

Toward a Holistic Missiology  
Global Missiology Conference  
March 31, 2007  
Jerry D. Porter

On February 15, 2007, the Board of General Superintendents released a statement of mission for the Church of the Nazarene: **“To make Christlike disciples in the nations.”** Why this statement and why now?

Dr. Russ Bredholt, at our request, prepared a brief historic review of the development of statements of mission over the years. He referenced the language Dr. Phineas Bresee used in 1892, just ahead of the 1895 founding of Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene: “The sanctification of believers, the reclamation of backsliders and the conversion of sinners” (*Called Unto Holiness*, Volume I).

Included in the Articles of Faith and General Rules of the Church of the Nazarene, November 26, 1895, was this mission statement:

We seek the simplicity and the Pentecostal power of the primitive New Testament Church. The field of labor to which we feel especially called is the neglected quarters of the cities and wherever else may be found waste places and souls seeking pardon and cleansing from sin. This work we aim to do through the agency of city missions, evangelistic services, house to house visitation, caring for the poor, comforting the dying. To this end we strive personally to work with God and to incite others so to do.

By the 1930s, the language for the church’s “reason-to-be” evolved into the following: “. . . holy Christian fellowship, the conversion of sinners, the entire sanctification of believers, and their upbuilding in holiness.” By this time you note the absence of any reference to the social components of mission. This emphasis had dropped into the background, and the evangelistic/holiness mandate had taken the preeminence.

In the 1940s and 1950s church leaders began using special themes to address specific needs. This period is often best remembered for Dr. J. B. Chapman’s address in 1947: “All Out for Souls.” This message at the District Superintendents’ Conference was part of the “Mid-Century Crusade for Souls” which emphasized visitation and personal evangelism. It became the focal point of the 1948 General Assembly. These themes were embraced in part in response to the declining rate of growth of the church across America.

A more recent look into the attempt to define mission shows the language changing again while trying to keep the same essence. The “Foreword” by the Board of General Superintendents in the 1980 *Manual* refers to the “achievement of our great objective; namely, to advance the kingdom of God on earth.” A few sentences later we find more

new phrasing: “. . . we have a definite commitment to proclaim the doctrine of Christian holiness.”

Shortly into the 1980-85 Quinquinium, a retreat was held with the Board of General Superintendents, officers, and directors of International Headquarters. At this off-site gathering led by a professional facilitator, a “formal” mission statement, nearly one-page in length, was drafted and adopted. In April 1993, the Board of General Superintendents reaffirmed this same statement of mission:

I. Mission Statement

“The mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to respond to the Great Commission of Christ to ‘go and make disciples of all nations’ ” (Matthew 28:19, NIV). (This is the target to be attained. To “make disciples” encompasses the entire spectrum of church ministries from holiness evangelism to holiness higher education.)

II. Key Objective

“The key objective of the Church of the Nazarene is to advance God’s Kingdom by the preservation and propagation of Christian holiness as set forth in the Scriptures.” (We believe that every agency of the church must justify its existence and activities by direct relationship to this central purpose.)

III. Critical Objectives

“The critical objectives of the Church of the Nazarene are 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” (*Manual*, paragraph 25). (Within the parameters of these objectives each leader must individually spell out the specific critical objectives of his assignment.)

It is interesting to note that even in this amplified description of the mission of the church, once again there is no reference to the social implications of the gospel. For the most part, the above mission statement has become irrelevant. Few Nazarene leaders know it, and even fewer ever refer to it.

Dr. Frances Hesselbein, at the time CEO of the Drucker Foundation, met with the Board of General Superintendents in the 1997 Columbia Project and emphasized the importance of a clear, brief statement of mission that guides the whole organization. When she asked us for the denominational mission statement, none of us could respond. Finally, Dr. Cunningham offered to go to his hotel room to retrieve this 1980 document. Following our embarrassing moment, Ms. Hesselbein noted that a mission statement should be memorable and to the point—something this version was not. She affirmed that a mission statement that no one knows or refers to is virtually useless.

That started our Board on a process that culminated with the recently-released statement of mission. This process included dialog with key leaders and, most recently, the assistance of the Board of General Superintendents' Thought Partners under the leadership of Dr. Jim Bond. We have agreed as a Board to review the rest of the 1980 document to refresh the language for this new generation of Nazarenes. Hopefully, we will reference the social implications of the holy life as we “unfold” the new, succinct statement of mission. If you have any insights or suggestions regarding this language, please feel free to assist us.

The “Foreword” drafted by the Board in the 2005-2009 *Manual* opens with these words: “The mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to respond to the Great Commission of Christ to ‘go and make disciples of all nations’” (Matthew 28:19).

The 2006 General Board report also quoted from the Preamble to Local Church Government in that same 2005-2009 *Manual*:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matt. 28:20, NIV).

The multidimensional mission of the Church of the Nazarene is: “to make known to all peoples the transforming grace of God through the forgiveness of sins and heart cleansing in Jesus Christ.”

Our mission first and foremost is to ...

- ‘Make disciples’
- Incorporate believers into fellowship and membership
- Equip (teach) for ministry all who respond in faith

The ultimate goal of the community of faith is to present every person perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28) at the last day.

In that same 2006 General Board Report we introduced the phrase, “Making Christlike disciples in all the nations.”

Nearly 27 years have passed since the International Headquarters retreat produced what was at the time an updated version of the “mission statement.” It has been almost 10 years since Frances Hesselbein brought up the importance of a brief and memorable statement. We need to view this statement as a dynamic expression of mission that, hopefully, we will not fear revisiting from time to time.

**“To make Christlike disciples in the nations.”**

The term “Christlike” (holiness is Christlikeness) and the phrase “in the nations” as opposed to “of all nations” makes the statement unique—not an exact quote of Matthew

28:19. Over the years the various articulated statements of mission seem tethered to at least two things: evangelism and the holy life. The missing component (present in some of the earliest expressions) is the emphasis on compassionate ministries. The beauty of this statement is its simplicity, which highlights the shared sense of purpose that binds the denomination together. It is a way of reminding pastors and others that strong and healthy churches place a premium on the spiritual disciplines and maturity in Christ. Its strength, however, is also its weakness. A seven-word statement of mission is by definition an attempt to “boil down” all the important components of mission to their non-negotiable simplified essence.

As we gather for this 2007 Global Missiology Conference, we would be wise to review our terms as we study the multifaceted mission of the church. We would all agree that words do matter. Words are ideas. Change the words, and you may or may not improve the original ideas. Change the words, and it is possible to affect the behavior of a group.

### **Holistic Missiology**

**ho·lis·tic**: relating to or concerned with wholes or with complete systems rather than with the analysis of, treatment of, or dissection into parts <holistic medicine attempts to treat both the mind and the body> (*Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary*).

**mis·si·ol·o·gy**: the theological study of the mission of the church, esp. the character and purpose of missionary work (*Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*).

Dewi Hughes, in the introduction to the Holistic Mission Lausanne paper states:

Holistic mission is the task of bringing the whole of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ. It begins with the confession that Jesus is Lord of all and attempts to live out that lordship in the whole of life. The mission of the church is, therefore, comprehensive in its means and in its impact.

Evvy Hay Campbell, in her article in the same Lausanne paper titled, “The Church and Health,” defines holistic mission as “the whole Church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.”

Obviously, holistic mission is to properly interrelate the various component parts into a comprehensive whole. Any over- or under-emphasized part causes the mission not to be “holistic.”

I would like to address two specific areas of debate regarding a holistic missiology. First is the tension between the call to persuade persons to embrace saving faith in Christ and the call to minister in compassion and justice to pressing human needs. The second area that we will address is the tension between effective mission practice and appropriate quantitative measurements.

### **The balance between compassion and evangelism.**

Does one serve the other, or is one primary while the other is secondary? In the Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 33, Dr. Rene Padilla, in his article, “Holistic Mission,” defines holistic as primarily the balance between these two callings:

In a way, the adjective *holistic* only intends to correct a one-sided understanding of mission that majors on either the vertical or the horizontal dimension of mission. . . . The affirmation [from John Stott] that “the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility” seems to suggest a real integration of the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of mission, which is at the very heart of *holistic* mission (p.1).

As a seminary rector at the Seminario Nazareno de las Americas, I recall the excellent debate that came out of John Stott’s Lausanne Conference affirmation that the Church needed to diminish its reference to the Matthean statement of the Great Commission (28:16-20) and, rather, embrace and give preference to the Johannine statements (17:18, 20:21). Dr. Stott saw this as the “incarnational” Great Commission, which was summarized in Luke 4:18-19.

Rene Padilla quotes a so-called Radical Discipleship *ad hoc* Lausanne group:

There is no biblical dichotomy between the Word spoken and the Word made flesh in the lives of God’s people. Men will look as they listen and what they see must be at one with what they hear. The Christian community must chatter, discuss and proclaim the gospel; it must express the gospel in its life as the new society, in its sacrificial service of others as a genuine expression of God’s love, in its prophetic exposing and opposing of all demonic forces that deny the Lordship of Christ and keep men less than human; in its pursuit of real justice for all men; in its responsible and caring trusteeship of God’s creation and its resources (p.3).

It is not enough to take care of the spiritual wellbeing of an individual without any regard for his or her personal relationships and position in society and in the world. As Jesus saw it, love for God is inseparable from love for neighbour (Matthew 22:40).

Rene Padilla, p. 6

Dr. Padilla’s statement is very true. But neither is it enough to respond to pressing human crisis and not attend to the spiritual needs of our neighbor.

Stott concluded that social action and evangelism are partners in the Christian mission. Neither is a means to the other, or even a manifestation of the other, for each is an end in itself. The relationship between the Great Commandment and the Great Commission constitutes a primary illustration of this. Christians are sent

into the world to serve—to demonstrate concern for man’s total welfare, the good of his soul, his body, his community.

D. Hesselgrave, EMQ, July 01, 1999, p. 279

We affirm the Christian’s calling to care for the whole person. But does that mean that we can choose the Great Commandment **or** the Great Commission? The great theological truths we embrace are normally two truths in constant tension. If someone asks:

- Is God three or one?
- Is God sovereign or are we responsible for our choices?
- Is sanctification instantaneous or progressive?
- Was Jesus Christ fully God or fully man?

The only correct answer to these questions is “Yes.”

Heresy is often the overemphasizing of one truth without equal emphasis of the counter-truth. Theological orthodoxy is attained when the two somewhat contradictory and even apparently competitive truths are in a constant, healthy tension. In much the same way, this debate between the spiritual and social implications of the gospel must be resolved by embracing the mystery of both truths as complementary and necessary. As Wesleyans and as Nazarenes, we draw from the rich Wesley and Bresee traditions of godly leaders who were passionately evangelistic and equally engaged in ministry to the needs of those around them. We cannot be forced to choose one as the prerequisite for the other or one in place of the other.

As children, we sang “Jesus loves me.” We did not sing, “Jesus loves my soul but does not care as much about the rest of me!” We understand that the “tricotomy” of body, soul, and spirit cannot be fragmented so the church ministers to spiritual matters while ignoring other deep concerns of the person. The holistic mission of the church embraces the spiritual **and** the social implications of the gospel.

### **The balance between qualitative and quantitative goal setting.**

The other tension that we will address is the balance between effective mission practice and appropriate quantitative measurements. No one denies the need to embrace the qualitative goal of embracing Christlikeness. Some, however, criticize the church when it attempts to set quantitative faith projections.

Levi T. DeCarvalho, in his article, “What’s Wrong with the Label ‘Managerial Missiology,’” published in the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (Fall, 2001, p. 141), quotes a *Christianity Today* report on a “missiological consultation held in Iguassu, Brazil, in October 1999, where the term ‘managerial missiology’ dominated the intense debates under the guidance of William Taylor, WEF’s Missions Commission head. David Neff reported:

Peruvian missiologist Samuel Escobar was unable to attend the consultation. . . . But in a paper discussed at the meeting, he criticized the “managerial missiology” practiced by certain North American groups. “The distinctive note” of this approach to missions “is to reduce Christian mission to a manageable enterprise,” Escobar wrote. Practitioners of this approach focus on the quantifiable, measurable tasks of missions and ask pragmatic questions about how to achieve goals. Escobar called this statistical approach “anti-theological” and said it “has no theological or pastoral resources to cope with the suffering and persecution involved because it is geared to provide guaranteed success.”

Dave Stravers, with The Bible League, USA, counters:

I cannot join those who criticize “managerial missiology.” Quantitative measurement of ministry results is absolutely essential. . . . The problem as I observe it is that so many well-meaning organizations are either unable or unwilling to measure the right things, or to manage their resources based on those measurements. There is no contradiction between quantity and quality when evangelism and discipleship are done God’s way. We have found that far from going too slow, our ministries have gone so fast we are always running to keep up (Levi T. DeCarvalho, IJFM, p. 142).

Levi T. DeCarvalho quotes Richard Briggs in “Theological issues facing OM in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”

A particular Western export, which OM needs to confront head on, is the so-called “managerial missiology.” This is a basic approach to mission in terms of how to manage it as a business, a project, or an exercise in resource deployment. It has dominated a certain wing of evangelical mission activity. It has been an unmitigated disaster. . . . We do not know when Jesus will return. Until he does, we are called to be good and faithful servants, not (heaven help us) good and strategic ones.

IJFM, p. 142

Are “management” and “strategic” necessarily bad words? Does the Lord allow us the luxury of choosing between being faithful or being fruitful? Is it wrong to strategize a course with an outline and course objectives? Some professors even go so far as to attempt to measure desired outcomes of a class that is being taught! Does NCM Africa do its best work by strategically addressing the HIV AIDS crisis or by simply being faithful to love and encourage the dying? Why must we choose one or the other? We all set goals. Why would we build a “house” of evangelism without first counting the cost? Why would we launch a “battle” to move nominal Christians to committed disciples without counting and organizing our “troops?”

In the International Journal of Frontier Missions, Ralph D. Winter reviews Samuel Escobar’s book, “The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone” with these observations:

At one point he speaks of the “shock” Latin American students had when they heard that Billy Graham people were estimating an “X” percent response in a planned series of meetings and were making quantitative plans to meet that size of need. Thus, it is almost as though planning processes themselves are unhelpful.

We would all agree with some things these “managerial missions” critics are saying. Some management principles and policies have been applied in ways that may run counter to the upside-down kingdom of God. These critics, however, arbitrarily view most all qualitative measurements as antithetical to mission.

Jim Plueddamann, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol 31, No. 2, April 1995:

A major donor was willing to make a large contribution to an unreached people project provided they could come up with objectives which had “measurable and time specific goals.” Another donor asked how many souls would be saved if we conducted a certain evangelistic project. He was interested in the number of dollars per soul. Neither Bible-believing donor sensed any theological problems with such a request. I have a hunch that the Apostle Paul would be quite puzzled by this passion to predict specific numbers by a certain date. . . When we say that our goal is to plant one church per year, we may get trapped into thinking about a mere building and forget about the true nature of the church. . . Healthy



churches are measured by the quality of faith rather than by the quantity of people, offerings or buildings. The quality of faith of believers can't be described with numbers.

Plueddamann EMQ

We would all agree that only measuring numerical growth is a serious reduction of our mission. We need to evaluate maturational growth, incarnational growth, Kingdom growth, Christlikeness growth, etc. We cannot reduce the Kingdom to a mathematical equation that somehow puts God and grace in a box. On the other hand, we know that healthy churches will normally grow qualitatively and quantitatively. They are not mutually exclusive.

The danger for the Church of the so-called "managerial mission management" is that we become so focused on reaching numerical goals that we feel that in reaching them we have accomplished our mission. There are some equally deadly anti-Christ dangers in blindly working toward a specific numeric goal at all costs.

If we know our support might be cut because we don't meet predetermined objectives, we will aim at goals that are easy to attain. We will set goals that will make us look good at the end of the year rather than goals that grow from faith in a God of hope. We aim for numbers we are likely to hit rather than qualities which are eternally important. . . . If all our energies are focused on a numerical goal, we tend to use people as mere cogs in our wheel, to help us accomplish our goals. We become hyper-task oriented and people become dehumanized as a means. . . . Numerical objectives encourage a domineering, authoritarian leadership style.

Plueddamann EMQ

Interestingly enough, while Dr. Pleuddamann is critical of numerical goals, he is very supportive of "visionary goals." He has difficulty, however, differentiating between them.

While numerical objectives are usually trivial, heretical, and discouraging, visionary goals help us to focus on the eternal in a world of anarchy. They become a driving force for our ministry. . .

- Visionary goals come from a God of hope
- Visionary goals seek eternal results
- Visionary goals grow out of prayer
- Visionary goals describe qualities rather than quantities
- Visionary goals grow out of team ministry

Plueddamann EMQ

How do we use numbers in the work of the church? There was an Old Testament census that was condemned because the purpose was to pump up the arrogant leader's ego. On the other hand, there was a census that was done at Jehovah's request, as recorded in the book of Numbers!

There are at least five possible perspectives when it comes to Christian leaders counting converts, churches, offerings, disciples, etc.:

- 1. No quantitative information is collected**
- 2. Quantitative data is gathered to celebrate God's activity among us**
- 3. Numerical measurements are used for evaluation of missional health**
- 4. Quantitative goals are embraced**
- 5. The idolatry of numerical growth**

**1. No quantitative information is collected:** In the fog of misinformation many churches have no idea if they are growing or dying. They emphasize the “spirit” of the services and the “attitude” of the congregants, but they have no interest in knowing if there are fewer students or more single adults than last year. Any counting would be “arrogant and unspiritual.” Does it matter that we know that there were 120 in the Upper Room or that Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness? Because of the danger of worshipping numerical results, some opt out of “numbers” altogether and have no idea if there are funds in the account as they simply write checks on a hunch and a prayer.

**2. Quantitative data to celebrate God's activity among us:** There were 5,000 family units fed from a small boy's lunch! Three thousand were baptized into faith in Christ on the Day of Pentecost! Last year 7,000 persons embraced faith in Christ in the Cali, Colombia, House of Prayer! Fifteen hundred new Nazarene congregations were launched in 2006 in the Horn of Africa! Numbers can serve to glorify God as we celebrate the number of young persons volunteering to serve as summer missionaries or the number of dollars raised in support of Hurricane Katrina disaster relief.

**3. Quantitative measurements are used for evaluation of missional health:** In every other area of life we quantify. During early January, my wife and I weighed ourselves every day to see if we were making any headway on reducing the quantified holiday-season pounds. What if my medical doctor informs me, “In this office we do not care about numbers. We just want to know if you are happy! Your blood pressure, give or take 100, is 200 over 200. Your sugar level, give or take 100, is . . . We don't worry about your cholesterol count . . . Do you enjoy eating?” We would immediately change doctors because we use numbers to evaluate our physical health. In the same way, we need to measure carefully so we can know how much money has been raised for the teen mission trip and whether we have fewer babies in the nursery during the past three years. I was deeply impacted by my undergraduate missions courses with Dr. Donald Owens. He introduced us to Donald McGavran's studies of mission agencies that had served in India. Some spent more time, money, and human resources with less fruit. Others were more fruitful with a wiser investment of lesser human and financial resources. If we refuse to measure, then we will not know if the methods are effective.

**4. Quantitative goals are embraced:** Louie Bustle is the world's best goal setter. We were 25-year-old rookie missionaries assigned to work with the Bustles to launch the work of the Church of the Nazarene in the Dominican Republic. Before we even arrived

in Santo Domingo, Louie announced that with God's help, we would start 10 churches the first year and 50 churches in 10 years. I thought he was crazy, but I saluted, and we got to work. We prayed for 10 pastors and talked about this vision in the first church that was started. By the time we started our third congregation, we had six ministerial candidates in the theological education by extension classes. At the first district assembly, 18 months after starting the work, we reported 13 organized congregations with several missions. There were over 30 congregations by the third assembly with over 1,000 Nazarenes. God knows if the goals are arrogant or humble visions. "Embracing a dream with a date" is what we do when we are going to get married or graduate from college. Why would we not do the same in the Kingdom?

Any local church member or pastor can write down what they understand to be the "results" that the Lord would like to see in and through their church in the next three years. These results could be described qualitatively as Christlikeness, love, prayer, fellowship, and compassionate ministry. These same leaders can also prayerfully embrace faith projections that reflect the number of persons actively participating in a discipleship program or the number of persons who found employment through a compassionate ministry project. **"Embracing a faith projection" is prayerfully and collectively seeking the mind of the Lord regarding the qualitative and quantitative results we believe the Lord would want to see in our congregation in a given period of time.**

**5. The idolatry of numerical growth:** The danger of "counting" is that it is done for the vain glory of the leaders. We use our data to put others down, or we think that the "growth" must be evidence of God blessing us more than the other congregations or denominations. The idolatry of numbers will cause leaders to be abusive, exploiting persons for their selfish purposes. It will also divide the Body of Christ with competitive attitudes rather than gratitude for the blessings a sister congregation is experiencing.

We are stewards who will give an **accounting**.

The first one came and said, "Sir, your mina has earned ten more." "Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. . . . The second came and said, "Sir, your mina has earned five more." . . . Then another servant came and said, "Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow." His master replied, "I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! . . . Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?" Then he said to those standing by, "Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas. . . . I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away" (Luke 19:16-26 NIV).

Pragmatism cannot rule unchallenged. On the other hand, we have no right to continue doing what we know has not produced the "results" the Lord desires to see. I spoke at a recent district assembly and a visiting, non-believer school superintendent asked if he could use my message, "Taking Responsibility for Results," with his school principals.

He commented, “What right does a principal or a teacher have to continue using methods that we know do not teach children to read or to write?” On the judgment day, we will give an accounting for how we invested the minas entrusted to us. We are humbly invited and expected to be results-producing partners in this holy, missional venture.

In defense of numbers in the work of the Church, they can be used productively:

- To glorify God and give witness to the Kingdom come among us
- To honestly measure the results for evaluative purposes, hopefully leading us to greater missional effectiveness
- To embrace faith projections of the mission our Lord has given us **to make Christlike disciples in the nations**

We yearn to move **toward a Holistic Missiology** that adequately reflects the various mission components in their proper balance. It is a moving target. We will always be moving toward a holistic missiology. Corrective measures usually cause the pendulum to swing too far. The world is constantly changing. The church that is commissioned to “go” is a constantly new and changing organism. As such, we will forever need to review our statement of mission and measure our lives and service by the same.

The goal is not to make believers or even members, but to **make disciples**. That was the mission of Jesus, and it is our declared mission as well.