

NAZARENES BELIEVE IN STARTING NEW CHURCHES

Nazarenes start churches—they always have and they still do.

From their earliest beginning they have been starting churches and still do. That’s the reason 12,578 congregations exist around the world today. That means, not counting churches that died or had to be closed, Nazarenes have planted an average of more than two churches per week over the last 100 years.

Commitment to global and close-by new church evangelism. In 1906, two years before the merging general assembly at Pilot Point, Texas, Dr. P. F. Bresee, the first general superintendent, clarified the vision for the future: “Our church is preeminently a missionary church. It knows no difference between home and foreign fields—in these days all fields are near” (Harold Ivan Smith, *Quotable Bresee*, 151).

Every church started as a new church. Let’s bring our reasons for praise closer home. Every Church of the Nazarene stands as a visible memorial to someone’s vision, sacrifice, and sweat that brought that church into being. Someone paid a great price to start your church. Never forget it. And everyone who came to faith as result of that new church will feel a deep debt of gratitude to those courageous, selfless folks who started that church.

Do we owe a response? After pondering what earlier believers did for us in founding our local church, it seems every Nazarene may owe some sense of gratitude for the church where they worship and serve. Could it be that as we praise God for bringing the pioneer’s dreams to fruition that a quiet inner sobering challenge starts to grow from six unforgettable words of our Master, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Could it be that we may help start a new church in return?

What do you know of the story of how your church started?

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT NEWSTART?

New church evangelism plan. NewStart is the name of a new movement among Nazarenes for congregations starting strong new churches. It is a well-researched plan for starting strong new churches the right way.

Makes higher success rate possible. NewStart adds significant strengths to all new church efforts by providing training for leaders, assessment of potential pastors, accurate and thorough demographics, and local church sponsorship. It helps a church start with the right leader, in the right place, at the right times.

Three-way unbeatable partnership. NewStart is actually a cooperative grassroots partnership between local congregations, district leaders, and support staff at headquarters. After extensive research, Dr. Bill M. Sullivan, director of the USA/Canada Mission/Evangelism Department, met with district superintendents at regional meetings on the college and university campuses during the 1995 PALCONS. They discussed the serious decline in new churches and developed a plan to reverse the trend. The plan they developed was NewStart.

Local churches starting churches. Local worshiping congregations starting new churches as part of their evangelism efforts is its key component. NewStart strategy encourages and gives permission to pastors and congregations to sponsor new churches.

Local church assumes supportive relationships. NewStart calls local congregations that sponsor churches to commit to excellence, to personnel sharing, to providing mentoring oversight, to calling only a certified new church pastor, to financial responsibility, and to an agreement that the new church will not be expected to be supported by the district.

Sponsoring a church takes hard work. Birthing a church, like human parenting and most phases of missionary work, requires accepting responsibility and sometimes sacrifice. NewStart Coordinator Jim Dorsey explains, “Many times parents make do with less so their children can have more. Parenting a church requires the same selfless maturity and an uncommon commitment to Kingdom values.” Sounds a lot like human parenting and in many ways it is.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS NEW TERM “MISSIONAL?”

One of the first observations made about the new “missional” theme is that the word can’t be found in the dictionary. But we know what it means. Missional brings missions into the life of the local church.

Missional means doing the work of a missionary. The first question asked when trying to describe a missional church is “What do missionaries do?” or more importantly, “If our neighborhood or city is a mission field what should we be doing differently?” The work of our missionaries is not simply to start a new church at a particular location, but to reach the city, if not the nation, with many churches.

Missional means a Kingdom response to an area. When we think of a mission field we think of an entire country like Swaziland or a region like the Balkans. The mission there is to reach as many people as possible throughout the country or region for Christ and the Church.

Missional congregations are never satisfied with serving only the faithful. Missional churches in the United States and Canada joyfully take responsibility for the lost in their area. They take a clue from global missions where mission-field churches are started with the expressed understanding that they are a part of a plan to reproduce themselves in additional congregations.

Missional churches are committed to intentional outreach. Missional leadership training programs are instituted to equip local or indigenous leaders in the multiplication of churches. As local churches in global missions gain in numbers and finances they are always close to the cutting-edge of evangelism as sponsors of new churches.

Missional thinking requires new ways of seeing. Though the work of missions is to reach entire cities and countries by starting as many churches as possible, that is a hard commitment for us to grasp. When it comes to the work of ministry in our own neighborhoods, the church is often content to simply build their own local congregation—sometimes without any plans to respond to the needs of the whole city and the entire nation.

How do you see being missional important to starting a church? _____

Missional leadership requires new ways of behaving As difficult as it is to reach and retain people there is a natural tendency to hold on to members and finances in order to grow a congregation as large as possible. Encouraging members to leave in order to start another congregation may seem to be counterproductive until the mission mandate of the church is fully understood. The missional challenge is much more than sustaining autonomous congregations. Congregations are called upon to partnership with one another in order to reach as many people as possible for Christ and the church—in as many different places and circumstances as possible.

Missional leadership refocuses on what the church is to be The missional challenge changes the way a leader thinks about new churches. In the past starting a new church usually meant an existing congregation had to lose members and money in order for another to gain members and money. With a missional mentality we no longer think of losing but now gaining. Every church gains when it is part of a plan larger than its own existence. A missional congregation is not an end in itself. It is always a means to an end—building the Kingdom through obedience to the Great Commission.

Missional achievements bring glory to God This new missional mentality brings all churches and pastors together around a common commitment. Strong new churches can only be started effectively as they are nurtured and sponsored by existing congregations. Gains of a new congregation are the gains of the sponsor congregation in this win/win equation. With their strength, stability, and experience mature congregations become incubators for missional outreach. They take as much pride in the growth and success of the new congregation they have sponsored as parents do in their children.

In what ways might sponsoring a new church affect the beliefs and behaviors of an existing church? _____

STARTING STRONG NEW CHURCHES . . . THE RIGHT WAY!

Most experienced in starting new churches agree on the basic components as crucial for launching new churches the right way. How these various areas are defined may be unique for any given new church. But responding to these questions the right way in this new ministry context makes all the difference for a NewStart. After working through this workbook, think through how you might answer these steps and fill in your responses.

1. ***The Right Reasons***—What are the right motivations for starting a new church? _____

2. ***The Right Leader***—What are some ideas to find the right leader for a new church? _____

3. ***The Right Core Group***—What kind of laypersons are needed for a new church? _____

4. ***The Right Area***—How would a new church's location be selected? _____

5. ***The Right Sponsor***—Which existing churches could contribute members and/or money to sponsor a new church? Are there other churches that might partner with them? _____

6. ***The Right Target***—Who would this new church reach? How would you describe the typical new attender to this new church? _____

7. ***The Right Invitations***—How could these unchurched in this ministry area be invited to worship in this new church in a way they might respond? What would not work as well? _____

8. ***The Right Time***—When would be the best possible Sunday to open the doors of this new church to the community as their “Grand Opening” celebration? _____

KEY PLAYERS: WHO ARE THEY AND HOW NEEDED ARE THEY?

Because every work of God is centered on the gospel at work in relationships, people are the most important part of NewStart. People are needed to start new churches. And reaching people for Christ is what makes the church viable and strong and growing. The key players are:

1. ***Sponsorship pastors***—For the first time in decades, pastors and local churches have been empowered to start churches.
2. ***Church boards***—Miracles begin to happen when top lay leaders see starting churches is as important as every other phase of ministry.
3. ***New church leaders***—Pastors who are committed to Kingdom effectiveness through starting new congregations.
4. ***Core group members***—Laypersons are needed to be members of the core groups who get involved in all the details of starting the new work. In some situations laypersons sense God wants them to take spiritual responsibility for a people group or a neighborhood. These persons should allow their zeal for the work to develop in an orderly fashion in cooperation with the parent church.
5. ***District superintendent***—In starting new churches, one of the first steps is keeping the district superintendent informed and asking for help as needed. Work to secure his enthusiastic support. In NewStart the local congregation and their pastor take full responsibility for starting the new work and the district approves the leader. In NewStarts the district superintendent becomes advisor, mentor, and partner.
6. ***Everyone***—As a church moves into new church evangelism, it will need people to go, people to stay and give, people who are willing to stay with a NewStart church at least until the work is well established.

Circle the numbers on this page of persons you believe would be willing to help sponsor a new church. Which might not?