

# District Superintendent Report

June 21, 2019

Dr. Duarte, fellow pastors, members and friends of this 71st annual gathering of the Canada West District, it is an honour to bring you my first report as superintendent.

Bienvenue! (French) Bienvenidos! (Spanish) Mabuhay! (Filipino) Welkom! (Afrikaans) Maale (Nuer) Welcome! (English). These are the languages in which some of our district worship services are conducted. We worship one God through the many tongues used across our landscapes.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the freshness and challenge of this assignment for the church. God has been before us and with us in so many of the services, meetings, and conversations in which I have been able to participate.

Our churches and gatherings of Nazarenes are filled with people of warmth, loveliness, and the Spirit of God. I always look forward to each visit and hearing people's stories of how God has led them. It has been a true joy to serve Canada West District and the wonderful people of which it is comprised.

The past year has been a learning curve for me as well as my family. I have a deep love and appreciation for my husband, Brad, whose steadfastness and support continues to be my rock. Our children, Rae-Lee and Brock are always eager to hear about our church families around the district and have taken places of servant ministry where they live. How grateful I am for a church that offers a place to belong, to serve, and to be disciplined in so many towns and cities.

## **Giving Thanks**

I must begin my report by giving all praise to God Almighty, who sustains, lifts us up, and to His Son, Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us.

I am grateful for the leadership of Dr. Larry Dahl, whose kind and gracious spirit has been evident by strong relationships that have been built with other organizations for the district. He has left a 'sweet fragrance' of Canada West Nazarenes and there is credibility and respect when I speak of our church. His wisdom is invaluable, and his patience is most generous.

It is because of Rose Graham, our beloved district administrator, and her staff, R.J. Graham, and Jena Beagle, that the district ministry has carried on as seamlessly as it has. You need to know what a prayer warrior you have in Rose. She remembers you before the Lord, she celebrates with you, she cries with you. The district staff even put up with us all from time to time! Rose's leadership and intelligence has made us a district of stability and strength.

Thank you to our district leadership: the DAB (District Advisory Board) members – Jeff Baker, Stu Williams, Tim Enns, John Ingalls, Penny Ure, and Laurie Watton; NYI Chair Ryan Wood; NMI Chair Carolyn Herbert; SDMI Chair Leah Baker; Harmattan and Lakeshore camp board members, and to our pastors who are

shepherds/crisis workers/proclaimers/healers/resource point/and friends. It is a privilege to work alongside such faithful women and men of God.

Two more praises: Airdrie Family Life church is now organized and Winnipeg River of Life is sponsoring a church plant!

### **Observing**

I have taken time this year to go to our many churches and ministry points, to listen and observe how our people are engaged in their communities. A few observations I will note:

1. Every church has a group of committed, faithful people who give time and money each month to see God's work continue.
2. Communities have changed and some of our congregations are unsure how to connect in a meaningful and relevant way.
3. Some pastors are feeling discouraged as numbers decrease and are uncertain what the reasons are for the decline.
4. While a segment of our congregations is committed to the Nazarene denomination, others are less so. Most of our congregations are comprised of at least half of their people coming from other denominations, if any. One cannot assume a congregant is familiar with our Nazarene value of global missions, and the call to holiness living.
5. As cost of living and building costs increase, it is becoming more difficult for declining congregations to maintain property. These challenges are requiring us to be creative in the use of our facilities and our personnel. I cannot think of one building that is only used once a week by the parent congregation.

### **Looking Back**

	1956	1990	2018	Highest Year
Total Churches	62	58	34	1960 (68)
Membership	2707	4080	3005	2007 (4463)
Worship Attendance		3855	2421	1982 (4980)
Discipleship Attendance	3975	2691	1856	1964 (4467)

Total Number of Churches Planted Since District Started: 103

*Decadal (2008-2018) Information:*

Decadal Full Membership Change:	-32.8%
Decadal Worship Attendance Change:	-28.92%
Decadal Discipleship Attendance Change:	-8.57%
Annual Avg. Full Membership Change:	-3.79%
Annual Avg. Worship Attendance Change:	-3.36%
Annual Avg. Discipleship Attendance Change:	-0.89%

**A Glance at This Year (2018-19)**

Amount and plus or minus number from previous year

Membership:	2950	(-54 from last year)
Total Churches:	34	(34 last year)
Total Church Income:	5382471	(-217,529 from last year)
New Nazarenes:	59	(-13 from last year)
Baptisms:	70	
Conversions	63	(-17 from last year)
Worship Attendance:	2459	(+38 from last year)
SDMI Attendance:	2064	(+208 from last year)

Giving To Others - Percentage and Amounts:

WEF	\$320,901 (115.3%)	(- \$150,774 from last year)
District	\$264,440 (87.0%)	(+ \$22,547 from last year)
Ambrose	\$110,174 (87.0%)	(+ \$9,394 from last year)

New Nazarenes: 14 churches reported zeroes this year

Conversions: 15 churches reported zeroes this year

Baptisms: 25 churches reported zeroes this year

Giving for the World Evangelism Fund: 1 church reported zero this year (0 last year)

Giving for GTOs: 0 churches reported zeroes this year (0 last year)

## **Seeing Forward**

If I had a vision for these statistics, it would be to see no churches reporting zeroes in these areas! ZERO zeroes is something to look towards. Zero Canada West pastors reporting zeroes in these areas!

My focus in the coming months will be in three main areas:

### **1. Prayer and Renewal**

We need to learn again how the voice of God sounds. We need to help one another discern and step forward in faith. We need to learn how to spend longer than five minutes in a devotion, be humble enough to confess to one another, to repent, to be willing to trust God – no matter what. We will accomplish this by emphasizing set free retreats, prayer summits, and corporate times of gathering together.

### **2. Discipleship of Believers**

Two years ago, a common language task force came together and drafted a definition of a disciple:

*“A Christlike Disciple is one whose encounter with Jesus has so captured them that they cooperate with the Holy Spirit in reordering their lives to more fully love God and others.”*

We need to understand our identity as Christ’s disciples and provide our people with tools to grow in their walks with Christ. We will accomplish this by helping these disciples become disciple makers through New Starts and by guiding them through what a disciple journey looks like. We will view our children and youth ministries as disciple making efforts and will support our leaders as they seek to create ways of building disciples amongst their areas as well.

### **3. Leadership Development**

Our pastoral leaders are often in positions of challenge. While recognizing their unique calling in the body of Christ, we need to equip them with resources in building healthy, outward-focused churches.

We will accomplish this through our Affinity Groups (online pastor cohorts). The next year will focus on the RAND Project (Research and Development for Vibrant Church Renewal), and the goal is to encourage our pastoral leaders to guide local leaders through the same process of development and renewal.

## **Sleep Walking**

I have a cousin who, as a youngster, would often sleepwalk during the night. If my uncle happened to hear her moving about, he would also get out of bed and stayed with her to ensure she remained safe. My cousin would do strange things like make a meal, converse about the school bus, or move items and furniture around in the living room. Once she even went outside and walked around the farmyard for a while. In the mornings, she would never remember any of the events from the night before.

I was reminded of this story recently while listening to an excellent sermon by Rev. Doug Sedore. I wonder if there are those of us who are engaged in spiritual sleepwalking. We go about our spiritual routines and our ministry activities and, at the end, we couldn’t say why we did them or what activities we did. We may be doing things that are not even relevant and yet we insist on keeping them.

1 Thessalonians 5:6 says,

<sup>6</sup>So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.

Paul is telling the Thessalonians they are to be alert, to beware, to be vigilant (as in awake) and to have control and be reasonable (as in sober).

As Christians, we are exhorted to be alert and sober, as we see the 'Day' approaching. We should not to allow this day to creep up on us unawares, or sleep as others do. We should not be indifferent or lukewarm, but should walk in spirit and truth, and live circumspectly.

Friends, I wonder if we have become indifferent to our call to be children of the light.

It is time to awake!

### **Awaken!**

Jane Lancaster Patterson, Associate Professor of New Testament, Seminary of the Southwest, states that the last chapter of 1 Thessalonians is as meaningful for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians, as it was for the original recipients of Paul's letter. "There is still the need for cultural discernment; the unlikely power of faith, hope, and love; and the importance of community for one's personal holiness, evidenced in practices of mutual encouragement and care."

Let us not slip into rote worship. Let us not close our eyes to the diversity in our neighbourhoods. Let us not be indifferent to our need for community and personal communion with God.

Awake!

Be alert! Be vigilant! What is causing our desire for the Lord to slowly seep away? Why does it no longer stir us to know family and neighbours are hardened to the ways of God?

I have often prayed for us that God would open our eyes to see what is truly going on around us, that He would open our eyes to hear the truth and not the whispers of lies from our spiritual enemy, and that He would be given freedom to fully reign in each one of our lives and the lives of our churches.

Karoline Lewis, associate professor of Luther Seminary, reminds us that as believers, we are to live as if Christ will be here any minute. We do so not in fear, but in peace, security, and promise. Why? Because the life we live is not toward some anticipated reward, but in response to an unanticipated gift. Have we become dull to the beauty of God's gift, freely given to us, not deserved?

May our days ahead be lived in their fullness as we shed spiritual habits of lethargy and indifference. God, awaken in us an insatiable desire to be with you. And as we grow in grace and understanding, may we be prepared to be in the presence of pure holiness.

Come, Lord Jesus! This is my prayer.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Rose Brower-Young*

*Rev. Rose Brower-Young*