiving 100,469 new members by profession of faith, exceeding 100,000 new members by profession of faith for the first time in our history. The total number of new Nazarenes reached 117,296, another record. This means that our progress toward the centennial goals is certainly within reach.
- Our goals are more than statistical benchmarks. They are missional expressions of our vision of the church's engagement of our Lord's commission to go into all the world with the message of grace, hope, and transformation.
- We recognized a year of jubilee, which arose from the 2001 General Assembly action to allow congregations to remove inactive members. This action resulted in the removal of 50,000 members, significantly more than the average of 20,000 removals each year. (USA/Canada statistics)
- While decisions are important first steps, discipleship ensures the possibility of believers maturing and growing in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The worldwide Sunday School responsibility list reflected a gain of 5,938 with 1,410,693 persons enrolled globally. Worldwide Sunday School attendance reflected a gain of 9,006 with 766,038 in Sunday School every week.
- An Isaiah-like encounter with the divine Presence empowers our efforts to develop new congregations. Through the innovative NewStart strategy,

- mission-driven vision is becoming reality. In 2003 there was a net gain of 55 new congregations following a decade with an average annual net loss of 12 churches. For the first time in over 20 years the Church of the Nazarene can report a net gain in new congregations. Over 100 new congregations have been started in each of the last three years—a pace that will reach, if not exceed, the centennial 2008 goal for new congregations. (USA/Canada statistics)
- *JESUS* Film statistics indicate the global reach of our evangelism and disciple-making efforts. Our report this year highlights endeavors that have enjoyed God-given success. A brief reference to the World Mission report indicates over 250 *JESUS* Film teams are working with our missionaries and nationals in spreading the gospel in 138 languages. This past year, the film was shown 21,039 times in 98 world areas with a total of 4,166,430 viewers. A total of 571,017 (13.8 percent of viewers) said they wished to accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior. What a tremendous result to see 251,709 (43.9 percent of decisions) involved in discipleship as a result of the *JESUS* Film showings. With God's help, we have seen an increase in decisions for Christ with percentages up from 13.4 percent in 2002 to 14 percent in 2003. New conversions counted in the initial follow-up have increased from 37 percent in 2002 to 42 percent in 2003. Many of these individuals who have accepted Christ are being tracked and disciplined through local churches.
  - The United States and Canada experienced significant new growth in 2003 according to reports from the district assemblies. During 2003, 33,288 new Nazarenes were added to the membership roles of local congregations. This rate of growth exceeds the annual average of 31,487 during the past decade.

### EXPERIENCING THE HOLINESS OF GOD

When Isaiah was encountered by the holiness of God, he realized the unfathomable depths of his need for cleansing. This stunning realization brought him to despair and hopelessness. "I am unmade," he cried. For us, as for Isaiah, when we get a glimpse of the holiness of God we are made painfully aware that all constructions of our own holiness are futile attempts at the impossible.

At the very heart of our Wesleyan Holiness tradition exists a pivotal understanding of the work of God in the life of humankind. When we, by the work of the Spirit of God in His prevenient grace, are drawn to God in repentance and confession, we are justified by grace, through faith. It is the gift of God and is not of our own making. Equally significant is our understanding that we as believers, after our justification, will inevitably face another reality. We are drawn by His mercy and grace to see our utter inability to rid our own hearts of the radical self-centeredness which so dominates our existence. When we face the malignancy of our willfulness as the very foundation of all human sinning and comprehend His desire to provide the divine remedy of heart purity,

we are sanctified wholly by grace, through faith. The disciplines of holy living and the necessities of developing maturity express the work He has done but are not capable of producing holiness in us. It is only by His grace, by the power of His Spirit, and on the merit of the sufferings of Christ on our behalf that we are entirely sanctified.

This is not a matter of uncertainty with us. It may well be that we must examine and discuss the nuances and exegetical bases for our confidence, but let it never be thought that we are wavering in our commitment to the message of entire sanctification as a work of divine grace subsequent to our justification. This is one of the primary bases for our existence as a denomination and is the hope for the redemption and restoration of the world. It is vital to our mission.

It is true to a profound depth: Without our message, we have no mission. And without mission, we have no message.

It is on that basis that we believe so strongly that the educational institutions of the church must continue to embrace and reinforce this crucial basis for our mission. Education in the Wesleyan-Arminian theological tradition requires us to educate for excellence and for theological coherence.

As a Wesleyan-holiness denomination, education has always been at the very heart of our missional concerns. The International Board of Education adopted as its quadrennial theme: *Educating Global Christians for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. This facet of our mission is being facilitated through a global network of:

- 57 colleges, universities, and seminaries in 40 countries of the world
- 28,410 students enrolled in on-campus programs, an increase of 2,037
- 11,257 students enrolled in extension programs, an increase of 1,156
  - 39,667 total students worldwide
  - 6,347 degrees awarded worldwide, an increase of 1,076

We salute IBOE's 21<sup>st</sup> century global education strategy, *Preparing Great Commission Pastors* through a wide array of resources, tools and strategies.

It is our conviction, as reinforced by the rigorous defense of the Gospel by John Wesley, that Grace is universal. We do not go to bring God with us; we go because God is already there, working to draw and attract His creation to himself. In this regard, the Church of the Nazarene is clearly a model of missional endeavor that emphasizes restoration, transformation, and reconciliation.

People in the throes of addiction, in the grip of the worst of human tragedy, can be so utterly rearranged as to become models of grace and reconciliation to God and

humankind. This reconciliation is not the product of human endeavor. It is the gift of God's grace. And it sometimes happens in the most unexpected ways.

In Honduras a *JESUS* Film team discovered, to their dismay, after setting up the equipment to show the *JESUS* Film that the film itself was missing. In a quandary as to what to do, one of the team members discovered a testimonial video developed for pastors in which the pastor of a "*JESUS* Film" church-plant gives his testimony of transformation. Having been addicted to drugs and alcohol, he found Christ after viewing the *JESUS* Film. His life was utterly transformed, and he responded to a call to ministry with enthusiasm born of radical change. The team decided to show that testimonial video in place of the missing *JESUS* Film, and in response to the testimony of deliverance, many people came to Christ.

Our belief in universal grace prompts a proactive response involving both giving and going: 36 of the 83 districts in the United States and Canada and 101 of the 341 districts/pioneer areas in World Mission regions paid 100 percent or more of their World Evangelism Fund.

The quadrennial Nazarene Youth Conference was held in Houston, Texas, on July 22-27, 2003. That event brought over eight thousand youth, youth leaders, volunteers, Nazarene college personnel, and special guests together for six days packed full of services and activities, all centered around one theme, "Discipleship: The Journey." Throughout the event the focus was on five main components of discipleship: Covenant, Community, Compassion, Contemplation, and Communication. No wonder the event lent itself to an encounter of God's presence as well as His holiness.

In a report of another youth gathering in East Timor via NYI Ministries, a Nazarene missionary from Indonesia states: "Although the young people were not accustomed to this, the Spirit of God was moving on their hearts—and where God is . . . there is power and there is change!"

### EMBRACING THE MISSION OF GOD

As Isaiah did in his encounter with God, we too must incorporate the twin themes of *revival* and *renewal*. As significant and important as these terms are, we must go beyond these terms, however, to discover the challenging, changing contexts of God's mission. As we move toward this goal, we find ourselves celebrating His work and achievement among us even as we strengthen our commitment to embrace His work in ever-emerging contexts.

Our challenge is offered in the context of celebration. The Centennial Initiative adopted at the 1999 General Board meeting has set as a goal the re-establishment of the textbook publishing program for the Church of the Nazarene. The first of four core texts, *Discovering the Old Testament*, was released in July 2003. The second core text,

*Discovering the New Testament*, is scheduled for release in 2004. The first supplemental reading text, *Philosophy of Religion*, was released in September 2003.

The challenge to *revival* and *renewal* moves from broader perspectives to concrete examples or reference points. Contemporary renewal may be seen in a variety of expressions throughout the Church of the Nazarene as we seek to embrace the mission of God. Almost weekly we learn of new formats God is using to engage His world through our ministry and mission.

Congregations are springing up in shopping malls, meeting at unique times with innovative formats designed to attract lost people with the Good News! New infrastructures of leadership are increasingly incorporating national or indigenous leaders. *Holiness Today*, our primary English-language denominational publication, will soon become a web-based magazine with a bimonthly print presence at reduced subscription costs.

Among the new initiatives embraced by our Board in recent months is development of the Nazarene Foundation. Approved by the General Board last year, work is under way to secure effective and consecrated leadership who will assist us in providing resources for the fulfillment of the mission in heretofore unimagined proportions.

Even though the Foundation is in its infancy and the leadership search is currently under way, the responses to its formation have been heartening and quite unexpected. A reality which is difficult for many of us to imagine is that there are resources which are available to the church—over and above the giving of tithes and offerings to our local churches—which are being donated to the mission of the kingdom of God in very encouraging amounts.

Far from being in competition with other charitable giving avenues of the church, including the foundations of many of our colleges and universities, the Nazarene Foundation is already proving to be a valuable channel through which resources are being held on behalf of the colleges and universities as well as providing a means by which both individuals and corporations are providing funds for special needs as well as for the overall mission of the church.

In recent months our Board has wrestled in depth with the issue of the relocation of Nazarene Headquarters. Given the complexity of the issue, you will understand that it has been a subject of hours of prayer, discussion, debate, and investigation. Dr. Stone and his office have provided reams of material and information. Discussions have been held with personnel in the Headquarters community, the seminary community, Nazarene Publishing House, and the wider community surrounding the Headquarters complex.

Serious maintenance issues are repeatedly being addressed in the aging facilities on our campus, some of them requiring our personnel to climb multiple stories via stairways for weeks at a time while parts are located for aging elevator systems. Plumbing systems are aging and being constantly repaired. Heating and air-conditioning systems face necessary repairs and expensive replacement in the near future.

It is a matter of concern, however, that we not move unilaterally. The location of our seminary in close proximity to Headquarters has been a source of valuable cooperation and identity. The availability of jobs for seminary families has been a positive expression of partnership. And the ability and desire of the seminary to identify with and minister to the community surrounding the Headquarters campus has provided valuable contact with this segment of the Kansas City area.

However, it has seemed most reasonable for us to look to the long-term future of both the seminary and Nazarene Headquarters. In light of that, the Board of General Superintendents has voted to recommend to this General Board session that Nazarene Headquarters move to a new location at 95<sup>th</sup> Street and Renner Boulevard in Lenexa, Kansas, and that a new facility be constructed which will house all of the ministries of Headquarters in one new, up-to-date, attractive building. This will provide a new sense of community and cooperation, better utilization of the valuable people resources in Headquarters, and a bright, new face for the church. In addition, the proposed site will provide space so that if and when Nazarene Theological Seminary should choose to move its location, land for the construction of the seminary would be available. We are committed to assisting NTS in any fund-raising endeavor to accomplish that, should they choose to move to the new location. In addition, space would be available for the Nazarene Publishing House to locate to the new site should it choose to do so in the future.

The proposal that will come to the General Board includes a number of benchmarks and requirements that we have recommended be accomplished prior to any move, among them the stipulation that at least 50 percent of the funding for the project be raised through donations prior to the initiation of construction. With this recommendation comes also a potential for investing in the community surrounding the present Headquarters site with a proposed community housing complex which would provide much-needed housing and infrastructure for this area of Kansas City.

It seems that this could be an exciting new opportunity for the Church of the Nazarene which could well positively coincide with the celebration of our centennial in 2008. We urge your support for this recommendation. I am sure we will all give this proposal careful and prayerful attention as we prepare to address the future for our church.

## CLOSING

The Church of the Nazarene has had, in most every statistical measure, a remarkable year. In spite of the decision to make 2003 the “Jubilee Year,” our growth in new Nazarenes is unprecedented. We have seen some astounding responses to our evangelistic endeavors through such tools as the *JESUS* Film and Evangecube. Many of our World Mission regions continue to show remarkable and exciting growth, propelling them to meet or exceed the centennial growth goals set over the last three years.

We have seen a turnaround in the number of congregations, reversing a decade-long trend. We are receiving reports of over 3,000 new church-type missions already started in World Mission areas. And, in spite of a world economy that has struggled in the last three years, giving to the World Evangelism Fund has exceeded all previous levels of giving.

The Church of the Nazarene is alive and well. As we proceed toward the celebration of our centennial, we continue to believe that the vitality of the church is not waning, its mission is not diminished, and its message is not diluted.

- We believe in justification, a transforming experience whereby we are reconciled to God, to others, and to our role as representatives of God’s grace in His world.
- We believe the message of Christian holiness is essentially one of restoration:
  - Of the marred image of God
  - To the mind and heart of God
  - To purity of heart
  - Effecting the exchange of the crippling effects of selfishness for the liberation of compassion
  - Enabled by personal and corporate surrender to the perfect will of God
- We believe this envisioned renewal begins with an attitude of intentionality.

The Board of General Superintendents desires a joint-venture relationship with every department and ministry of the church, with every region and district, to provide a partnership of empowering leadership to the church. We believe our role to be that of stewarding the message of the church, inspiring and challenging the accomplishment of the mission of the church, and nurturing the relationships between our Headquarters ministries, our colleges and universities, and the people of our local churches everywhere.

We are not an aggregation of isolated and individualistic entities seeking occasionally to be in contact with one another. We are the people of God, the embodiment of the character of God, fulfilling the mission of God. We are a holy people, called out from the world but not in isolation from it. We are the holy people of God who are in dynamic relationship to the world in order that we might bring hope, help, healing, and holiness to this broken planet.

But this mission requires that we be accountable to one another for properly stewarding our message and our mission. We dare not merely hope that the work will get done. We have seen the LORD—The King! He has called us. We have responded!

The work will not be easy, but the results will be transforming. We must step up to the task together, in confident praise of Him who is Sovereign over all, who alone is inherently Holy, from whom all other holiness derives and in whom alone is the hope of our world!

Respectfully submitted,  
Board of General Superintendents

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