

History of Blacks in the Church of the Nazarene



Introduction

The unique history of Black Nazarenes in the early existence of the Church of the Nazarene is one of acceptance and rejection, healing and hurts, accomplishments and indifference. It is one of a predominantly white holiness denomination seeking to establish a nucleus of blacks in North America.



Slowly But Surely

- **As one denominational leader put it, “Nazarene leaders were aware from an early date that the church’s efforts to reach American Blacks were deplorable.”**
- **Herald of Holiness Article (August 1922)**
- **Herald of Holiness Article (March 1994)**



In the August 9, 1922 issue of the Herald of Holiness, H. M. Chambers wrote:

“We are distinctively a missionary people and yet it is to be regretted that as a church we are so slow to take the truth of holiness to the Negroes of this country. An awakening of interest and effort in order that the colored people might be brought in, saved, sanctified and organized as Nazarenes is certainly greatly needed.

As a result of earnest prayer and faith through a period of years, as well as by persistent effort and sacrifice, the second Church of the Nazarene (Colored) was organized in Hutchinson, Kansas and a neat building erected. In giving credit for this achievement we should not fail to mention dear Brother Aaron Johnson who was a precious saint of God and who went to heaven several years ago. Largely as a result of his prayers and devotion the spread of holiness among the colored people of Hutchinson is due. He was the father of the pastor of our second church, Brother Buford C. Johnson...”



In a 1994 issue of Herald of Holiness (now Holiness Today) Stan Ingersol, manager of Nazarene Archives writes:

“The late-19th century rise of American Holiness denominations coincided with the onset of de jure (by law) racial segregation in the South and de facto (in fact) segregation in the North. The Holiness Movement spoke no prophetic words to the situation, and the birth of the Church of the Nazarene and other white Holiness denominations paralleled the rise of black ones, such as the Church of Christ (Holiness).

“An African presence in the early Church of the Nazarene was real but modest. Black Nazarenes appear in early pictures of New England District deaconesses, church groups, and camp meeting participants. Rev. Mary Palmer, a black woman, pastored the racially mixed Grace Church of the Nazarene on the Southern California District from 1909 to 1916.”



Historic Church

- **Miller Memorial Church of the Nazarene was planted in 1902 by a Canadian, but not until 1914 was it organized. This church is now called Community Worship Center and pastored by Dr. Elmer Gillett. Its early members were predominantly West Indian. The beginning days of reaching out to blacks in North America really covers only the late 19th century.**





Miller Memorial Church



Brooklyn Beulah Church

Fifth General Assembly (1919)

- **The Fifth General Assembly in 1919 records a preliminary effort to preach the gospel to southern blacks and organize churches, but an honest acknowledgment of shameful failure came in 1940.**



The first real apparent challenge and honest acknowledgment of shameful failure came in 1940, when Dr. C. Warren Jones of both World Missions and Home Missions departments spoke these words to the General Board:

“When it comes to the Negro race, we have done nothing. We have a few and very few missions for the colored people, of which there are 12,000,000 in the United States. We have talked and promised ourselves to do something but that is as far as we have gotten. We seem to fail when it comes to consistency. We keep thirty-five missionaries in Africa and spend \$40,000 a year to evangelize 1 1/3 million people and neglect the millions of the same race in the homeland. (At this point in time, we had only two organized black churches). We would not do less for Africa, but do you think we should do something for the black man in our own land? They may be black but they go to make up the human race and were surely included in the ‘all nations’ of the Great Commission.”

No greater truth than this has been spoken by one of our denominational leaders.

Sixth General Assembly (1923)

- In 1922 Bishop C. P. Jones, founder of Church of Christ, Holiness, U.S.A., expressed his desire to bring his church into the Church of the Nazarene. This Sixth General Assembly organized a special committee to pursue such a merger.**



Tenth General Assembly (1940)

- **This merger was once again addressed but nothing materialized. The Church of Christ, Holiness, U.S.A. had about 13,000 black members at that time. Nazarene leaders were invited to meet with Bishop Jones's appointed representatives for further consideration.**





Rev. E.E. Hale

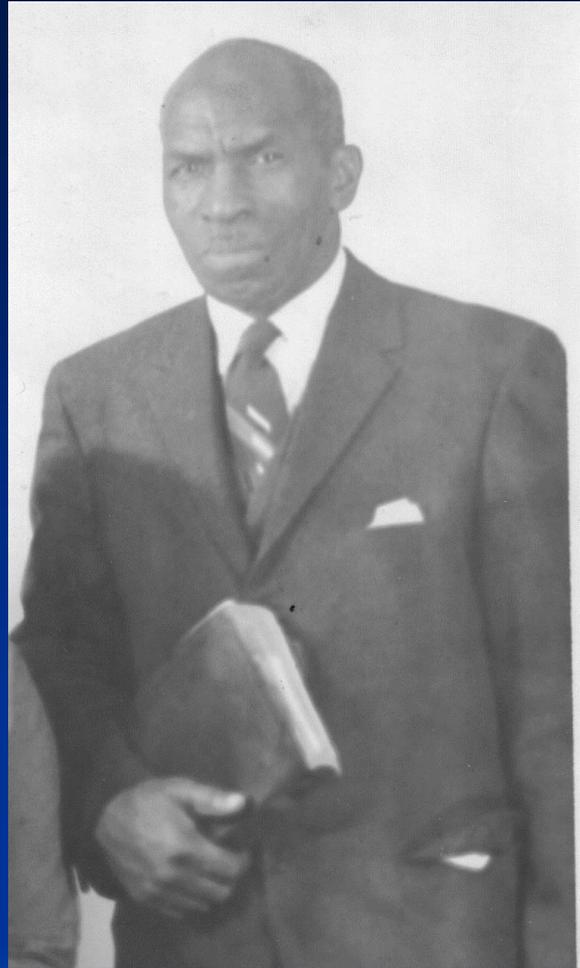
To Be or Not To Be

- **Apparently our church was not ready or willing to take this step. The reason was never revealed. Perhaps it was just not to be. All was not lost. We gained 3 or 4 of Bishop Jones's strong ministers.**





Elder D.A. Murray



Rev. Boyd Proctor

Call For A Commission

- **In 1940, at the Tenth General Assembly a resolution was adopted calling for a commission “to lay plans...for the evangelization of the American Negro, and the establishment of the church among them...”**



Eleventh General Assembly Recommendation That Colored District Be Set Up (1944)

- In 1944, the General Assembly recommended definite steps be taken to add emphases to Black evangelism in the Southern states. A policy for set up, organization, and establishing of the Colored District was adopted and implemented by the General Assembly and Board of General Superintendents.**



**POLICY COVERING THE
SET-UP AND
ORGANIZATION FOR
COLORED WORK**



Desperate Need For Leadership

- Years before a concentrated effort was underway to evangelize blacks in America, the church and its leaders were conscious of an urgent need for trained leadership. A special committee was appointed by the Board of General Superintendents to make a survey regarding the possibility of a Bible Training School where Negroes who felt the call to Christian work would be trained. Institute, West Virginia seemed to be an unusual opportunity.**

Nazarene Reserve Army Call

- **The Nazarene Reserve Army of the Church of the Nazarene was revitalized. Its purpose was to make such calls for special projects which are deemed vital and for which no provision has been made through the regular funds of the church.**



THE CALL:

Those willing to become members in the Nazarene Reserve Army and respond to this first call are asked to send at least \$1.00 to be applied in the Colored Church of the Nazarene now under construction at Institute, West Virginia. It will house both the congregation and first unit of the Colored Bible Training School.



First Five African American Churches Organized

- **During the first 40 years of our denomination's history only five African American black churches were organized, as a part of the new Colored District. They were:**

Institute, West Virginia

Indianapolis, Indiana

Meridian, Mississippi

Columbus, Mississippi

New Orleans, Louisiana



Other Churches Subsequently Organized

Bethel Church, Oakland, California - 1949

Grace Church, Detroit, Michigan - 1950

Bethel Church, Pasadena, California - 1952

Shawmut Church, Alabama - 1953

Memphis Church, Tennessee - 1954

Nashville Church, Tennessee - 1955



First Negro Conference in the South (January 25, 1948)

- **The First Negro Conference (as it was called) in the South was held in 1948 at Fitkin Memorial Church in Meridian, Mississippi. Eight churches were represented at this first conference. Membership was 106.**



Second Colored Annual Conference (November 21, 1948)

- **Seventeen churches were listed at this conference, some yet to be organized. Membership was 190. Pledges were taken for dormitory space at Nazarene Bible Institute. Dedication announced for December 12, 1948. Mrs. Louise Chapman, wife of Dr. J. B. Chapman (deceased) helped secure much of what came in.**
- **The conference, at the request of Elder C. Johnson, voted to change the word to “colored” rather than “negro” when designating our race.**



General Superintendent Dr. Hardy C. Powers challenged the church to “keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23). We need to move back into the cities where the majority of blacks live and practice what we preach.”



He pointed out:

“Our problem involves leadership, organization, and finance. Failure among men or in a movement is due either to our inability to do the task, or to our lack of strength of motive. If we fail in evangelizing the colored people of America, it will be only for the second reason. There are two sides to life’s highway: the side of the priest and Levite, unconcerned; and the side of the Samaritan, listening and helping. When you let your heart go, it’s going to cost you something. It will cost you time; it will cost you in shocked sensibilities; it will cost you money.”



Nazarene Training Institute Opened

- In 1948, Nazarene Training Institute, a Bible training school for African Americans, began operations. Rev. Edwin C. Hale, a white minister was appointed acting president of the school. He served for six years.**

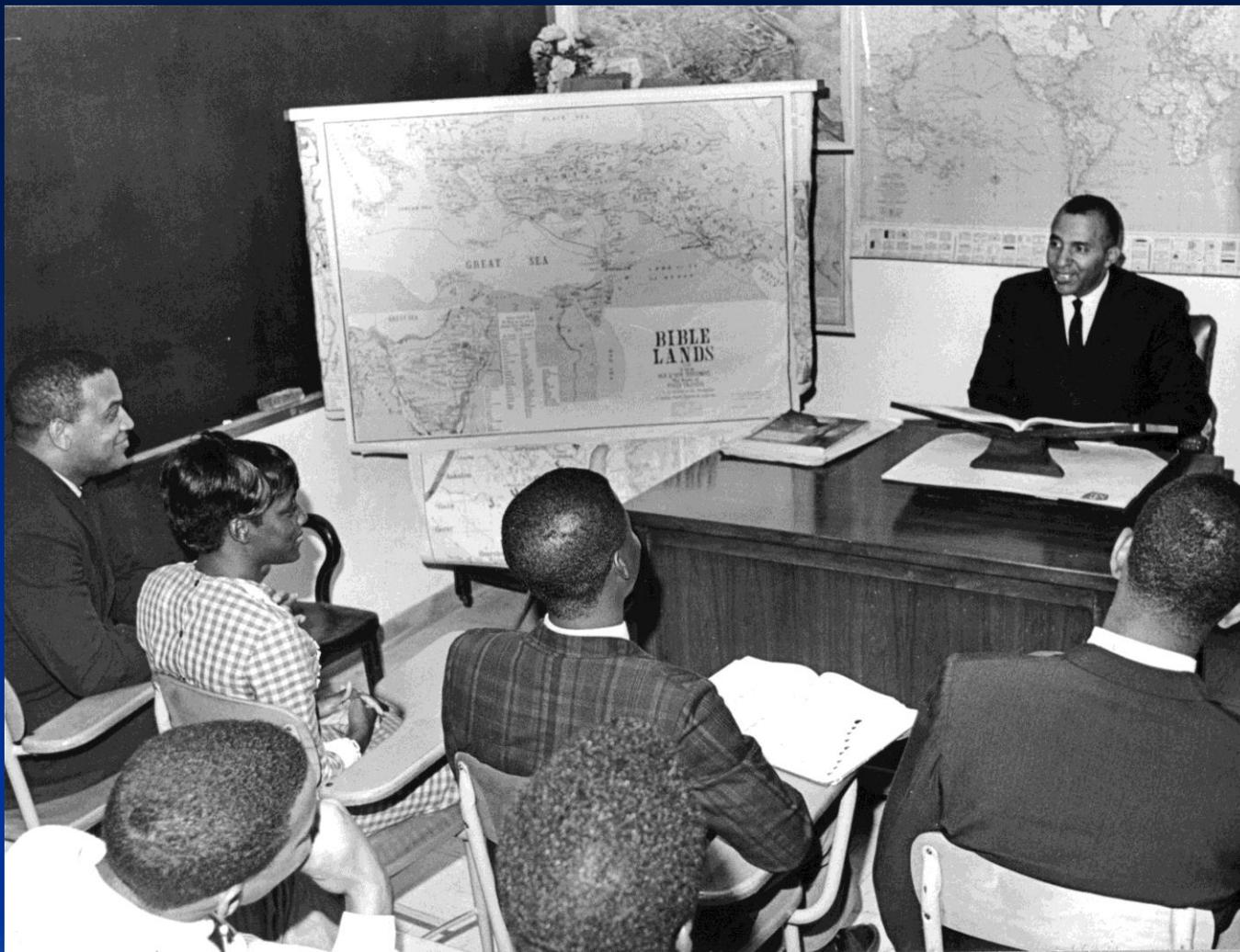




**Faculty Staff, and Student Body
Dr. Cunningham, President (Far Left), and
Clarence Bowman, Dean (Far Right)**



Clarence Bowman, Dean (Far Left), and Dr. Cunningham, President (Far Right)



**Class In Session
Taught By Dean Bowman**



Chapel Service



Prayer Room

General Information

Nazarene Bible Institute was located in Institute, West Virginia, home of West Virginia State College for Negroes; about seven miles from Charleston.

Housing and Employment

No dormitory facilities were available the first year; however, every effort was made to assist students in finding a place to room and board.



Tuition and Fees

Although the school was partially supported by the Church of the Nazarene, there was a small tuition charge and some fees to be paid. Matriculation - \$3.00; library fees - \$2.00; and tuition - \$25.00, for a total of \$30.00 per semester.

The Course of Study

The courses offered could be completed in three years and led to ordination in the Church of the Nazarene provided the requirements were met as specified in the Church Manual.



Rev. Clarence Bowman to N.T.I.

- In 1951 Rev. & Mrs. Clarence Bowman came to teach. He soon was appointed dean and school treasurer. He was called “A Bridge Builder” - facilitating mutual understanding and respect among cultures through consistent, practical holiness lifestyle. For nearly 20 years he and his wife served at the school, living with their two children in very small quarters. He at the same time planted a church in Charleston, West Virginia. The new church served as a “workshop laboratory for young preachers.”**





Rev. and Mrs. Clarence Bowman

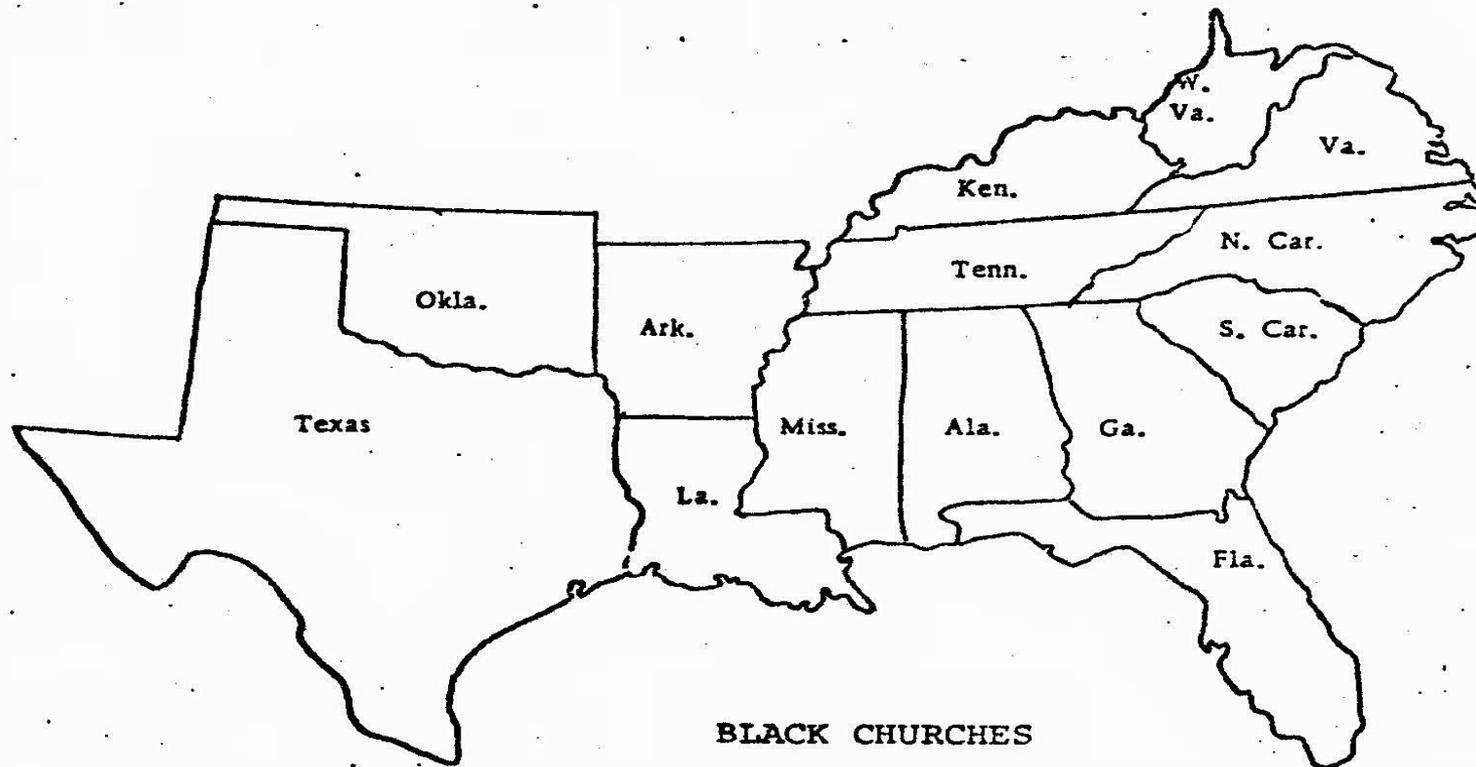
Gulf Central District Organized

- In 1953 at Institute, West Virginia, a major step was taken to implement what the General Assembly of 1944 had adopted - thus, the organization of the Gulf Central District covering 13 Southern states.**



THE GULF CENTRAL DISTRICT

Organized 1948
Closed 1969



- 1948 - 2 churches fully organized on districts other than the Gulf Central District
5 fully organized churches on Gulf Central District
8 others holding services on Gulf Central District
- 1967 - 14 churches on Gulf Central District (6 previously transferred to Florida)
44 churches on other districts
- 1976 - 81 predominately black organized churches in the United States



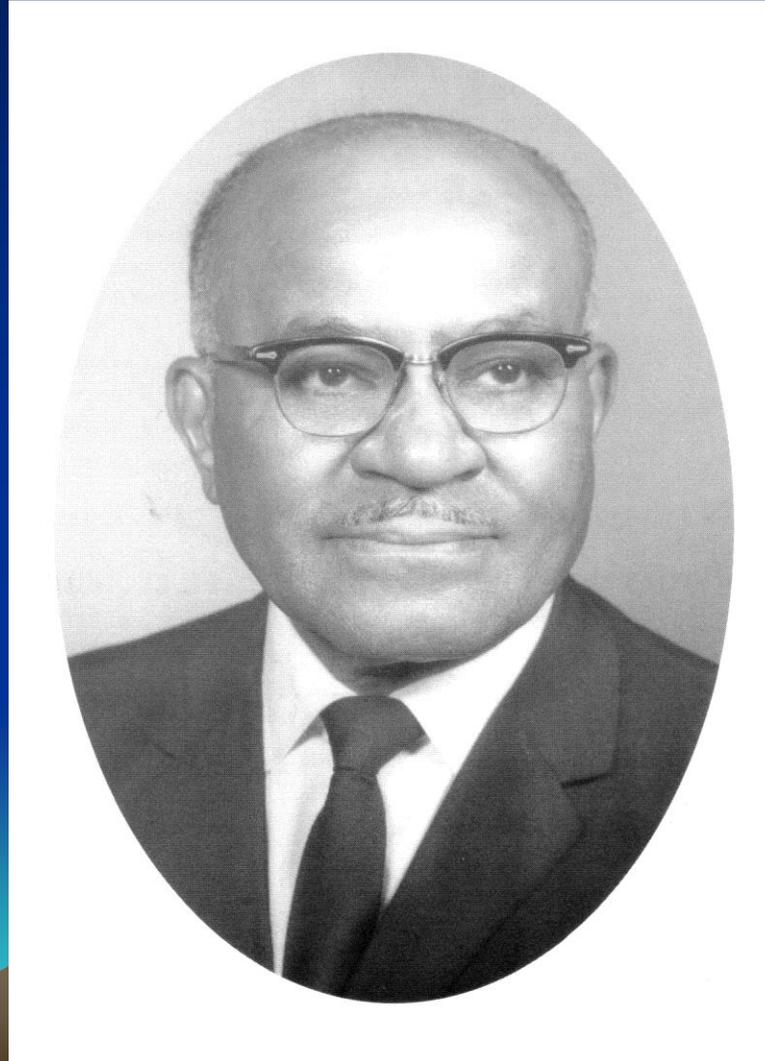
Institute, West Virginia

Letter From General Superintendent

- **Dr. D. I. Vanderpool, presiding General Superintendent of this new district, wrote a letter to all the white district superintendents that had black churches on their district. He encouraged everyone to work together and challenged them to contribute financially to the black work. Rev. Leon Chambers was introduced as the district superintendent over the Gulf Central District.**



Dr. Cunningham Appointed President of N.T.C.



- **In 1954 Dr. R. W. Cunningham was appointed president of Nazarene Bible College (note name change). He served in this capacity for almost 20 years. He was dedicated to the challenge of preparing African American pastors.**



N.T.C. Merges With N.B.C.



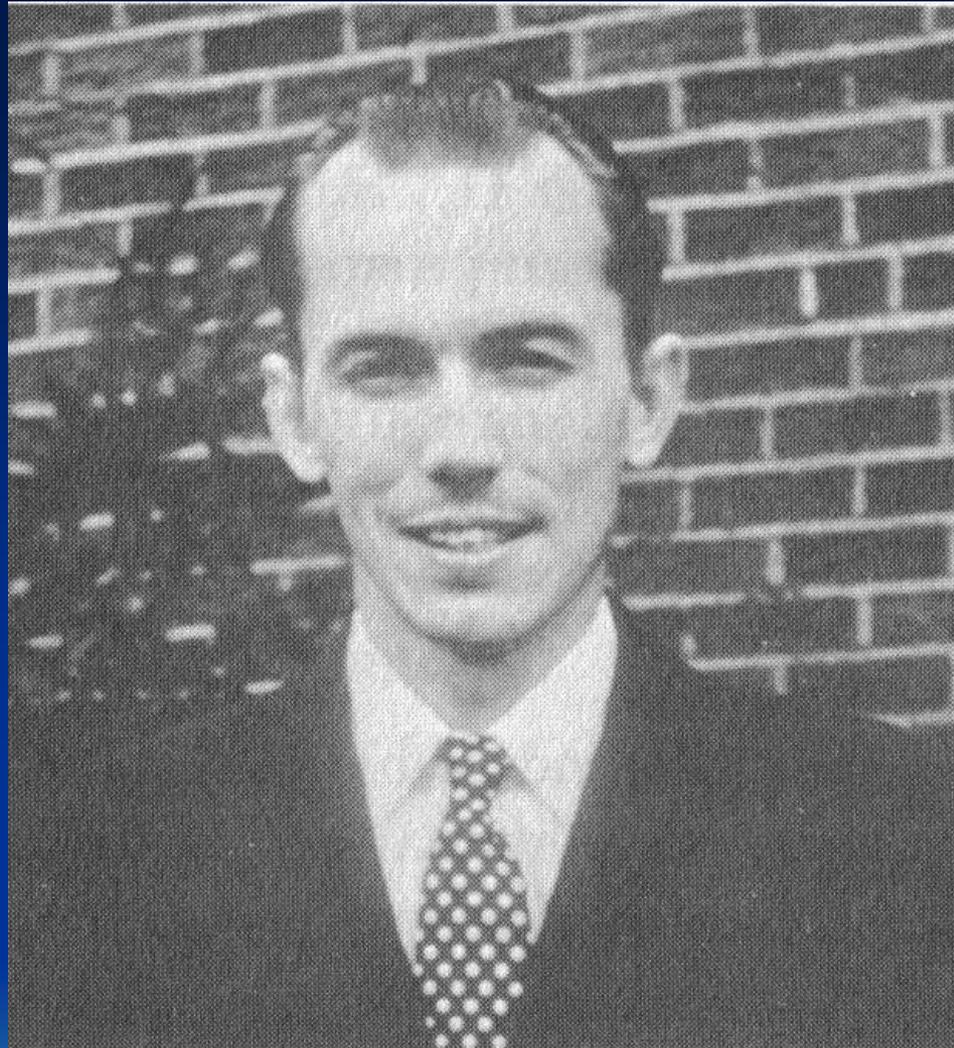
NBC Campus



NBC Library

- **In 1970 these two schools were merged. Rev. Clarence Bowman accepted an invitation to teach at Nazarene Bible College. His wife, Charlotte, rendered valuable service as secretary to the college president.**





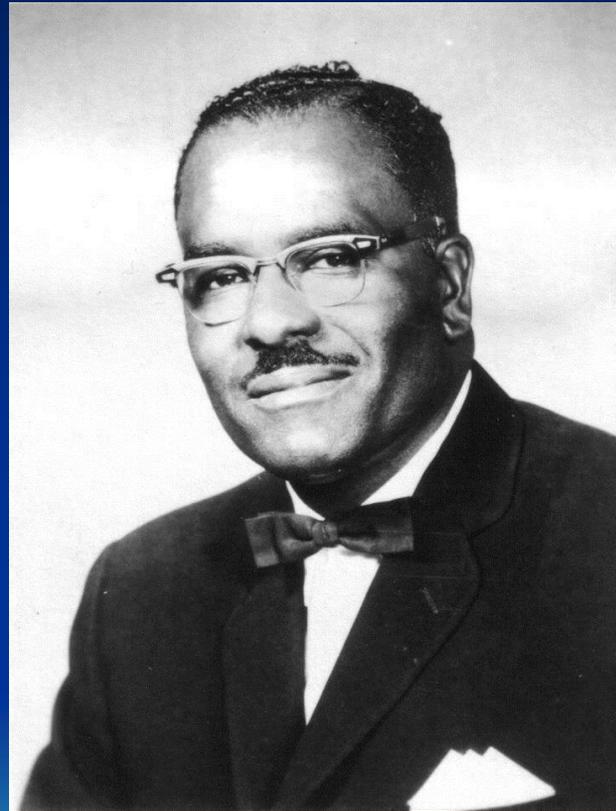
Rev. Leon Chambers

First District Superintendent Appointed

- In 1953, Dr. D. I. Vanderpool appointed Rev. Leon Chambers, a white minister, to be superintendent at the age of 30. He had shown such deep concern and frustration that the church was so interested in foreign missions but gave little attention to the millions of black people here at home. He was wise enough to seek the counsel of Elder Murray, one of Bishop C. P. Jones's Church of Christ Holiness, U.S.A. strong pastors and Elder C. C. Johnson in this assignment.**



First Black District Superintendent Appointed



Rev. Warren A. Rogers Sr.

- **In 1958 Rev. Warren A. Rogers, Sr. was appointed district superintendent following Rev. Chambers. Rev. Rogers had been serving as a pastor and evangelist for nearly 30 years before becoming a Nazarene. He was a very gifted musician. He served for 10 years before the Gulf Central District was closed.**



Roger's Legacy

- **Rev. Warren A. Rogers went home to be with the Lord on October 25, 2005 after several years of poor health that confined him to his home in Detroit, Michigan. He was known as “A Fisher of Men.” His leadership and zeal for reaching people for Christ prompted Nazarene Bible College to create a scholarship fund in his name for students wishing to pursue ministerial preparation.**



**Rogers,
Cunningham,
Bowman
Ministerial
Institute**



- **On January 21, 2002, Nazarene Theological Seminary became the birthplace of RCBMI, marking a historical pivotal point in the development of Black American “leadership, prophetic witness, social action, theological and academic excellence in the Church of the Nazarene. The establishment of the Rogers, Cunningham, Bowman Institute was formally announced and established...”**



Goodwill Ambassador

- **Dr. Louise Chapman, wife of the late General Superintendent Dr. J. B. Chapman, was called “Goodwill Ambassador” by the Gulf Central District because of her special interest and support to the overall work among African Americans.**



Builder's Club Initiated

- **Dr. Chapman introduced the “Builders Club” as a method of assisting small and new black churches in the purchase of property.**



Gulf Central District Phased Out

- In 1968, the Gulf Central District was phased out by vote of the 17th General Assembly. In 1966, in anticipation of the move, six churches on the Gulf Central District in Florida merged into the respective geographical districts. Some gains were lost for lack of adequate preliminary ground work and closer supervision of the black churches. In 1971 our black student enrollment at N.B.C. dropped as well. It took three years to recover that loss in student enrollment.**



Black Scholarship Fund Established

- **A scholarship fund was established from a portion of the sale of the Institute, West Virginia property to assist blacks in college ministerial training.**



23 Million U.S.A. Blacks

*—We must
reach them!*



How will they hear the gospel without ministers to preach the Word of God?

Reaching this great mission field at home is a challenge that confronts every one of us. One way that any and every Nazarene can respond is through his gift for black ministerial scholarships made available through the Department of Home Missions and administered by each individual Nazarene college.

Will you help to provide the leadership that will reach the 23 million blacks of America for Christ?

Many have already joined in this effort and have received 10 percent missionary special giving credit for their local churches.

Use the form below to insure proper credit.

SPONSORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOME MISSIONS • Church of the Nazarene

BLACK MINISTERIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Here is my gift of \$ _____ for black ministerial scholarships.

Name _____

Church _____

District _____

Mail to:
Dr. Norman O. Miller
General Treasurer
Church of the Nazarene
6401 The Paseo
Kansas City, Mo. 64131

Appointment of Committees For Communication

- **Several committees were formed to provide for better communication and implementation of black ministries.**



Encouraging Changes

- **Many encouraging changes have come about in recent years since the phasing out of the Gulf Central District. Time and space will allow only for the mention of a few.**



Historic Black Nazarene Gatherings

- **June 14-17, 1984 - National Black Churchmen's Conference in Orlando, Florida**
- **June 4-7, 1991 - First National Nazarene Black Pastors Conference in Kansas City, Missouri**
- **June, 1993 - National Black Strategy Banquet in conjunction with the 23rd General Assembly in Indianapolis, Indiana**
- **June 22, 1997 - African American Luncheon in conjunction with the 24th General Assembly**



Historic Black Nazarene Gatherings (cont'd)

- **June 24, 2001 - African American Luncheon in conjunction with the 25th General Assembly**
- **July 25-28, 2002 - National Black Nazarene Conference in Atlanta, Georgia**
- **July 29 – August 1, 2004 – National Black Nazarene Conference in Orlando, Florida**
- **August 3-6, 2006 - National Black Nazarene Conference in Dallas, Texas**



Historic Black Nazarene Gatherings (cont'd)

- **July 24 – 27, 2008- National Black Nazarene Conference in Orlando, Florida**
- **July 22- 25, 2010 - National Black Nazarene Conference in St. Louis, Missouri**
- **July 5 – 8, 2012 – National Black Nazarene Conference in Atlanta, Georgia**





Nazarene Theological Seminary Conference (Kansas City, 1991)

Black Congregations Canada and the United States, 2005

