

**Report of the South Carolina District Superintendent
July 16, 2017**

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Porter, fellow pastors, members and friends of this seventy-fifth annual assembly of the South Carolina District, it is my privilege to bring you my eleventh report as superintendent.

Welcome! *Bienvenidos!* (Spanish) *Hwan-yeong!* (Korean) *Bem Vinda!* (Portuguese)

The joy of this assignment has remained fresh and fulfilling, and in some ways it feels as if Diane and I have only been here a few weeks. In other ways, it seems that we have been here all our lives. We love South Carolina, and we especially love South Carolina Nazarenes. Thank you for allowing us to become part of your story. Next to being married to Diane and being dad to Josh and Jeff, serving you is the greatest privilege of my life.

I report that it is well with my soul. Let me affirm my faith like this: “I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Church of Jesus Christ, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

FINGERPRINTS

The fingerprint that marks the assembly handbook reminds us of the fingerprints that have marked this district over our history. While the times, places, and faces of this assembly have changed over the years, one thing that has not changed is the sense that God has marked us as His own, and that His blessing is upon us.

During this 75th anniversary, if we were to dust for God’s fingerprints, we would find them everywhere. We would find them on our hearts, as He continues to shape us and mold us into the likeness of his son, Jesus Christ. We would find God’s thumbprints on our backs as He compels us to start new works, to deepen our commitment, and to increase our willingness to take fresh risks for the Kingdom. We would find God’s fingerprints on new ministries, new churches, and new converts. We would find God’s fingerprints all over a campground that is being continually developed and improved as a ministry tool and resource for spiritual growth.

And it is not just God’s fingerprints that have marked this district. There are also the fingerprints of women and men God has used to shape us and form us. Over the last few months I have read all 75 of our district journals, giving special attention to district superintendent reports and assembly proceedings. The experience left me with three deep impressions: 1) great appreciation for the nine DSs who have preceded me and how God used each of them to shape this district; 2) profound admiration for the significant sacrifices our pastors and laity have made throughout our history; 3) a renewed commitment to our 75-year-old mission to evangelize South Carolina with the message of God’s transforming grace and to invite individuals to engage in the story of God.

Tonight we thank God for our wonderful Ministry Team. Their fingerprints are everywhere! It is a joy to work alongside Camp Manager Alan Pullen, District Secretary Greg Pressley, District Treasurer and NMI President LaNora Jensen, SDMI Chairman Kyle Poole, NYI President David Snodgrass, Executive Assistant Peggy Smith, Office Manager Rachael Watts, Special Projects Director Diane Estep, Church Planting Director Ben LaPlace, Hispanic Ministries Director Gabriel Moreno, District Minister of Pastoral Care Ray Moore, and especially the fine pastors that make up this district.

FRUITFULNESS

It is encouraging to see how God's fingerprints on the Church of the Nazarene in South Carolina these last 75 years have led to fruitfulness. Here is a snapshot of fruitfulness by quarter-century:

Fruitfulness by Quarter-Century

	<u>1942</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>2017</u>
Total Churches/CTMs	10	53	58	74
Membership	498	3,777	8,100	10,219
Ordained Ministers	6	62	109	132
Licensed Ministers	5	16	24	42
Worship Attendance	-	-	5,919	5,841
SDMI Attendance	715	4,706	5,900	4,891

It can be valuable to see both a long-term view that provides perspective as well as a short-term view that indicates fresh fruit and potential trends.

Fruitfulness This Year

Membership:	10,219 (+217)
Total Churches/CTMs:	74 (+4)
Total Church Income:	\$9,950,714 (+\$4,891)
New Nazarenes:	444 (+44)
Baptisms:	322 (+84)

Conversions:	617 (-165)
Worship Attendance:	5,841 (-104)
SDMI Attendance:	4,891 (-66)

Giving for Others:	WEF	113.1%	(\$568,662)
	District	97.7%	(\$628,699)
	TNU	100.8%	(\$208,640)
	P&B	100.8%	(\$207,268)

More Fruitful Leaders

One of our priorities as a district is leadership development:

- The School of Pastoral Leadership has been one of our primary means of developing fruitful leaders
- In the last three years over 80 of our ministers have received Church Planting training
- Breathe – the first-ever District Women’s Night of Praise was held in April
- EQUIP and INSPIRE are designed to develop the lay leaders of our churches

More Fruitful Churches

In addition to developing fruitful leaders we are also giving attention to developing fruitful churches. Two new initiatives are helping us in this area:

ZERO ZEROES is the goal of *zero* South Carolina pastors reporting *zeroes* in any of the following areas:

- **New Nazarenes:** 9 churches reported zeroes this year (24 last year)
- **Conversions:** 11 churches reported zeroes this year (13 last year)
- **Baptisms:** 17 churches reported zeroes this year (25 last year)
- **Giving** for the World Evangelism Fund, Pensions & Benefits, Trevecca Nazarene University, and District Fair Share: 8 churches reported zeroes this year (12 last year)

Several pastors and churches have sacrificed and labored to meet their giving goals for others. Please be assured of our gratitude and admiration, and the promise of the Lord’s blessing.

Vibrant Church Initiative (VCI): Of the ten churches that made application for VCI, four churches were selected for the inaugural program—Aiken Ebenezer, Ashwood, Pelion, and Summerville. The initiative includes assessments completed by the church on their local church health and community demographics, an assessment site visit and meeting with the local VCI team, and an action planning day at the campground. Kyle Himmelwright, Terry Weyman, and Joshua Fite are helping to lead this initiative. Two of the four churches are already experiencing renewal.

THE FUTURE

I would not pretend to be able to forecast where we will be in 75 years, or even 25 years. But let me share where I think God may be leading us in the next 10 years.

- **More Hispanic ministry.** This will continue to be a growing edge. In the last 10 years we have grown from one Spanish-speaking congregation to nine, with a combined average weekly attendance of approximately 600.
- **More languages.** For our first 60 years, the only language spoken in our churches was English. Today, South Carolina Nazarenes worship in English, Spanish, Korean, and

Portuguese. What languages will be next?

- **More diversity.** We are seeing a healthy trend in this area, especially in our larger churches. As our congregations become more diverse, they better reflect the ethnic and racial makeup of their mission field and better connect with their neighbors.
- **More multi-congregational use of single facilities.** For missional as well as stewardship reasons, we will continue to see more than one Nazarene congregation using the same building. Often, these congregations will speak different languages.
- **More worship attendance challenges.** We have more Nazarenes in South Carolina than ever, but they attend less regularly. In the past, a “faithful” Nazarene attended 48-50 Sundays a year. Today, a “faithful” Nazarene attends 38-40 Sundays a year. The dynamics of blended families, more travel, non-traditional work schedules, and misplaced priorities (other activities) will continue to impact Sunday morning attendance. We must find creative and graceful ways to address this challenge.
- **More opportunities for bi-vocational ministers.** The trend toward pastors needing employment outside the church will continue, which has implications for congregational expectations as well as ministerial preparation. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Many of our churches are becoming much more missional because their pastor works in the mission field. Tonight, 50% of our lead pastors are bi-vocational.
- **More opportunities for women in ministry.** Our prayer is to see more women in ministry, especially as “lead pastors.” As God calls, the church should encourage, nurture, and provide places to serve. Key to this will be the intentional leadership development of women of all ages in local churches. Ten years ago, 2% of our lead pastors were female; tonight 10% of our lead pastors are female.
- **More preaching on God’s transforming grace.** Our younger pastors will lead us in finding fresh ways of expressing our message of Christlikeness, transformational holiness, and entire sanctification that easily connect with our mission field.
- **More campground improvements.** The continued development and implementation of our Ten-Year Master Plan for the camp, including a new marketing initiative, will allow us to continue to improve and expand the effectiveness of the camp.
- **More churches.** Of all we do, nothing has a greater impact on the future than the planting of new churches. New churches are the most effective evangelism strategy. In the next ten years we will have over 100 Churches of the Nazarene in South Carolina.

2020 Vision

Three years ago we introduced our **2020 Vision**—to be a district of 100 churches by our 2020 District Assembly. We began a strategic effort to cultivate a climate of church planting that has led to the planting of 14 churches in the last three years.

The #1 lesson we have learned about church planting is that districts don't plant churches, and churches don't plant churches; people plant churches—people who hear God's call to start something new and respond with faith and courage. God continues to call, praise His name.

Last year we organized two new churches and commissioned four new church starts.

Tonight I want to give you an update on them:

Florence A New Start International – Michael and Hope McCants

Charleston Iglesia del Nazareno – Bill and Isa Wojtkowski

Graham Correctional – Leslie LaPrise

Ridgeville – Sylvia and Jim Mallory

Georgetown New Hope – Rick and Chris Yant

Hollywood Super Bus – Ted and Patty Hambrick

These six new works reported a combined 169 members this year, and a worship attendance of 199.

Organizations and Commissioning

Tonight we have the privilege of organizing one new church and commissioning five new church starts. Would the congregation **West Columbia Taller de Jesus** please make your way to the platform, as Hispanic Ministries Director, Gabriel Moreno, introduces you.

Organization Ceremony

Tonight, we celebrate the official organization of West Columbia Taller de Jesus. This congregation has been meeting for almost three years, and tonight the life of this congregation moves to a new level as they embrace the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of an organized congregation in accordance with the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene. On behalf of the South Carolina District, I commend you for your vision, your faith, and your hard work. You have become a community of faith and an authentic expression of the kingdom of God in the world. By this act of organization, you declare your intention to share with the global family of Nazarenes in fulfilling our common mission: "To make Christlike disciples in the nations."

Three core values guide us in our mission:

We are Christian. We stand with believers everywhere in affirming the historic Christian creeds, and we deeply value our particular heritage in the Wesleyan-holiness tradition. We look to the Bible as our primary source of truth as it proclaims Christ to us, and “all things necessary to our salvation.”

We are Holiness. We believe that God’s grace has the power to transform and cleanse the human heart so that we are sanctified and empowered to live Christlike lives in the world.

We are Missional. We believe God calls us to participate in the kingdom mission of reconciliation. We do this by preaching the gospel, by acts of compassion, and by making Christlike disciples.

Brothers and sisters, I ask you now to affirm your membership vows.

Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and do you realize that He saves you now?

Response: I do.

Do you affirm the Agreed Statement of Belief of the Church of the Nazarene?

Response: I do.

Do you covenant to give yourself to the fellowship and work of God in connection with the Church of the Nazarene as set forth in the Covenant of Christian Character and the Covenant of Christian Conduct? Will you endeavor in every way to glorify God, by a humble walk, godly conversation, and holy service; by devotedly giving of your means; by faithful attendance upon the means of grace; and, abstaining from all evil, will you seek earnestly to perfect holiness of heart and life in the fear of the Lord?

Response: I will.

Pastor Ulises Garcia, I appoint you as pastor of West Columbia Taller de Jesus Iglesia del Nazareno.

And now, by the authority entrusted to me as superintendent of the South Carolina District Church of the Nazarene, I hereby declare the official organization of **West Columbia Taller de Jesus Iglesia del Nazareno**. Welcome to the global family of Nazarene congregations!

New Church Plant Commissioning

Ben LaPlace, District Church Planting Director, will now introduce our newest church planters and their sponsors:

One Church-Chester (Pastor Matt Alexander (Trina); Sponsor: Chester/Pastor Brian Howard)

Leath Correctional (Pastor Leslie LaPrise; Sponsor: Midland Valley Community/Pastor Kyle Poole)

Charleston Portuguese (Pastor Antonio Matias (Daniela); Sponsor: Charleston Calvary/Pastor Rodney Lindsay)

Summerville Portuguese (Pastor Carmo Antonio Reis (Suylam); Sponsor:

Summerville/Pastor Mike Blankenship)

Rock Hill Nuevo Amanecer (Pastor Julio Amador (Nancy); Sponsor: Piedmont Mission Area churches and pastors)

Commissioning: In gratitude for both the call and the location God has impressed on your heart, I hereby commission you to start the work of the Church of the Nazarene in the place God has called you. Go, make Christlike disciples in the nations, beginning in your own mission field!

Challenge

We are discovering that God not only calls people, God calls people to specific places. Is God calling you to start something new? To start something that will be around 75 years from now? Or perhaps God is calling you to strengthen something that already exists, so it will be around 75 years from now.

Some time ago, the ladies in the office discovered a historical treasure hidden deep in one of the office files. It was an original Western Union telegram dated October 22, 1942. I was so fascinated by it I made a copy of it and have carried it in my Bible ever since. Let me read it to you: It is dated October 22, 1942, 1:39 p.m., sent from Fitzgerald, GA, to Jasper, ALA, a telegram from General Superintendent J. B. Chapman to J. G. Wells: "You are elected superintendent South Carolina District. Wire acceptance immediately."

At first I thought this was an example of the authority of a general superintendent: "*Wire acceptance immediately.*" Then, one day it dawned on me: "*Wire acceptance immediately*" isn't about *authority*. "*Wire acceptance immediately*" is about *urgency*. The message Chapman was sending was this: "A door has opened in South Carolina. There's work to be done here. Opportunity is knocking. Souls are at stake. Time matters. Let's get on with it."

Brothers and sisters, the door is still open! There's still work to be done! Opportunity is still knocking! Souls are still at stake! Time still matters! Let's get on with it!

EDWARD L. ESTEP
District Superintendent
South Carolina District Church of the Nazarene