

“EVANGELIZE THE NEGRO”: SEGREGATION, POWER, AND EVANGELIZATION WITHIN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE’S GULF CENTRAL DISTRICT, 1953-1969¹

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Introduction

Recently, issues related to race and African American participation in predominantly white denominations have drawn the interest of religious historians. In fact, since the early 2000’s, several scholars have written full-length monographs on how issues related to race shaped the course of certain mainline and American holiness denominations during the 20th century. For instance, Peter Murray, in his text entitled, *Methodists and the Crucible of Race, 1930-1975*, analyzes how the United Methodist Church (UMC) dealt with and attempted to eliminate its racially segregated jurisdiction during the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and early 1970s, while Gardiner H. Shattuck has examined how segregation and race impacted the Episcopal denomination throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.² Moreover, in one of his recently published books, James Earl Massey has traced how African Americans embraced and impacted the beliefs of the Church of God (Anderson, IN),³ from the late 19th century to the late 1990s.⁴

One of the aims of this article includes a desire to add to this recent surge in historical scholarship by revealing how issues related to church governance, segregation, and evangelization impacted southern black participation in the Church of the Nazarene (CN)

¹This article contains information and ideas that will appear in the author’s forthcoming dissertation entitled, “Slowly, But Surely: Racial Segregation and Black Participation in the Church of the Nazarene, 1914-1969.”

²See Peter Murray, *Methodists and the Crucible of Race, 1930-1975* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004) and Gardiner H. Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 2004). For further reference on how race, segregation, and the struggle for civil rights impacted Methodism and other mainline denominations during the middle of the 20th century, see Clarence G. Newsome, “Mary McLeod Bethune and the Methodist Episcopal Church North: In But Out,” in *This Far By Faith: Readings in African-American Women’s Religious Biography*, ed., Judith Weisenfeld and Richard Newman (New York: Routledge, 1994), 124-139; James Thomas, *Methodism’s Racial Dilemma: The Story of the Central Jurisdiction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992) and James F. Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³Historically, the Church of God (Anderson, IN) has not defined itself as a denomination. Because of its historical commitment to non-denominationalism and its current congregational polity and non-centralized ecclesiology, pastors and local congregations prefer to describe the Church of God as a “movement” instead of a “denomination.” For further reference about the movement’s polity and theology, see <http://churchofgod.chog.org/ME2/Audiences/dirsect.asp?sid=D6384FB8CD884976BB7825A9F1B49078&nm=Our+History>; Internet; accessed 23 July 2008.

⁴James Earl Massey, *African Americans and the Church of God (Anderson, IN): Aspects of a Social History* (Anderson, IN: Anderson University Press, 2005). For other works on how blacks participated in the Church of God (Anderson, IN) during the late 19th and 20th centuries, see Cheryl Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 35-48, 98-105 and John W.V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity: A Centennial History of the Church of God* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1980), 162-169.

(another predominantly white holiness denomination that emerged out of the 19th century American Holiness Movement)⁵ during the 1950s and 1960s. Up until now, no religious historian has significantly examined how issues related to segregation, missions, or black autonomy impacted the participation and faith of African Americans in the CN during the middle of the 20th century. Roger Bowman, a former African American minister in the denomination, wrote a popular missionary book over thirty years ago on the CN's evangelical mission among blacks. In that monograph, he briefly detailed how black Nazarenes worked alongside denominational leaders to start and organize churches, Sunday schools, and other ministries. In a few pages of his work, Bowman briefly outlined how southern blacks ministered under the jurisdiction of the Gulf Central District (GCD). The GCD was a segregated district that governed and oversaw the activities of black churches in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Bowman's basic thesis regarding the GCD was that it "was not organized as an instrument of segregation but as an instrument of evangelism...that would...hopefully provide for closer supervision and greater support." As such, he did not examine how other organizational, theological, and racial issues shaped the relationship between blacks and the CN.⁶

Moreover, other denominational historians like Millard Taylor and W.T. Purkiser have stated that the main purpose for establishing and continuing the GCD was to "give closer supervision and assistance to the (black) churches."⁷ Thus, to this day, there exists no in-depth study of (1) how segregation, theology, or other jurisdictional issues impacted the direction and life of southern black congregations or (2) how southern African Americans were able to develop

⁵To define it briefly, the American Holiness Movement (AHM) refers to the 19th century Protestant interdenominational movement that emphasized a concern for "sanctification" or the "higher Christian life." The AHM began among the religious revivals that swept across American Protestantism in the early 19th century and culminated in the founding of several holiness denominations by the beginning of the 20th century. For further works dealing with the emergence of the AHM during the 19th century, see Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957); George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 72-103 and Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan, *Religion in America*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), 332-334. For an interesting work that looks at how the AHM impacted southern black Baptists during the late 19th century, see David Daniels, "The Cultural Renewal of Slave Religion: Charles Price Jones and the Emergence of the Holiness Movement in Mississippi" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1992). In this dissertation, Daniels articulates how the African American Holiness Movement (AAHM) in Mississippi labored to reposition and carry on certain elements of slave religion at the close of the 19th century. Through six chapters, Daniels argues that the AAHM (under the direction of Charles Price Jones and other religious and lay leaders) rejected the pessimistic attitude of many black Baptists toward slave religion and in turn, practiced sound religion, promoted racial uplift, and encouraged others to seek education.

⁶Roger Bowman, *Color Us Christian: The Story of the Church of the Nazarene Among America's Blacks* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1975), 35-36.

⁷See Mendall Taylor, *Fifty Years of Mission: World Outreach Through Home Missions*, V. 3 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1958), 149 -152 and W.T. Purkiser, *Called Unto Holiness: The Second Twenty-five Years, 1933-1958*, vol. 2 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 199.

and strengthen their churches and ministries while remaining segregated under the umbrella of the GCD.

This article attempts to overcome this scholarly neglect by analyzing how certain racial, ministerial, and jurisdictional practices and how particular theological beliefs impacted the development of black Nazarene ministries during the 1950s and 1960s. The specific thesis is that after 1958, churches, ministers, and laity on the GCD were able to more affectively grow and develop their ministries and contribute to black Nazarene missions because they were able to gain more autonomy and decision making power over their segregated jurisdiction.

In order to establish this claim, the paper will first outline how the Colored District (CD) served as an organizational precursor of southern segregation in the CN before it was dissolved in 1952. Then, the essay will show how white leaders in the GCD helped to impede the development of black churches, Sunday Schools, and pastors in the years between 1953 and 1958. In this same section, the research will detail how African Americans struggled against their secondary status as they attained certain positions of district leadership and as they created the organizational and ministerial foundation that would help to strengthen the GCD after 1958. Next, the article will describe the ways in which African Americans, from 1958 to 1969, acquired a greater amount of control over the affairs of the GCD and how this acquisition enabled them to recruit and train more pastors and how it enabled them to strengthen their committees, congregations, ministries, budgets, and overall commitment to the denomination's evangelistic focus. In this part of the essay, the paper will also outline how the district's commitment to social conservatism and "holiness evangelism" enabled them to gain more control over their segregated district in a time when civil rights gains were being made in American society. Then, a conclusion regarding the outcomes and implications of the research will be rendered.

By focusing on this particular subject, this paper will (1) provide the first scholarly study on how segregation did or did not affect black self- agency in the CN, (2) shed light on how theological beliefs, organizational systems, evangelistic practices, and geographical location impacted blacks who worshipped and ministered outside of mainstream black denominations (i.e. the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, etc.) during the Civil Rights Era, and (3) contribute to the historiography on how African Americans impacted the history of predominantly white holiness denominations during the 1950s and 1960s.

The Colored District: A Precursor to Southern Segregation

About seven years before the GCD was formed, the Department of Home Missions sent a memorial to the General Board⁸ requesting that:

⁸The General Board (GB) was created by the General Assembly (the supreme elective and legislative body in the CN) of the denomination in 1923. The main function of the GB was to oversee the work of six major denominational departments: Foreign Missions, Church Schools, Department of Home Missions and Church Extension (later termed Home Missions and Evangelism), Publication, Ministerial Relief, and Education. In 1932, it was decided that the General Board would meet every January to give reports and assess the work of each subcommittee. For further reference, see Purkiser, 32-51.

In as much as there are thirteen million colored people in the United States (one out of every ten person being colored) we urge the Department of Home Missions and Evangelism and the General Board to take definite steps toward the evangelization of these people, toward the establishment of Nazarene churches for colored people, and to appropriate necessary funds for the accomplishment of the task.⁹

Within a few weeks, this memorial was passed and the Board of General Superintendents agreed to allocate funds to set up “The Colored District.”¹⁰ At the outset, the district “oversaw” black churches and missions in various places like Alabama, Chicago, and New Orleans. Moreover, it also supervised the largest black churches, which were located in Indianapolis, IN (19 members), Mashulaville, MS (20 members), Columbus, MS (16 members), Oakland, CA (15 members), and Institute, West Virginia (57 members).¹¹ The pastors of these churches were Warren A. Rogers, C.C. Johnson,¹² Clifford R. Johnson, and R.W. Cunningham.

Over the next four years, more churches would be added to the CD. In fact, by the time the CD was dismantled in 1952, two more congregations of thirty-one and nineteen were in operation in San Antonio, TX and Oklahoma City, OK. Also, by the end of that year, a church of twenty-eight was operating in a rented building in Detroit and two small Los Angeles

⁹*Journal of the Eleventh General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene* (June 1944): 123. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. For some years prior to the establishment of the GCD, several missionaries and leaders within the denomination requested that the church take concerted efforts to evangelize African Americans. For instance, in 1919 and 1925, R.J. Kirkland and E.C. DeJernett, two white pastors, wrote articles in the *Herald of Holiness* requesting that the denomination begin churches among the “American Negro.” Also, in 1932 and 1937, Geren C. Roberts and Fairy Chism (a white African missionary) published two concise treatises asking the CN to focus its efforts on evangelizing African Americans living in large cities. For further reference see R. J. Kirkland, “The Negro Problem,” *Herald of Holiness*, 07 May 1919, 6. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri; E.C. DeJernett, “Should the Church Undertake Gospel Work Among American Negroes?” *Herald of Holiness*, 11 February 1925, 7-8. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri; Geren C. Roberts, “A Neglected Field,” *Herald of Holiness*, 27 April 1932, 7-8. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri; Fairy Chism, “What is the Matter With Us,” *Herald of Holiness*, 31 July 1937, 6. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri and *Journal of the Tenth General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene* (June 1940), 361. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

¹⁰Interestingly enough, in 1944, the denomination also placed Native American churches, Sunday schools, and educational institutions under a segregated jurisdiction called the North American Indian District. For further reference, see, Purkiser, 200-201.

¹¹It is interesting to note that the West Indian congregations in Brooklyn and the Cape Verdean church in Rhode Island remained under the jurisdiction of geographical districts throughout the existence of the CD. Even though they were invited to the yearly meetings of the conference, they did not participate or vote in any of the legislative or executive actions of the CD.

¹²C.C. Johnson oversaw and pastored both the work at Mashulaville, MS and the church in Brookhaven, MS until 1958. The next year, the ministry at Mashulaville was dissolved, but Johnson continued to pastor the latter congregation until 1962. Shortly thereafter, the church ceased operation. See, *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Seventh Annual Assembly Journal* (April 1959): 6-7. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri and *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Seventh Annual Assembly Journal* (July 1962): 7-11. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

congregations had purchased property and developed stable Sunday school ministries.¹³ Moreover, even though there wasn't a single African American congregation that had over fifty members, there were fourteen registered ministers, nine of which were actively pastoring churches in the North, South, and West—Rufus Sanders (Chicago Friendly CN), Warren A. Rogers (Detroit Jubilee CN), Clarence Jacobs (Indianapolis First Colored CN), O.B. Whiteside (Los Angeles Marshall Memorial CN), Clifford R. Johnson (Oakland Bethel CN), D.A. Murray (New Orleans Bethel CN), C.C. Johnson (Brookhaven CN (Mississippi)), Leslie Casmere (San Antonio West End CN), and R.W. Cunningham (Charleston West Institute CN (West Virginia)).¹⁴

Although these statistics and names point to the presence of black leadership at the local level, the majority of the legislative and executive power over African American churches, missions, and Sunday schools in the North, West, and South was held by white ecclesiastical leaders. For instance, J.B. Chapman, a white pastor and church head assumed ultimate jurisdiction over the CD in 1947. Along with Chapman, S.T. Ludwig, the Executive Secretary of the Department of Home Missions and Evangelism was appointed and remained secretary over the district for years to come until Rev. Dr. Hardy C. Powers replaced him as the primary supervisor in 1949.¹⁵

By maintaining this system of governance, the denomination took a paternal approach to evangelizing and organizing black congregations. In the policy covering the set up of the CD, the Board of General Superintendents made sure that white District Superintendents would make organizational and jurisdictional decisions:

The organization of new churches among the colored people is to be carried out through the regular Districts now covering the fields, the District Superintendents of the various districts being authorized and instructed to organize such churches wherever in their judgment the organization is advisable. When organized, the new churches are to be assigned to the Colored District and their statistics inserted in the minutes of the Colored District. Insertion in this list of authorized churches is to be by order of the District Superintendent from the District in which the church is located.¹⁶

¹³By 1953 many churches had already developed Sunday school missions whose average attendance outnumbered their membership rolls. For instance, in 1952, Chicago Friendly Church of the Nazarene reported an average of 30 people who attended Sunday school as opposed to 11 who were members of the church. Also, by 1953 there were twice as many Sunday school attendants as church members at Indianapolis First Colored, Oakland Bethel, Charleston West Institute, Pasadena Bethel, and New Orleans Bethel. For further reference see *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, First Annual Assembly Journal* (February 1953): 11-12. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵Department of Home Missions and Evangelism, "Colored Work: Annual Report to the Board of General Superintendents and the Members of the General Board" (January 1950): 1-2. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

¹⁶Board of General Superintendents, "Policy Covering the Setup and Organization For Colored Work As Authorized By the General Assembly" (Sept. 1944): 1. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri; S.T. Ludwig, "Report of the Present Status of the Colored Work" (Sept. 1947): 1. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri; Taylor, 149 and Purkiser, 198-199.

When it came to the licensing and ordaining of black ministers, the same segregated and paternalistic approach applied:

Recognition of orders for colored preachers, the licensing and ordaining of such preachers and other matters affecting the roll of the new District are to be on order of the regular Districts in which the colored churches are located. But the ministers so recognized, licensed and ordained shall be placed on the rolls of the new District and not on the rolls of the regular Districts involved.¹⁷

This type of administrative segregation was practiced by the denomination throughout the late 1940's and early 1950's. Although there is no evidence to suggest that ultra-racist holiness/Pentecostal views impacted their organizational approach,¹⁸ their policies still discouraged black self-agency in a time when African Americans in other predominantly white denominations were speaking out against racism.¹⁹ For instance, when the CD met for the first time in 1947,²⁰ black Nazarenes did not address the issue of denominational racism, largely because white leaders controlled the affairs of the district. In fact, by 1952, almost all of the officers that held positions of legislative and executive power on the CD were white and all the churches and Sunday schools reported their membership numbers and financial expenditures to these representatives. Also, even though black ministers like C.C. Johnson and D.A. Murray consistently spoke and preached at district meetings, they were not encouraged to address social or racial issues. Moreover, even though pastors like Murray and Johnson lead and kept alive small southern churches in the early 1950's,²¹ they continued to be supervised by white District Superintendents.²² Thus, even though they led the affairs of local congregations and contributed

¹⁷Board of General Superintendents, 1.

¹⁸According to David Harrell, from the early 1950's to the early 1960's, various lower class white holiness and Pentecostal leaders stated that whites and blacks should remain separate because African Americans would corrupt the purity of the white race. For further reference, see David Edwin Harrell, *White Sects and Black Men in the Recent South* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 62-72 and Andrew Michael Manis, *Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Black and White Baptists and Civil Rights, 1947-1957* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 63-66. The author of this article has found no evidence to suggest that denominational leaders or ministers within the CN held such views.

¹⁹For example, by the late 1940's, blacks within the Methodist Church had begun to speak out against the practice of segregating black churches under the umbrella of the Central Jurisdiction. For further reference, see Murray, 57-66 and Thomas 73-78.

²⁰Even though the Board of General Superintendents agreed to start the conference in 1944, the first district meeting did not take place until 1947.

²¹By 1952, there were 5 organized African American churches in the South that had official membership rolls: (1) New Orleans Bethel CN (4 members), Brookhaven CN (9 members), San Antonio West End CN (31 members), Oklahoma City Alice Street CN (19 members), and Charleston West Institute CN (32 members). See *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, First Annual Assembly Journal*, 12.

²²Even when the church started a ministerial training school for African Americans in 1948, a white minister named Rev. E.E. Hale was appointed president. He would hold that position until a black minister named R.W. Cunningham took over the presidency in 1954. For further reference see S.T. Ludwig, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting, Nazarene Bible Institute" (Jan. 11, 1949): 1-3. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri; S.T. Ludwig, "Meeting of Trustees, Nazarene Bible Institute" (Jan. 10, 1950): 1-2. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri; S.T. Ludwig, "Third Annual Board Meeting of the Trustees of Nazarene Bible Institute" (Jan. 9, 1951): 1-3. Nazarene Archives, Kansas

to the development of the district, they were afforded little opportunity to vote on or speak about issues related to race, district evangelism, or ministerial education.

What these actions reveal is that through the CD, there was an attempt to segregate African American churches on a national basis without allowing black ministers or leaders to govern the segregated jurisdiction or control which issues would be discussed at district conferences. This denominational position was fairly conservative when one considers the fact that calls for racial integration and black equality were being echoed in American society during this period. As early as 1941, African American labor leaders like A. Phillip Randolph put pressure on President Roosevelt to establish the Fair Employment Practice Committee, which was created to help generate more jobs for blacks around the country. Also, by 1948, the armed forces had been desegregated, the membership of the NAACP had increased to 450,000, and President Truman had appointed a presidential committee on civil rights.²³

At the same time, African Americans in the UMC had already pressured their denomination to endorse minority legal protection and to emphasize the local church's responsibility to work to improve racial conditions around the country. Moreover, blacks in the UMC and in the Church of God (Anderson, IN) (another predominantly white holiness body) had gained a substantial financial and voting base within their respective denominations. Black Methodists, for instance, already elected their own bishops and national leaders and could make formal requests of their denomination. In other words, by the early 1950s, African Americans in these bodies were able to hold positions on mission and educational boards, elect their own ecclesiastical leaders, and create ministries that were relevant to the needs of black congregations.²⁴ Nonetheless, it would take a few more years before southern blacks in the CN were able to achieve a similar level of ecclesiastical power.

Organizational and Ministerial Features of the Gulf Central District 1953-1958

Throughout the middle of the 1950s, many of the churches, ministers, and laity on the GCD still did not possess the amount of autonomy and decision-making power that was needed in order to affectively develop their ministries and further strengthen their missionary efforts among southern blacks. That would not begin to happen until after 1958. However, before

City, Missouri; Alvin Bowes, "Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Nazarene Bible Institute (Jan. 7, 1954): 1-3. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

²³Murray, 56-59. See also Monroe Billington, "Civil Rights, President Truman and the South," in *The Journal of Negro History*, 58, no. 2 (Apr. 1973): 127-139.

²⁴For example, by the late 1940s, African American pastors and churches in the Church of God (Anderson, IN) had already established the Board of Education, the National Youth Fellowship (1921), a semi-monthly publication called the *Shining Light Survey* (June 1932), and the General Ministerial Assembly, which was a body designed and led by African Americans that met once a year to develop new churches and ministries and to hear about how various black congregations were doing around the country. Also, by 1917, a black owned campground at West Middlesex, PA had been established for the purpose of bringing African American pastors and laity together for one to two weeks every year to fellowship, to worship, to attend workshops, and to discuss various ecclesiastical concerns affecting black churches. Also, by 1944, blacks within the Central Jurisdiction had elected their seventh and eighth bishops (Edgar A. Love and Matthew W. Clair) and had sent their own delegates to vote at the General Conference in Kansas City, MO. For further details, see Thomas, 56-57, 80-81 and Massey, 83-140.

detailing how they acquired this autonomy and power, it is important to outline how blacks labored and struggled to build the foundations of the GCD in the mid 1950s.

After the CD was dissolved in 1952, the General Board and the Board of General Superintendents decided to establish the GCD as a jurisdiction that would govern all churches in the southern portion of the United States. In the beginning, the GCD was like the CD, in that all the district officers were white pastors and denominational leaders. D.I. Vanderpool, one of the General Superintendents, served as head officer, Dr. John Stockton as treasurer, Alpin P. Bowes as District Secretary and Rev. Leon Chambers as District Superintendent (DS). Chambers (a native of Alabama) was appointed to this position because he expressed to denominational leaders his “desire” to develop black ministries in the South. Thus, after he graduated from Nazarene Theological Seminary in the early 1950s, Chambers was chosen as DS.²⁵

Of course, there is evidence to suggest that Chambers’ “desire” was influenced by his assumption that the “cultural instability” of African Americans needed to be redeemed. He never made this view public in any of the district minutes, but he did echo these sentiments two decades later when he was asked by R.W. Hurn to reflect upon his time as DS. In that correspondence, he stated that, “Black people are (in a) class and status conscious among themselves...The black population is in a state of cultural instability...The cultural instability of the black people could be the greatest opportunity of the church.”²⁶

Nevertheless, Chambers’ apparent paternalism did not impede him from relying upon the knowledge and wisdom of black pastors to help him fulfill his duties as DS. For instance, pastors like C.C. Johnson and D.A. Murray helped Chambers to realize the importance of recruiting more black ministers if he wanted to establish more congregations in the South. Chambers listened to their counsel and thus recommended to the 1955 District Assembly to recruit and develop more pastors.²⁷

When one assesses the ministerial and financial situation of the district in 1955, one can understand why Chambers made this statement. During the assembly, the district ordained Lula Williams (the female pastor at Meridian Fitkin Memorial in Meridian, MS) and Joe Edwards (the minister at Oklahoma City Alice Street in Oklahoma City, OK) as elders, which brought the grand total to three on the entire district. Aside from those who were ordained, there were only three licensed ministers pastoring organized churches—Leslie Casmere (San Antonio West End, San Antonio, TX), C.C. Johnson (Columbus, Columbus, MS), and E.W. Wilson (Shawmut Bethel, Lanett, AL).²⁸

By 1957, the ministerial situation had changed very little despite the fact that the total number of churches had increased to thirteen. Organized congregations were in operation in Brookhaven, MS, Calvert, AL, Columbus, MS, Columbus, TX, Memphis, TN, Meridian, MS,

²⁵Roy F. Smee, “Missionary Societies Pray for U.S. Chinese and Negro Work,” *Herald of Holiness*, 20 August 1958, 16-17. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

²⁶Leon Chambers, “Letter Written to Dr. R.W. Hurn” (July 25, 1972): 4. Nazarene Archives. Kansas City, Missouri.

²⁷Ibid, 3-4 and *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Third Annual Assembly Journal* (Feb 28-Mar 2, 1955): 14-15. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

²⁸Ibid, 4-5.

Miami, FL, Nashville, TN, New Orleans, LA, Oklahoma City, OK, Richmond, VA, San Antonio, TX, and Lanett, AL. On top of this, missions and Sunday schools had been established in Chattanooga, TN, Concord, NC, Mashulaville, MS, and Newport News, VA. Yet, during this period, only one more person had been ordained as an elder—C.C. Johnson. Moreover, the list of licensed ministers only numbered seven—Leslie Casmere (San Antonio West End CN), Roland Chopfield (Chattanooga mission station), R.S. Green (San Antonio West End CN), David C. Moore (no official placement), Boyd L. Proctor (Richmond Mt. Zion CN), Lawrence Reddick (Miami Overcoming CN), and Henry Terry (Memphis Friendship CN).²⁹

These are interesting figures to consider when one analyzes the amount of West-Indian and African American ministers pastoring outside the GCD during the late 1950s. For instance, by the year Chambers relinquished his position as district superintendent, there were eight ordained elders and eight licensed ministers outside the South. Furthermore, seventeen churches were in operation with a total membership of 487, an average Sunday school attendance of 819, and a combined property value of \$283,264.000. Of course, some of these churches, like those in Brooklyn, had been in operation since the late 1910s and early 1920s. Thus, they had the opportunity to develop and strengthen their ministries and financial budgets years before the southern congregations were in existence.

Nonetheless, the fact that there were more members, ordained elders, licensed ministers, and a greater amount of property value among black churches outside the GCD could lead one to suggest that West-Indian, Cape Verdean, and African American congregations outside the South fared just as well or even better than their southern contemporaries, even though they (unlike their southern counterparts) did not receive much financial or organizational support from the denomination.³⁰ The Department of Home Missions and Evangelism, along with southern geographical districts, gave large amounts of money to the GCD during the 1950s to help strengthen missions and support newly formed churches. In fact, both parties gave almost \$11,000 to the general budget of the GCD by the beginning of 1955 and over \$17,000 from February 1, 1956 to March 31, 1957. These expenses helped to pay for the DS's income and traveling expenses and supplemented the salaries of various black pastors on the district. The funds were also used to print the district journal, cover the operational expenses of certain evangelistic ministries, pay for the expenses of General Assembly delegates, and to help incur some of the rental costs for the congregations that did not own property.³¹ Thus, for the first five years, there was a concerted effort on behalf of the denomination to provide monetary capital to the GCD in an effort to try and evangelize African Americans in the South. Yet, by the end of those five years, there was limited growth and in terms of total ministers, property value,

²⁹ *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fifth Annual Assembly Journal* (April 25-26, 1957): 4-7, 11. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

³⁰ In fact, by the beginning of 1958, the property value of African American churches on the GCD stood at only \$87,500, which was a little less than 1/3 of the total property value of black churches outside the South. Also, the total membership of the GCD stood at 178, which was over three hundred less than the churches in the North, Midwest, and West. For further reference see, *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Sixth Annual Assembly Journal* (March 1-2, 1958): 18-21. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

³¹ See, *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Third Assembly Journal*, 15 and *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fifth Annual Assembly Journal*, 16.

membership, and churches, the GCD had not achieved the same amount of success that churches in the North and West had attained.

Despite this limited growth and despite the fact that white leaders like Leon Chambers and Alpin P. Bowes held most of the highest appointments on the district, African Americans did manage to acquire limited positions of leadership, support the theological and evangelistic mission of the denomination, and help build the organizational framework of the GCD. For example, in the same year that the Supreme Court gave their ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, blacks served on two of the ministerial boards that reviewed and recommended those who would be ordained and licensed as ministers. Melza Brown, D.A. Murray, and Leslie Casmere sat on the District Advisory Board and black ministers like Clarence Bowman and R.W. Cunningham were on the Orders and Relations, and Ministerial Studies Board. Over the next two years, African American pastors continued to serve on these boards and Cunningham maintained his position as president of Nazarene Bible Institute (NBI), the denominational school that operated for the specific purpose of training African American ministers.³²

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in 1957 and 1958, two of the six district officers were African American females. “Mrs.” Arthur Jackson (a member of Memphis Friendship CN) was the president of the Nazarene Foreign Missionary Society (NFMS)³³ and “Mrs.” Lula Williams (the acting pastor of Meridian Fitkin Memorial Church of the Nazarene) headed up the District Church School Board. As head of the primary educational board on the district, Williams, along with the rest of the committee, often sent recommendations to the district in an effort to improve evangelization in the South. For instance, on April 26, 1957, Williams and the board recommended that:

1. In order to bring new members into our Sunday schools and reach new families in our church communities, we recommend that each church appoint a committee to survey the community and take a religious census of families attending no church and children not attending Sunday school.
2. We recommend that each N.Y.P.S sponsor religious education courses for youth to be taught on youth level and give Christian Service Training credit cards from the Christian Service Training Commission in Kansas City.

³²R.W. Cunningham pastored the black Nazarene church at Institute, West Virginia and taught at NBI until 1954. After E.E. Hale resigned his position as president, Cunningham was nominated by the Board of General Superintendents to become the president of NBI. On January 11, 1955, that motion was approved by the Board of Trustees of NBI. Cunningham accepted the nomination and served as president of the college until the school was shut down by the denomination in 1969. For further reference see, Alvin P. Bowes, “Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Nazarene Bible Institute” (January 7, 1954); 1-3. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri and Alvin P. Bowes, “Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Nazarene Bible Institute” (January 11, 1955): 2-4. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

³³The Nazarene Foreign Missionary Society was originally called the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society and had active branches an almost every Nazarene district by the late 1950s. It changed its name in 1952 in an effort to recruit and enlist men to the society. They were relatively unsuccessful and by 1958, it continued to be dominated by females. For more information see, Purkiser, 256.

3. We recommend that the missionary societies be responsible for sending at least one student to Nazarene Bible Institute this fall.
4. We recommend that representatives be invited from Nazarene Bible Institute to visit the churches in the month of June and stimulate interest in the various communities surrounding our churches.
5. We recommend that a vacation Bible school be held in each church and that Bible teaching be emphasized.³⁴

These statements reveal that black females like Williams were committed to evangelism and to raising awareness about the need to develop and train pastors at NBI. As it was already mentioned, there were few ministers on the GCD during the mid to late 1950s and Williams and her counterparts understood the importance of overcoming this shortage. This particular concern is what drove her and the board to make the above recommendations and why, at the next district assembly, they stated that:

1. The constituent churches of the Gulf Central District, under the authorization of the district, be required to conduct Christian Service Training courses in their churches at least once a year.
2. That consideration be given to fostering vacation Bible schools in all of the churches and that, where it is possible, trained workers if extra workers are essential.
3. That each church of the district be responsible for sending one boy and one girl, eighteen years of age or over, to our Nazarene Bible Institute annually for youth rallies.
4. That Nazarene Young people be encouraged to make caravan trips to the Nazarene Bible Institute annually for youth rallies.
5. That Rev. R.W. Cunningham's educational tours be continued in order to maintain the interest of the churches on our district in the Institute and that time be give for two meetings at each church that would desire it.³⁵

Aside from this educational involvement, Williams and other pastors recorded the highlights of the conference and reported them to the *Herald of Holiness* (the denominational magazine), urged churches to pay their budgets, led committees on evangelism, took an active role in meetings, and participated in district worship. In certain services, Joe Edwards, Clarence Bowman, and Arthur Jackson sang songs such as "He's the One," "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," "Close to Thee," "I Need the Prayers," and "How Great Thou Art." Also, Roland Chopfield and C.C. Johnson occasionally preached, while R.W. Cunningham gave reports on the affairs of NBI.

Moreover, at the assemblies, pastors like D.A. Murray, Leslie Casmere, Warren Rogers, and Lula Williams delivered papers that focused on evangelism, training African American

³⁴*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fifth Annual Assembly Journal*, 17-18.

³⁵*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Sixth Annual Assembly Journal*, 22.

pastors and lay workers, and improving church finances. For example, at the 1954 district assembly, Murray read a work entitled, “Revivals,” while Casmere and Rogers took the opportunity to deliver their papers called, “Evangelizing Our People,” and “Financing Our Churches.” At the following assembly, Williams made public her commitment to strengthen black Sunday schools by reading her paper, which was termed, “Building the Sunday School.” Rogers followed her address by reading his work entitled, “The General Work of a Pastor.”³⁶ Thus, by reading papers, by participating in worship, and by sitting on committees, black pastors (both male and female) and laity participated in district affairs, despite the fact that the white leaders continued to possess ultimate financial and administrative power over the GCD.

Nevertheless, by participating in district concerns and by committing themselves to the evangelistic mission of the CN in the 1950s, southern black Nazarenes seemingly accepted denominational segregation. Even though the 1956 General Assembly (GA) made an official statement against racism that read that, “. . . world-wide discrimination against racial minorities [must] be recognized as being incompatible with the Scriptures’ proclamation that God is no respecter of persons,” it was not endorsed by any on the GCD nor was it discussed by any of the district committees after 1956. By doing this, blacks (and whites) made it clear that their primary concern was not to address racism or civil rights, but to strengthen budgets, churches, and missions and to train and develop more African American pastors. Racism and segregation were ignored and even if black pastors or congregants had preached on or discussed the implications of their secondary status within the denomination, those voices were not heard outside their local congregations and communities. Therefore, it seems that southern black Nazarenes allowed segregation (at both the jurisdictional and congregational levels) to shape their religious lives during a time when the burgeoning civil rights movement had begun to make waves in many sections of the South.³⁷

At the same time, the evidence has shown that southern black Nazarenes did not merely accept their second-class membership in the CN. Instead, through participation on district boards, committees, and worship services, through their theological and ministerial commitment to evangelism, and through their calls to recruit and train more black pastors, African Americans (both males and females) in the 1950s had an impact on the life and direction of churches on the GCD. Still, despite this impact, there were few churches, ministries, and pastors on the district,

³⁶*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fourth Annual Assembly Journal*, 11-15; *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Third Annual Assembly Journal*, 11; *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fourth Annual Assembly Journal*, 11-13; *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fifth Annual Assembly Journal*, 12-14 and *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Sixth Annual Assembly Journal*, 14-17.

³⁷For instance, by the end of 1956, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Montgomery Bus Boycott had effectively desegregated public transportation in Montgomery. This victory was one of the most important events that would add strength to the burgeoning civil rights movement during the late 1950s. For further reference, see Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Harper Collins: New York, 1958); James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 65-66, 80-85 and Mary Fair Banks, “Trailblazers: Women in the Montgomery Bus Boycott,” in *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & Torchbearers, 1941-1965*, eds., Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods (Bloomington, IN: The University of Indiana Press, 1993), 71-84.

largely because African Americans did not control the overall infrastructure of the district. Yet, that situation would change as African Americans acquired a greater amount of administrative, ministerial, and decision-making power over the district in the late 1950s and 1960s.

*Gaining Control: Organizational, Ministerial, and Theological Features
of the Gulf Central District 1959-1969*

After 1958, black pastors, churches, and laity on the GCD were able to more adequately grow and develop their ministries and contribute to black Nazarene missions because they were able to gain more autonomy and executive control over their segregated jurisdiction. This acquisition began to unfurl when the Sixth Annual Assembly of the Gulf Central District, Chambers presented Warren A. Rogers as the new DS. After the presentation, it was noted that Rogers “brought a stirring message from Acts 1:8” and after his sermon concluded, the altar was “filled with seekers.” Several weeks before Rogers gave this oration, the Board of General Superintendents had appointed him to his new position.³⁸ Rogers received this offer because he had been born and raised in the Deep South³⁹ and because he had developed his reputation as an efficient minister. For instance, by the time of his appointment, he had already successfully pastored two churches in Indianapolis, IN and in Detroit, MI. Rogers first pastored the Indianapolis congregation, where he helped the church acquire property and attain a small, but established membership (19 members were registered in 1948). After stabilizing that church, he then moved to Detroit and over the following years, he helped Detroit Jubilee CN become a healthy and vibrant congregation.⁴⁰

When Rogers became DS in 1958, he sought to strengthen the GCD like he had the churches in Indianapolis and Detroit. In order to accomplish this end, Rogers immediately established a district newspaper so that communication on the jurisdiction could be improved. The name of the paper was entitled, *The Gulf Central Informer*, and its main purpose was to keep pastors and laity informed about what was happening on the district throughout the year. During his first year of administration, Rogers also held four revivals at Memphis Friendship CN, at West Side San Antonio CN, at Chattanooga Alton Park CN and in Orlando, FL. He believed that these revivals would help revive the spiritual condition of blacks in these churches and would empower others to establish new congregations. At the end of 1958, this belief turned into reality, as his revival preaching helped the Chattanooga congregation increase its membership by five and as it helped to lay the foundation of the congregation that would be established in Orlando at the end of the year.⁴¹

³⁸This appointment came after Chambers tenured his resignation in early 1958.

³⁹Rogers was born in Winnsboro, LA in 1917. After four years, the family moved to the Mississippi Delta and worked on a variety of cotton plantations in and around Alligator, MS and Clarksville, MS. Sometime before 1941, Rogers moved to Akron, Ohio, where he became a member of the Kenmore CN. For further reference, see Warren Rogers, “Letter Written to R.W. Hurn” (September 9, 1972): 1-3. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri and Bowman, 43.

⁴⁰Unknown Author, “Report of Individual Colored Churches, Indianapolis, Indiana” (1948): 6. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri and *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, First Annual Assembly Journal*, 7-9, 14.

⁴¹*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Seventh Annual Assembly Journal* (April 4-5 1959): 7, 20-21. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. See also, Warren Rogers, “What the

By holding revivals and by visiting various locations and churches throughout the district, Rogers also helped to organize two other churches and increase membership on the district by thirty-six, which brought the total to two-hundred and eighteen. Moreover, his efforts encouraged sixteen additional people to join the Nazarene Young People's Society (NYPS) and the NFMS. To state it differently, during his first year as DS, Rogers was able to further the work of the district by helping to start new churches and by evangelizing in various black communities around the South. However, it is important to remember that other black pastors and laity contributed to the strengthening of the district during the late 1950s and early 1960s. For example, in an article written in February 12, 1958, Rev. Joe Edwards of Providence CN in Oklahoma City, OK, asked *all* Nazarenes to pray for; (1) more black churches to be established, (2) funds to improve church structures, and (3) additional African American preachers. Edwards emphasized the importance of praying for these things when he stated that:

When people pray they will see the urgent need of more churches and Sunday schools in our district among our people. When people pray, they will want to enter into that colaboring (sic) with God to bring into existence the things we pray for. This is my prayer for 1958. We need more churches, better church buildings, and more preachers of our race; but most of all we need more people of my race who are willing to suffer and die for this great cause...For it is the will of God that black men and women, too, be saved and sanctified in our Southland, where more than ten million of the seventeen million Negroes live.⁴²

Edwards' statements reveal the importance that he placed on the continuing need to develop more racial autonomy within the district. He believed that this could be attained by training black laity to take on a more active role in their congregations and by developing African American pastors who could effectively evangelize southern blacks.

In the early 1960s, Edwards' call was heeded by many on the district. By 1961, for instance, Arthur Jackson headed the NFMS, Archie Williams⁴³ chaired the District Church School Board, and Roland Chopfield led the NYPS. Likewise, Rogers, along with Edwards, Jackson, Chopfield, and R.W. Cunningham, oversaw and led the District Advisory Board and the Orders and Relations and Ministerial Studies Board.⁴⁴ This growth in black leadership also took place on the various district committees. By the third year of Rogers' administration, there were seven more assembly committees in operation, which brought the total to twelve⁴⁵ and all but one—the committee on Publishing Interests—was chaired by an African American.

General Budget Means to Our Negro Work," *Herald of Holiness*, 18 March 1959, 11. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁴²Joe Edwards, "When People Pray," *Herald of Holiness*, 12 February 1958, 6. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁴³Williams was the newly licensed minister who pastored the three year old congregation in Orlando.

⁴⁴*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Ninth Annual Assembly Journal* (August 3, 1961): 5. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁴⁵The names of those committees were Church Schools, Education, Evangelism, NFMS, Home Missions, Memoirs, NYPS, Nominations, Public Morals, Publishing Interests, Resolutions, and Ways and Means. See *Ibid.*, 23-26.

Throughout the early to mid 1960s, these boards and committees expanded and remained dominated by black pastors and laity. In 1962, for instance, the District Advisory Board did not have a single white minister or ecclesiastical head on its committee and the Orders and Relations and Ministerial Studies only had one white member—Alpin P. Bowes—on its board. Also, licensed black ministers or laity headed all of the twelve committees in operation. The list of chairmen included Archie Williams, Roy L. Fralin, Joe Edwards, Charles Johnson, “Mrs.” Roy L. Fralin, Roland Chopfield, Eddie Burnett, Edward Greene, Boyd Proctor, and Warren Rogers.⁴⁶ In that same year, the NFMS added five more officers to its organization. Instead of operating with just a President, persons now held titles of Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Secretary of Study, and Secretary of Publicity and Star Society. By the following year, the NYPS followed the lead of the NFMS and elected a Vice-President (Charles Johnson), a Secretary (Roy L. Fralin), and a Director of Junior Fellowship (“Mrs.” Archie Williams).

During this same time, these enlarged groups began to ask local congregations to develop their own missionary and youth societies. At the 1962 District Assembly, the NYPS challenged churches and ministers to develop youth ministries so that more young people could develop their knowledge of the Bible and so their energies could be “channeled to God.” They emphasized these two points when they recommended that:

1. We encourage each pastor to properly organize an N.Y.P.S. If you have a sizable group of young people, you are by the constitution of the NYPS to divide them into three classes: junior (ages 4-11), teen (ages 12-19), young adult (ages 20-40).... We sincerely feel our youth should get together annually, or once every two years.... This we feel is a must to have fellowship with our youth. We commend that you meet together once per week, but keep your meeting where God can approve, and please give them an active part in your regular service. The tireless energy of youth must be channeled to God
2. The pastor and local church president must be responsible. Bible study should remain supreme in our N.Y.P.S. If what you are doing is not a problem, you are either not doing your best or it is not worth doing. Remember our goal—300 by 1963.⁴⁷

Similar requests to build up the constituency of local chapters, increase financial budgets, and evangelize southern blacks were made by the NFMS in the early to mid 1960s. For example, at the 1961 District Assembly, they made the following recommendations:

1. A monthly missionary meeting be held in every church...
2. Finances
 - a. Alabaster offering for the September Alabaster services. Every church try having a regular African *Umbongo*

⁴⁶In 1962, Rogers headed up the Nominations Committee, the Ways and Means Committee, the District Advisory Board, and the Orders and Relations and Ministerial Studies Board. See, *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Tenth Annual Assembly Journal* (July 13-14, 1962): 24-30. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

- b. Thanksgiving offering. Challenge the people to raise all the General Budget offering in November, then have an overflow offering at Easter time. Begin to announce the missionary offering early. Have the preacher preach on the plight of the lost world. Encourage people to pledge.
3. Goals for the year:
1. Every Nazarene observe the sky watch.
 2. Every member strive to win a soul.
 3. Buy one Memorial Roll.
 4. Every church raise their General Budget.
 5. Every church have in full a Prayer and Fasting society.⁴⁸

Likewise, three years later, Arthur Jackson and the Nazarene World Missionary Society (NWMS) (formerly the NFMS) challenged every congregation to increase their membership, purchase missionary books, hold at least one monthly missionary meeting, pray for missionaries, and increase their giving to world missions. When it came to actual numbers, the committee recommended that by the beginning of 1965, there should be at least 20 societies, 450 members, 250 prayer and fasting members, 200 *Other Sheep*⁴⁹ subscriptions, 50 junior readers, and \$200.00 in Alabaster offering.⁵⁰

These calls for greater participation were bolstered by the fact that committees like the NWMS had experienced financial and membership growth during the first half of the decade. In 1959, total giving for the NWMS stood at \$68.00. However, by 1962 (the first year that the GCD held a NWMS convention) that total jumped to \$588.00, which was more than the combined sum of the Sunday school department and the NYPS. During the same year, the NWMS had 13 societies and 166 members. By 1964, total societies for the NWMS had increased by three and overall membership had swelled to 337. Jackson attributed this growth to God, but acknowledged that the NWMS had to continue to grow and improve if they were going to “save” more people.⁵¹

Even though total membership numbers in these committees and in the churches were affected by the decision to remove all five Florida churches from the jurisdiction of the GCD,⁵²

⁴⁸*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Ninth Annual Assembly Journal, 24-25.*

⁴⁹The *Other Sheep* was a monthly missionary journal that was started in 1911. For further reference, see Purkiser, 41-42.

⁵⁰*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Twelfth Annual Assembly Journal (August 13-14, 1964): 26.* Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁵¹*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Seventh Annual Assembly Journal, 31; Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, 35 and Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Twelfth Annual Assembly Journal, 25-26.*

⁵²After being removed, the churches were governed by the district in which they were located. This decision to integrate the Florida churches will be discussed later on in the paper.

membership continued to remain steady. For instance, in their report at the Fifteenth Annual District Assembly, Jackson and her committee stated that there were 226 NWMS members on the district. At the following assembly, membership increased to 266 and a total of 13 societies were still supporting Nazarene missions around the globe.⁵³

Jackson supported and encouraged this growth through her words of advice. In some of her reports and writings, for instance, she maintained that NWMS members needed to pray and fast if their work was going to expand and if they were going to have an impact on spreading the message of holiness among southern blacks. In a small article written in July of 1966, she expressed her theological convictions concerning these topics when she stated that:

Prayer and fasting are much needed these days. Through prayer and fasting we become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Prayers of intercession accompanied with fasting releases the hand of God to do wonders among the people. Problems are solved, difficulties overcome, and souls are won to Christ.⁵⁴

In an article written two years later, she also challenged NWMS members to remember that Christ had called them to spread “the good news” among African Americans with zeal and fervor:

A ministry has been entrusted to us namely, to communicate the good news that man can be reconciled to God. As Christians we want to see people saved. How do we go about it? This is a person to person ministry. God is looking to the church through world missions to be a bright light shining in a world of darkness. We are responsible to God and man. God demands our best. The time has come that we must be courageous leaders, and point our people back to God.⁵⁵

Nonetheless, like Jackson and the NWMS, the NYPS also contributed to the evangelistic thrust, organizational strength, and racial autonomy of the GCD throughout the mid to late 1960s. During this time, it challenged churches, like it had previously, to work towards evangelizing youth so that more young people could be “saved” and incorporated into the life of southern black churches. Roland Chopfield, the president of the NYPS, emphasized this urgent need in 1965 when he asserted that:

We are especially emphasizing N.Y.P.S. work in our district. We must organize our society by gathering together the saved from 4 to 40. The way to start is to start, it is as

⁵³*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fourteenth Annual Assembly Journal* (September 1-2, 1966): 17-18. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri; *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fifteenth Annual Assembly Journal* (September 15, 1967): 27, 35. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri and *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Sixteenth Annual Assembly Journal* (September 12, 1968): 25. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁵⁴Mrs. Arthur Jackson, “N.W.M.S.,” *The Gulf Central Informer* 8, no. 1 (July 1966): 2. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁵⁵Mrs. Arthur Jackson, “N.W.M.S.,” *The Gulf Central Informer* 10, no. 4 (February 1968): 3. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

simple as that. The time is now...All of this requires work, but work brings sums not subtraction, or division and sums bring joy and good reports at our meetings.⁵⁶

Similarly, when Edward Husband (a recent graduate of NBI) became president of the committee in 1966, he challenged each church to organize a NYPS so that young people could receive salvation.⁵⁷ Like the NWMS and the rest of the GCD, the overarching goal was to evangelize “souls.” This was stressed in their reports to the district and in their annual conventions. For instance, at the 1968 yearly convention of the NYPS, Chopfield delivered a message entitled, “They Turned the World Upside,” which allegedly “encouraged and inspired the convention” to carry on its work with zeal and fervor.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, as these voices and challenges were being uttered, more local NYPS units were being formed and more young people were becoming members of those chapters. In fact, out of the nineteen churches that were operating in 1967, twelve of them had NYPS committees with a total of 298 members. Within the next two years, that number increased to 374.⁵⁹

Moreover, as membership increased in the NYPS, Rogers was able to recruit more black students to attend NBI to prepare for Christian ministry. Rogers felt that the school was the “life line” for developing black leadership on the GCD.⁶⁰ Thus, he traveled extensively and was able to encourage more young people to attend NBI. For example, when he finished his annual college tour in 1966, he reported that some 215 young people were interested in attending NBI with the explicit purpose of training for Christian ministry. Over time, those interests turned into commitments as enrollment was pushed to a total of 42 by 1968.⁶¹

Of course, this financial and membership growth in youth and missionary societies and at NBI happened at the same time Rogers was laboring to recruit more pastors and as he was helping to start more churches and strengthen those already in existence. As it was mentioned in the previous section, few pastors were recruited to the district during its first five years of existence. However, while he was DS, Rogers made it one of his primary goals to develop pastors that would lead and develop churches on the GCD. He realized that like any other newly formed religious body, the district would not survive unless it had stable clerical leadership. The challenge, therefore, was to bring enough clergy into the ranks of the district so that the churches could become more autonomous and self-sustaining.

Because of this need, Rogers made a recommendation during his second year as DS to (1) create two new churches, (2) establish two self-sustaining congregations, and (3) enroll ten

⁵⁶Roland Chofield, “N.Y.P.S. Meet in Orlando, Fla.,” *The Gulf Central Informer* 7, no. 3 (June 1965): 1. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁵⁷*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fourteenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 25.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 28 and *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Sixteenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 29-30.

⁵⁹*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fifteenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 20 and *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Seventeenth Annual Assembly Journal* (July 25, 1969): 15. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁶⁰Warren Rogers, “Nazarene Training College Tour,” *The Gulf Central Informer* 10, no. 3 (August 1967): 1. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁶¹Warren Rogers, “Nazarene Training College,” *The Gulf Central Informer* 10, no. 6 (May 1968): 1. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

students at NBI by the following District Assembly. During the previous year, only one church, Providence CN in Oklahoma City, OK, was added to the list of existing churches that were self-supporting and that could sustain a full-time salary for its pastor.⁶² Most of the congregations were small in number and thus were unable to employ a full time minister.⁶³ Rogers understood these difficulties, so he made it a point to commend the church in Oklahoma City when they were able to employ Joe Edwards as their full time pastor. Likewise, at the same district assembly, Rogers praised the San Antonio West End CN when they had generated enough funds to build a new church. He revealed his enthusiasm when he stated that:

On Sunday, September 13, 1959, we had the thrilling experience of helping to dedicate our first new church building on the district. This was our San Antonio, Texas, West End Church, where Rev. Leslie Casmere is pastor. Our beloved general superintendent, Dr. Vanderpool, officiated in the affair, with Rev. Alpin Bowes; Rev. Hester, the district superintendent of the San Antonio District; Rev. Kornegay, pastor of San Antonio First Church; yours truly; and others sharing in this victorious service, with the house filled to its capacity. We are grateful to God for this achievement of San Antonio West End Church, for their exercised faith in this venture to present this beautiful and commodious building to God and the community.⁶⁴

Over the following years, experiences like this would become more common on the district as more black pastors were added to the district and as more churches became self-sustaining. For instance, in 1961, twelve of the nineteen total churches—Calvert Faith CN (Calvert, AL), Chattanooga Alton Park CN (Chattanooga, TN), Columbus First CN (Columbus, TX), Concord Emmanuel CN (Concord, NC), Goulds First CN (Goulds, FL), Nashville Community CN (Nashville, TN), Providence CN (Oklahoma City, OK), Orlando Gorman Memorial CN (Orlando, FL), Richmond Woodville CN (Richmond, VA), San Antonio Morning Glory CN (San Antonio, TX), Winnsboro CN (Winnsboro, LA), and Lawton Grace CN (Lawton, OK)—paid their budgets. During that same year, both Orlando Gorman and Richmond Woodville acquired their own church buildings and two more pastors—Roland Chopfield (pastor of Chattanooga Alton Park CN) and Ruben Davis (pastor of Concord Emmanuel CN)—were ordained as elders, which brought the district total to seven. Moreover, by the end of the assembly, Roger Bowman, Frank Bryant (pastor of Goulds First CN),⁶⁵ Eddie Burnett (pastor of Orlando Gorman Memorial CN), Roy Fralin (pastor of Nashville Community CN) and Charles P. Johnson (the newly appointed minister at Meridian Fitkin Memorial CN) became licensed ministers. Because of their admittance, the GCD now had a sum of twelve licensed pastors who were ministering on the district.⁶⁶

⁶²*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Eighth Annual Assembly Journal, 22.*

⁶³Each church also was required to pay their district budgets, which added an extra burden to their financial difficulties. In fact, of the seventeen churches in existence in 1960, only eight paid their budgets in full. Of those eight, only the church in Oklahoma City had to pay \$25.00 to both the general and district budgets. The rest of the congregations did not have to pay more than \$20.00 to either budget. These figures alone seem to reveal that most of the churches on the GCD did not have enough members or enough income to support a full time pastor at the start of the 1960s. See *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁵Both Goulds First CN and Lawton Grace CN were the two new churches formed in 1961.

⁶⁶*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Ninth Annual Assembly Journal, 5-30.*

By 1964, the organizational and ministerial situation improved even more. Since 1961, for example, three more churches had been formed—Memphis New Prospect CN (Memphis, TN), Taft CN (Taft, FL), and Orlando Praise Temple CN (Orlando, FL)—which brought the total to twenty-two. Church finances continued to grow and all but eight congregations paid their budgets in full.⁶⁷ By the following year, all twenty-two churches were still in operation and the total membership of those congregations stood at 501, which represented over half of all “Negro” Nazarene members in the continental United States.⁶⁸ Moreover, at the district assembly, nine ordained elders were ministering on the district, while thirteen licensed pastors oversaw the work of various churches and ministries on the GCD.⁶⁹

The following year would bring changes to the district after it was decided that all five of the Florida churches would be integrated and governed by the Florida District. Rogers and the GCD Advisory Board made this decision in May of 1966.⁷⁰ Although this cut into the overall strength of the GCD, Rogers and the district were still able to organize two new churches during the same year—Johnson Chapel CN in Prentiss, MS and Rogers Chapel CN in Nashville TN—which brought the district church total to nineteen. Of those nineteen, all but one paid their budgets in full and their total giving equaled \$27,972.00, which was about a fourth of all the money given by “black” (i.e. West Indian, Cape Verdean, and African American) churches in the United States.⁷¹

Until the GCD was dissolved in 1969, these numbers would remain relatively stable. In the proceeding year after the Florida decision, the district still had nine ordained elders actively ministering and a total membership of 455. Total giving for that year reached to about \$37,000 and every congregation paid its general and district budgets in full.⁷² Likewise, by 1969, nineteen congregations were still in operation with an overall membership of 532, which still represented almost a third of all black Nazarenes in North America. Also, in its last year of operation, southern black Nazarenes gave almost \$50,000 to local and global missions.⁷³

⁶⁷*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Twelfth Annual Assembly Journal*, 19, 22.

⁶⁸*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Thirteenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 21.

⁶⁹That list of ordained elders included Winston Best, Eddie Burnett, Roland Chopfield, Ruben Davis, Joe Edwards, Charles Johnson, Warren Rogers, Archie Williams, and “Mrs.” Lula Williams. Those recorded on the licensed minister roll were Leonard Adams, Leslie Casmere, “Mrs.” Cora Dials, Raymond Harvey, Edward Husband, Mrs. Janie Johnson, Charles Jones, Christopher Joseph, Mrs. Norvell Lewis, Miss Joe Ann Marshall, Elonza Pugh, Earl Joe Walker, and Eddie Lee Walker. For further reference see, *Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Thirteenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 6-10.

⁷⁰*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fourteenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 17 and Warren Rogers, “Florida Churches Transfer to Florida District,” *The Gulf Central Informer* 8, no. 1 (July 1966): 1-2. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. It is important to note that around this time the United Methodist Church was also trying to dismantle the Central Jurisdiction, which was the segregated conference that governed all the black churches in the UMC. After several years of debate, the denomination decided, on August 20, 1967, to gradually transition African American churches into their geographical conferences. For further reference on how certain events and persons impacted this decision, see Thomas, 137-147.

⁷¹*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fourteenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 15-21.

⁷²*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fifteenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 20, 35.

⁷³*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Seventeenth Annual Assembly Journal*, 15, 26.

What the Florida action and the above numbers reveal is that by the late 1960s, the GCD had attained a certain amount of power within the denomination even though it was segregated from the rest of the southern churches. Black pastors and laity had gained control over the district, were allowed to make ministerial and financial decisions that impacted the life and direction of black southern congregations, and were able to send voting delegates to various General Assemblies. These factors enabled leaders and laity on the GCD (during the 1960s) to gain decision making power over the affairs of the jurisdiction, which, in turn, enabled district boards, committees, pastors, and parishioners to strengthen and develop their own ministries and to more effectively contribute to Nazarene home missions.

However, it must be noted that African Americans on the GCD were able to attain these ends because of their commitment to “holiness evangelism” and their willingness to often overlook how racism continued to impact their life within the denomination. This commitment was exemplified in Rogers’ address at the 1960 District Assembly when he noted that one of the main objectives of his ministry was to evangelize African Americans:

To present my second report as district superintendent of the Gulf Central District in this eighth assembly brings me face to face, not only with the submitting of my report, but also with the fresh awareness of the challenge, which has been the driving power in my very being, for the evangelization of my people.⁷⁴

Roger’s desire was not to merely “save” southern blacks, but to help them become “sanctified” Nazarenes. One of the ways that he attempted to do this was through establishing various committees that would make recommendations on how to carry out evangelism and how to indoctrinate pastors and laity. Various entities like the Education Committee, the Evangelism Committee, the Home Missions Committee, and the Public Morals Committee were created to help meet these ends. In their yearly reports, they stressed to churches the importance of evangelizing and of developing sanctified Nazarenes. In 1961, for instance, the Evangelism Committee had the following recommendations passed by the District Assembly:

1. That each church endeavor to have at least two revivals per year.
2. That if the church is not able financially to support an evangelist, then the pastor should conduct his own revival.
3. That each church promote a personal evangelism program for witnessing for Christ.
4. That our worship should be with joy and blessing and freedom in the Lord.⁷⁵

On top of holding evangelistic services, the Public Morals Committee suggested that:

1. Each church in the Gulf Central District read and exhort at least once per month in a regular service from the church *Manual* concerning the moral standards of the church.

⁷⁴*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Eighth Annual Assembly Journal*, 20.

⁷⁵*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Ninth Annual Assembly Journal*, 24.

2. Each church should impress upon the minds of all Christians, and especially our youth, the importance of simplicity in hair dress and other manner of dress.
3. Each pastor should stress the danger and possible results of intemperate living.
4. Each church should warn the people about the danger of close relationship with unconverted people of low morals.⁷⁶

Four years later, after the Civil Rights Bill had been passed and after civil rights groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had achieved some successes in desegregating public facilities in Alabama and in establishing voting centers in small Mississippi towns, the district, along with these committees, remained committed to evangelizing, holding revivals, and developing the personal morality of black Nazarenes without addressing issues related to civil rights or racism at the district level. In fact, both the Education Committee and the Public Morals Committee did not make any recommendations on how to evangelize or express one's faith publicly during this time of social unrest. The former entity continued to stress the importance of holding revivals, while the Public Morals Committee suggested that:

1. Our pastors should read our *Manual* to our people each month, especially to our young people in the days in which we now live.
2. In all of our young people's meetings, we should not fail to warn them against immoral television programs and to read good material.
3. We should all stress to our young people about the kind of company they keep, and about their dress.⁷⁷

Likewise, in the 1965 and 1966 editions of *The Gulf Central Informer*, Rogers did not state how southern blacks were to engage civil rights or other issues related to racism in society or in the church. Instead, Rogers continued to stress the importance of creating new congregations, new church buildings, and "winning souls" for the "Kingdom of God."⁷⁸ In his report to the 1967 District Assembly, Rogers continued to relay the importance of "winning souls" to the audience when he stated that:

Fellow workers of Christ, are we living in the awareness that we are laboring in the day, but when the night cometh no man can work? These are the words of Jesus which are recorded in St. John's Gospel 9:4. Jesus indicated by making this declaration, that the hour will come when it will be too late to find Him as Saviour, but instead He will be sitting in the judgment chair. Therefore, what we plan to do for God toward winning souls must be done quickly.⁷⁹

⁷⁶Ibid., 26.

⁷⁷*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Thirteenth Annual Assembly Journal, 25-29.*

⁷⁸See, for instance, *The Gulf Central Informer* 7, no. 2 (June 1965) and *The Gulf Central Informer* 8, no. 1 (July 1966). Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁷⁹*Gulf Central District Church of the Nazarene, Fifteenth Annual Assembly Journal, 15.*

Later on in that report, he also explained the importance of shunning “worldly styles” and living holy lives.

The theory of salvation and sanctification is not enough, Gulf Central Nazarenes; but rather true holiness is required by God. It must be demonstrated in a spirit of forgiveness, meekness, love, long-suffering, compassion, seeking the salvation of others, suffering for righteousness’ sake, the wearing of apparel as becoming to holiness, and taking on the whole likeness of Christ. More should be said from our Nazarene pulpits concerning Nazarenes who endeavor to keep up with the styles, fashions, and tempo of the world today... There is a middle-of-the-road position which we as holiness people must take, and the Word of God gives support... Taking holiness is not enough, but rather it is a life to be lived day by day.⁸⁰

What the above examples and quotes reveal is that Rogers and the majority of those on the district were committed, both in practice and theory, to spreading “scriptural holiness” among southern blacks without publicly challenging social or denominational racism.⁸¹ This is interesting to note considering the fact that the Sixteenth General Assembly made an official pronouncement against racism. The statement read as follows:

We, the members of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene, wish to reiterate our historic stand of Christian compassion for men of all races. We believe that God is the Creator of all men and that of one blood are all men created. We believe that all races should have equality before law, including the right to vote, the right to equal educational opportunities, the right to earn a living according to one’s ability without discrimination, and the right to public facilities supported by taxation.⁸²

⁸⁰Ibid., 16.

⁸¹An exception to this general pattern was Charles Johnson, the pastor of Meridian Fitkin Memorial CN. Like many other southern black pastors, Johnson arrived in Meridian to build up the small congregation and to increase the income, ministries, and membership of the church. However, after returning from the General Assembly in 1964, Johnson was alerted that one of his parishioners’ grandson, James Chaney, had been killed with two other Jewish civil rights workers—Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman—in Philadelphia, MS. The incident garnered widespread coverage in the media and it prompted Johnson to become involved in the struggle for civil rights in and around Meridian. Soon, he organized the Meridian Action Committee (MAC), whose main function was to secure employment for African Americans throughout the city. Around the same time, Johnson also put together the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), which taught life and job skills to young blacks seeking employment. Over the next few years, Johnson was elected to both city and county offices and became head of one of the most influential committees in the county. Furthermore, because of his success, the governor appointed him to one of his personal committees and three times during President Lyndon B. Johnson’s and President Jimmy Carter’s administrations, Johnson was invited to the White House to attend banquets and to meet with other governmental committees. For further reference, see, Polly Ableby, *“What Color is God’s Skin?”: Stories of Ethnic Leaders in America* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1984), 28-42 and Kathy Trapp, “Another Title for Charles Johnson—Black Consultant,” *Herald of Holiness*, 1 August 1983, 5-6. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁸²W.T. Purkiser, “The Church Speaks on Current Issues,” *The Herald of Holiness*, 5 August 1964, 12. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. In the same year, the Church of God (Anderson, IN),

Similarly, other Nazarenes wrote to the *Herald of Holiness* in support of overcoming racism within the denomination. For instance, one article written by a pastor in New York stated that racism often caused white Nazarenes from fulfilling the Christian commandment to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Moreover, a laywoman named “Mrs.” John Scott expressed her desire to see the church take a stronger stand on civil rights and even stated that the church’s relative silence was not compatible with the “gospel of holiness.”⁸³

Despite these claims, the majority of those within the denomination still focused on evangelizing the world with the message of holiness and even when persons wrote articles dealing with racism, they often focused on how racism impeded evangelism. E.E. Barrett of Kankakee, IL, expressed this sentiment when he stated that:

We can safely be as socially minded and as revolutionary as our spiritual forefathers, who “turned the world upside down” or right side up. Guidelines for this are furnished by the fundamental principles of holiness, including the wholeness of love, righteousness, and justice... Would not concern for people and social holiness both promote and aid evangelism?⁸⁴

A laywoman from Illinois followed a similar line of thinking when she claimed that:

As Christians, we must take care that our testimony, our daily lives, are not marred by a misguided belief that any one race is inferior... This is a situation for Christians nationwide—of all denominations—to give serious attention to in prayer, lest a principle be undermined, a nation destroyed, or a soul lost for eternity because racism, or whatever other name is used, blinds us to our central goal in life—winning souls to Christ.⁸⁵

Nonetheless, what the above quotes seem to suggest is that Rogers and the rest of the GCD chose not to address issues related to civil rights at the district level because they believed, like many other Nazarenes, that their primary goals were to spread “scriptural holiness,” begin new churches, recruit more pastors, and strengthen the overall infrastructure of their district. This does not mean that those on the GCD were complicit with segregation.⁸⁶ What it does suggest, however, is that they had worked hard to gain more autonomy and decision making power over their congregations and over their segregated jurisdiction. Thus, to actively attack denominational racism or to urge churches to get involved with civil rights could have possibly

another predominantly white holiness body, also rendered a statement in support of civil rights legislation. See Massey, 118-119, for further details.

⁸³William Goodman, “My Duty to My Neighbor,” *The Herald of Holiness*, 24 February 1965, 9 and Mrs. John Scott, “Pro: Civil Rights,” *The Herald of Holiness*, 7 April 1965, 18. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁸⁴E.E. Barrett, “Holiness is Wholeness,” *The Herald of Holiness*, 29 November 1967, 3-4. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁸⁵Martha J. Sherman, “On Racism and Civil Rights,” *The Herald of Holiness*, 4 November 1964, 18. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁸⁶At this point, it is important to remember that neither Rogers nor any of the leaders on the GCD encouraged blacks to accept second-class citizenship. Moreover, when Charles Johnson became heavily involved in the struggle for civil rights in Mississippi, he remained active on district boards and was never publicly condemned by any one on the district for his actions.

deterred them from strengthening the ecclesiastical infrastructure that they had labored so hard to build since the late 1950s.

Conclusion

The essay has attempted to demonstrate how black southern Nazarenes were able to “reach” more African Americans, create and sustain more churches, develop more ministries, and recruit more pastors as they gained more control over their segregated jurisdiction during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. The paper demonstrated this by first outlining how the CD served as an organizational precursor to the GCD before it was dissolved in 1952. Then, the article described how white leaders in the GCD helped to impede the development of black churches, Sunday Schools, and pastors in the years between 1953 and 1958. At the same, the research also outlined how blacks during this period struggled against their secondary status as they attained positions of leadership and as they created the organizational and ministerial foundation that would help to strengthen the GCD after 1958. Then, the essay outlined the ways in which African Americans, from 1958 to 1969, acquired a greater amount of control over the affairs GCD and how this acquisition enabled them to recruit and train more pastors, strengthen their committees, congregations, ministries, budgets, and improve their overall commitment to the denomination’s evangelistic mission. In this portion of the essay, it was also shown how Rogers’ and the district’s commitment to social conservatism and “holiness evangelism” enabled them to gain more control over their segregated district in a time when civil rights gains were being made in American society.

Nonetheless, when thinking about the outcomes reached in this paper, the question still remains: What can be learned from reconstructing the story of the struggle of southern black Nazarenes? First, it reminds the author that some (especially those who were actors and players in the 1950s/60s) may find this paper flawed or downright wrong because the historical reconstruction depends solely on the written word. However, this critique should also serve as a reminder. If laypersons or pastors do not spend the time to tell or write their stories or if scholars and historians do not spend the time collecting testimonies or conducting interviews, then written accounts, such as the one presented in this paper, may be all that is left in years to come.

Moreover, in light of the denomination’s centennial anniversary, this paper beckons one to consider how contemporary issues related to race and church organization will impact or shape the future stories of African Americans and other so-called “minorities” in the United States. Will current or proceeding denominational and ecclesiastical leaders (read white Americans) be able to provide just juridical space without diminishing or limiting the autonomy or empowerment of non-white churches that are now governed by geographical districts? How and in what ways should American districts with predominantly white and non-white churches encourage shared leadership responsibilities at the highest levels of governance? Since no African American or person of color has held the highest office within the denomination, should denominational leaders encourage local congregations and districts to elect the first non-white General Superintendent at the following General Assembly? Would such a move give further credence to the denomination’s claim that it is a “holy” church representative by persons of various races and ethnicities? These and many other questions remain to be answered when one considers the future of how race will continue to impact the landscape of the Church of the Nazarene, both in North America and abroad.