



PART II

Church Constitution

PREAMBLE

ARTICLES OF FAITH

THE CHURCH

ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION
AND GOVERNMENT

AMENDMENTS

PREAMBLE TO CHURCH CONSTITUTION

In order that we may preserve our God-given heritage, the faith once delivered to the saints, especially the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace, and also that we may cooperate effectually with other branches of the Church of Jesus Christ in advancing God's kingdom, we, the ministers and lay members of the Church of the Nazarene, in accordance with the principles of constitutional legislation established among us, do hereby ordain, adopt, and set forth as the fundamental law or Constitution of the Church of the Nazarene the Articles of Faith, the Covenant of Christian Character, and the Articles of Organization and Government here following, to wit:

ARTICLES OF FAITH

NOTE: Scripture references are supportive of the Articles of Faith and were placed here beginning with action of the 1976 General Assembly. They are not to be considered part of the Constitutional text.

I. The Triune God

1. We believe in one eternally existent, infinite God, Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe; that He only is God, holy in nature, attributes, and purpose. The God who is holy love and light is Triune in essential being, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(Genesis 1; Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Isaiah 5:16; 6:1-7; 40:18-31; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19-20; John 14:6-27; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; 1 John 1:5; 4:8)

II. Jesus Christ

2. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead; that He was eternally one with the Father; that He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say the Godhead and manhood, are thus united in one Person very God and very man, the God-man.

We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and that He truly arose from the dead and took again His body, together with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven and is there engaged in intercession for us.

(Matthew 1:20-25; 16:15-16; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1-18; Acts 2:22-36; Romans 8:3, 32-34; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:12-22; 1 Timothy 6:14-16; Hebrews 1:1-5; 7:22-28; 9:24-28; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:2-3, 15)

III. The Holy Spirit

3. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune Godhead, that He is ever present and efficiently active in and with the Church of Christ, convincing the world of sin, regenerating those who repent and believe, sanctifying believers, and guiding into all truth as it is in Jesus.

(John 7:39; 14:15-18, 26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:33; 15:8-9; Romans 8:1-27; Galatians 3:1-14; 4:6; Ephesians 3:14-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:24; 4:13)

IV. The Holy Scriptures

4. We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

(Luke 24:44-47; John 10:35; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

V. Sin, Original and Personal

5. We believe that sin came into the world through the disobedience of our first parents, and death by sin. We believe that sin is of two kinds: original sin or depravity, and actual or personal sin.

5.1. We believe that original sin, or depravity, is that corruption of the nature of all the offspring of Adam by reason of which everyone is very far gone from original righteousness or the pure state of our first parents at the time of their

creation, is averse to God, is without spiritual life, and inclined to evil, and that continually. We further believe that original sin continues to exist with the new life of the regenerate, until the heart is fully cleansed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

5.2. We believe that original sin differs from actual sin in that it constitutes an inherited propensity to actual sin for which no one is accountable until its divinely provided remedy is neglected or rejected.

5.3. We believe that actual or personal sin is a voluntary violation of a known law of God by a morally responsible person. It is therefore not to be confused with involuntary and inescapable shortcomings, infirmities, faults, mistakes, failures, or other deviations from a standard of perfect conduct that are the residual effects of the Fall. However, such innocent effects do not include attitudes or responses contrary to the spirit of Christ, which may properly be called sins of the spirit. We believe that personal sin is primarily and essentially a violation of the law of love; and that in relation to Christ sin may be defined as unbelief.

(Original sin: Genesis 3; 6:5; Job 15:14; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:18-25; 5:12-14; 7:1-8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Galatians 5:16-25; 1 John 1:7-8

Personal sin: Matthew 22:36-40 {with 1 John 3:4}; John 8:34-36; 16:8-9; Romans 3:23; 6:15-23; 8:18-24; 14:23; 1 John 1:9-2:4; 3:7-10)

VI. Atonement

6. We believe that Jesus Christ, by His sufferings, by the shedding of His own blood, and by His death on the Cross, made a full atonement for all human sin, and that this Atonement is the only ground of salvation, and that it is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. The Atonement is graciously efficacious for the salvation of those incapable of moral responsibility and for the children in innocency but is efficacious for the salvation of those who reach the age of responsibility only when they repent and believe.

(Isaiah 53:5-6, 11; Mark 10:45; Luke 24:46-48; John 1:29; 3:14-17; Acts 4:10-12; Romans 3:21-26; 4:17-25; 5:6-21; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians

5:14-21; Galatians 1:3-4; 3:13-14; Colossians 1:19-23; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:9; 9:11-14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:18-21; 2:19-25; 1 John 2:1-2)

VII. Preventive Grace

7. We believe that the grace of God through Jesus Christ is freely bestowed upon all people, enabling all who will to turn from sin to righteousness, believe on Jesus Christ for pardon and cleansing from sin, and follow good works pleasing and acceptable in His sight. We also believe that the human race's creation in Godlikeness included the ability to choose between right and wrong, and that thus human beings were made morally responsible; that through the fall of Adam they became depraved so that they cannot now turn and prepare themselves by their own natural strength and works to faith and calling upon God.

(Godlikeness and moral responsibility: Genesis 1:26-27; 2:16-17; Deuteronomy 28:1-2; 30:19; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 8:3-5; Isaiah 1:8-10; Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:1-4; Micah 6:8; Romans 1:19-20; 2:1-16; 14:7-12; Galatians 6:7-8

Natural inability: Job 14:4; 15:14; Psalms 14:1-4; 51:5; John 3:6a; Romans 3:10-12; 5:12-14, 20a; 7:14-25

Free grace and works of faith: Ezekiel 18:25-26; John 1:12-13; 3:6b; Acts 5:31; Romans 5:6-8, 18; 6:15-16, 23; 10:6-8; 11:22; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14; 10:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 4:10a; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12-15; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; James 2:18-22; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2:20-22)

VIII. Repentance

8. We believe the Spirit of God gives to all who will repent the gracious help of penitence of heart and hope of mercy, that they may believe unto pardon and spiritual life. Repentance, which is a sincere and thorough change of the mind in regard to sin, involving a sense of personal guilt and a voluntary turning away from sin, is demanded of all who have by act or purpose become sinners against God.

We believe that all persons may fall from grace and apostatize and, unless they repent of their sins, be hopelessly and eternally lost. We believe that regenerate persons need not return to sin but may live in unbroken fellowship with God

through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit who bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.

(2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalms 32:5-6; 51:1-17; Isaiah 55:6-7; Jeremiah 3:12-14; Ezekiel 18:30-32; 33:14-16; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 3:1-14; 13:1-5; 18:9-14; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 17:30-31; 26:16-18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:9)

IX. Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption

9. We believe that justification is the gracious and judicial act of God by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believe on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

9.1. We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.

9.2. We believe that adoption is that gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a child of God.

9.3. We believe that justification, regeneration, and adoption are simultaneous in the experience of seekers after God and are received by faith, preceded by repentance; and that to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

(Luke 18:14; John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 5:24; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:17; 3:21-26, 28; 4:5-9, 17-25; 5:1, 16-19; 6:4; 7:6; 8:1, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 2:16-21; 3:1-14, 26; 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:6-7; 2:1, 4-5; Philippians 3:3-9; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 1:9; 3:1-2, 9; 4:7; 5:1, 9-13, 18)

X. Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification

10. We believe that sanctification is the work of God which transforms believers into the likeness of Christ. It is wrought by God's grace through the Holy Spirit in initial sanctification, or regeneration (simultaneous with justification), entire sanctification, and the continued perfecting work of the Holy Spirit culminating in glorification. In glorification we are fully conformed to the image of the Son.

We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotion to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.

It is wrought by the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service. Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by grace through faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

This experience is also known by various terms representing its different phases, such as “Christian perfection,” “perfect love,” “heart purity,” “the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit,” “the fullness of the blessing,” and “Christian holiness.”

10.1. We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace.

We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the divine impulse to grow in grace as a Christlike disciple. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and personality. Without such purposeful endeavor, one’s witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost.

Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines, and sacraments of the Church, believers grow in grace and in wholehearted love to God and neighbor.

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; John 7:37-39; 14:15-23; 17:6-20; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; Romans 6:11-13, 19; 8:1-4, 8-14; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:17-18, 25-27; Philippians 3:10-15; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 4:9-11; 10:10-17; 12:1-2; 13:12; 1 John 1:7, 9)

("Christian perfection," "perfect love": Deuteronomy 30:6; Matthew 5:43-48; 22:37-40; Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 3:10-15; Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 4:17-18

"Heart purity": Matthew 5:8; Acts 15:8-9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:3

"Baptism with the Holy Spirit": Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9

"Fullness of the blessing": Romans 15:29

"Christian holiness": Matthew 5:1-7:29; John 15:1-11; Romans 12:1-15:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-15; Colossians 2:20-3:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7-8; 5:23; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Hebrews 10:19-25; 12:14; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 1:1-11; 3:18; Jude 20-21)

XI. The Church

II. We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

God calls the Church to express its life in the unity and fellowship of the Spirit; in worship through the preaching of the Word, observance of the sacraments, and ministry in His name; by obedience to Christ, holy living, and mutual accountability.

The mission of the Church in the world is to share in the redemptive and reconciling ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Church fulfills its mission by making disciples through evangelism, education, showing compassion, working for justice, and bearing witness to the kingdom of God.

The Church is a historical reality that organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms, exists both as local congregations and as a universal body, and also sets apart persons called of God for specific ministries. God calls the Church to live under His rule in anticipation of the consummation at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Exodus 19:3; Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 8:11; 10:7; 16:13-19, 24; 18:15-20; 28:19-20; John 17:14-26; 20:21-23; Acts 1:7-8; 2:32-47; 6:1-2; 13:1; 14:23; Romans 2:28-29; 4:16; 10:9-15; 11:13-32; 12:1-8; 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 7:17; 11:1, 17-33; 12:3, 12-31; 14:26-40; 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:1; Galatians 5:6, 13-14; 6:1-5, 15; Ephesians 4:1-17; 5:25-27; Philippians 2:1-16; 1 Thessalonians

4:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:19-25; 1 Peter 1:1-2, 13; 2:4-12, 21; 4:1-2, 10-11; 1 John 4:17; Jude 24; Revelation 5:9-10)

XII. Baptism

12. We believe that Christian baptism, commanded by our Lord, is a sacrament signifying acceptance of the benefits of the atonement and incorporation into the Body of Christ. Baptism is a means of grace proclaiming faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. It is to be administered to believers indicating their full purpose of obedience in holiness and righteousness. As participants in the new covenant, young children and the morally innocent may be baptized upon request of parents or guardians. The church shall give assurance of Christian training. Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

(Matthew 3:1-7; 28:16-20; Acts 2:37-41; 8:35-39; 10:44-48; 16:29-34; 19:1-6; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-28; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:18-22)

XIII. The Lord's Supper

13. We believe that the Communion Supper instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is a sacrament, proclaiming His life, sufferings, sacrificial death, resurrection, and the hope of His coming again. The Lord's Supper is a means of grace in which Christ is present by the Spirit. All are invited to participate by faith in Christ and be renewed in life, salvation, and in unity as the Church. All are to come in reverent appreciation of its significance, and by it show forth the Lord's death until He comes. Those who have faith in Christ and love for the saints are invited by Christ to participate as often as possible.

(Exodus 12:1-14; Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; John 6:28-58; 1 Corinthians 10:14-21; 11:23-32)

XIV. Divine Healing

14. We believe in the biblical doctrine of divine healing and urge our people to offer the prayer of faith for the healing

of the sick. We also believe God heals through the means of medical science.

(2 Kings 5:1-19; Psalm 103:1-5; Matthew 4:23-24; 9:18-35; John 4:46-54; Acts 5:12-16; 9:32-42; 14:8-15; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 5:13-16)

XV. Second Coming of Christ

NOTE: Constitutional changes adopted by the 2023 General Assembly are in the process of ratification by the district assemblies at the time of printing. Where changes are being made, words in italics are new words and words in brackets [] are words being deleted.

15. We believe that *at the end of the age* the Lord Jesus Christ will *be revealed as Lord of all*. He will come again in glory and power to establish fully the kingdom of God that He proclaimed and initiated in His life and ministry. As the Triune God first created heaven and earth, God will renew them in the new creation where He will dwell eternally with His redeemed people. [; that w]We who are alive at His coming shall not precede them that are asleep in Christ Jesus; but [that], if we are abiding in Him, we shall be caught up with the risen saints to meet the Lord in the air, so that we shall ever be with the Lord. *In that day, God, who in the cross triumphed over all evil powers, will complete His loving purposes for creation. There will be no more suffering, injustice, or death, and God will wipe away every tear.*

(Deuteronomy 10:17; Isaiah 11:1-9; 65:17-25; 66:22-23; Matthew 6:9-13, 24; 25:31-46; 28:18; Luke 4:18-21; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 3:21; Romans 8:18-22; 1 Corinthians 13:12-13; 15:24-25, 28; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 1:6; 2:5-11; 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 9:26-28; 2 Peter 3:3-15; Revelation 1:7-8; 12:10-12; 21:1-8; 22:7-20)

XVI. Resurrection, Judgment, and Destiny

16. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, that the bodies both of the just and of the unjust shall be raised to life and united with their spirits—“they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

16.1. We believe in future judgment in which every person shall appear before God to be judged according to his or her deeds in this life.

16.2. We believe that glorious and everlasting life is assured to all who savingly believe in, and obediently follow, Jesus Christ our Lord; and that the finally impenitent shall suffer eternally in hell.

(Genesis 18:25; 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 50:6; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-31; 20:27-38; John 3:16-18; 5:25-29; 11:21-27; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:1-16; 14:7-12; 1 Corinthians 15:12-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 20:11-15; 22:1-15)

THE CHURCH

I. The General Church

17. The Church of God is composed of all spiritually regenerate persons, whose names are written in heaven.

II. The Churches Severally

18. The churches severally are to be composed of such regenerate persons as by providential permission, and by the leadings of the Holy Spirit, become associated together for holy fellowship and ministries.

III. The Church of the Nazarene

19. The Church of the Nazarene is composed of those persons who have voluntarily associated themselves together according to the doctrines and polity of said church, and who seek holy Christian fellowship, the conversion of sinners, the entire sanctification of believers, their upbuilding in holiness, and the simplicity and spiritual power manifest in the primitive New Testament Church, together with the preaching of the gospel to every creature.

IV. Agreed Statement of Belief

20. Recognizing that the right and privilege of persons to church membership rest upon the fact of their being regenerate, we would require only such avowals of belief as are essential to Christian experience. We, therefore, deem belief in the following brief statements to be sufficient. We believe:

20.1. In One God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

20.2. The Old and New Testament Scriptures, given by plenary inspiration, contain all truth necessary to faith and Christian living.

20.3. Human beings are born with a fallen nature, and are, therefore, inclined to evil, and that continually.

20.4. The finally impenitent are hopelessly and eternally lost.

20.5. The atonement through Jesus Christ is for the whole human race; and that whosoever repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is justified and regenerated and saved from the dominion of sin.

20.6. The believers are to be sanctified wholly, subsequent to regeneration, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

20.7. The Holy Spirit bears witness to the new birth, and also to the entire sanctification of believers.

20.8. Our Lord will return, the dead will be raised, and the final judgment will take place.

V. The Covenant of Christian Character

21. 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:

21.1. 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 people (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 people; 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 the means of grace, including the public worship of God (Hebrews 10:25), the ministry of the Word (Acts 2:42), the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-30); searching the Scriptures and meditating thereon (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-16); family and private devotions (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Matthew 6:6).

21.2. 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, extramarital, or same-sex relations; perversion in any form or looseness and impropriety of conduct (Genesis 19:4-11; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Matthew 5:27-32; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; 1 Timothy 1:10).

(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 (Proverbs 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).

21.3. 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).

ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT

Article I. Form of Government

22. The Church of the Nazarene has a representative form of government.

22.1. We are agreed that there are three legislative entities in the structure of the Church of the Nazarene: local, district, general. The regions serve as administrative entities for mission strategy and implementation.

22.2. We are agreed on the necessity of a superintendency that shall complement and assist the local church in the fulfilling of its mission and objectives. The superintendency shall build morale, provide motivation, supply management and method assistance, and organize and encourage organization of new churches and missions everywhere.

22.3. We are agreed that authority given to superintendents shall not interfere with the independent action of a fully organized church. Each church shall enjoy the right to select its own pastor, subject to such approval as the General Assembly shall find wise to institute. Each church shall also elect delegates to the various assemblies, manage its own finances, and have charge of all other matters pertaining to its local life and work.

Article II. Local Churches

23. The membership of a local church shall consist of all who have been organized as a church by those authorized so to do and who have been publicly received by those having proper authority, after having declared their experience of salvation, their belief in our doctrines, and their willingness to submit to our government. (100-109)

Article III. District Assemblies

24. The General Assembly shall organize the membership of the church into district assemblies, giving such lay and ministerial representation therein as the General Assembly

may deem fair and just, and shall determine qualifications of such representatives, provided, however, that all assigned ordained ministers shall be members thereof. The General Assembly shall also define the powers and duties of district assemblies. (200-207.4)

Article IV. The General Assembly

25. How Composed. The General Assembly shall be composed of ministerial and lay delegates in equal numbers, elected thereto by district assemblies of the Church of the Nazarene; such ex-officio members as the General Assembly shall from time to time direct; and such delegates as may be provided for by the General Assembly.

25.1. Election of Delegates. At a district assembly within 16 months of the meeting of the General Assembly or within 24 months in areas where travel visas or other unusual preparations are necessary, an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates to the General Assembly shall be elected by plurality vote, provided that the ministerial delegates shall be assigned ordained ministers of the Church of the Nazarene. Each Phase 3 assembly district shall be entitled to at least one ministerial and one lay delegate, and such additional delegates as its membership may warrant on the basis of representation fixed by the General Assembly. Each assembly district shall elect alternate delegates not exceeding twice the number of its delegates. In situations where travel visas are problematic, a district assembly may authorize the District Advisory Board to select additional alternates. (205.23, 301-301.1)

25.2. Credentials. The secretary of each district assembly shall furnish certificates of election to the delegates and alternates severally elected to the General Assembly, and shall also send certificates of such elections to the general secretary of the Church of the Nazarene immediately following the adjournment of the district assembly.

25.3. Quorum. The quorum at any meeting of the General Assembly shall be a majority of the voting delegates who have been registered on site with the General Assembly Credentials

Committee. If a quorum has once been obtained, a smaller number may approve the unapproved minutes and adjourn.

25.4. General Superintendents. The General Assembly shall elect by ballot from among the elders of the Church of the Nazarene six general superintendents, who shall constitute the Board of General Superintendents. Any vacancy in the office of general superintendent in the interim of General Assemblies shall be filled by a two-thirds vote of the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene. (305.2, 316)

25.5. Presiding Officers. A general superintendent appointed thereto by the Board of General Superintendents shall preside over the daily meetings of the General Assembly. But if no general superintendent be so appointed or be present, the General Assembly shall elect one of its members as temporary presiding officer. (300.1)

25.6. Standing Rules. The General Assembly shall adopt rules of order governing its manner of organization, procedure, committees, and all other matters pertaining to the orderly conduct of its business. It shall be the judge of the election and qualifications of its own members. (300.2-300.3)

25.7. General Court of Appeals. The General Assembly shall elect from among members of the Church of the Nazarene a General Court of Appeals and shall define its jurisdiction and powers. (305.7)

25.8. Powers and Restrictions.

(1) The General Assembly shall have power to legislate for the Church of the Nazarene, and to make rules and regulations for all the departments related to or associated with it in any respect, but not in conflict with this Constitution. (300, 305-305.8)

(2) No local church shall be deprived of the right to call its pastor, subject to such approval as the General Assembly shall find wise to institute. (117)

(3) All local churches, officers, ministers, and laypersons shall always have the right to a fair and orderly trial and the right to make an appeal.

AMENDMENTS

26. The provisions of this Constitution may be repealed or amended when concurred in by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly members present and voting, and when ratified by not less than two-thirds of all the Phase 3 and Phase 2 district assemblies of the Church of the Nazarene. A two-thirds vote is required on each constitutional amendment item by any Phase 3 or Phase 2 district assembly. Either the General Assembly or any Phase 3 or Phase 2 district assembly may take the initiative in the matter of proposing such amendments. As soon as such amendments shall have been adopted as herein provided, the result of the vote shall be announced by the Board of General Superintendents, whereupon such amendments shall have full force and effect.

27. Resolutions amending the Articles of Faith (paragraphs 1-16.2) shall be referred by the General Assembly to the Board of General Superintendents for review by a study committee, including theologians and ordained ministers, appointed by the Board of General Superintendents that reflects the global nature of our Church. The committee shall report, with any recommendations or resolutions, to the Board of General Superintendents, who shall report to the subsequent General Assembly.

PART III

The Covenant of Christian Conduct

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

HUMAN SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

CHURCH OFFICERS

RULES OF ORDER

AMENDING THE COVENANT
OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

A. The Christian Life

28. The church joyfully proclaims the good news that new life can be found through Jesus Christ. Scripture begins with God's good work of creating, though the appearance and ever-increasingly devastating effects of sin followed. Yet, because of God's grace and mercy, God constantly acts to restore what has been damaged by sin. The fullness of God's redemptive plan is revealed in the good news of the gospel that in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17-19) God's restorative work calls the people of God to embody and witness to this new life in the present day. The Christian life calls the disciple, the whole person –body, mind, and spirit, to commitments and choices in response to God's transforming grace. Therefore, "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1b-2b).

(Romans 12:1b-2b, Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-11, I Thess. 5:23-24)

28.1. God's people commit themselves to enduring Scriptural truth, found in both the Old and New Testaments. We hold that the Ten Commandments, as reaffirmed in the teachings of Jesus Christ, demonstrated in the Great Commandment and the Sermon on the Mount constitute the basic Christian ethic. We consider it imperative that in every specific cultural context we earnestly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the wisdom of the Christian tradition in living Christlike lives.

(John 14:26; 16:13)

28.2. God invites us to join in His work of restoration through commitment to wholeness. Thus, our shared conviction is that the Christian life will mean continually 'putting on' some things and 'laying down' others. Such practices are often sacrificial, and shape us for a life of witness in the world in which we live. These move believers toward ever-increasing Christlikeness, are intentional, and develop over time as

people discern and respond to God's call to participate in Christ. Therefore:

(Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 25:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

28.3. We call our people to discipleship in the context of faithful congregations. Nurture, grace, and accountability are the responsibility of the Christian community. As the family of God, we take seriously the responsibility to raise children into Christlikeness, teaching them from birth that they are recipients of the fullness of Jesus' love. We are called to become the family of God for those who have never experienced the love of Jesus.

(1 Corinthians 12:27-28; Ephesians 2:14-16)

28.4. We call our people to proclaim and demonstrate God's grace and love to the world. Equipping believers for reconciling love as ambassadors for Christ in the world is the shared responsibility of every congregation. God calls us to attitudes, practices of hospitality, and relationships that value all persons. We participate as joyful disciples, engaging with others to create a society that mirrors God's purposes. Our faith is to work through love. Therefore, the Church is to give herself to the care, feeding, clothing, and shelter of the poor and marginalized. A life of Christian holiness will entail efforts to create a more just and equitable society and world, especially for the poor, the oppressed, and those who cannot speak for themselves.

(Leviticus 19:18, 34; Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 11; Isaiah 61:1; Zechariah 9:12; Matthew 25:34-44; Romans 5:7-8, 12:1; 2 Corinthians 5:16, 20; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:10,6:12; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:27; James 2:1-9)

28.5. We call our people to remember that all time is God's. The entirety of our lives should serve God's purposes. The way we use time impacts others, so together we commit to using time in ways that proclaim God's love to the world, build each other up, and craft healthy communities of grace. In this way, our leisure time, our active time, our sleep time, our work time, our worship time, and our whole time is offered in stewardship to God.

(Ephesians 5:14-16)

28.6. We call our people to remember the value of learning. Education is of the utmost importance for the social and spiritual well-being of society. We call educational organizations and institutions to teach children, youth, and adults, biblical principles and ethical standards in such a way that our doctrines may be known. Education from public sources should be complemented by Christian teaching in the home. Because all truth is God's truth, 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, Colossians 1:16)

28.7. We call our people to remember that all our work is offered in service to God. As people fully committed to God, and uniquely gifted by Christ, the whole of each of our lives should fulfil God's purposes. All our work, paid or unpaid, should be done generously, ethically, and justly, in ways that promote the well-being of society and mirror Christlikeness.

(Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 24:14-15; Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:22-25)

28.8. We call our people to careful and considered use of media and technologies. We affirm the churches' use of technology in service to the Kingdom, using it in a balanced way, prioritizing interpersonal relationships. Care must be taken to intentionally include those who have limited access. We must practice formation that helps people discern ways in which technologies may draw them away from engagement in actual community and family participation. We encourage disciples to live out the value of personal, face-to-face connection and to resist any form of living that would lead to isolation or create a culture of only virtual relationships, unless medically advised.

(Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 10:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:7)

28.9. We call our people to care for creation. God pronounced the original creation to be good and appointed humanity to steward creation for God's greater purposes. Care for this created world includes such things as avoiding lifestyles of pollution and of unnecessary consumption of goods and resources.

(Genesis 1:26-28; John 1:3; Romans 8:18-25; Colossians 1:15-20)

28.10. We call our people to be peacemakers. Because Jesus blessed peacemakers and commanded us to love our enemies, we commit ourselves to being agents of reconciliation in our families, among friends, at the workplace, in our churches, societies, nations, people groups, and tribes.

(Psalm 34:14; Matthew 5:9, 43-48; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:14-16; Hebrews 12:14)

29. As we search the Scriptures and develop discernment, we become aware of practices that do not promote the full potential of human beings. Such practices prevent the development of Christlikeness in believers and dishonor creation. Discernment calls us to “lay aside” those things that hinder us. We suggest that the standard given to John Wesley by his mother, Susanna, helps form a basis for the discernment of evil. She taught him, “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.” Discernment regarding the things we lay aside forms part of our discipleship, accountability, and corporate witness. Growth in discipleship will increase our people’s ability to discern harmful messages that encourage or glorify destruction, impurity, immorality, or violence, and to refuse to participate in them or in what promotes them.

Therefore, **we call our people to manifest the fruit of the Spirit** in their lives as a witness to God’s transforming and creative power over sin and death. In full awareness that sin takes new forms in each generation, often working in innovative and destructive ways, the above calls are not intended to be exhaustive, but representative of a way of life that is formed by the Spirit enabling us to become Christlike, to the glory of God the Father. These practices form part of our discipleship and pursuit of corporate Christlikeness, as we continue on a journey of grace.

(Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9; Hebrews 12:1)

29.1. We call our people to wisdom in their use of time, money and bodies. Entertainment and activities subversive of the Christian ethic that promote consumerism, self-centeredness, violence, sensuality, and treating others as objects rather than persons created in the image of God are to be avoided. Because we are living in a day of moral confusion in which we face the encroachment of evil into our thoughts and lives through the various avenues of print and digital media, it is essential that we observe safeguards to keep us from becoming secularized and worldly. We have an 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 includes all forms of dancing that detract from spiritual growth and break down proper moral inhibitions and reserve. We encourage the church to teach and respond in keeping with practices of personal holiness, including Sabbath-keeping, and to contribute to the creation of positive modes of entertainment, arts, and sports.

(Philippians 4:8-9; Colossians 3:23; 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)

29.2. We call our people to identify, prevent, and resist behaviors that lead to unhealthy habits or compulsive actions. Commitment to excellence and wellness requires us to resist habits of mind and life that could lead to addictions. This endeavor demands corporate and personal wisdom, discernment and truth speaking. Because these behaviors and habits may remain hidden, we encourage the church to develop means of accountability in areas of potential bondage.

As Christians, we are called to resist all forms of compulsive actions, from the most pernicious to those culturally acceptable. Recognizing these vary from nation to nation, they may include food, sporting or fitness life, legal stimulants, cosmetic surgery, internet, or shopping. We also encourage the church community to seek solutions for and understanding of those caught up in addictions.

(Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

29.3. We call our people to abstain from drinking alcohol, thereby witnessing to the world. From its earliest days, Nazarenes refrained from drinking alcohol, as a witness to transformed lives. Because of the prevalence of alcohol abuse in our world, we ask our people to refrain from alcohol and other intoxicating substances as an expression of self-giving love and solidarity with individuals, families, and communities who suffer pain and trauma because of alcohol abuse and addiction. We recognize that other Christian traditions may respond to these issues differently. Nazarenes choose to abstain in response to the biblical mandate to love others. We welcome into our congregations those who are struggling with alcohol or other addictions, and in our welcome, we willingly abstain to make our faith community an environment of safety. Our position must be embodied with grace.

(Leviticus 19:18, 34; Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:21; Mark 12:28-34; Romans 13:8-10; Romans 14:13-23; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Ephesians 5:18; Philippians 2:4)

29.4. We call our people to abstain from intoxicants, tobacco, stimulants, depressants, and hallucinogens outside proper medical care and guidance, regardless of the legality and availability of such substances. Medical evidence demonstrates that these substances, when used outside of proper medical care and guidance, can be destructive, not just of the body, but of the mind, as well as families, social structures, and communities.

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

29.5. We call our people to resist greed in all forms. It is vital that we reject all acts of greed that promote wealth over

wellness or status over humility. We do not support distorted, biblically unsound messages about prosperity. Economic practices that oppress and take advantage of others are to be avoided. Schemes such as lotteries, legal or illegal gambling, payday loan organizations, pyramid schemes, often take needed financial resources from the poor and elderly with false promises of return.

(Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13)

29.6. We call our people to reject attitudes and actions that undermine the good of people and devalue individuals. All humans are created in the image of God and Christ died for all, therefore every person we encounter merits our highest regard and love. As a people of God, reflecting Christ's love for the world, we reject all forms of racism, ethnic preferences, tribalism, sexism, religious bigotry, classism, exclusionary nationalism, and any other form of prejudice. All of these are contrary to God's love and the mission of Christ.

29.7. We call our people to resist any loyalty that would compete with Christ's Lordship, which is idolatry. We reject joining any oath-bound societies whether political, secret orders, or guilds that would dilute commitment to Christ and prevent open, transparent communication of primary allegiances. The cost of this refusal can be very real; so, the Christian community must offer support to those who resist.

(Exodus 1:17; Daniel 6:10; Acts 5:29; Revelation 7:14)

29.8. We call our people to resist corruption in all its forms. All forms of corruption undermine humanity, and create unhealthy divisions in communities and societies. We must resist the temptation to be drawn into corrupt practices such as the use of power to get our own way, manipulate others, engage in bribery, rely on wealth to buy influence, support practices of corruption, and harass or draw others into corruption.

(Leviticus 19:11,13, 15; Luke 3:8, 10-14; Hebrews 13:5)

B. Sanctity of Human Life

30. The Church of the Nazarene believes in the sanctity of human life and strives to protect against abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, and the withholding of reasonable medical care to handicapped or elderly.

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.

30.3. Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research and Other Medical/Scientific Endeavors that Destroy Human Life after Conception. The Church of the Nazarene strongly encourages the scientific community to aggressively pursue advances in stem cell technology obtained from sources such as adult human tissues, placenta, umbilical cord blood, animal sources,

and other non-human embryonic sources. This has the righteous end of attempting to bring healing to many, without violating the sanctity of human life. Our stand on human embryonic stem cell research flows from our affirmation that the human embryo is a person made in the image of God. Therefore, we oppose the use of stem cells produced from human embryos for research, therapeutic interventions, or any other purpose.

As future scientific advances make new technologies available, we strongly support this research when it does not violate the sanctity of human life or other moral, biblical laws. However, we oppose the destruction of human embryos for any purpose and any type of research that takes the life of a human after conception. Consistent with this view, we oppose the use, for any purpose, of tissue derived from aborted human fetuses.

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.

30.5. 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.

30.6. 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.

C. Human Sexuality and Marriage

31. 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.

(Genesis 1:27; 19:1-25; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 15-20; 1 Timothy 1:8-10)

D. Christian Stewardship

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. (150)

(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.

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. (140, 163, 164-164.2, 125.13)

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. (117.4, 117.6, 139.8)

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 Nazarene Benefits USA.

National boards and/or regional advisory councils are also authorized and empowered to establish support for International Board of 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 Advisory Board. (225.19, 317.10, 345, 346.3, 402)

E. Church Officers

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.” (115.11, 137, 155-157)

F. Rules of Order

34. Subject to the applicable law, the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of government in the *Manual*, the meetings and proceedings of the members of the Church of the Nazarene, local, district, and general, and the committees of the corporation shall be regulated and controlled according

to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (latest edition) for parliamentary procedure. (115, 205, 300.3)

G. Amending the Covenant of Christian Conduct

35. The provisions of the Covenant of Christian Conduct may be repealed or amended when concurred in by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting of a given General Assembly.