

## DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT 2008

### *WHAT ABOUT JOHN?*

General Superintendent Dr. Nina Gunter; General Superintendents Emeriti Dr. William Greathouse and Dr. Talmadge Johnson; Dr. Dan Boone, President of Trevecca Nazarene University; retired Tennessee District Superintendent Dr. Harvey Hendershot; delegates and friends of the Tennessee District Church of the Nazarene: With joy and thanksgiving, I present my sixth report to this, the ninety-seventh Annual Tennessee District Assembly.

A few Saturdays ago, Carol and I had the happy privilege of attending a soccer game at Hermitage Church. Our 7-year-old grandson, Maxwell, was playing. During one of the quarters that he was not on the field, I noticed that he had developed his own game. He and another little boy ran right by us. They were chasing a little yellow butterfly. Maxwell had his hand on his friend's shoulder, pulling him back, yelling, "He's mine! I saw him first!" There are many, many Maxwells in this world. We often chase butterflies and miss the real game.

We expend our life energy, chasing trophies that we really don't even care about. I was in a dusty church closet recently. You know what I found there? A lot of old softball trophies. We somehow think they are important and we can't quite get rid of them, but we don't bother to display them anymore. At just about every garage sale you go to, you will probably find some old trophies for sale. Those things we worked so hard for are now relegated to closets and garage sales. That's an indication that we were probably playing the wrong game. Trophies tarnish and butterflies flutter off.

But why are we this way? Once someone asked three great psychologists this question, "What is the one thing people want more than anything else?" Freud said, "The one thing people want the most is to be loved." Jung said, "To be secure, is what people want the most." Adler said, "The thing people want most is to feel important." I think I'm with Dr. Adler on this one. We need to feel important. We need to amount to something. We subconsciously feel that if we can just win a few trophies, we won't have this feeling of inferiority anymore. Then we truly will be respected and looked up to and finally, we will be important.

This causes humans to live their lives competing and comparing. In his little book, *Compassion*, Henri Nouwen said that competition is our main motivation in life. Ironically, even in the church we struggle with this. Preachers are not immune. We hear someone preach a great sermon and we think, "Why couldn't I have said that?" We see someone pastoring a larger church than ours and we think, "What does that pastor have that I don't have? Why does he get all the breaks?" It is true of our laity. We sometimes think that our little church doesn't count for much. We are not big enough to offer all the programs the big church down the street can. We compare. Intellectually, we know that whether you are in a bigger church or a smaller church, this says nothing about your value or worth. You are where God put you and there is no promotion from doing God's will. But it is humanly difficult to truly believe this. And so in a few minutes, when the delegate's books are distributed, the temptation will be too great. We will again compare and compete. We

will compare how our church measures up with the other 91 churches. However, you will notice that somehow, this year, I misplaced the obligatory *Top 10* lists!

In this District Assembly, could we think differently? Could we truly rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep? Could we see our churches, not in competition with one another, but truly a family of churches, drawn together as one mighty army, 14,000 strong, having marched together now as a denomination for 100 years, under the banner of “Holiness Unto the Lord”? Could we drop our tendency to compare and once again be bathed in the beautiful Spirit of Jesus....the Spirit of compassion?

Our Board of General Superintendents has described our church. They have said that we are Christian People. We are Missional People. And we are Holiness People. In previous District Assembly reports I have talked about the first two and today, I want to celebrate with you that we are Holiness People. Into this nation of butterfly and trophy chasers, Jesus and the Church of the Nazarene bring a message of hope!

Jesus described this holiness lifestyle as he hosted a beach breakfast buffet. We read about it in John 21. The resurrected Jesus makes his third appearance to the disciples. He prepares breakfast for them on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. His conversation that day was a test for Peter. His conversation that day is a challenge for the Tennessee District Church of the Nazarene.

*JESUS SAID “WATCH ME”— HOLINESS PEOPLE GIVE PRAYERFUL SERVICE.*

You can't help but watch Jesus as he prayerfully and humbly walked among the disciples. Your eyes are drawn to this holy man. He never pastored a mega church. That wasn't His style. What He modeled for all of us was a lifestyle of prayerful service. He would often remove himself from the noise and chatter of the day and find a place of recuperative prayer. Then He would go back among the people and give lowly service. Here in John 21, He is cooking breakfast and just a few days before, He was washing dirty feet. This is the holy lifestyle. The Nazarene church is rarely the largest church in town. We do not have the most ornate buildings. We try to live like our holy Jesus. We are a praying people and we know that true joy comes in serving the hurting and helpless and hopeless among us.

Jesus wasn't competing with anyone. He was a humble servant. William Barclay tells about a wonderful man named, Principal Cairns. He would never enter a room first. He always said, “You first, I follow.” Once, as he came on to a platform, there was a great burst of applause in welcome. He stood aside and let the man after him come first and began himself to applaud. He never dreamed that the applause could possibly be for him; he thought it was for the other man. That seems to me to be the spirit of Jesus and that is the spirit of holiness people. We do not need, nor desire adulation. We happily and humbly admit that we are the “least of these”.

That is the spirit of those with whom I have worked this year. I know she will be embarrassed that I thank her first, but my sweet Carol is a perfect example of one involved in prayerful service on the Tennessee District. It has been my honor and joy to live and serve with her for 35 years. She lives like Jesus; never seeking a place for herself, but always seeking to serve. In the words of 10-year-old Weston Smith, “You stand out like a strawberry in a bowl of peas.”

I am grateful for the servants in the District Office: Dr. Bill and Sharon Wiesman, Barbara and M.L. White, and Charles and Ann Powers. District Secretary, Jeff Sexton; Hispanic Coordinator, Pedro and Justita Cruz; Black Coordinator, JoeAnn Ballard; and Camp Garner Creek Retreat Center Manager, Paul and Martha Ann Eby have all provided prayerful servant leadership this year. Our auxiliary leaders have provided service not for pay, but from hearts of love—NYI President, Chelli Jones; NMI President, Carol Anne Eby; and Sunday School Chairman, Larry Spraker.

The District Advisory Board, composed of clergy: Daryl Blank, Dwight Gunter, Leonard Jackson, Howard Plummer, Kim Smith, Brian Wiesinger; laypersons: Lois Brown, |Dave Clark, Roger Costa, Michael Johnson, Gerald |Skinner, has ably provided leadership, advice, and encouragement to the District Superintendent and the work of the District this year. You can add to this list, thousands of local church servants who give of their time, money and talent to continue the work of our churches. We are grateful for this army of prayerful servants. They have watched how Jesus lives and they are simply emulating Him. I don't have any trophies for all of you today. You don't want them anyway. However, with 7-year-old Harris Weinstein, let me say, "If I had 10 thumbs, I'd put them all up for you."

*JESUS SAID "LOVE ME"—HOLINESS PEOPLE BELIEVE IN LOVING SACRIFICE.*

Peter's test continues in John 21. After breakfast, Jesus asks that famous question three times. "Peter, do you love me?" And each time, Peter said "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Then, feed my sheep." If we love Christ we will care for his flock. We will give loving service to the Church for which He gave His life.

I am happy to report that Tennessee Nazarenes have done just that this year. God has favored us with much growth and progress. We have raised for all purposes an all time high of \$21,568,910. For 100 years, the people called Nazarenes have felt strongly about loving sacrifice. We have been generous with others through our budget system. We made a decision a long time ago that we would not spend all our money on ourselves and our local ministries. But a healthy portion would be sacrificially given away to our missionaries, our retired ministers, our universities, and our district endeavors. Because of this decision, the Nazarene Church has a missionary program in 151 countries which is admired by much larger denominations than our own. We have one of the finest university systems of any denomination. In the United States and Canada, we are starting one new church every day. And our retired ministers receive, although not a large monthly check, a regular one. We continue to faithfully make these loving sacrifices because we know that we can do so much more together than we can separately.

This year we supported our missionaries through our World Evangelism Fund by sending \$1,143,350 which is 94.51% of our budget. We supported Trevecca Nazarene University with \$523,808 which is 91.44% of our assigned budget. Every dollar over 90% goes right back to our Tennessee students. We gave \$626,317 to our District Unified Budget which represents 93.97% of our budget. We gave \$308,336 to our Pensions and Benefits Budget which is 93.91% of our assigned budget. It is interesting to note that last year, our retired ministers in Tennessee received \$714,749, which is more than twice what we contributed to the fund this year. We still look forward to the day that we will be able to pay 100% on all these budgets. We anticipate that day, not for our personal boasting but simply so that all the needs can be met. This year 62 of our 91 churches were able to pay all their budgets in full and we rejoice with each of them.

We are thanking God for all the people who are participating in our churches. We averaged 12,770 in morning worship which is an increase of 299. Our current membership is 14,578 which is an increase of 201. Our Sunday School attendance is now at 8,584 which is a slight decrease of 35. We believe that there are many small groups and classes occurring every week that are not counted in this figure. We continue to be committed to Sunday School and small group ministries, believing that this is one of our greatest tools in producing Christlike disciples in the nations. We rejoice that 798 New Nazarenes joined the church.

This year, 19 of our churches are receiving the Tennessee District *Leading the Way* Award. To receive this award, a church must have reached three goals: New Nazarenes joining the local church equal to 5 percent or more of last year's worship attendance, an increase of 5 percent or more over last year's worship attendance, and payment of all budgets. These are reachable goals and I look forward to the day when over half of our churches will be growing at a rate of at least 5 percent a year. When that happens, we will be reaching many more people for the Lord with the message of salvation and heart holiness. The 2008 *Leading the Way* churches and pastors include Clarksville First, Kim Smith; Clarksville Korean, Young Lee; Franklin Community of Faith, Ronnie Johnson; Gallatin, Kyle Poole; Goodlettsville, Daryl Blank; Gray's Chapel, Ken Andrews; Jason Chapel, Wendell Brown; Kingston Springs, David Denson; Madison, Scott Lankford; Memphis Calvary, Lynn Holmes, Nashville Christ, Rollan Coleman; Nashville Donelson, David Hill; Nashville Grace, Ken Dove; Nashville New Life Korean, Jwa Kim; Nashville Whites Creek, Bernie Deffinger; Pleasant Point, Marcus Wilson; Portland, Rich Cook; Savannah, Wayne and Kathy Bittle; Waverly, Daron Brown. In keeping with our desire this year to have an assembly where we do not compare and compete, I decided not to give you an award. I know that it will just end up in the church closet or in your garage sale anyway! Let's rejoice with these who rejoice.

We also want to weep with those who weep. This may have been a very difficult year for your church. Just because your church wasn't one of the *Leading the Way* churches, doesn't mean that you weren't involved in loving sacrifice this year. In fact, your sacrifice may have been great just to stay even with where you were last year. We are not a group of individual churches. We are a united family. All our victories are shared by all of us and all of our disappointments are also shared.

We rejoice that our family has organized 2 new churches this year—Clarksville Korean Church with Pastor Young Lee, sponsored by Clarksville Grace and Pastor Steve Estep and Memphis Look at God Restoration Church with Pastor Bryant Walker, sponsored by Memphis Holiness Tabernacle and Pastor McArthur Jackson. We began 3 other NewStarts this year: Gallatin Hispanic with Pastor Juan Bazan, co-sponsored by Gallatin First and Nashville Glencliff Hispanic with Pastors Kyle Poole and Pedro Cruz; Memphis Restoration Tabernacle with Pastor Derrick Brown, sponsored by Memphis Holiness Tabernacle, Pastor McArthur Jackson; and Decaturville New Vision with Pastor Larry Patrick. This gives us 9 NewStarts in progress and we thank Dr. Bill Wiesman for his work in this area. As holiness people we continue to believe in loving service. We obey Christ's command to feed and care for His beautiful sheep.

*JESUS SAID, "FOLLOW ME"—HOLINESS PEOPLE LIVE IN TOTAL SURRENDER.*

Peter's test continues. Jesus talks to him about the total surrender that will be required of him. He will be required to surrender his life just as Jesus had done a few days before. He says, "Peter, follow me." This was Peter's moment. It was his opportunity to say, "O Jesus, I will give you my prayerful service. I really do believe in loving sacrifice. And here is my all. I will follow you in total surrender! If it means I must die, then I am willing." But he failed the test, at least for this moment. He said, "Lord.....what about John?" What about this other disciple? What was Peter doing? He was comparing and competing. He was saying, "Jesus, are you going to require the same thing of John?" And Jesus told Peter that it basically was none of his business. Jesus was saying, "Peter. I am talking to you now. You don't need to worry about John. There are no duplicate assignments. I will take care of John; just as I am going to take care of you. But Peter, will you follow me, even if it means a cross? Will you live out total surrender?"

Peter wasn't quite ready to follow Christ all the way, so Jesus sent him to an upper room to pray for ten days. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on Peter's life, he was transformed. The post-Pentecost Peter, cleansed and filled with the Holy Spirit, totally surrendered to any cross that may come to him, stood to preach with boldness and reckless abandon. No longer was he saying, "What about John?" Now all he could think and say was "What about Jesus?" His eyes had been released from all others to stare at the Savior. He was living out total surrender.

Competition? Comparison? No! Compassion—compassion for lost people and our great Savior! With the songwriter we exclaim, "Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus, I've lost sight of all beside; so enchained my spirit's vision, looking at the crucified. All for Jesus! All for Jesus!"

John 21 was a test for Peter but it is a challenge for the Tennessee District Church of the Nazarene. Are we going to Watch Jesus and Love Jesus and Follow Jesus? Or are we going to continue to live our lives like most folks in the world, controlled by thoughts of competition? Are we going to truly be holiness people? There is a total surrender offered to us. It is a once and for all commitment to allow Christ to crucify our sinful nature. And then there is a daily dying of self interest until we can say with Paul, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Phil. 4:11). Paul said, "Christ shall be exalted in my body whether it be by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20). We are Holiness People. We give ourselves in prayerful service. We believe in loving sacrifice. And we live in total surrender.

I was sitting in Olive Garden a few weeks ago, across the table from my friend, Gerald. It was a holy moment as he told me about his "John 21" meeting with Christ. It was a test. He aced it. Now Gerald was a good Christian by most all estimations. He taught Sunday School class, sang special songs on Sunday morning preceded by his personal testimony about the goodness of God, sang in the choir, pitched for the church softball team, served on the church board, and attended Saturday morning men's prayer breakfast. And sometimes, he even paid his tithe. But Gerald knew and his wife, Betty, knew that there was something missing in his life.

One Saturday morning, all the other men who met for prayer at the church altar were unable to attend, and Gerald thought that was great because he could stay home and have breakfast with Betty. But the phone rang and the treasurer of the church was calling to ask Gerald to meet him at the church for prayer. Because Sherman was one of the godliest men Gerald knew, he agreed to meet him. They arrived about the same time and greeted one

another with a hug. Gerald noticed that there was a different look in Sherman's eyes. They knelt at the altar, facing each other. Sherman took Gerald's hand and said, "I need you to do a special favor for me." Gerald said, "I will if I can." Sherman explained that the day before he had been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer and the doctors had given him only 3 or 4 months to live. He said, never changing his expression, "I'm prepared to go on, but I'm really not ready because my little girl is only a few months old and I won't be here for her when she needs a godly example from a father. I would like to ask you to do something special for me after I die." Gerald said, "I will if I can." Sherman said, "Will you be Jesus in Becky's life for me?"

Gerald began to weep. He said, "My life is a mess. I am an inconsistent Christian. There are some kingdoms in my life I have been unable to surrender." Sherman never changed his expression. He said, "Gerald, it doesn't have to be that way. God can sanctify you wholly this morning.....right here." Gerald said with a determination he had never had before, he held on to that altar and he said, "I am not getting up from here until God does this promised work in my heart." Gerald told me he and Sherman prayed that morning for a long time but finally God came. He stopped praying "I surrender some" and he prayed "I surrender all." And God came and cleansed his heart from inbred sin and filled him with His Holy Spirit. That morning Gerald died. A few months later, Sherman died. When Gerald walked into his kitchen later that Saturday morning, Betty looked at him and knew immediately that something had happened. He seemed somehow radically different. Today Becky is a fine Christian nurse living in Memphis and Gerald can't tell that story without crying. That day in Olive Garden, Gerald Willis and I were both crying.

Oh, Tennessee Nazarene, has there been a moment for you, when in absolute, total surrender you asked God to crucify your sinful nature and fill you with His Holy Spirit? And if this blessed work has been accomplished in your heart, have you continued in your daily walk with Christ so that the spirit of competition and comparison cannot creep back in?

Yes, we are Holiness People. Unapologetically, we are people who have determined to give prayerful service, to believe in loving sacrifice and to live in total surrender. Boldly we proclaim that believers can be sanctified wholly, through and through. There is a deeper work that Christ can do in us that will fill us with love for God and our fellow man. We have caught a glimpse of a crucified, resurrected Savior and nothing else compares. He has won our affections and nothing else can compete for them. All the butterflies of this world have lost their fascination. Tennessee Nazarene Family, we are Holiness People. Let us teach holiness. Let us live holiness and this world will be drawn to our gentle, simple ways. They will be drawn to the beautiful Jesus we emulate. I am honored to travel this new year with you. I can't wait to see what God will do in us and through us!

Pleased with the Prospects,

*Bob Broadbooks*