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ANSR



Dynamics of the Placement Process

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God has been calling forth women and men to serve as ministers in the Church of the Nazarene. In recent years hundreds have responded and begun the discipline of preparation. In the United States and Canada during the last decade the average number granted their first district license has been more than 500 each year. In 2002 the number of newly licensed ministers reported by the General Secretary was 582. Over the last several years newly licensed ministers have been about 20% to 25% women and 75% to 80% men.

Those of us who are called to ministry in the Church of the Nazarene are different in many ways. We come from different backgrounds. We differ in personality. Our academic skills and our levels of discipline vary. Some of us do our educational preparation through a liberal arts program followed by seminary while others prepare through college alone, at Bible college, by directed study, in district centers, or on-line. We may serve as missionaries, evangelists, chaplains, administrators, associates, or senior/solo pastors. We are each unique in many ways, but we share a great commitment to the heavenly calling and a deep desire that our ministry would be significant.

This paper looks at deployment of ministers, particularly pastors, in the Church of the Nazarene. As with other presentations at this conference, we hope that consideration of the system will contribute to positive change. We especially desire that the church will become more effective in placing women in ministry. In addition, we hope that some new ministers seeking placement, both women and men, will be helped as they seek to obey God and find fulfilling ministry within the Nazarene system.

Significant Ministry

Placement and fulfillment will be more likely in a denominational culture that affirms a broad understanding of legitimate expressions of congregational life. If significant ministry can only be found as a senior pastor of a large, suburban church, most Nazarene pastors will invest their lives in unimportant ministry. Indeed, this is true not only for Nazarenes, but for most protestant ministers. On the occasion of his retirement from Duke Divinity School, Jackson Carroll said, "Protestant clergy will mostly be pastors of small to mid-sized congregations—often in small town and rural areas where 52 percent of all congregations are located" (Jackson Carroll, Williams Professor Emeritus of Religion and Society, Duke Divinity School, Reflections of a Clergy-Watcher, Retirement Lecture, April 18, 2001, pages 8-9).

Carroll's description is supported by Richard Houseal's comparison of the distribution of congregations in several denominations by the size of their Sunday morning worship attendance. The most striking thing about the resulting graph, below, is the similarity in distribution of Assembly of God, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Church of the Nazarene, Presbyterian Church (USA), and Southern Baptist Church congregations. There are interesting differences, but perhaps most interesting is the fact that the Nazarene pattern is not unique.

Figure 1 ([click here to see it](#))

Those of us who live in large cities or worship in large churches have some tendency to discount the legitimacy and advantages of smaller communities. We are naturally inclined toward the ethnocentric question, Why can't they be more like us?

One of the most enjoyable books I (Kenneth) read in the last year was Bob Greene's *Once Upon a Town: The Miracle of the North Platte Canteen*. A large part of my enjoyment was his very positive descriptions of the people and places of

my youth. During World War II people in the small and medium sized towns in western Nebraska brought some joy and relief to soldiers on military trains headed toward an uncertain future. I liked his descriptions of the fulfillment people found in service. I liked the fact that he recognized the value of normal life in these communities. Among other positive descriptions of this part of the country he said, "In a lot of ways, it is a country that many of us seem always to be searching for" (2002, page 9).

But I did not like his introduction. Greene evidently lives, like a majority of the population of the United States, in one of the relatively few very large urban centers or within about fifty miles of a coastline. Unfortunately, even when he is writing a book of praise for Midwestern people living in smaller communities, Greene joins those who seem to think their life is better, somehow more significant than life and service in smaller, inland communities. He says, "North Platte, Nebraska, is about as isolated as a small town can conceivably be. It's in the middle of the middle of the country, alone out on the plains; it is hours by car even from the cities of Omaha or Lincoln. Few people venture there unless they live there, or have family there" (page 5). "There is no reason for anyone to pass through North Platte anymore the jet age has done away with that. If a person wants to get from one end of the United States to the other, he or she now likely does it five miles in the air, high above the country high above Nebraska. All the small towns flash by in an instant on a cloudy day, it's as if they are not even down there" (page 8).

Greene is not alone in this questioning of the significance of small and mid sized communities. Many of us assume that one city of 1,000,000 is obviously better than 100 cities of 10,000 and certainly better than 1,000 communities of 1,000. Similarly, when we think of communities of faith, many of us assume that a church of 1,000 is obviously better than 10 churches of 100 and certainly better than 20 churches of 50. Sociologists may have found that as group size increases, consensus about norms tends to decrease, deviance from norms tends to increase, and leaders tend to become more isolated from members (Johnstone, 1983, pages 69-70). However, most of us are more aware of the reality that economic viability, program possibilities, and professional prestige are better in one church of 1,000.

In fact, in the Church of the Nazarene over the last fifty years there appears to have been a shift in appreciation of the variety of legitimate congregational expressions. In the ANSR book, *The Smaller Church in a Super Church Era*, B. Edgar Johnson, who was then the General Secretary, described the transition. According to him, in the General Assembly in 1948 a general superintendent warned about the disadvantages of larger organizations and encouraged Nazarenes to choose smaller institutions in order, among other things, to locate churches strategically and to keep people close to leadership. However, by the 1980s this had changed. Now, Dr. Johnson said, "It is believed that small churches are *not ideal*". "[D]uring these past 40 years small churches have succumbed to a less positive image. Their inherent value has been questioned. No longer are they elevated to the plateau of the ideal" (Johnston and Sullivan, 1983, pages 86-89).

Both of us are worship in large churches. We give thanks for the growth of many of our churches. We are encouraged by the strength of large Nazarene churches in many areas of the country. At the same time, we give thanks for the many small Nazarene churches. Our sociological studies suggest that there are advantages as well as disadvantages in small communities and churches.

As shown in table 1, almost half of the existing Nazarene churches in the United States are in rural areas and small towns; communities where there are fewer than 25,000 people living within five miles of the church.

| Table 1 | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Nazarene Churches in the United States by Community Type | | | | |
| Community Type* | All Nazarene Churches | | Churches with Under 50 Worshipers | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Major Urban | 1,315 | 27% | 427 | 23% |
| Smaller Urban | 1,239 | 26% | 324 | 17% |
| Town & Country | 2,302 | 47% | 1,117 | 60% |
| *Major Urban ø at least 100,000 population within 5 miles, Smaller Urban ø at least 25,000 within 5 miles, but under 100,000, Town & Country ø less than 25,000 within 5 miles | | | | |

Table 2 shows most (69%) Nazarene churches in the United States and Canada have fewer than 100 worshipers on an average Sunday. Nearly one-third (32%) of those people who participate in worship in a Nazarene church do so in these

smaller churches. One-fourth (25%) of our churches have between 100 and 300 in worship. This is 39% of the people who worship in a Nazarene church on average Sunday morning.

We have fewer than 300 churches with as many as 300 worshipers. However, this 6% of the churches have 29% of the worshipers.

| Table 2 | | | | | | |
|--|----------|---------|--------------------|------------|---------|--------------------|
| Distribution of Congregations and Worshipers Active Churches and NewStarts in 2002 in the Church of the Nazarene in the United States and Canada | | | | | | |
| | Churches | | | Worshipers | | |
| Worship Size | Number | Percent | Cumulative Percent | Number | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| 1-50 | 1,877 | 38.4% | 38.4% | 57,708 | 11.1% | 11.1% |
| 51-100 | 1,504 | 30.8% | 69.2% | 108,049 | 20.8% | 31.9% |
| 101-150 | 609 | 12.5% | 81.7% | 75,003 | 14.4% | 46.3% |
| 151-200 | 319 | 6.5% | 88.3% | 55,492 | 10.7% | 56.9% |
| 201-300 | 292 | 6.0 | 94.2% | 70,999 | 13.6%% | 70.6%% |
| 301-500 | 183 | 3.8% | 98.0% | 69,652 | 13.4% | 84.0% |
| 501-800 | 60 | 1.2% | 99.2% | 37,441 | 7.2% | 91.2% |
| Over 800 | 38 | 8% | 100% | 45,909 | 8.8% | 100.0% |
| Totals | 4,882 | 100.0% | | 520,253 | 100.0% | |

Churches, unlike towns, have a mandate to make disciples, to enfold new people into the kingdom of God. Pastors and members in every church must be missional. Around every church there are surely some people who have not heard and experienced the good news of salvation. As those people become faithful Christians, they must be joyfully received into the fellowship of the church. Nothing less is acceptable.

However, sometimes the church will welcome them into existing structures and at other times we will create new structures. It may be that starting new churches is as legitimate an option as enlarging existing churches. This option was evidently more acceptable in the 1940s when the general superintendent encouraged smaller institutions and Nazarenes organized nearly 1,500 new churches.

If it is assumed that bigger is obviously better, it will be difficult to understand why some thoughtful people choose smaller communities. But, in spite of the wisdom of gifted city managers or pastors, some do. In fact, we were raised by a man who recognized and enjoyed the advantages of large cities like Los Angeles, Denver, and Johannesburg, but chose the advantages of a small community when he contemplated the influences he thought might be best for his task of raising sons. I did not make the same choice as I raised my children, but his choice was not obviously inferior to, or less rational than mine.

One reason we might reject the legitimacy of smaller churches is that larger churches are more viable economically. Certainly larger churches can afford better compensation for their pastors. However, as John Dart, news editor of *Christian Century* recently observed, while, "Most Protestant congregations are small" and changing them into larger congregations would be more efficient, "I don't think that will happen, because congregations are communities of history, connection and value. Most will not give up that community for a more efficient operation." (*Christian Century*, Vol. 120, No. 4, page 32).

Nazarene ministers are more likely to prepare appropriately and find fulfillment in ministry if they start out with realistic understandings of the places to which God has been calling Nazarenes to serve. The church, as it seeks to carry out its mission needs administrators, chaplains, deaconesses, educators, evangelists, lay ministers, ministers of Christian education, ministers of music, missionaries, and song evangelists, and others. We need gifted, dedicated, prepared pastors for the 281 (6%) churches that have more than 300 worshipers on an average Sunday morning. We also need

gifted, dedicated, prepared pastors for the 1,877 (38%) churches with 50 or fewer worshipers. We need pastors for churches made up primarily of professionals where educational levels are high, as well as for those where the priesthood of all believers is more highly valued than a well-educated, professional clergy. We need pastors who will serve churches in neighborhoods that have aged from vibrant communities of young families to established neighborhoods of empty nest couples. We need pastors for churches in a rich variety of cultural settings. Some will serve in the suburbs, but we also need gifted, dedicated, appropriately prepared pastors for the variety of urban and rural communities to which God has called us.

Over the last century Nazarene women and men have accepted missionary and other assignments involving great sacrifice. Perhaps it is appropriate to challenge youth and students to prayerfully consider careers of service in circumstances they might otherwise consider as unsuitable or financially challenging. This might include small churches, rural communities, and bivocational situations, as well as missionary service or ministry in urban settings, minority churches, or blue-collar neighborhoods.

Having observed that, "Protestant clergy will mostly be pastors of small to mid-sized congregations—often in small town and rural areas where 52 percent of all congregations are located," Jackson Carroll stated a value judgment. He said, "*Clearly there is nothing wrong with this. Such congregations deserve excellent leadership as much as any other, and they can be just as rewarding a context for a fulfilling ministry as a large urban or suburban congregation*" (Retirement Lecture, page 8, emphasis added). A few decades ago Nazarenes might have been more inclined to agree with Carroll's value judgment than we are now. This may make it more difficult now for many Nazarene ministers to experience significance and fulfillment.

Corps of Ministers

Placement in any field is easier where there is a shortage of personnel. When there are more applicants available than there are positions to fill, those making decisions about placement are able to choose between several candidates. On the other hand, when there are more positions than applicants, candidates may choose between positions.

The Church of the Nazarene does not seem to be experiencing the kind of shortage of pastors that is troubling some other denominations. Jack Marcum, of the Presbyterian Church (USA) research services staff, examined some of the nuances of the perceived shortage of pastors in their denomination. His analysis suggests that rather than a literal shortfall in the number of ministers, there is a focused shortage. Their problem is finding pastors for the congregations, mostly small, that need them while many ordained ministers for various reasons, including dual career marriages and more second-career clergy, are limiting the kinds and locations of calls they will consider. In fact, the number of small Presbyterian congregations is increasing at the same time that Presbyterian ministers are less inclined to accept calls to small churches.

The distinction between a literal shortage in the number of ministers and a shortage of people willing to accept particular types of calls is important, Marcum said, because if we perceive a real shortfall in the number of ministers then the "logical response is to recruit more candidates for ministry." "But given the complexity of the problem, a blanket 'Recruitment drive' would do little to fill existing vacant pulpits and might result in a large pool of alienated individuals unable to find suitable calls" (2001, *Parsing the Pastor "Shortage"*, page 1).

| Table 3 | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Comparison of Pastoral Vacancy Rates in Nazarene* and Presbyterian (USA)** Churches | | | | |
| | All Churches | | Churches Without a Pastor | |
| Members | Nazarene | Presbyterian | Nazarene | Presbyterian |
| 1-50 | 28.1% | 22.8% | 14.7% | 76.6% |
| 51-100 | 30.8% | 21.2% | 10.6% | 46.9% |
| 101-150 | 15.3% | 13.8% | 7.8% | 24.7% |
| 151-200 | 8.8% | 9.5% | 5.3% | 16.3% |
| 101-150 | 15.3% | 13.8% | 7.8% | 24.7% |
| 201-300 | 7.9% | 11.8% | 7.0% | 12.1% |

| | | | | |
|---|------|-------|------|------|
| 301-500 | 5.9% | 10.6% | 6.6% | 9.1% |
| 501-800 | 2.2% | 6.0% | 5.6% | 9.1% |
| Over 800 | 0.9% | 4.4% | 8.7% | 1.0% |
| <p>* Active Nazarene churches in the United States reporting membership in 2001 with a pastoral vacancy on December 31, 2001.</p> <p>**Percentages reported in "Parsing the Pastor - Shortage"</p> <p>http://www.pcusa.org/research/monday/shortg.htm</p> | | | | |

In comparison to the Presbyterian Church (USA) a much smaller proportion of Nazarene congregations are without a pastor. On any given day about 10% of the Nazarene congregations in the United States do not have a pastor. Many of these are in the relatively short time period between the leaving of one pastor and the calling and arrival of a new one. However, some vacancies are longer term.

While the percentage of small Nazarene churches with vacancies is only 14.7% rather than the 76.6% of the Presbyterians, the Nazarene "shortage" of pastors is higher in this size category than in any other. As with the PC (USA), a general recruitment drive among Nazarenes might fail to fill existing vacancies and instead result in a pool of surprised and frustrated individuals unable to find "suitable" calls.

A significant number of Nazarene ministers retire every year. In the United States and Canada that number has been relatively stable at about 150 for the last ten years. Table 4 also shows that the proportion of ministers who are in the retired status has been around 20%. As the larger cohort of "boomer" age ministers reach retirement age beginning about 2010, the number of retirements might be expected to increase.

| Table 4 | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| Ten Year Pattern of Retirements and Retired Ministers in the Church of the Nazarene in the United States and Canada | | | | | |
| | Total | Retirements | | Total Retired | |
| Year | Ministers | Number | Percent * | Number | Percent * |
| 1993 | 12,244 | 137 | 1.1% | 2,501 | 20.4% |
| 1994 | 12,423 | 156 | 1.3% | 2,543 | 20.5% |
| 1995 | 12,482 | 137 | 1.1% | 2,580 | 20.7% |
| 1996 | 12,582 | 143 | 1.1% | 2,569 | 20.4% |
| 1997 | 12,748 | 110 | 0.9% | 2,636 | 20.7% |
| 1998 | 12,789 | 137 | 1.1% | 2,666 | 20.8% |
| 1999 | 12,861 | 150 | 1.2% | 2,625 | 20.4% |
| 2000 | 13,144 | 170 | 1.3% | 2,659 | 20.2% |
| 2001 | 13,179 | 145 | 1.1% | 2,693 | 20.4% |
| 2002 | 13,239 | 142 | 1.1% | 2,664 | 20.1% |
| <p>Source: General Secretary's annual summary</p> <p>*Percentage of all U.S.A. and Canada Ministers</p> | | | | | |

Over the last ten years the number of newly licensed ministers has averaged almost 550. During this time period, there have been an average of about 250 newly ordained elders and 30 newly ordained deacons.

| Table 5 |
|---|
| Ten Year Pattern of Additions to the Corps of Nazarene Ministers in the |

| United States and Canada | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Year | Total | Newly Licensed | | New Elders | | New Deacons | |
| | Ministers | Number | Percent * | Number | Percent * | Number | Percent * |
| 1993 | 12,244 | 506 | 4.1% | 240 | 2.0% | 32 | 0.3% |
| 1994 | 12,423 | 534 | 4.3% | 239 | 1.9% | 37 | 0.3% |
| 1995 | 12,482 | 518 | 4.1% | 251 | 2.0% | 36 | 0.3% |
| 1996 | 12,582 | 550 | 4.4% | 240 | 1.9% | 19 | 0.2% |
| 1997 | 12,748 | 499 | 3.9% | 282 | 2.2% | 32 | 0.3% |
| 1998 | 12,789 | 533 | 4.2% | 245 | 1.9% | 28 | 0.2% |
| 1999 | 12,861 | 556 | 4.3% | 260 | 2.0% | 35 | 0.3% |
| 2000 | 13,144 | 619 | 4.7% | 253 | 1.9% | 37 | 0.3% |
| 2001 | 13,179 | 574 | 4.4% | 270 | 2.0% | 33 | 0.3% |
| 2002 | 13,239 | 582 | 4.4% | 283 | 2.1% | 26 | 0.2% |
| Source: General Secretary's annual summary | | | | | | | |
| *Percent of total ministers | | | | | | | |

The pattern of losses from and additions to the Nazarene corps of ministers over the last decade has resulted in a relatively stable total number of elders and licensed ministers. There are fewer deacons, however the number increased by more than 100% over the decade.

| Table 6 | | | | |
|--|--------|---------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Nazarene Ministers in the United States and Canada | | | | |
| Year | Elders | Deacons | Licensed Ministers | Total Ministers |
| 1993 | 9,600 | 170 | 2,474 | 12,244 |
| 1994 | 9,681 | 208 | 2,534 | 12,423 |
| 1995 | 9,767 | 242 | 2,473 | 12,482 |
| 1996 | 9,781 | 244 | 2,557 | 12,582 |
| 1997 | 9,907 | 276 | 2,565 | 12,748 |
| 1998 | 9,973 | 300 | 2,516 | 12,789 |
| 1999 | 10,012 | 319 | 2,530 | 12,861 |
| 2000 | 10,166 | 346 | 2,632 | 13,144 |
| 2001 | 10,191 | 357 | 2,631 | 13,179 |
| 2002 | 10,206 | 379 | 2,654 | 13,239 |
| Source: General Secretary's annual summary | | | | |

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