

NINA G. GUNTER— A WOMAN CALLED

by GAIL L. SAWRIE

Since the time she responded at age 14, Nina Gunter has never doubted God's call to leadership on her life.



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READY LAUGHTER is one of Nina Gunter’s distinctive traits. She has been known to tell a funny story or two since she was young, and such accounts usually put others at ease.

Another trait is her “get-it-done” attitude. Throughout her life, Nina has sought to make things better whether she is serving in a church, teaching school, counseling, writing, or trotting the globe as general director of Nazarene Missions International (NMI) or as a general superintendent for the Church of the Nazarene. She has done so with organization, always striving to complete tasks early.

As a wife, mother of two active sons, grandmother, pastor, teacher, and in other roles, her schedule was something that became important early on.

Nina Griggs Gunter grew up on a farm in South Carolina, the youngest of eight children. One of her favorite pastimes was playing church with her two older brothers and cousins. They would take turns preaching, being the “seeker,” leading the music, or playing piano.

Nina also remembers going to mission meetings with her mother. Given Nina’s life, those activities may be seen as prophetic, a training ground, or both.

Called to Minister

Nina sensed God’s call to ministry as a preteen. While searching the Scripture to affirm God’s will for her life, she was drawn to 1 Samuel 1:18, “Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child.” Although she wrestled with this call for a couple of years, Nina accepted God’s plan. Immediately, her pastor had the 14-year-old speak at a prayer meeting, and then helped her obtain a local minister’s license. Nina began to write sermons and speak in neighboring churches.

Nina and Dwight Moody Gunter were married while attending Trevecca Nazarene University, and both preached on weekends, attended classes, and worked during their schooling.

The Gunters copastored several churches. Throughout the years, they have been invited to preach at camp meetings and revivals, alternating the pulpit between them. They also enjoy speaking at finance and leadership seminars.

While Nina has never doubted God’s call, there have been times when others questioned whether a woman should preach. More than a few have admitted that they were wrong after hearing the God-anointed words in her sermons.

Called to Lead

Nina found herself in positions of leadership at an early age, whether it was in the pulpit, on a softball field, on a basketball court, or on a missions council.

She was asked to serve on the South Carolina District NMI Council shortly after the Gunters settled into their first full-time pastorate. When Nina walked into the first meeting, she had a few misgivings. Her concerns multiplied as she realized

that she—a twentysomething—was in a group of people in their 40s and 50s. However, the council members took the young woman under their wings, encouraged her, and gave her freedom with her assignment. Nina has modeled that leadership training since.

Nina’s leadership became evident as she challenged her church and later her district (as district NMI president) to higher goals, especially paying the World Evangelism Fund (then General Budget) in full. She was elected to the General NMI Council in 1976. When General NMI Director Phyllis Perkins resigned in 1986, Nina was elected to that role.

Throughout her life, Nina Gunter has had strong mentors—some of the most formidable being the late General NMI President Emeritus Louise Robinson Chapman and the late General NMI Director Mary Scott. Their businesslike manner set the bar high for the young South Carolinian. Nina sought the counsel and prayers of both leaders many times.

As NMI director, Nina felt a burden to help NMI leaders improve leadership skills and mentor others. Nina has continued mentoring younger people.


During the 2005 General Assembly, Nina was elected as the first female general superintendent of the denomination. In the four years she has served in this capacity, she has seen the awareness of women in ministry raised. Nina ordained the first female elders in Papua New Guinea and presided over the Japan District Assembly when they elected their first female district superintendent. Nina was the first female leader of any denomination to ordain elders in South Korea. The last four years have been full of many “firsts” for this strong leader.

Called to Dream

Throughout her life, Nina has maintained a “dream” file of perceived needs, and she encourages others to do the same. When she observed a method that might be done more effectively, given the proper situation, she added it to her dream file.

A number of those dreams became realities when she was general NMI director, such as the creation of district convention packets, several prayer initiatives including Nazarene World Week of Prayer and prayer for the persecuted church, faith promise resources, regional NMI coordinators, NMI resource notebooks, and the Award of Excellence.

Nina Gunter may be retiring as general superintendent, but her call remains. She will continue ministering, leading, and dreaming.

One thing is certain—if Nina is around, there will be leadership and laughter, lots of laughter. 

GAIL L. SAWRIE serves as NMI editor and is the office editor for *Mission Connection* magazine and the blogger for Among the Nations.

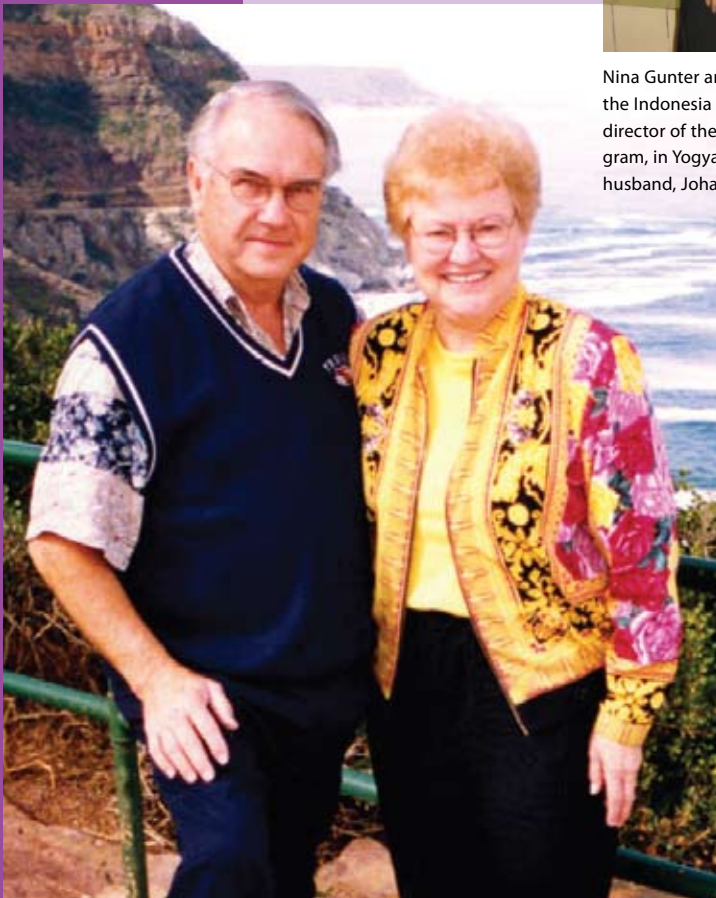
NINA GUNTER



Nina Gunter and Nunuk Siahaya, professor at the Indonesia Nazarene Theological College and director of the Nazarene Child Sponsorship program, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where Siahaya's husband, Johannis, serves as president.



Nina Gunter shortly after being elected general superintendent.



Moody and Nina Gunter



Nina Gunter receives the first Nina Griggs Gunter Servant-Leader Award from Trevecca Nazarene University President Dan Boone.



Nina Gunter with the first three women pastors from the Western Highlands District to be ordained in Papua New Guinea.