

# **A LIVING FAITH: WHAT NAZARENES BELIEVE**

Every organization that endures over time is based on a deeply shared combination of purpose, belief, and values. So it is with the Church of the Nazarene. It was founded to transform the world by spreading scriptural holiness. It is both a Great Commission church and a Holiness church at the same time. Our mission is to make Christlike disciples of all nations.

The present and future life of the Church of the Nazarene is defined by participation in the mission of God. It is therefore an expression of the Church of Jesus Christ and an organization made distinct not just by what it believes but by how it goes about contributing uniquely to the kingdom of God.

In the early years of this new millennium, it is appropriate for the Church of the Nazarene to identify those distinctives that we joyfully embrace and celebrate. Our most precious treasures—our mission, calling, beliefs, and highest values—we gladly offer as a gift to the generations to come.

We pray that our core values will continue to serve as a guiding light for those who must make their way through the light and shadows of the decades that lie ahead.

# CORE VALUES

## **1** We Are a Christian People

As members of the Church Universal, we join with all true believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and in embracing the historic Trinitarian creedal statements of Christian faith. We value our Wesleyan-Holiness heritage and believe it to be a way of understanding the faith that is true to Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.

## **2** We Are a Holiness People

God, who is holy, calls us to a life of holiness. We believe that the Holy Spirit seeks to do in us a second work of grace, called by various terms including “entire sanctification” and “baptism with the Holy Spirit”—cleansing us from all sin; renewing us in the image of God; empowering us to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves; and producing in us the character of Christ. Holiness in the life of believers is most clearly understood as Christlikeness.

## **3** We Are a Missional People

We are a “sent people,” responding to the call of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, witnessing to the Lordship of Christ and participating with God in the building of the Church and the extension of His kingdom (2 Corinthians 6:1). Our mission (*a*) begins in worship, (*b*) ministers to the world in evangelism and compassion, (*c*) encourages believers toward Christian maturity through discipleship, and (*d*) prepares women and men for Christian service through Christian higher education.

# ESSAYS

## **1** We Are a Christian People

*We are united with all believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We believe that in divine love, God offers to all people forgiveness of sins and restored relationship. In being reconciled to God, we believe that we are also to be reconciled to one another, loving each other as we have been loved by God, forgiving each other as we have been forgiven by God. We believe that our life together is to exemplify the character of Christ. We stand with Christians everywhere in affirming the historic Trinitarian creeds and beliefs of the Christian faith and deeply value our heritage in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. We look to Scripture as the primary source of spiritual truth confirmed by reason, tradition, and experience.*

With all the people of God we confess and praise Jesus Christ the Lord.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church, which, as the Apostles' Creed tells us, is one, holy, universal, and apostolic. In Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit, God the Father offers forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to all the world. Those who respond to God's offer in faith become the people of God. Having been forgiven and reconciled in Christ, we forgive and are reconciled to one another. In this way, we are Christ's Church and Body and reveal the unity of that Body. As the one Body of Christ, we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." We affirm the unity of Christ's Church and strive in all things to preserve it (Ephesians 4:5, 3).

Jesus Christ is the holy Lord. For this reason, Christ's Church is not only one but also holy. It is to be holy in its

parts and in its totality, holy in its members as it is in its Head. The Church is both holy and called to be holy. It is holy because it is the Body of Christ, who has become for us righteousness and holiness. It is called to become holy by God, who chose us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless. As Christ's one Body, our life together as a church should embody the holy character of Christ, who emptied himself and took on the form of a slave. We affirm the holiness of Christ's Church, both as a gift and as a calling.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church. For this reason, the Church is not only one and holy but also universal, including all who affirm the essential beliefs of the Christian faith. We affirm the apostolic faith that has been held by all Christians, everywhere and at all times. We embrace John Wesley's concept of the universal spirit, by which we have fellowship with all those who affirm the vital center of Scripture, and we extend toleration to those who disagree with us on matters not essential to salvation.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Scriptures. For this reason, the Church is not only one, holy, and universal but also apostolic. It is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and continually devotes itself to the apostles' teaching. The Church especially looks to the Scriptures, which are the Church's only norm of faith and life. The Lordship of Jesus over the Scriptures means that we are to understand the Scriptures through the witness of the Holy Spirit as they testify to Jesus. To confirm and correct our understanding of the Scriptures, we honor and heed the ancient creeds and other voices of the Christian tradition that faithfully explain the Scriptures. We also allow our understanding of the

Scriptures to be guided by the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us in repentance, faith, and assurance. Finally, we test our understanding of the Scriptures by seeking the reasonableness and coherence of their witness to Jesus Christ.

We are especially called to witness to the holiness of Christ's Church as embraced in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. We affirm the principles of salvation by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ our Savior. In doing so, we continue to affirm that Christ's Church is one, universal, and apostolic. But our special calling is to hold before the eyes of the world and the Church the centrality of holiness and to encourage the people of God to live in the fullness of the Father's holy love. For this reason we affirm the Wesleyan-Holiness understanding of the Christian faith and seek to remain faithful to its principal teachings: God's prevenient grace and the means of grace, repentance, faith, the new birth, justification, assurance, the Christian community and its disciplines, and the perfection of love.

## **2** We Are a Holiness People

*We are called by Scripture and drawn by grace to worship God and to love Him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves. To this end we commit ourselves fully and completely to God, believing that we can be “sanctified wholly,” as a second crisis experience. We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts, cleanses, fills and empowers us as the grace of God transforms us day by day into a people of love and spiritual discipline, ethical and moral purity, and compassion and justice. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that restores us in the image of God and produces in us the character of Christ. Holiness in the life of believers is most clearly understood as Christlikeness.*

We believe in God the Father, the Creator, who calls into being what does not exist. We once were not, but God called us into being, made us for himself, and fashioned us in His own image. We have been commissioned to bear the image of God: “I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44).

Our hunger to be a Holiness people is rooted in the holiness of God himself. The holiness of God refers to His Deity, His utter singularity of being. There is none like Him in majesty and glory. The appropriate human response in the presence of such a glorious being is worship of God as God. God’s holiness is expressed in His gracious redemptive acts. Encounter with the God who reveals and gives himself makes worship possible, and worship becomes the primary way of knowing Him. We worship the holy, redeeming God by loving what He loves.

Our worship of the great and gracious God takes many forms. Often it is praise and prayer with the faith communi-

ty. It also expresses itself in acts of private devotion, thanksgiving and praise, and obedience. Evangelistic sharing of the faith, compassion toward our neighbor, working for justice, and moral uprightness are all acts of worship before our God of blazing holiness. Even the ordinary tasks of life become acts of worship and take on a sacramental significance as worship of a holy God becomes our way of life.

Jesus Christ revealed the one holy God to us and modeled worshipful holy living for us. Jesus informs our understanding of holiness through His life, sacrifice, and teachings as found in the Gospels, particularly the Sermon on the Mount. As a Holiness people we seek to be like Jesus in every attitude and action. By His grace God enables believers who worship Him with their whole hearts to live Christlike lives. This we understand to be the essence of holiness.

God has also given us the gift and responsibility of choice. Because we were born with a tendency to sin, we are inclined to choose our own way rather than God's (Isaiah 53:6). Having corrupted God's creation with our sin, we are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). If we are to live again spiritually, God, who calls into being what does not exist, must graciously create us anew through the redemptive acts of His own Son.

We believe that God uniquely entered our world through the incarnation of His only Son, Jesus of Nazareth, the historical God-man. Jesus came to renew the image of God in us, enabling us to become holy people. We believe that holiness in the life of the believer is the result of both a crisis experience and a lifelong process. Following regeneration, the Spirit of our Lord draws us by grace to the full consecration of our lives to Him. Then, in the divine act of entire sanctification, also called the baptism with the Holy Spirit, He cleanses us from original sin and indwells us with His holy

presence. He perfects us in love, enables us to live in moral uprightness, and empowers us to serve!

The Spirit of Jesus works within us to reproduce in us His own character of holy love. He enables us to “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). To be like God is to be like Jesus. Having had the divine image restored in us in God’s act of entire sanctification, we acknowledge that we have not yet arrived spiritually; our lifelong goal is Christlikeness in every word, thought, and deed. By continued yieldedness, obedience, and faith, we believe that we are “being transformed in his [Christ’s] likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). We participate further in this process as we live a life of worship expressed in many ways, including embracing the spiritual disciplines and the fellowship and accountability of the local church. As a Body of Believers in a specific congregation, we endeavor to be a Christlike community, worshiping God with our whole hearts and receiving His gifts of love, purity, power, and compassion.

As a Holiness people we do not exist in a historical and ecclesiastical vacuum. We identify with the New Testament and the Early Church. Our articles of faith clearly place us in the tradition of classical Christianity. We identify with the Arminian tradition of free grace (Jesus died for all) and human freedom—the God-given capacity of all to choose God and salvation. We also trace our ecclesiastical heritage to the Wesleyan Revival of the 18th century and to the Holiness Movement of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Through the centuries the Holiness people have had a “magnificent obsession” with Jesus. We worship Jesus! We love Jesus! We think Jesus! We talk Jesus! We live Jesus! This is the essence and overflow of holiness for us. This is what characterizes Holiness people.



## **3** We Are a Missional People

### **3a. Our Mission of Worship**

*The mission of the church in the world begins in worship. It is as we are gathered together before God in worship—singing, hearing the public reading of the Bible, giving our tithes and offerings, praying, hearing the preached Word, baptizing, and sharing the Lord's Supper—that we know most clearly what it means to be the people of God. Our belief that the work of God in the world is accomplished primarily through worshiping congregations leads us to understand that our mission includes the receiving of new members into the fellowship of the church and the organizing of new worshiping congregations.*

Worship is the highest expression of our love for God. It is God-centered adoration honoring the One who in grace and mercy redeems us. The primary context for worship is the local church where God's people gather, not in self-centered experience or for self-glorification, but in self-surrender and self-offering. Worship is the church in loving, obedient service to God.

Worship is the first privilege and responsibility of God's people. It is the gathering of the covenant community before God in proclamation and celebrative response of who He is, what He has done, and what He promises to do.

The local church in worship is at the core of our identity. The Church of the Nazarene is essentially local worshiping congregations, and it is in and through the local congregation that our mission is fulfilled. The mission of the church finds its meaning and orientation in worship. It is in the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, the public reading of the Scripture, the singing of hymns and choruses,

corporate prayer, and the presenting of our tithes and offerings that we know most clearly what it means to be the people of God. It is in worship that we understand most clearly what it means to participate with God in the work of redemption.

Our mission of worship is foundational for our church. As the Church of the Nazarene is essentially local worshiping congregations, our mission of worship will include a continued commitment to the starting of new congregations.

### ***3b. Our Mission of Compassion and Evangelism***

*As people who are consecrated to God, we share His love for the lost and His compassion for the poor and broken. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission move us to engage the world in evangelism, compassion, and justice. To this end we are committed to inviting people to faith, to caring for those in need, to standing against injustice and with the oppressed, to working to protect and preserve the resources of God's creation, and to including in our fellowship all who will call upon the name of the Lord.*

Through its mission in the world, the church demonstrates the love of God. The story of the Bible is the story of God reconciling the world to himself, ultimately through Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). The church is sent into the world to participate with God in this ministry of love and reconciliation through evangelism, compassion, and justice.

Both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment are central to the understanding of our mission. They are two expressions of a single mission, two dimensions of the one gospel message. Jesus, who directs us to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind . . . and your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39), also tells us to “go and make disciples

of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (28:19-20).

The mission of the church in the world extends to all humanity, as all people, being created in the image of God, have ultimate value. It is our mission to love and value people as they are loved and valued by God, who seeks to bring them peace, justice, and salvation from sin through Christ. It is our mission to have compassion upon and to care for those in need. It is our mission to oppose social systems and policies that devalue or disempower people.

The mission of the church extends to the whole person. God has created us as whole persons, and it is our mission to be ministers of God’s love to people as whole persons—body, soul, and spirit. Our mission of evangelism, compassion, and justice is a single integrated mission, engaging people in their physical, emotional, and spiritual need.

The mission of the church in the world extends to all humanity because Jesus Christ has come into the world to save all who call upon His name. As the people of God, it is our privilege and responsibility to share the good news of the gospel with all who will hear. Whether in public services or in personal one-on-one witnessing, *our passion is to take every opportunity to invite people to faith in Jesus Christ.*

The mission of the church in the world extends to all people because the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost, was poured out upon all humanity (Acts 2). It is our mission to present the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ to every person on earth. We are empowered by the Spirit to go into the world proclaiming the Kingdom and participating with God in the building of the church.

It is with a spirit of hope and optimism that we engage our God-given mission in the world. It is more than an ex-

pression of human concern or human effort. Our mission is a response to God's call. It is our participation with God in the Kingdom mission of reconciliation. It is the church's faithful witness to and expression of the love of God in the world—in evangelism, compassion, and justice. It is our faith in the ability of God's grace to transform the lives of people broken by sin and to restore them in His own image.

### **3c. Our Mission of Discipleship**

*We are committed to being—and inviting others to become—disciples of Jesus. With this in mind, we are committed to providing the means (Sunday School, Bible studies, small accountability groups, etc.) through which believers are encouraged to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and in their relationship with each other and with God. We understand discipleship to include submitting ourselves to obeying God and to the disciplines of the faith. We believe we are to help each other live the holy life through mutual support, Christian fellowship, and loving accountability. Wesley said, “God has given us to each other to strengthen each other’s hands.”*

Christian discipleship is a way of life. It is the process of learning how God would have us live in the world. As we learn to live in obedience to the Word of God, in submission to the disciplines of the faith, and in accountability to one another, we begin to understand the true joy of the disciplined life and the Christian meaning of freedom. Discipleship is not merely human effort, submitting to rules and regulations. It is the means through which the Holy Spirit gradually brings us to maturity in Christ. It is through discipleship that we become people of Christian character. The ultimate goal of discipleship is to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

By studying and meditating on the Scriptures, Christians discover fountains of refreshment in every thirsty valley on their discipleship journey. Invigorated by the washing of the Word, refined by immersion in the Word, drinking deeply the truths of the Word, the disciples discover to their happy surprise that they are being “transformed by the renewing of [their] mind” (Romans 12:2). The Christian way opens before them like a high and open road. Nerved by God, they proceed on a way of life that eclipses mere human and cultural values. Refreshed by the fountain of the Word, disciples give their life away in self-transcending service.

We affirm the life-giving value of the classic spiritual disciplines in the training of women and men as disciples of Christ. The disciplines of prayer and fasting, worship, study, solitude, service, and simplicity are at the same time natural expressions and intentional commitments in the life of the believer.

Discipleship requires mutual support and loving accountability. On our own, few of us will develop the spiritual disciplines that lead to Christian maturity. We believe that we are to encourage the mutual support provided through such means as Sunday School classes, discipleship groups, Bible study groups, prayer meetings, accountability groups, and Christian mentoring as necessary to our spiritual formation and maturity. Recognizing the role of accountability in the Wesleyan class meetings encourages us to support its place within the contemporary Christian congregation.

### ***3d. Our Mission of Christian Higher Education***

*We are committed to Christian education, through which men and women are equipped for lives of Christian service. In our seminaries, Bible colleges, colleges, and universities, we are committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the develop-*

*ment of Christian character, and the equipping of leaders to accomplish our God-given calling of serving in the church and in the world.*

Christian higher education is a central part of the mission of the Church of the Nazarene. In the early years of the Church of the Nazarene, institutions of Christian higher education were organized for the purpose of preparing men and women of God for leadership and Christian service in the global spread of the Wesleyan-Holiness revival. Our continued commitment to Christian higher education through the years has produced a worldwide network of seminaries, Bible schools, colleges, and universities.

Our mission of Christian higher education comes directly out of what it means to be God's people. We are to love God with our whole "heart, soul, and *mind*." We are therefore, to be good stewards in the development of our minds, our academic resources, and in the application of our knowledge. In this light, we are committed to the open and honest pursuit of knowledge and truth coupled with the integrity of our Christian faith. Christian higher education is an essential arena for the development of the stewardship of our minds. It is intended to be an arena characterized by the discussion and discovery of truth and knowledge about God and all of God's creation.

In Christian higher education faith is not compartmentalized, but wonderfully integrated with knowledge as faith and learning are developed together. The whole person is cultivated with every area of thought and life understood in relationship to the desire and design of God. Christian character and the equipping of Christian leaders for service in the church and the world are forged in the context of learn-

ing about God, humanity, and the world. This commitment of Christian higher education to the formation of the whole person is critical for the development of Christian men and women for missional leadership in the church and the world.

As a redeemed people called to Christlikeness and sent as agents of God's love in the world, we participate with God in the work of redeeming humanity. Christian higher education contributes significantly to our being such a missional people—offering the broad range of knowledge—and it is necessary for effective service to God in our various vocations. Our faithful participation in God's redemptive work requires that we raise up men and women of God who can take their place as Christian servant leaders in the church and in the world.

The world in which we are called to serve is becoming more closely connected and more profoundly complicated each day. As God's work of redemption advances in present and future generations, our faithful witness to the Lordship of Christ and effective participation with God in the building of the church will continue to require a vital commitment to Christian higher education.





