

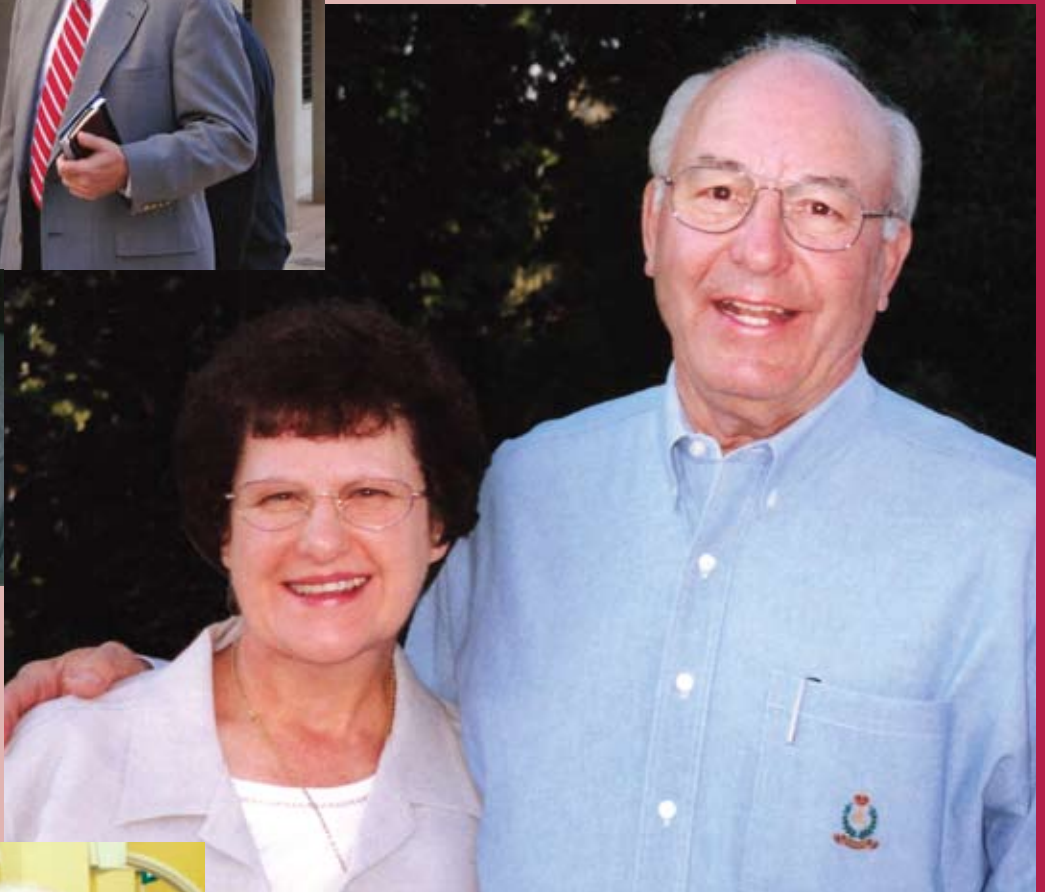
JIM DIEHL



Worshiping
in Jordan



Ordaining pastors in Bangladesh



Dorothy and Jim Diehl



Receiving a warm welcome in South Africa



Jim Diehl preaches at a
youth event, "EJUNAS,"
in Chiclayo, Peru.

THIS ONE AND ONLY JOURNEY

by MARK GRAHAM

When Jim Diehl surrendered his career desires to God, the church gained a dynamic broadcaster for the holiness message.



IN HIGH SCHOOL, his dream was to become a sports announcer like Jim Zabel—voice of the Iowa Hawkeyes. Other broadcasters also inspired him as he listened to 50,000-watt, clear channel WHO in Des Moines, Iowa. If you've heard Jim Diehl speak, you know he would have been a talented announcer. With a flair for detail, a self-deprecating sense of humor, and the gift of a master storyteller, he can have an audience chuckling one moment and crying the next.

Born in Iowa's state capital, James Harvey Diehl was the first son of Don and Della Diehl. Don was a foreman of manufacturing at Mrs. Clark's Foods. Della was a homemaker. Life revolved around their beloved Des Moines First Church of the Nazarene, to which they first carried Jim as a babe in arms.

At Des Moines First Church, Jim came under the wing of C. E. Stanley, whom he calls "the greatest pastor I have ever known." He would also take a strong interest in the Stanley's teenage daughter, Dorothy (Dottie), who would eventually become his wife and partner in ministry.

But first, he had to give up his desire to become a broadcaster. It happened one night at an Iowa District camp meeting. He went forward and prayed. "I didn't have to die out to 100,000 things," he says, "only one." And he chose to answer God's call to full-time Christian service. It was broadcasting's loss, the church's gain.

Jim counts C. E. Stanley; his father; and his district superintendent, Gene Phillips, as major influences in his life. He says his preaching style was inspired by his father-in-law, C. E. Stanley.

He was affected powerfully by the life of his own father, who was totally immersed in church life on every level.

"Dad was an oak tree Christian," says Diehl. "He taught me many things, one of which was how to weather storms without being broken."

Jim and Dottie married in 1956 while attending Olivet Nazarene College. Upon graduation, the pastorate beckoned with Iowa assignments in Muscatine, Indianola, and Oskaloosa. Ordination came in 1960. During these pastorates, a daughter and three sons graced the Diehl home—Jodi, Jim Jr., Don, and David.

In 1973, Curtis Smith, recognizing the young Midwestern preacher's talents for leadership, organization, and affability, invited Jim to serve as assistant to the president of a fledgling Nazarene college in the Kansas City suburb of Olathe, Kansas. Jim would spend four years at what is now MidAmerica Nazarene University before receiving a pastoral call to Atlanta, Georgia, First Church. Three years later he would be called to take on the role of superintendent of the Nebraska District.

There he enjoyed being both a pastor and cheerleader to other pastors. During his six years in Nebraska and the

following four as superintendent of the Colorado District, Jim worked to encourage those around him and to promote local churches in a positive way.


He is one of only a handful of district superintendents of his generation who returned to the pastorate from the superintendency, being elected as senior pastor of Denver, Colorado, First Church in 1989. Four years later, delegates to the 23rd General Assembly in Indianapolis elected him as the 29th member of the Board of General Superintendents.

Jim believes God was preparing him throughout his journey for each new assignment.

He even had a chance to be a broadcaster of sorts, with a daily live radio program for seven years while pastoring in Oskaloosa. Television was only a dream to Jim as a teenager, but God also opened the door for a television program on KTVO. A 30-minute program was telecast every Sunday morning to an audience covering 44 counties in southern Iowa and northern Missouri.

Jim and Dorothy have had their moments of trials and sadness. The absolute lowest point in their lives came on June 23, 2008, when the family gathered around the bed of their youngest child, David, as the 45-year-old father breathed his last. It was the conclusion of a two-year battle against cancer. "As a dad, to see your son struggling to get his next breath and not be able to help him in any way was an absolutely helpless and hopeless feeling. David went on to his heavenly home, but, oh man, parents are not meant to bury their children!"

What does Jim Diehl envision for the future of his church? "Keep the fire burning," he booms. "The Church of the Nazarene has a biblical doctrine, an excellent form of government, wonderful facilities, and gifted personnel. But all of the good things we have don't make any difference if we lose our passion to win the world for Christ and to lead people on to the sanctified life!"

As a student, Jim played lead characters in four high school plays. As he looks back, he agrees with Shakespeare that life is truly a stage. "The Church of the Nazarene has been my home all across the stage—from birth to when I pass through the curtain to the other side. Our church has given me more opportunities and blessings and privileges than I ever deserved. I am deeply indebted. It has been a joyous journey!" 

MARK GRAHAM is former managing editor of the *Herald of Holiness* and currently serves as manager of communication resources for Nazarene Pensions and Benefits USA.

KEEP THE FIRE BURNING!