

Didache: Faithful Teaching 8:1: Introduction
Dean G. Blevins

Welcome to the eighth year of *Didache: Faithful Teaching*. While a journal dedicated to a larger Wesleyan audience, this edition serves as a means for saying “thank you” to several important contributors to theological education in the Church of the Nazarene, and in particular, to one of the major proponents for global higher education, Dr. Jerry Lambert. In their report to the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene, the General Superintendents of the denomination noted

Jerry Lambert has given 47 years of faithful service to the Church of the Nazarene as pastor, district superintendent, and college president. For the past 14 years he has provided extraordinary leadership to the International Board of Education, taking the IBOE to new levels of effectiveness. (Annual Report, 85th General Board, February 2008)

Their comments might have included a healthy “amen” by a number of educators, administrators and students across the global church. Jerry Lambert transformed a modest position within the tradition into an engine for theological dialogue and educational transformation. Dr. Lambert’s support for theological reflection around the globe, as well as his passion for raising the standard of educational quality, reflect the energy and relational quality of a gentleman who surrounded himself with collaborative partners and skilled professionals to transform the educational process within the International Board of Education (IBOE). Dr. Albert Truesdale, former Dean of the Faculty at Nazarene Theological Seminary and active participant in International Education, offers this reflection of Jerry Lambert:

In Honor of Jerry Lambert
Albert Truesdale

“Better.” That word captures the service of Jerry Lambert to education in the Church of the Nazarene. In all he has done, Jerry has sought to make the Church of the Nazarene better through education--no matter its venue.

In many conversations I have heard him speak of a vision for excellence and magnitude he received during his education at Southern Nazarene University and Nazarene Theological Seminary. Those institutions cultivated in him a belief that the Wesleyan Tradition is a champion of a catholic spirit in art, music, science and theology, and that education should serve the purposes of justice and equality. In the best sense of the term Jerry Lambert received a “Christian humanist” education in the Church of the Nazarene. He thinks that should continue to be the goal of Nazarene education—certainly clergy education. Patient in many ways, he has had no patience with retrograde thinking and religion. For example, he has met developments in science with an open mind determined to reconcile the best in science with the best in faith. The vision of Nazarene higher education he received has no place for intellectual fear and cowardice, and no place for political partisanship.

Jerry has used his administrative offices to expand the aesthetic, intellectual, educational and theological horizons of the Church of the Nazarene. In service to “better” he has characteristically worked to build alliances with anyone willing to expand the church’s educational opportunities. No elitist, Jerry has worked untiringly to create vehicles of education in places where books, classrooms, and educational technology are scarce. He believes that all members of Christ’s Church have inherited “better” from their Lord and that it is the responsibility of the “privileged” to make “better” available to all. I have watched him build the structures needed to make this happen.

For Jerry Lambert “hierarchy” means “vehicle for service,” not “vehicle for personal aggrandizement”. And what must be said of him applies equally to his wife, Verla.

Around the world—from admirable university structures to humble classrooms in developing countries, Jerry Lambert’s thrust has been the same: make the best resources available to as many people as possible. His philosophy has been and will be: “Bloom where you are planted!”

May Jerry Lambert’s tribe increase. *Gloria Dei!*

The journal begins with Dr. Lambert’s own self-report to the General Board concerning the goals and outcomes of the IBOE. Administrators within the tradition will recognize this as a “Quality Review” or self-study that almost all Nazarene educational institutions underwent in the last few years; a strategy which encourages a culture of self-assessment in those settings, raising the educational quality of each entity. It seems appropriate we have an opportunity to hear directly from Dr. Lambert’s own “voice” concerning his dreams and efforts for the sake of theological education.

In addition, the articles include a theological essay by E. LeBron Fairbanks, the new Commissioner of the IBOE, that advocates for the necessity of an attitude of acceptance on the global stage, an attitude that marks the both the character of Dr. Lambert and the vision of Dr. Fairbanks as he takes leadership. The journal continues with a second essay by President Ron Benefiel of Nazarene Theological Seminary. Cast in personal autobiography, the article actually reflects the type of theological diversity found in our global tradition concerning the “language of holiness.” Holiness remains one of Dr. Lambert’s and Dr. Benefiel’s mutual concerns, often revealed through their desire to sponsor global conversations that often provided key resources within this journal. As noted in last edition, Dr. Lambert might have served the journal best in his ability to spark theological conversations around the world and then serve as a default “acquisitions editor” by forwarding a number of the writings for review and consideration in *Didache: Faithful Teaching*. Dr. Benefiel’s and Commissioner Fairbanks’ writings represent theologically reflective essays that often served the journal well alongside more detailed research papers.

Dr. Michael W. Vail follows with a substantive research treatment on the role of curriculum evaluation. Dr. Vail’s contribution represents an amazing volume of work Mike offered over the years as education consultant. I have had the privilege of working with Dr. Vail on at least four major projects through both IBOE and Clergy Development:

- 1) the implementation of guidelines using core ability statements for assessing and validating educational programs for clergy education;
- 2) the creation of teaching modules for clergy preparation;
- 3) an assessment of educational institutions through the quality review process; and
- 4) the launch of this journal both as an online venture as well as an educational resource.

At each step Mike offered a measured educational perspective that proved crucial for the success of each program. I know of no other single person who has worked so diligently, often behind the scenes, to insure the success of clergy preparation in our tradition, particularly as an educational endeavor. Mike will be assuming a new role at Trevecca Nazarene University as the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning where his wisdom will be deeply appreciated.

The final research article reflects the editor's preliminary thoughts addressing leadership, church polity and economic social psychology. The article represents an ongoing project addressing social influences that shape views of clergy leadership for good and ill. While a bit of an "odd" offering (recently reviewed and revising for a different publication as well) I offer this research as a way to help us all realize the quality of leadership and the social factors, including economic perspectives, that sometime support or inhibit the church's efforts. The article also serves as a type of "bridge" to the next section of the journal.

As noted in previous editions, the journal also seeks to profile student writing. It seems appropriate, in a volume dedicated to recognizing contributors to the education ministry of the church that we acknowledge another important contributor, Dr. Tom Nees, through the legacy of student writings. Again, the General Superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene noted in their 2008 report that: "Tom Nees served the church for 45 years as a pastor and as founder of Hope Community Church of the Nazarene in Washington, D. C. before coming to International Headquarters 12 years ago." I believe it is fair to say that no one leader modeled the hard work of incorporating passionate evangelism and compassionate social justice into a common framework of the witness of the church. It seems natural that three papers be offered by students who share the type of passion for social justice that fueled Nees' vision.

The student authors were recipients of the Tom Nees Social Justice Award given at Nazarene Theological Seminary. The award was initiated to recognize the Church's commitment to its calling of serving among the poor in ministries of compassion and justice. Nell Becker Sweeden (2006, now Ph.D. student at Boston University), Jodi Belcher (2007) and Tim Gains (2008) offer three strong treatments involving both biblical reflection and theological dialog around the key theme of Social Justice.

My appreciation, as always, to the authors who have contributed to this edition. I would like to offer a special thanks to Shawn Stevenson who now serves as technical advisor and "web master" for the journal. Shawn serves as Coordinator for Online Education and Course Design at Nazarene Theological Seminary (NTS). I would also like to thank Dr. Fairbanks for his endorsement of this venture and Mrs. Barb Najarian, his able assistant and good friend in these endeavors. Along with Shawn, Jeff Sykes, Director of Information Technology at NTS, works behind the scenes to maintain this site for the International Board of Education. As always, *Didache: Faithful Teaching* remains a journal dedicated to being a resource for the total efforts of the Church of the Nazarene, and other educational institutions, for the sake of global Wesleyan Christian education. Readers may have been confused by my "relocation" to NTS in a new teaching role, and the seminary's willingness to provide a less expensive infrastructure for the sake of the journal's viability, thinking these changes reflect a more limited perspective. While NTS shares a similar passion for global theological education and desires to partner in collaborative efforts like this one, *Didache: Faithful Teaching* serves the larger academic community through efforts like those represented in lives of Dr. Lambert, Dr. Nees, Dr. Fairbanks, Dr. Benefiel and Dr. Vail. I encourage your participation and promotion of this journal since its continuation rests with a global writing community. As always, we encourage faculty members to sponsor quality student writings to foster the future of our Wesleyan academic tradition.

Table of Contents

IBOE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE MISSIONAL AND QUALITY REVIEW
REFLECTIONS AND SELF-STUDY by Jerry D. Lambert

AN ATTITUDE OF ACCEPTANCE by E. LeBron Fairbanks

LANGUAGES OF HOLINESS: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SEEKER by Ron Benefiel

THE CHALLENGE OF EVALUATING CLERGY EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE by Michael W. Vail.

THE CATECHESIS OF POLITICS: HOW POLITY SHAPES PERSONHOOD by Dean G.
Blevins

RECLAIMING THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND TRUE FREEDOM OF THE KINGDOM
OF GOD by Nell Becker Sweeden

WHY EQUALITY IS NOT ENOUGH: THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL
JUSTICE by Jodi L. A. Belcher

A CHRISTIAN AESTHETICS OF JUSTICE: TOWARD THE REVERSAL OF OUR OWN
TRAGIC FLAW by Timothy Gaines

Works Cited

Annual Report of the General Superintendents to the 85th General Board Church of the Nazarene (February 2008) accessed online (June 28, 2008) at <http://www.nazarene.org/files/docs/GSReport2008.pdf>