



## MEMBERSHIP CLASS

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

**To be a growing church where we encourage each other to worship God, walk in Christlikeness, work in a ministry and win our community.**

"All this is from God, (worship) who has reconciled us to himself through Christ (walk) and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation: (work) that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed unto us the message of reconciliation (win)." 2 Cor. 5:18-19 NIV

#### **WORSHIP GOD "All this is from God..."**

Our desire is for people to learn and participate in worshipping God. Our mind, heart, and tongue should be filled with praise and worship.

#### **WALK IN CHRISTLIKENESS "...who reconciled us to himself through Christ..."**

Our sin separated us from God. Christ died for us so that we could be forgiven and set free to live a life of obedience to God. That's reconciliation. Obedience isn't always easy. We must encourage and hold one another accountable, working together.

#### **WORK IN THE MINISTRY "...and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..."**

Every believer has been called to use his/her gifts to build up the body of Christ; preaching, teaching, praying, singing, helping, serving to the glory of God.

#### **WIN OUR COMMUNITY "...he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."**

We are called to reach out in love to our world. We believe that what God did for us through his Son Jesus is good news of great joy that we share with others.



# MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

WITH VALLEY CHAPEL, A CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

**Realizing the sacred privilege and responsibility of being a member of a local church body, I prayerfully commit to (God and the church body) the following:**

**I will be a blessing to my church body by holding to the biblical doctrines upon which the church rests as essential to the Christian experience.** "We believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We especially emphasize the deity of Jesus Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit. We believe that human beings are born in sin; that they need the work of forgiveness through Christ and the new birth by the Holy Spirit; that subsequent to this there is the deeper work of heart cleansing or entire sanctification through the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and that to each of these works of grace the Holy Spirit gives witness. We believe that our Lord will return, the dead shall be raised, and that all shall come to final judgment with its rewards and punishments." (Church Manual 801)

**I will be a blessing to my church body by disciplining myself to receive the means of grace that God has ordained so that I will be strengthened spiritually.** This is accomplished by prayer (with others and private); the Word of God received through preaching, studying, meditating, and reading; the Lord's supper; baptism, a nurturing community; spiritual mentoring and family devotions.

**I will be a blessing to my church body by living out our local church purpose to: Worship God , Walk in Christlikeness , Work in Ministry, and Win Our Community.** *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."* 2 Corinthians 5:18 – 19

**I will be a blessing to my church by taking an active role in the ministry for which God has gifted me, participating in works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up.**

**I will be a blessing to my church body by displaying Christlike attitudes and actions toward others. I will also speak carefully, staying away from gossip, lying and quarreling.** I will endeavor to build others up in keeping with Ephesians 4:29.

**I will be a blessing to my church body by seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the church.** I will put into practice "timeless biblical principles to contemporary society" (Manual 33.1) as I seek to live a holy life everyday. I realize that how I live my life before others becomes a reflection of my church body. I realize that I represent Christ and his church and I must live daily a life that honors them both.

**I will be a blessing to my church body by faithfully giving my tithes, and as God would lead me, to give to the needy and to other offerings.**

**I will be a blessing to my church body by allowing the Holy Spirit to transform me to Christlikeness.** I will seek to entirely set myself apart for God, to live a life that pleases and honors him by seeking and fulfilling his purpose for my life, desiring that "God himself would sanctify me through and through." 1 Thessalonians 5:23

I realize that if I choose not to keep my covenant, the local church has the responsibility to seek reconciliation or, if necessary, to remove me from its membership.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Covenant of Christian Character

## FROM THE MANUAL OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

27. To be identified with the visible Church is the blessed privilege and sacred duty of all who are saved from their sins and are seeking completeness in Christ Jesus. It is required of all who desire to unite with the Church of the Nazarene, and thus to walk in fellowship with us, that they shall show evidence of salvation from their sins by a godly walk and vital piety; and that they shall be, or earnestly desire to be, cleansed from all indwelling sin. They shall evidence their commitment to God—

27.1. FIRST. By doing that which is enjoined in the Word of God, which is our rule of both faith and practice, including:

- (1) Loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself (Exodus 20:3-6; Leviticus 19:17-18; Deuteronomy 5:7-10; 6:4-5; Mark 12:28-31; Romans 13:8-10).
- (2) Pressing upon the attention of the unsaved the claims of the gospel, inviting them to the house of the Lord, and trying to compass their salvation (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:14-16; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).
- (3) Being courteous to all men (Ephesians 4:32; Titus 3:2; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 John 3:18).
- (4) Being helpful to those who are also of the faith, in love forbearing one another (Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:2, 10; Colossians 3:12-14).
- (5) Seeking to do good to the bodies and souls of men; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and ministering to the needy, as opportunity and ability are given (Matthew 25:35-36; 2 Corinthians 9:8-10; Galatians 2:10; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17-18).
- (6) Contributing to the support of the ministry and the church and its work in tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-10; Philippians 4:15-19).
- (7) Attending faithfully all the ordinances of God, and 27.2.

SECOND. By avoiding evil of every kind, including:

- (1) Taking the name of God in vain (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; James 5:12).
- (2) Profaning of the Lord's Day by participation in unnecessary secular activities, thereby indulging in practices that deny its sanctity (Exodus 20:8-11; Isaiah 58:13-14; Mark 2:27-28; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10).
- (3) Sexual immorality, such as premarital or extramarital relations, perversion in any form, or looseness and impropriety of conduct (Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).
- (4) Habits or practices known to be destructive of physical and mental well-being. Christians are to regard themselves as temples of the Holy Spirit (Proverbs 20:1; 23:1-3; 1 Corinthians 6:17-20; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:18).
- (5) Quarreling, returning evil for evil, gossiping, slandering, spreading surmises injurious to the good names of others (2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:15; Ephesians 4:30-32; James 3:5-18; 1 Peter 3:9-10).
- (6) Dishonesty, taking advantage in buying and selling, bearing false witness, and like works of darkness (Leviticus 19:10-11; Romans 12:17; 1 Corinthians 6:7-10).
- (7) The indulging of pride in dress or behavior. Our people are to dress with the Christian simplicity and modesty that become holiness (Prov. 29:23; 1 Timothy 2:8-10; James 4:6; 1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 John 2:15-17).
- (8) Music, literature, and entertainments that dishonor God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; James 4:4).

27.3. THIRD. By abiding in hearty fellowship with the church, not inveighing against but wholly committed to its doctrines and usages and actively involved in its continuing witness and outreach (Ephesians 2:18-22; 4:1-3, 11-16; Philippians 2:1-8; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

# The Covenant of Christian Conduct

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE MANUAL 2017–2021

## 28.0

The church joyfully proclaims the good news that we may be delivered from all sin to a new life in Christ. By the grace of God we Christians are “to put off the old self”—the old patterns of conduct as well as the old carnal mind—and are “to put on the new self”—a new and holy way of life as well as the mind of Christ. (Eph. 4:17–24)

## 28.1

The Church of the Nazarene purposes to relate timeless biblical principles to contemporary society in such a way that the doctrines and covenants of the church may be known and understood in many lands and within a variety of cultures. We hold that the Ten Commandments, as reaffirmed in the New Testament teachings of Jesus Christ, demonstrated most fully and concisely in the Great Commandment and the Sermon on the Mount constitute the basic Christian ethic.

## 28.2

It is further recognized that there is validity in the concept of the collective Christian conscience as illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. The Church of the Nazarene, as an international expression of the Body of Christ, acknowledges its responsibility to seek ways to particularize the Christian life so as to lead to a holiness ethic. The historic ethical standards of the church are expressed in part in the following items. They should be followed carefully and conscientiously as guides and helps to holy living. Those who violate the conscience of the church do so at their own peril and to the hurt of the witness of the church. Culturally conditioned adaptations shall be referred to and approved by the Board of General Superintendents.

## 28.3

The Church of the Nazarene believes this new and holy way of life involves practices to be avoided and redemptive acts of love to be accomplished for the souls, minds, and bodies of our neighbors. One redemptive arena of love involves the special relationship Jesus had, and commanded His disciples to have, with the poor of this world; that His Church ought, first, to keep itself simple and free from an emphasis on wealth and extravagance and, second, to give itself to the care, feeding, clothing, and shelter of the poor and marginalized. Throughout the Bible and in the life and example of Jesus, God identifies with and assists the poor, the oppressed, and those in society who cannot speak for themselves. In the same way, we, too, are called to identify with and to enter into solidarity with the poor. We hold that compassionate ministry to the poor includes acts of charity as well as a struggle to provide opportunity, equality, and justice for the poor. We further believe the Christian’s responsibility to the poor is an essential aspect of the life of every believer who seeks a faith that works through love. We believe Christian holiness to be inseparable from ministry to the poor in that it drives the Christian beyond their own individual perfection and toward the creation of a more just and equitable society and world. Holiness, far from distancing believers from the desperate economic needs of people in this world, motivates us to place our means in the service of alleviating such need and to adjust our wants in accordance with the needs of others. (Exodus 23:11; Deuteronomy 15:7; Psalms 41:1; 82:3; Proverbs 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; Jeremiah 22:16; Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:10)

## 28.4

In listing practices to be avoided we recognize that no catalog, however inclusive, can hope to encompass all forms of evil throughout the world. Therefore it is imperative that our people earnestly seek the aid of the Spirit in cultivating a sensitivity to evil that transcends the mere letter of the law; remembering the admonition: “Test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21–22)

Education is of the utmost importance for the social and spiritual well-being of society. Nazarene educational organizations and institutions, such as Sunday Schools, schools (birth through secondary), child care centers, adult care centers, colleges, and seminaries, are expected to teach children, youth, and adults biblical principles and ethical standards in such a way that our doctrines may be known. This practice may be instead of or in addition to public schools. The education from public sources should be complemented by holiness teaching in the home. Christians should also be encouraged to work in and with public institutions to witness to and influence these institutions for God's kingdom. (Matthew 5:13–14)

We hold specifically that the following practices should be avoided:

Entertainments that are subversive of the Christian ethic. Our people, both as Christian individuals and in Christian family units, should govern themselves by three principles. One is the Christian stewardship of leisure time. A second principle is the recognition of the Christian obligation to apply the highest moral standards of Christian living. Because we are living in a day of great moral confusion in which we face the potential encroachment of the evils of the day into the sacred precincts of our homes through various avenues such as current literature, radio, television, personal computers, and the Internet, it is essential that the most rigid safeguards be observed to keep our homes from becoming secularized and worldly. However, we hold that entertainment that endorses and encourages holy living, that affirms scriptural values, and that supports the sacredness of the marriage vow and the exclusivity of the marriage covenant, should be affirmed and encouraged. We especially encourage our young people to use their gifts in media and the arts to influence positively this pervasive part of culture. The third principle is the obligation to witness against whatever trivializes or blasphemes God, as well as such social evils as violence, sensuality, pornography, profanity, and the occult, as portrayed by and through the commercial entertainment industry in its many forms and to endeavor to bring about the demise of enterprises known to be the purveyors of this kind of entertainment. This would include the avoidance of all types of entertainment ventures and media productions that produce, promote, or feature the violent, the sensual, the pornographic, the profane, or the occultic, or which feature or glamorize the world's philosophy of secularism, sensualism, and materialism and undermine God's standard of holiness of heart and life.

This necessitates the teaching and preaching of these moral standards of Christian living, and that our people be taught to use prayerful discernment in continually choosing the "high road" of holy living. We therefore call upon our leaders and pastors to give strong emphasis in our periodicals and from our pulpits to such fundamental truths as will develop the principle of discrimination between the evil and good to be found in these media.

We suggest that the standard given to John Wesley by his mother, namely, "whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of your body over mind, that thing for you is sin," form the basis for this teaching of discrimination. (28.2–28.4, 926–931) (Romans 14:7–13; 1 Corinthians 10:31–33; Ephesians 5:1–18; Philippians 4:8–9; 1 Peter 1:13–17; 2 Peter 1:3–11)

Lotteries and other forms of gambling, whether legal or illegal. The church holds that the final result of these practices is detrimental both to the individual and society. (Matthew 6:24–34; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–13; 1 Timothy 6:6–11; Hebrews 13:5–6; 1 John 2:15–17)

## 29.2

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## 30.1

**Induced Abortion.** The Church of the Nazarene affirms the sanctity of human life as established by God the Creator and believes that such sanctity extends to the child not yet born. Life is a gift from God. All human life, including life developing in the womb, is created by God in His image and is, therefore, to be nurtured, supported, and protected. From the moment of conception, a child is a human being with all of the developing characteristics of human life, and this life is dependent on the mother for its continued development. Therefore, we believe that human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception. We oppose induced abortion by any means, when used for either personal convenience or population control. We oppose laws that allow abortion. Realizing that there are rare, but real medical conditions wherein the mother or the unborn child, or both, could not survive the pregnancy, termination of the pregnancy should only be made after sound medical and Christian counseling.

Responsible opposition to abortion requires our commitment to the initiation and support of programs designed to provide care for mothers and children. The crisis of an unwanted pregnancy calls for the community of believers (represented only by those for whom knowledge of the crisis is appropriate) to provide a context of love, prayer, and counsel. In such instances, support can take the form of counseling centers, homes for expectant mothers, and the creation or utilization of Christian adoption services.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes that consideration of abortion as a means of ending an unwanted pregnancy often occurs because Christian standards of sexual responsibility have been ignored. Therefore the church calls for persons to practice the ethic of the New Testament as it bears upon human sexuality and to deal with the issue of abortion by placing it within the larger framework of biblical principles that provide guidance for moral decision making. (Genesis 2:7, 9:6; Exodus 20:13; 21:12–16, 22–25; Leviticus 18:21; Job 31:15; Psalms 22:9; 139:3–16; Isaiah 44:2, 24; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15, 23–25, 36–45; Acts 17:25; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 6:16; 7:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6)

The Church of the Nazarene also recognizes that many have been affected by the tragedy of abortion. Each local congregation and individual believer is urged to offer the message of forgiveness by God for each person who has experienced abortion. Our local congregations are to be communities of redemption and hope to all who suffer physical, emotional, and spiritual pain as a result of the willful termination of a pregnancy. (Romans 3:22–24; Galatians 6:1)

## 30.2

**Genetic Engineering and Gene Therapy.** The Church of the Nazarene supports the use of genetic engineering to achieve gene therapy. We recognize that gene therapy can lead to preventing and curing disease, and preventing and curing anatomical and mental disorders. We oppose any use of genetic engineering that promotes social injustice, disregards the dignity of persons, or that attempts to achieve racial, intellectual, or social superiority over others (eugenics). We oppose initiation of DNA studies whose results might encourage or support human abortion as an alternative to term live birth. In all cases, humility, a respect for the inviolable dignity of human life, human equality before God, and a commitment to mercy and justice should govern genetic engineering and gene therapy.

## 30.4

**Human Cloning.** We oppose the cloning of an individual human being. Humankind is valued by God, who created us in His image, and the cloning of an individual human being treats that being as an object, thus denying the personal dignity and worth bestowed on us by our Creator.

Euthanasia (Including Physician Assisted Suicide). We believe that euthanasia (intentionally ending the life of a terminally ill person, or one who has a debilitating and incurable disease that is not immediately life-threatening, for the purpose of ending suffering) is incompatible with the Christian faith. This applies when euthanasia is requested or consented to by the terminally ill person (voluntary euthanasia) and when the terminally ill person is not mentally competent to give consent (involuntary euthanasia). We believe that the historic rejection of euthanasia by the Christian church is confirmed by Christian convictions that derive from the Bible and that are central to the Church's confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Euthanasia violates Christian confidence in God as the sovereign Lord of life by claiming sovereignty for oneself; it violates our role as stewards before God; it contributes to an erosion of the value the Bible places on human life and community; it attaches too much importance to the cessation of suffering; and it reflects a human arrogance before a graciously sovereign God. We urge our people to oppose all efforts to legalize euthanasia.

Allowing to Die. When human death is imminent, we believe that either withdrawing or not originating artificial life-support systems is permissible within the range of Christian faith and practice. This position applies to persons who are in a persistent vegetative state and to those for whom the application of extraordinary means for prolonging life provide no reasonable hope for a return to health. We believe that when death is imminent, nothing in the Christian faith requires that the process of dying be artificially postponed. As Christians we trust in God's faithfulness and have the hope of eternal life. This makes it possible for Christians to accept death as an expression of faith in Christ who overcame death on our behalf and robbed it of its victory.

The Church of the Nazarene views human sexuality as one expression of the holiness and beauty that God the Creator intended. Because all humans are beings created in the image of God, they are of inestimable value and worth. As a result we believe that human sexuality is meant to include more than the sensual experience, and is a gift of God designed to reflect the whole of our physical and relational createdness.

As a holiness people, the Church of the Nazarene affirms that the human body matters to God. Christians are both called and enabled by the transforming and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to glorify God in and with our bodies. Our senses, our sexual appetites, our ability to experience pleasure, and our desire for connection to another are shaped out of the very character of God. Our bodies are good, very good.

We affirm belief in a God whose creation is an act of love. Having experienced God as holy love, we understand the Trinity to be a unity of love among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are made with a yearning for connection with others at the core of our being. That yearning is ultimately fulfilled as we live in covenanted relationship with God, the creation, and loving one's neighbor as one's self. Our creation as social beings is both good and beautiful. We reflect the image of God in our capacity to relate and our desire to do so. The people of God are formed as one in Christ, a rich community of love and grace.

Within this community, believers are called to live as faithful members of the body of Christ. Singleness among the people of God is to be valued and sustained by the rich fellowship of the church and the communion of the saints. To live as a single person is to engage, as Jesus did, in the intimacy of community, surrounded by friends, welcoming and being welcomed to tables, and expressing faithful witness.

Also within this community, we affirm that some believers are called to be married. As defined in Genesis, "a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) The marriage covenant, a reflection of the covenant between God and the people of God, is one of exclusive sexual fidelity, unselfish service, and social witness. A woman and a man publicly devote themselves to one another as a witness to the way God loves. Marital intimacy is intended to reflect the union of Christ and the Church, a mystery of grace. It is also God's intention that in this sacramental union the man and woman may experience the joy and pleasure of sexual intimacy and from this act of intimate love new life may enter the world and into a covenantal community of care. The Christ-centered home ought to serve as a primary location for spiritual formation. The church is to take great care in the formation of marriage through premarital counseling and teaching that denotes the sacredness of marriage.

The Scriptural story, however, also includes the sad chapter of the fracturing of human desire in the Fall, resulting in behaviors that elevate self-sovereignty, damage and objectify the other, and darken the path of human desire. As fallen beings, we have experienced this evil on every level—personal and corporate. The principalities and powers of a fallen world have saturated us with lies about our sexuality. Our desires have been twisted by sin and we are turned inward on ourselves. We have also contributed to the fracturing of the creation by our willful choice to violate the love of God and live on our own terms apart from God.

Our brokenness in the areas of sexuality takes many forms, some due to our own choosing and some brought into our lives via a broken world. However, God's grace is sufficient in our weaknesses, enough to bring conviction, transformation, and sanctification in our lives. Therefore, in order to resist adding to the brokenness of sin and to be able to witness to the beauty and uniqueness of God's holy purposes for our bodies, we believe members of the body of Christ, enabled by the Spirit, can and should refrain from:

Unmarried sexual intercourse and other forms of inappropriate sexual bonding. Because we believe that it is God's intention for our sexuality to be lived out in the covenantal union between one woman and one man, we believe that these practices often lead to the objectification of the other in a relationship. In all its forms, it also potentially harms our ability to enter into the beauty and holiness of Christian marriage with our whole selves.

Sexual activity between people of the same sex. Because we believe that it is God's intention for our sexuality to be lived out in the covenantal union between one woman and one man, we believe the practice of same-sex sexual intimacy is contrary to God's will for human sexuality. While a person's homosexual or bi-sexual attraction may have complex and differing origins, and the implication of this call to sexual purity is costly, we believe the grace of God is sufficient for such a calling. We recognize the shared responsibility of the body of Christ to be a welcoming, forgiving, and loving community where hospitality, encouragement, transformation, and accountability are available to all.

Extra-marital sexual relations. Because we believe this behavior is a violation of the vows that we made before God and within the body of Christ, adultery is a selfish act, a family-destroying choice, and an offense to the God who has loved us purely and devotedly.

Divorce. Because marriage is intended to be a life-long commitment, the fracturing of the covenant of marriage, whether initiated personally, or by the choice of a spouse, falls short of God's best intentions. The church must take care in preserving the marriage bond where wise and possible, and offering counsel and grace to those wounded by divorce.

Practices such as polygamy or polyandry. Because we believe that the covenantal faithfulness of God is reflected in the monogamous commitment of husband and wife, these practices take away from the unique and exclusive fidelity intended in marriage.

Sexual sin and brokenness is not only personal but pervades the systems and structures of the world. Therefore, as the church bears witness to the reality of the beauty and uniqueness of God's holy purposes we also believe the church should refrain from and advocate against:

Pornography in all its forms, which is desire gone awry. It is the objectification of people for selfish sexual gratification. This habit destroys our capacity to love unselfishly.

Sexual violence in any form, including rape, sexual assault, sexual bullying, hateful speech, marital abuse, incest, sex trafficking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, bestiality, sexual harassment, and the abuse of minors and other vulnerable populations. All people and systems that perpetrate sexual violence transgress the command to love and to protect our neighbor. The body of Christ should always be a place of justice, protection, and healing for those who are, who have been, and who continue to be affected by sexual violence. A minor is defined as any human being under the age of 18, unless the age of majority is attained later under a state's or country's own domestic legislation.

Therefore we affirm that:

Where sin abounds grace abounds all the more. Although the effects of sin are universal and holistic, the efficacy of grace is also universal and holistic. In Christ, through the Holy Spirit, we are renewed in the image of God. The old is gone and the new comes. Although the forming of our lives as a new creation may be a gradual process, God's healing is effective in dealing with the brokenness of humanity in the areas of sexuality.



The human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We affirm the need for our sexuality to be conformed to God's will. Our bodies are not our own but have been bought with a price. Therefore, we are called to glorify God in our bodies through a life of yielded obedience.

The people of God are marked by holy love. We affirm that, above all the virtues, the people of God are to clothe themselves with love. The people of God have always welcomed broken people into our gathering. Such Christian hospitality is neither an excusing of individual disobedience nor a refusal to participate redemptively in discerning the roots of brokenness. Restoring humans to the likeness of Jesus requires confession, forgiveness, formative practices, sanctification, and godly counsel—but most of all, it includes the welcome of love which invites the broken person into the circle of grace known as the church. If we fail to honestly confront sin and brokenness, we have not loved. If we fail to love, we cannot participate in God's healing of brokenness.

As the global church receives and ministers to the people of our world, the faithful outworking of these statements as congregations is complex and must be navigated with care, humility, courage, and discernment.

32

Meaning of Stewardship. The Scriptures teach that God is the Owner of all persons and all things. We, therefore, are His stewards of both life and possessions. God's ownership and our stewardship ought to be acknowledged, for we shall be held personally accountable to God for the exercise of our stewardship. God, as a God of system and order in all of His ways, has established a system of giving that acknowledges His ownership over all human resources and relationships. To this end all His children should faithfully tithe and present offerings for the support of the gospel. (140) (Malachi 3:8–12; Matthew 6:24–34; 25:31–46; Mark 10:17–31; Luke 12:13–24; 19:11–27; John 15:1–17; Romans 12:1–13; 1 Corinthians 9:7–14; 2 Corinthians 8:1–15; 9:6–15; 1 Timothy 6:6–19; Hebrews 7:8; James 1:27; 1 John 3:16–18)

32.1

Storehouse Tithing. Storehouse tithing is a scriptural and practical performance of faithfully and regularly placing the tithe into that church to which the member belongs. Therefore, the financing of the church shall be based on the plan of storehouse tithing, and the local Church of the Nazarene shall be regarded by all of its people as the storehouse. All who are a part of the Church of the Nazarene are urged to contribute faithfully one-tenth of all their increase as a minimum financial obligation to the Lord and freewill offerings in addition as God has prospered them for the support of the whole church, local, district, educational, and general. The tithe, provided to the local Church of the Nazarene, shall be considered a priority over all other giving opportunities which God may lay upon the hearts of His faithful stewards, in support of the whole church.

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## 32.2

Fundraising and Distribution. In the light of the scriptural teaching concerning the giving of tithes and offerings for the support of the gospel, and for the erection of church buildings, no Nazarene church should engage in any method of fundraising that would detract from these principles, hinder the gospel message, sully the name of the church, discriminate against the poor, or misdirect the people's energies from promoting the gospel.

In disbursing to meet the requirements of the local, district, educational, and general programs of the Church of the Nazarene, local churches are urged to adopt and practice a financial apportionment plan, and to pay general, educational, and district apportionments monthly. (130, 153, 154–154.2, 516.13)

## 32.3

Support of the Ministry. "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). The church is obligated to support its ministers, who have been called of God, and who, under the direction of the church, have given themselves wholly to the work of the ministry. We urge therefore that the members of the church voluntarily commit themselves to the task of supporting the ministry by gathering money weekly for this holy business and that the pastor's salary be paid regularly every week. (115.4, 115.6, 129.8)

## 32.4

Life Income Gifts, Planned and Deferred Giving. It is essential in the exercise of Christian stewardship that careful thought be given as to what shall be done with one's income and possessions over which the Lord makes the Christian a steward during this life. The Church of the Nazarene, recognizing the need for faithful stewardship in this life and the God-given vision to leave a legacy for the future, has established the Church of the Nazarene Foundation to enhance Christian stewardship through planned and deferred giving. Civil laws often do not provide for the distribution of an estate in such a way as to glorify God. Each Christian should give attention to the preparation of a last will and testament in a careful and legal manner, and the Church of the Nazarene through its various ministries of missions, evangelism, education, and benevolences—local, district, educational, and general—is recommended for consideration.

## 32.5

Shared Responsibility for the Denominational Mission. The government of the Church of the Nazarene is representative. Each local congregation supports the overall mission of the church as defined by the General Assembly and implemented through the leadership of the Board of General Superintendents in world evangelism, education, ministerial support, and district ministries.

The Board of General Superintendents and the General Board are authorized and empowered to develop, revise, and maintain a system for raising the World Evangelism Fund and to establish funding goals and responsibilities for local churches through the assembly districts.

Subject to paragraph 337.1, national boards and/or regional advisory councils are authorized and empowered to establish ministerial retirement savings plans on their region. Reporting of such plans shall be as provided in paragraph 337.2. The provisions of paragraph 32.5 shall not apply to the Board of Pensions and Benefits USA.

National boards and/or regional advisory councils are also authorized and empowered to establish support for the higher education institutions on their region. Each district is authorized and empowered to establish funding goals and responsibilities for local churches for district ministry support through the District Assembly Finance Committee. (238.1, 317.10, 345, 346.3)

## 33

We direct our local churches to elect as church officers active members of the local church who profess the experience of entire sanctification and whose lives bear public witness to the grace of God that calls us to a holy life; who are in harmony with the doctrines, polity, and practices of the Church of the Nazarene; and who support the local church faithfully in attendance, active service, and with tithes and offerings. Church officers should be fully engaged in "making Christlike disciples in the nations." (113.11, 127, 145–147)

## Section: Current Moral and Social Issues

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914. **Organ Donation.** The Church of the Nazarene encourages its members who do not object personally to support donor/recipient anatomical organs through living wills and trusts.

Further, we appeal for a morally and ethically fair distribution of organs to those qualified to receive them. (2013)

915. **Discrimination.** The Church of the Nazarene reiterates its historic position of Christian compassion for people of all races. We believe that God is the Creator of all people, and that of one blood are all people created.

We believe that each individual, regardless of race, color, gender, or creed, should have equality before law, including the right to vote, equal access to educational opportunities, to all public facilities, and to the equal opportunity, according to one's ability, to earn a living free from any job or economic discrimination.

We urge our churches everywhere to continue and strengthen programs of education to promote racial understanding and harmony. We also feel that the scriptural admonition of Hebrews 12:14 should guide the actions of our people. We urge that each member of the Church of the Nazarene humbly examine his or her personal attitudes and actions toward others, as a first step in achieving the Christian goal of full participation by all in the life of the church and the entire community.

We reemphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We believe that Christian charity between racial groups or gender will come when the hearts of people have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ, and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself.

Therefore, we renounce any form of racial and ethnic indifference, exclusion, subjugation, or oppression as a grave sin against God and our fellow human beings. We lament the legacy of every form of racism throughout the world, and we seek to confront that legacy through repentance, reconciliation, and biblical justice. We seek to repent of every behavior in which we have been overtly or covertly complicit with the sin of racism, both past and present; and in confession and lament we seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

Further, we acknowledge that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and to overcome all personal, institutional and structural prejudice responsible for racial and ethnic humiliation and oppression. We call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized. (2017)

916. **Abuse of the Unempowered.** The Church of the Nazarene abhors abuse of any person of any age or sex and calls for increased public awareness through its publications and by providing appropriate educational information.

The Church of the Nazarene reaffirms its historical policy that all those who act under the authority of the Church are prohibited from sexual misconduct and other forms of abuse of the unempowered. When placing people in positions of trust or authority, the Church of the Nazarene will presume that past conduct is usually a reliable indicator of likely future behavior. The Church will withhold positions of authority from people who have previously used a position of trust or authority to engage in sexual misconduct or abuse of the unempowered, unless appropriate steps are taken to prevent future wrongful behavior. Expressions of remorse by a guilty person shall not be considered sufficient to overcome the presumption that future wrongful conduct is likely, unless the expressions of remorse are accompanied by an observable change of conduct for a sufficient length of time, to indicate that a repeat of the wrongful misconduct is unlikely. (2009)

**917. Responsibility to the Poor.** The Church of the Nazarene believes that Jesus commanded His disciples to have a special relationship to the poor of this world; that Christ's Church ought, first, to keep itself simple and free from an emphasis on wealth and extravagance and, second, to give itself to the care, feeding, clothing, and shelter of the poor. Throughout the Bible and in the life and example of Jesus, God identifies with and assists the poor, the oppressed, and those in society who cannot speak for themselves. In the same way, we, too, are called to identify with and to enter into solidarity with the poor and not simply to offer charity from positions of comfort. We hold that compassionate ministry to the poor includes acts of charity as well as a struggle to provide opportunity, equality, and justice for the poor. We further believe that the Christian responsibility to the poor is an essential aspect of the life of every believer who seeks a faith that works through love.

Finally, we understand Christian holiness to be inseparable from ministry to the poor in that holiness compels the Christian beyond his or her own individual perfection and toward the creation of a more just and equitable society and world. Holiness, far from distancing believers from the desperate economic needs of people in our world, motivates us to place our means in the service of alleviating such need and to adjust our wants in accordance with the needs of others. (2013) (Exodus 23:11; Deuteronomy 15:7; Psalms 41:1; 82:3; Proverbs 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; Jeremiah 22:16; Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:10)

**918. Gender Inclusive Language.** The Church of the Nazarene affirms and encourages the use of gender inclusive language in reference to persons. Publications, including the Manual and public language should reflect this commitment to gender equality as expressed in paragraph 501. Language changes shall not be applied to any scriptural quotations or references to God. (2009)

**919. The Church and Human Freedom.** Concerned that our great Christian heritage be understood and safeguarded, we remind our people that both political and religious freedom rest upon biblical concepts of the dignity of humankind as God's creation and the sanctity of one's own individual conscience. We encourage our people to participate in appropriate activity in support of these biblical concepts and to be ever vigilant against threats to this precious freedom.

These freedoms are constantly in danger, therefore we urge election of persons to public office at all levels of government who believe in these principles and who are answerable only to God and the constituency that elected them when carrying out a public trust. Further, we resist any invasion of these principles by religious groups .

**920. Affirmation and Declaration of Human Freedom.** Whereas, as Nazarenes, we embrace the divine call to a life of holiness, wholeness, and restorative living where all things and all peoples are reconciled to God. In response, the Holy Spirit brings freedom to the marginalized, oppressed, broken, and hurting, and justice to right injustices and cease selfish influence caused by sin, until all things are restored in God's reign. Consistent with our Wesleyan-holiness heritage and character, we confront the contemporary scourge of modern slavery, illegal or forced labor, and the trafficking of human beings and bodies. And, in keeping with these affirmations,

- We resolve that members and congregations of the International Church of the Nazarene will:
- As a holiness people, in our pursuit of justice, recognize that we are called to repent of any injustices in our past, amend our present, and create a just future;
- Call to account those who oppress others;
- Engage in compassionate care for those caught up in illegal or forced labor, organ harvesting, and sex slavery (along with any other emerging oppression as yet unknown to us);
- Listen actively for and amplify the cries of the oppressed;
- Denounce injustices and work humbly against the causes of injustice;
- Act in solidarity with our sister and brother against whatever binds in order to move together toward freedom; and
- Come alongside those who are vulnerable through godly practices that bring redemption, restoration, healing, and freedom (1 John 3:8).

Built upon our Wesleyan-holiness Christian heritage and call to holiness, we make the following affirmations:

- We affirm that the pursuit of justice, reconciliation, and freedom is at the heart of God's holiness being reflected in people. We commit ourselves and our ecclesial resources to working for the abolition of all forms of slavery, trafficking, and oppression, and to participate in intentional networks, conversations, and actions that provide hopeful alternatives.
- We affirm that churches should faithfully respond to the impulse of God's holy love by working for God's reign to be ever more visible. We are called to be faithful witnesses in thought, word, and deed, to the holy God who hears the cries of those who are oppressed, imprisoned, trafficked, and abused by economic, political, selfish, and evil systems and persons. God calls us to respond in humility with compassion and justice.
- We affirm that acting justly involves the compassionate care for those in our immediate surroundings and also being able to name injustice, and denounce the powers that cause it. Acting justly and loving mercy have often brought the people of God in conflict with the ruling powers and principalities of the day. God's justice calls us beyond equal treatment, tolerance of one another's differences, or simply reversing the role of oppressed and oppressor. By Jesus' example, we are called to a justice whereby we are willing to give ourselves up for the sake of another.
- We affirm that Christian justice requires a deep commitment to both personal and corporate confession, repentance, and forgiveness as necessary steps.
- We affirm that we must advocate for just and hopeful practices in all areas of life. Reflecting the compassionate hope of Christ and love for all people, we identify with the conditions that bring dehumanizing circumstances. We will speak for those who are not heard, and come alongside the vulnerable by offering practices that bring redemption, restoration, healing, and freedom.
- We affirm that we are called to become a people who embody a hopeful alternative to oppression and injustice. We are called to reflect the holy God in holy lives, bringing justice in motive and practice to people, circumstances, systems, and nations. While we may not end all suffering, as the body of Christ we are compelled to bring the holiness of God in healing fashion to the redemptive enterprise of restoring all things.
- We affirm that as a collaborative network we must think deeply, work holistically, and engage locally and globally. Complex issues drive modern slavery; therefore, multiple solutions must be undertaken.

These will proceed from the fabric of who we are in Christian community naturally flowing into what we do. We therefore pledge:

- To work separately and together, as individuals and institutions, consistent with our Wesleyan-holiness identity to serve with compassion and to prophetically challenge oppressive systems;
- To support, encourage, resource, plan, and engage together in effective, wise, sustainable action;
- To labor as a worshipping community, with Christ at the center, infused with the power of the Spirit as a movement of hope;
- To think deeply, pray with expectation, and act with courage.
- For this we live and labor until God's reign comes "on earth as it is in heaven." (2017)

**921. Value of Children and Youth.** The Bible commands every Christian to, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute” (Proverbs 31:8). The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–7; 11:19) admonishes us to communicate God’s grace to our children. Psalm 78:4 declares, “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.” Jesus affirms this in Luke 18:16, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” As a response to this biblical perspective, the Church of the Nazarene acknowledges that children are important to God and a priority in His kingdom. We believe God directed us to attend to all children—to love, nurture, protect, uphold, guide, and advocate for them. It is God’s plan that we introduce children to the life of salvation and growth in grace. Salvation, holiness, and discipleship are possible and imperative in the lives of children. We recognize that children are not a means to an end, but full participants in the Body of Christ. Children are disciples in training, not disciples in waiting. Thus, holistic and transformational ministry to children and their families in every local church will be a priority as evidenced by:

- providing effective and empowering ministries to the whole child—physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually;
- articulating Christian positions on current social justice issues that affect children;
- connecting children to the heart of the mission and ministry of the faith community;
- discipling children and training them to disciple others;
- equipping parents to nurture the spiritual formation of their children.

Since the church’s educational institutions (Bible schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries) prepare students for leadership, they play a crucial role in carrying out the vision and mission of communicating the value of children. They join local churches and families in taking responsibility to prepare members of the clergy and laity to raise the next generation of children and youth to be biblically and theologically literate and to meet the known and unforeseen challenges for evangelizing, discipling, and transforming their societies. The Church of the Nazarene envisions an intergenerational faith community where children and youth are loved and valued, where they are ministered to and incorporated into the Church family through a wide variety of means and methods, and where they have opportunities to minister to others in ways consistent with their ages, development, abilities, and spiritual gifts. (2009)

**922. War and Military Service.** The Church of the Nazarene believes that the ideal world condition is that of peace and that it is the full obligation of the Christian Church to use its influence to seek such means as will enable the nations of the earth to be at peace and to devote all of its agencies for the propagation of the message of peace. However, we realize that we are living in a world where evil forces and philosophies are actively in conflict with these Christian ideals and that there may arise such international emergencies as will require a nation to resort to war in defense of its ideals, its freedom, and its existence.

While thus committed to the cause of peace, the Church of the Nazarene recognizes that the supreme allegiance of the Christian is due to God, and therefore it does not endeavor to bind the conscience of its members relative to participation in military service in case of war, although it does believe that the individual Christian as a citizen is bound to give service to his or her own nation in all ways that are compatible with the Christian faith and the Christian way of life.

We also recognize that, as an outgrowth of the Christian teaching and of the Christian desire for peace on earth, there are among our membership individuals who have conscientious objection to certain forms of military service. Therefore the Church of the Nazarene claims for conscientious objectors within its membership the same exemptions and considerations regarding military service as are accorded members of recognized noncombatant religious organizations. The Church of the Nazarene, through its general secretary, shall set up a register whereon those persons who supply evidence of being members of the Church of the Nazarene may record their convictions as conscientious objectors. (2017)

923. **Creation.** The Church of the Nazarene believes in the biblical account of creation (“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”—Genesis 1:1). We are open to scientific explanations on the nature of creation while opposing any interpretation of the origin of the universe and of humankind that rejects God as the Creator (Hebrews 11:3). (1, 5.1, 7) (2017)

924. **Creation Care.** With deep appreciation of God’s creation we believe we are to strive to exhibit the stewardship qualities that help preserve His work. Recognizing we have been given a stake in sustaining the integrity of our surroundings, we accept the individual and collective responsibilities of doing so. (2009) (Genesis 2:15, Psalms 8:3–9; 19:1–4; 148)

925. **Evidence of Baptism with the Holy Spirit.** The Church of the Nazarene believes that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the new birth and to the subsequent work of heart cleansing, or entire sanctification, through the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

We affirm that the one biblical evidence of entire sanctification, or the infilling of the Holy Spirit, is the cleansing of the heart by faith from original sin as stated in Acts 15:8–9: “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.” And this cleansing is manifested by the fruit of the Spirit in a holy life. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:22–24).

To affirm that even a special or any alleged physical evidence, or “prayer language,” is evidence of the baptism with the Spirit is contrary to the biblical and historic position of the Church. (2009)

926. **Pornography.** Pornography is an evil that is undermining the morals of society. Printed and visual materials that degrade the dignity of humankind and are contrary to the scriptural view of the sanctity of marriage and the wholesomeness of sex are to be abhorred.

We believe that we are created in the image of God and that pornography degrades, exploits, and abuses men, women, and children. The pornography industry is motivated by greed, is the enemy of family life, has led to crimes of violence, poisons minds, and defiles the body. To honor God as Creator and Redeemer, we urge active opposition to pornography by every legitimate means and the making of positive efforts to reach for Christ those who are involved in this evil. (2009)

927. **Christian Modesty of Dress.** Recognizing the increasing trend toward immodesty of dress in public places, we remind our people of the Christian concept of modesty as an expression of holiness and urge that Christian modesty be exercised at all times in public. (2017)

928. **Wellness.** The scripture calls all believers to balance, health, and wholeness through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Gluttony is the practice of consuming to the detriment of body, community, and spiritual life. While obesity may arise due to genetics, cultural constraints, or physical limitations, gluttony, on the other hand, reflects a way of life that consumes God’s good creation: food, resources and relationships that harm both persons and community. The practice of Christian stewardship calls us to seek to maintain the health and fitness of our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit and to live temperate lives with all the resources and relationships God provides. (2009) (Proverbs 23:19–21; Matthew 11:19; 23:25; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 5:23; Philippians 3:19; Titus 1:8; 2:12; Hebrews 12:16; 2 Peter 1:6)

929. **Substance Abuse.** The Church of the Nazarene continues to strongly object to substance abuse as a social malignancy. We encourage church members to take an active and highly visible role and to participate in education and rehabilitation relative to substance abuse and the incompatibility of such use with a Christian experience and a holy life. (2013)

930. **Alcohol Desocialization.** The Church of the Nazarene publicly supports the desocialization of alcohol consumption. We encourage civic, labor, business, professional, social, voluntary, and private agencies and organizations to assist in such desocialization to counteract the advertising and media promotion of the social acceptability of the “alcohol culture.” (2013)

931. **Tobacco Use and Advertising.** The Church of the Nazarene urges its people to continue to speak out against the use of tobacco, both as a health hazard and a social evil. Our historic stand is based on God's Word, where we are admonished to maintain our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19–20).

Our stand opposing the use of tobacco in all its forms is strongly supported by medical evidence, documented by numerous social, governmental, and health agencies around the world. They have demonstrated that it is a major health hazard, and have shown conclusively that its use may produce changes in normal bodily physiology, both serious and permanent.

We recognize that our young people are greatly influenced by the millions of dollars that are spent on tobacco advertising, and its twin evil, beverage alcohol. We endorse a ban on all advertising of tobacco and beverage alcohol in magazines, on billboards, and on radio, television, and other media. (2013)

932. **HIV/AIDS** (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). Since 1981, our world has been confronted with a most devastating disease known as HIV/AIDS. In view of the deep need of HIV/AIDS sufferers, Christian compassion motivates us to become accurately informed about HIV/AIDS. Christ would have us to find a way to communicate His love and concern for these sufferers in any and every country of the world. (2013)

933. **Use of Social Media.** First and foremost, the content that we share should be respectful. As in all interpersonal relationships, we believe that the content of our social media should also be a reflection of the sanctified hearts for which we strive. Clergy and laity alike must be mindful of how their activities on social media affect the image of Christ and His church and impact its mission within their communities. Our activities should be life giving and affirming and should seek to uplift all persons. (2017) (Proverbs 15:4, 15:28, 16:24; Ecclesiastes 5:2–4; Matthew 15:11; Galatians 5:13–15; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:62; 2 Timothy 2:16; James 3:1–13)