

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Board of General Superintendents

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March 20, 2020

Dear Pastors,

The last two weeks have brought about seismic changes that most could have never imagined. The normal routines of life have been upended by the challenge of a microscopic virus. Busy schedules and travel have been brought to a screeching halt as the world has been asked to live by a new mantra of "social distancing." While we try to adjust to this new norm, it's not uncommon for our hearts to be troubled. In this season we turn our hearts to the Lord, and trust in God to be our guide. "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.' The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 56:10-11)

Thank you for pastoring well during this season. The reports that we have received this past week have been encouraging and inspiring as so many of you have taken the church outside the walls of the building and out into your communities. We know that you are sacrificing to continue to do the Lord's work and we are grateful.

Throughout this past week the Board of General Superintendents (BGS) has been working closely with district superintendents to discuss critical issues that may require action. We are addressing some of these issues with you today.

Beginning this week, there will be **weekly communication** from the BGS in several different ways:

- 1) The Nazarene.org web-site will have a direct link to COVID-19 updates, including the most recent messages and previous updates.
- 2) A weekly pastoral communique to the church via NCN news.
- 3) A weekly email communique to all Leadership – regional directors, field strategy coordinators, and district superintendents containing jurisdictional information and strategies for providing contextual leadership.
- 4) Regular communication to our pastors.

Guidelines for Local Congregational Meetings

Because the Church of the Nazarene is a global fellowship, it is difficult to make comprehensive recommendations that fit in every situation. In our various countries, there are different levels at which government guidelines are recommending restrictions on gatherings.

While the BGS believes in the importance of the gathering of the saints, due to the highly contagious nature of this virus, as the people of God we ask every local church to abide by

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and follow the recommendations from those in authority (national; state; municipal) who are asking us to cooperate with their decisions.

Further, the BGS empowers each District Advisory Board (DAB) to give directives and provide guidelines to local churches in the matter of congregational gatherings. It is the responsibility of the DAB to make recommendations for local churches that are based on following the law and any specific instructions from the Health Department and/or other public officials.

Regional directors are to work closely with their Pioneer Areas, Phase 1 and Phase 2 districts regarding decision-making during this crisis.

Because we take this very seriously, the BGS will not be traveling for a minimum of the next thirty days.

District as Resource

We are asking your districts to find ways to be a resource for pastors. This may include:

- Suggesting resources for your church including online worship and giving, and other innovative best practices.
- Developing collaborative partnerships between churches.
- Engaging with discipleship training initiatives that encourage hope.
- Calling the district family to prayer.

Should churches with mortgages be struggling to make their payments, we encourage the district to help in making contact with financial institutions to see if there may be options regarding payment.

Attendance Tracking

Average weekly attendance will only be counted for the months in which there is not an emergency. For the months of March 2020 through June 2020, counting attendance will not be required. However, *reporting* will continue and will include ministry accountability to your district superintendent.

Being accountable for our numbers is a part of our ecclesiology as it illustrates in concrete ways the life and health of the church. This initiative makes clear that the need for reporting is not eliminated. It does embrace the need for all of us to be accountable during this time, and each District will be responsible for determining the reporting which will be requested of each church.


Your district superintendents have been provided with guidelines and recommendations about upcoming District Assemblies and will be communicating with you regarding the activities of your particular district.

In the coming weeks we will continue to address critical issues facing our churches. We understand that the question of finances remains on the forefront for all involved and we have yet to realize the impact of this crisis on the global economy. We are a global church that has chosen to be interconnected, supporting and helping one another around the world. We are in on-going conversation with our district superintendents on these matters, as well as the senior leadership team from the Global Ministry Center. As we know more we will continue to keep you informed and do all that we can to support and resource the local church.

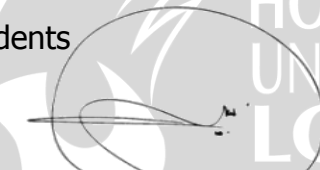
In your ordination vows we charged you to be "shepherds of the flock," and "to be prepared in every season." Because you are on the front lines of ministry, in a very real sense, you are also on the front lines of healing, comfort and salvation. We are grateful for you; we support you; and we believe in the power of God that is at work within you and through you.

Grace and peace to you all,

The Board of General Superintendents



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