

## **A Church in the Wesleyan Tradition**

### **Where We Came From**

- The Nazarene lineage runs through the English Reformation, the international spread of Methodism, and the Wesleyan-holiness movement in America.
- The Church of the Nazarene emerged as a union of various Wesleyan-holiness denominations and by 1915 embraced seven previously separate North American and British bodies.
- Phineas F. Bresee shaped the church's form of governance. Hiram F. Reynolds nurtured its identity as a church committed to global missions. Other early leaders included C. W. Ruth, C. B. Jernigan, William Howard Hoople, Mary Lee Cagle, George Sharpe, J. O. McClurkan, Susan Fitkin, R. T. Williams, J. B. Chapman, and H. Orton Wiley.
- The Church had an international dimension from its beginning. Today it is, by intention, an international church with over 380 districts world-wide, three-quarters of which are outside North America. There are nearly 1.4 million Nazarenes. Over half live outside the United States and Canada.

### **What We Believe and Teach**

- We believe that we are only one part of Christ's universal Church and share with believers in other communions one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.
- With other Protestants we affirm the priority of salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ, the priesthood of all believers, and the Bible as the final rule of Christian faith and practice.
- We believe that the Old and New Testaments reveal God's will for all persons concerning sin, salvation, and new life in Christ.
- We affirm that Christ's death atoned for the sins of all people, and that this grace is effective for the salvation of each person who accepts it.
- We believe that Christians are justified and sanctified by faith alone.
- We believe that Christ's sanctifying grace is received initially in the New Birth (regeneration) when the Holy Spirit plants a new principle of spiritual life within, and that sanctifying grace increases as we live life through the Spirit. We affirm that entire sanctification is a gracious provision and possibility for all believers, in which the heart is cleansed of all sin and overflows with love for God and neighbor.

### **Our Mission**

- The Church of the Nazarene is a "Great Commission" church.
- As such our members seek to witness faithfully and attractively to all people, so that the Christ life within would draw others to the love, worship, and service of God.
- We are called, especially, to preach the Gospel to the poor.
- The basic vehicles through which we carry out our mission are these: corporate worship, evangelism, compassionate ministry, Christian nurture, and education.
- Because the whole people of God constitute "the Church," and because each Christian is called to ministry by virtue of his or her baptism, every believer in the Church of the Nazarene has a role in carrying out the mission to which we are called as a corporate body.

Stan Ingersol, 2001. Adapted from Wes Tracy and Stan Ingersol, *Here We Stand: Where Nazarenes Fit in the Religious Marketplace* (1999). Published in *Holiness Today* (June 2001): 66.