

District Superintendent's Report
66th Gathering of the Indiana District Church of the Nazarene
Real Life Community Church of the Nazarene
Portage, Indiana
July 28, 2008

Greetings in the powerful name of Jesus. It's a privilege for me to bring my 13th report on the occasion of this the 66th gathering of the Northwest Indiana District Church of the Nazarene. I welcome each of you, delegates and friends, to this assembly. A special welcome as well to General Superintendent J.K. Warrick, Brian Allen and Michael Benson representing ONU, and guest speaker Steve Weber. Tomorrow morning our goal is to complete assembly business by 10:30 a.m. At that time, Dr. Weber's two presentations focusing on prayer will lead us to the conclusion of our assembly.

This is the Centennial year for the International Church of the Nazarene. 100 years ago this year at Pilot Point Texas, the Church of the Nazarene was born. On October 5, just a couple of months from now, the Church will celebrate "Centennial Sunday" around the world.

It is right that we should celebrate such a significant event. The history of The Church of the Nazarene is marked by the commitment and sacrifice of men and women, clergy and lay, whose love for Jesus Jesus, passion for holiness and sacrificial lifestyles propelled the church forward until today we are a world-wide church located in over 150 world areas. To God be the glory, great things he has done!

While there are many things statistics cannot tell us, they are an important part of our accountability to each other and do give us a sense of our progress in key areas of ministry. Here are the primary district statistics for the year just completed compared to last years totals:

Church Membership: 7840, decrease of 95
New Nazarenes: 311, a decrease of 45
Sunday School: 4379, a decrease of 115
Morning Worship: 7294, an increase of 18
*Raised for All Purposes: \$12,467,705, an increase of \$1,894,833

Our Fund Payments record is:

World Evangelism Fund: \$505,336, 88.65%

District Unified: \$348,649, 91.74%

ONU: \$215,221, 80.90%

Pensions: \$132,290, 87.02%

Allow me to share some highlights of the past year:

- Two years ago we offered a comprehensive revitalization program to churches on the district called Project 6:15. Nine churches have participated in this initiative. The need for church revitalization is urgent. It is at the same time exciting and motivating...and difficult and challenging! Leading a church turnaround is usually at least a five year process. Every local situation is unique. Several of the participating churches have found that it has taken this long to introduce the ideas and get the circumstances right for the continuation of the effort.

As a part of our continued commitment to revitalization, I am pleased to announce that this coming fall. Project 6:15 Phase 2: "High Impact Revitalization" will take place on October 17 and 18. Dr. Ken Priddy will be with us to continue our focus on church revitalization. One of the things that drew us to work with Dr. Priddy is the key principal of Project 6:15 that spiritual renewal must precede structural renewal! This event is being designed for two groups of churches: 1. Those who are ready to make their first commitment to revitalization, and 2. As a refresher to create new impetus for current Project 6:15 participants. There is a green sheet in each delegate packet about this event, and a separate yellow sheet with added information in the pastor's packets. I urge each pastor, along with lay leadership, to participate in this important event.

I commend the Mission Development Board for their work this year. It has been a year of laying a foundation for our missional efforts on the district. The planting of new churches remains a top priority for building the kingdom. We have not planted new churches systematically over the past several years. In our eagerness to make planting churches a top priority some years ago, tactical and timing mistakes were made that set us back. Getting used to the idea of a local church or churches being directly involved in parenting new churches has taken some time to adjust to...but pastoral passion and commitment to do so has increased over the past few years. The Mission Development Board will be helping us re-focus our attention on the planting of

new churches this year. It is essential that we do so! **Planting new churches is still THE most effective way to win new people to Jesus Christ.**

This is not to suggest that there has been no new missional activity on the district. I am pleased to call attention to the beginning of Hammond Family Community Church of the Nazarene that launched on Easter Sunday morning. Congratulations to Todd and Raquel Forrest on the birth of this fledgling congregation. I am also pleased to inform you that Angela and Kevin Grupe have started a new mission initiative in Michigan City. Angela graduated from ONU last year. She and Kevin, with a special burden for Michigan City and with the districts blessing, responded to God's call and moved there with no district financial support. Their efforts have established a beachhead for a return to our presence in Michigan City! In addition, our Spanish work continues to develop. We have several Spanish ministry preaching points that we believe will in time become fully organized churches!

- Speaking of our Spanish Ministries, Dr. Alberto Guang continues to give excellent leadership to this important ministry on our district. Last October we held our first Spanish Ministries Pastor's/Spouse Retreat. Even though the complex immigration issues currently present have created more uncertainty in our Spanish population this year than previously, we are still making good progress! Wasn't it great to have some of our Spanish brothers leading us in worship last night. You will find an update on our Spanish Ministries on the East Chicago page in your Assembly booklet.
- Considerable attention is being given the issue of the funding of the mission of the Church of the Nazarene across the US. The local church faces increasing pressures as costs escalate, especially in the area of health care. We are entering our second year of a two year experiment, reducing each Fund area by 10%. This gives us the opportunity to see what action the General Assembly will take next June regarding this issue.

What we know for sure is that the normal funding sources we have relied on for decades will not be adequate to fund a more aggressive missional initiative in the future. This past year, with Segue Foundation as a key planning resource, an "Enduring Gifts Endowment Committee" gave many hours in the development of

a comprehensive Enduring Gifts Endowment program for the District. We will view a video introducing this initiative during the assembly. The same DVD is in each pastor's packet to make the information easily accessible to each local church. I am asking each pastor to share this DVD with their congregation. There is also a brochure in each delegate's packet giving further information about the Enduring Gifts Program.

In September, in conjunction with our final Pastor's Centennial Planning Meeting, Kevin Stirratt, Vice President of the Segue Foundation, will be present to assist in a full presentation of the Enduring Gifts Endowment Program for pastors. As you will see, this initiative will in no way be in competition for any funding that would otherwise go to the local church. There are significant monies individuals will give to sources that would never go to the local church. We want to be prepared to share initiatives with potential donors focused primarily on the local church, that would attract these funds. The staff of Segue Foundation is with us this morning. Will you join me in greeting Segue President Rev. Darrell Poepelmeyer, Vice President Kevin Stirratt and Greg Clark, who specializes in strategic planning I urge you to go by the Segue table in the foyer and get acquainted with these good men. All three are ordained Nazarene Elders who have responded to God's special call to assist the local church in finding creative ways to fund the mission of the church!

- In a related area, I am excited to announce that a committee from our district has been collaborating with the other three Indiana Districts in a partnership seeking a Lilly Endowment Grant for \$750,000 as part of a potential \$4.3 million project designed to address the financial issues affecting ministry excellence for Nazarene pastors in the state of Indiana. The application will be made September 1 and we'll know by November the outcome. The Segue Foundation has also played a crucial role in assisting the four Indiana Districts with this project.

We are all indebted to the District Advisory Board for their visionary leadership in embracing and funding these initiatives, as well as caring for the regular business of the district.

Over time, every organization struggles to retain the vision and passion that brought it into existence. At 100 years of age we find

ourselves on a new cultural frontier. While the secular culture presents a challenging mission field, changing the church culture to enter that mission field is challenging as well. The landscape has changed in the past four decades. Things that used to fit don't fit. The way the church has functioned isn't working. Our familiar promotions and programs are ineffective. We increasingly face challenges and realities that we are ill prepared to address. This is good news!! Up against the wall with our effectiveness in North America having waned, there is a growing sense of urgency in some segments of the church. It is not widespread...yet! But there is an unmistakable hunger for something different and authentic! Something more than what we can come up with out of our own ingenuity, creativity, programs and planning.

In the scripture that is the basis for this year's assembly theme, "If My People...Pray!", Solomon has just completed the building of the Temple. Following the two weeks of feasting and celebration, God appeared to Solomon with a warning and a promise:

Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished. Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, (slide) **"...if my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land"**

2 Chronicles 7:11-15 (ESV)

It's not hard to transfer the imagery to today. God knew that there would be the tendency to drift away from a vital, intimate connection with Jehovah God into idolatry. Israel's brand of idolatry obviously isn't ours, but we do have our idols, and, as is always the case, they arise out of self centeredness and a tepid connection with our God.

I marvel sometimes at our resistance to the mission to which we have been called in favor of a status quo that renders us impotent in winning lost people to Jesus Christ and making them into, as the phrase goes, "fully devoted disciples." We cannot be satisfied with our progress in the US, and that certainly includes N.W. Indiana. As our annual statistics reflect, we are currently on a plateau. This is not where God wants us and I don't believe it is where we are going to stay. But we must be honest about where we are. As your leader, I assume responsibility. It is true that numbers don't tell the full story of what God is doing, but they do give us a partial gauge that we must not ignore. Perhaps God has us at the "if" point of Chronicles 7:14: **"...if my people humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."**

It is so easy for us to look at our lost, desperate culture, and rail against the hedonism, addictions, abortion, same sex marriage...and the list goes on. But perhaps it's time for us to examine ourselves. Too often changes in the church that are essential to enable us to make a connection with our culture are resisted in favor of the idol of a predictable status quo. Idols of personal preferences and time honored methods, though ineffective, take precedence over aggressive missional initiatives. We remain far too pastor centered. We need a revival of lay empowerment and lay mobilization. Too many of us don't have a clear picture of the future that God is calling us to. Program and structure prevail. Vision and passion are in too short supply. The reality of schedules and time pressure provide idols that replace the most important priority in any disciples life...our time in the word and prayer, developing our relationship with the Father...and receiving the life resources that can only come from our connectedness to Him.

Everything turns on leadership. God has been speaking to me about my personal need to move into new territory. He has been calling me to greater intimacy with Him. God has given me an accountability partner who is going to keep me focused on my own spiritual life. I hunger for greater power and purity and ministry effectiveness. I believe this is true of every pastor...but sometimes we need help in adjusting our lives to take time for the most important thing we have to do: Spending intimate time with the Father! I'm excited to announce that on November 6-8, Steve Weber will lead pastors and staff persons in an event called: (slide) "The Fresh Encounter Getaway". Steve recently related to me the story of one pastor who, having experienced the impact of one of the Prayer Summits,

confessed: "Everything I have done in my ministry for the past 18 years has been apart from the power of the Holy Spirit!" According to numerous surveys, his testimony is not unique!" And we're once again reminded of Jesus words in John 15: "...apart from me, you can do.....NOTHING!" Pastor's, there's a sheet in your packets with detailed information about this event titled: "The Fresh Encounter Getaway." I am asking every pastor and staff person to make the commitment to be present for this important gathering of our pastor/staff team!

The "Holiness Movement" was spawned in the hearts of those whose passion for God drove them to move outside the organized churches of the day seeking a more authentic life in the spirit. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop was born into the early years of that group of radical people. Now deceased, she is one of the great treasures of the Church of the Nazarene. In a booklet written almost fifty years ago, titled: "John Wesley: Christian Revolutionary", she wrote words I believe, as we turn 100 years old, are for the church today!

Some of us recall that the very thing which our forefathers had, essentially, was the spirit of revolution. They were not quiet, comfortable, placid, undisturbed people. They seethed with energy. They saw visions which sent them crashing through barriers of impossibilities. They dreamed dreams and brought forth solid realities. But they did not do everything that needs to be done. They took up a world-shattering task and we betray them when we accept what they did, as a status quo, to be preserved as a museum piece, not rolled out to do new battles...We ought to live "on the boundary"—dangerously. We need to take our position on the growing edge of a noble tradition. Essential Wesleyanism is *sanctified revolution*. There is life in it...It is human nature set on fire by the indwelling Holy Spirit, bringing Christ to bear on personal, church, social, national, and world life...Christian doctrines, at least the central ones, were life experiences before they became statements of faith. They were life involvements and profound commitments before they were neat propositions packed into theology books

It is the life, the personal participation in grace, the spiritual dynamic of the Christian's interrelatedness with God, that captures our attention...We will neither worship nor neglect our heritage. Our fathers found a dynamic that shattered the lethargy and ineffectualness of mediocre Christianity.

That dynamic propelled them into orbit, an orbit into which we were born...We will respect our fathers for discovering that dynamic and harnessing themselves to it. But then we are born into a responsibility for perpetuating that dynamic. It was the Holy Spirit to whom our fathers related themselves. He is the Dynamic. He will not be harnessed. He will not submit to our wills. He is creative and bursts out, like a raging fire, from the strictures we may try to build about Him. **Our heritage does not tie us to the past, but harnesses us to a dynamic that propels us into the demands of the future faster than we are often prepared to go."**

100 years. Should God tarry, where will the Church of the Nazarene be in another 100 years? Where will we be in another 10 years? The answer to this question lies squarely in the hands, the hearts, the priorities and the passions of people just like you and me.

(theme slide) What will it take for us experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit that birthed the Church of the Nazarene 100 years ago? What will it take to thrust us into a new orbit of Spirit empowered love and passion to reach a lost world? It is not a new program. It is a desperation for His presence and hearts crying to him in confession and repentance. The promise has been made. It's still valid today!

"...if my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land"

Right at the outset of this assembly, will you join me in we open our hearts to the Father?

Congregation: "This Is My Desire, To Worship You."

My report to you is respectfully submitted,

Lee Woolery, District Superintendent