



FROM
GENERATION
TO GENERATION

HOLY GOD, HOLY PEOPLE

**100 Years of the Church of the Nazarene
on the Kansas City District**

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The one-hundredth district assembly of the Kansas City District of the Church of the Nazarene takes place July 18–20, 2024. This booklet was written to coincide with that important district milestone. As a son of the Kansas City District it has given me tremendous joy to produce this work for this special occasion. I grew up attending Fairlawn Church of the Nazarene in Topeka. At Fairlawn I was baptized, responded to a call to ministry, preached my first sermon, received my local minister’s license, and decided on MidAmerica Nazarene University as my college of choice. During my senior year at MNU I served as youth pastor at Turning Point Church of the Nazarene in St. Joseph. After graduating from MidAmerica I joined the MNU staff and enrolled at Nazarene Theological Seminary. During those years I completed an internship in college ministries at College Church of the Nazarene in Olathe. In 2006 I was ordained an elder in the Church of the Nazarene at the eighty-second Kansas City District Assembly by Paul Cunningham, the long-time pastor of College Church. After a few years away from the City of Fountains I came back home to serve as lead pastor of Kansas City Village Community. I now work for Nazarene Archives out of an office at the Global Ministry Center in Lenexa.

Writing this booklet in the wake of all these experiences gave me several opportunities to walk down memory lane. Often the walks were on trails of my own memory as I recalled people, events, and faith communities that have shaped my life. At other times the walks were on research roads as I dug into district journals and other written sources and remembered, “Oh yeah—I was there!” (like my own ordination service in 2006). Even more walks occurred on the paths of conversation with district friends. With every step the whole trek made writing this booklet a sort of “this is your life” kind of journey.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Eddie Estep for the privilege of going on this writing journey. Dr. Estep graciously invited me to write this work and was a constant encouragement as I drafted each section. He has also pastored me through some of the biggest challenges of my life. I am deeply grateful for his leadership and his friendship. I am also grateful for Tabita Gonzalez, Kansas City District Missionary, who helped push the booklet across the finish line and facilitated its translation. Thanks also is due to my two wonderful colleagues at Nazarene Archives, Jolyn Stark and Stan Ingersol. Their excellent work at the archives helped me devote more time to completing this project.

A brief caveat about the writing itself: While I thought it might be important for history buffs like me that I cite a few sources in the footnotes, this booklet was never meant to be an exhaustive scholarly treatise on the history of the Kansas City District. Instead, I wanted to introduce how the district got started and provide a snapshot of some of its key leaders, institutions, and longest lasting churches. I also wanted to keep the booklet short. So much more could have been included, but the final product would have taken more than a couple of hours to read. That might have been fun for some of us history lovers, but I presume that most readers will be glad for a booklet they can read through on a lazy morning over a fresh cup of coffee. If the reading is not enjoyable, hopefully the coffee is, and at least the reading will be quick.

I dedicate this booklet to two Kansas City District mentors and their spouses, Rex and Lisa McCommon and Ron and Sharon Jackson. Rex was my youth leader at Fairlawn and currently pastors on the district at Excelsior Spring Church of the Nazarene. Ron was my college pastor and internship mentor at College Church before he was appointed Professor of Youth and Family Ministry at MNU. The McCommons and the Jacksons represent the best among us Kansas City District Nazarenes. I would not be who I am today without their ministry of presence in my teen and young adult years. Continuing to see them at district events represents one of district life’s greatest treasures: a ministry structure that fosters ongoing connection with friends.

Thanks for reading. Happy Centennial Anniversary, Kansas City District!

Ryan Giffin
Nazarene Archives
Holy Week 2024



The story of the Kansas City District begins in the years 1924 and 1925 when it was formed out of a merger of Nazarene congregations in eastern Kansas and western Missouri. The Kansas District of the Church of the Nazarene was organized many years earlier in 1910. The Missouri District was organized one year after that in 1911. The merger from these two districts resulting in the Kansas City District was initiated by the Kansas District at its district assembly in Wichita in 1924. It was proposed in response to a good problem: the Kansas District was growing. As its district leaders contemplated the future missional effectiveness and efficiency of the Church of the Nazarene in the Sunflower State it seemed wise to them to consider the formation of a new district.

The official proceedings of the 1924 Kansas District Assembly in Wichita record that on the third day of the gathering, Friday, August 29th, the following resolution was introduced by fifteen leaders and subsequently adopted by the delegates:

Whereas, we greatly rejoice in the great growth and development of the Kansas District and the continued blessings of God upon it, and Whereas the District has increased to such proportions that we believe a division of the District would be to its best interest and future development, Therefore be it resolved that we respectfully request that the matter of a division be submitted to the Board of General Superintendents with a request for such division, and if agreeable to the Missouri District, we desire that the Western part thereof become a part of a new district to be formed in conjunction with the eastern division of the Kansas District.¹

As it turns out, the idea of a new district was indeed agreeable to the Missouri District. Less than two weeks after the Kansas District Assembly, the Missouri District gathered for its District Assembly in Kansas City, Missouri. On the second day of its assembly, Thursday, September 11, 1924, this resolution was presented and adopted:

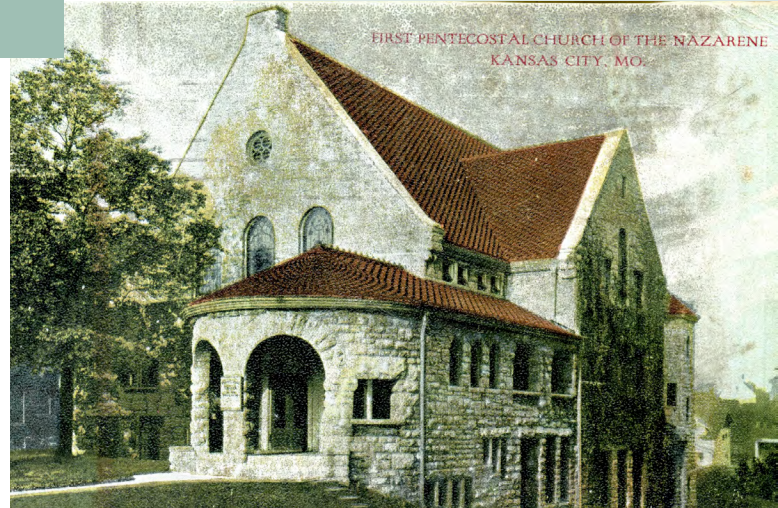
02

THE WEDDING THAT BEGAN THE KANSAS CITY DISTRICT

Whereas, the State of Missouri divides naturally into Eastern and Western division, and Whereas, Opportunity is afforded for more efficient Superintendency by observing such natural division, and Whereas, the action of the recent Kansas Assembly in respectfully requesting the Board of General Superintendents a division of the Kansas District for greater efficiency, and Whereas, the Kansas District, by this action, respectfully requests that similar action for the purpose of creating a new district of the Western part of Missouri, with the Eastern part of Kansas, be considered by the Missouri District, Therefore be it Resolved, that in harmony with such request, and for the greatest interests of both the Missouri and the Kansas Districts, we submit to the Board of General Superintendents a request for such division of the Missouri District upon earliest possible convenience.²

The requests from both districts to the Board of General Superintendents was approved and the Kansas City District was formed. The Board of General Superintendents appointed N. B. Herrell, a pioneer Nazarene with district superintendent experience in Pennsylvania, Idaho, Oregon, and Ohio, as the Kansas City District's first district superintendent. The newly established Kansas City District held its first district assembly the following year, September 9–13, 1925, at Kansas City First Church of the Nazarene, then located at 24th Street and Troost Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri.

On the opening day of the first Kansas City District Assembly, A. M. Bowes made a motion and G. S. Owen seconded it, that the participants in the assembly extend a rising vote of confidence and approval of the Board of General Superintendent's action to organize the new district and appoint Rev. Herrell as its leader. The motion carried unanimously. Immediately afterward, Missouri District Superintendent E. C. Dees and Kansas District Superintendent A. L. Hipple gave brief addresses commending the formation of the new district. Both district superintendents then escorted N. B. Herrell to the platform amidst applause. Rev. Herrell offered a speech in which he accepted the appointment as district superintendent and outlined his initial plans for the district



Kansas City First Church of the Nazarene, 24th Street and Troost Avenue, Site of the first Kansas City District Assembly in 1925



N. B. Herrell, the first district superintendent of the Kansas City District. Herrell served in this assignment until 1934

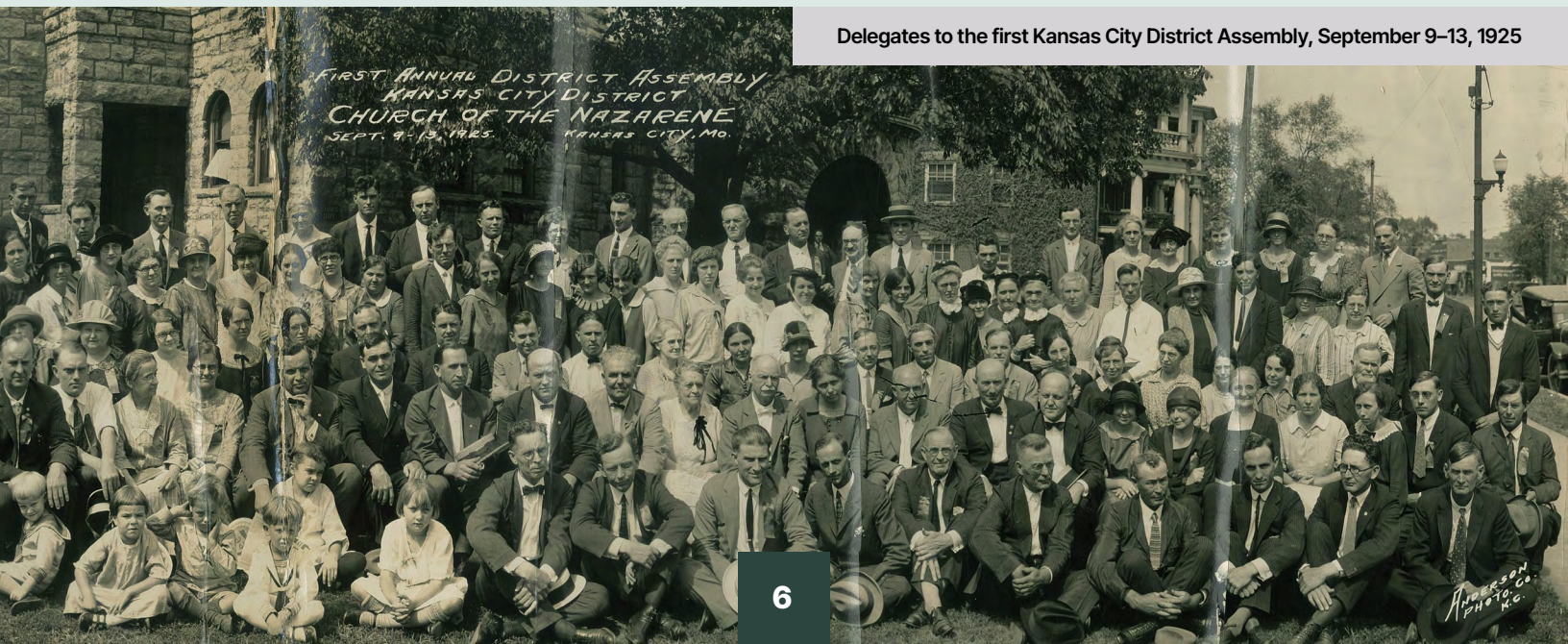
Following Rev. Herrell's remarks, all the delegates from the Missouri District gathered with Rev. Dees on the right-hand side of the sanctuary and all the delegates from the Kansas District gathered with Rev. Hipple on the left-hand side. Rev. Herrell stood in the center of the sanctuary. The Missouri and Kansas District Superintendents then took turns introducing Rev. Herrell to the members of the assembly from their respective districts which were now to be included in the Kansas City District. As the members were introduced, they were seated together in the center section of the sanctuary. The recorded assembly proceedings describe this moment as "a wedding ceremony in which these two portions of districts were to be united into one."³



The sanctuary of Kansas City First Church of the Nazarene, 24th Street and Troost Avenue, where the first Kansas City District assembly delegates were seated in 1925

After this memorable moment, Elgin R. Shook, the former district treasurer of the Kansas District, presented to the Kansas City District a check for \$679.79 as the new district's share of the balance in the Kansas District's treasury at the close of the 1924 assembly year. Shook also presented the Kansas City District with a large tent to be used for ministry. The charter delegates of the Kansas City District Assembly expressed their appreciation for this generosity with another rising vote of thanks. A new Nazarene district was formed. Its future looked bright. Just one month after the assembly the Herald of Holiness published an article entitled "The New Kansas City District."

The article declared, "it does not take a prophet to predict that this will soon be one of the strong districts of our denomination. Everyone present at the assembly was impressed with the spirit of unity and earnestness which was apparent all the time."⁴ Many Kansas City District Nazarenes would no doubt testify that a similar spirit of unity and earnestness is apparent in their gatherings today. And the district has certainly grown since that first district assembly. It reported thirty-eight churches to begin with. A century later, that number has swelled to over one-hundred congregations making Christlike disciples in western Missouri, eastern Kansas, and in the nations. From generation to generation, God has been faithful to the Kansas City District.



Delegates to the first Kansas City District Assembly, September 9-13, 1925

The District Assemblies of the Kansas City District

From 1925 until 1948 the Kansas City District Assembly and Conventions were held in various locations, including Carthage, Joplin, Kansas City, and Webb City on the Missouri side, and Chanute, Fort Scott, Kansas City, Neodesha, Parsons, Pittsburg, and Topeka on the Kansas side. From 1949 to 1961 these gatherings were held at the Kansas City District Center at Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp in Overland Park. This former hub of Kansas City District life became a part of the district's story in 1945 when the district acquired twenty-two acres of land at 7700 Antioch Road for the purpose of establishing a district center and campground. In the ensuing years the vision became a reality.

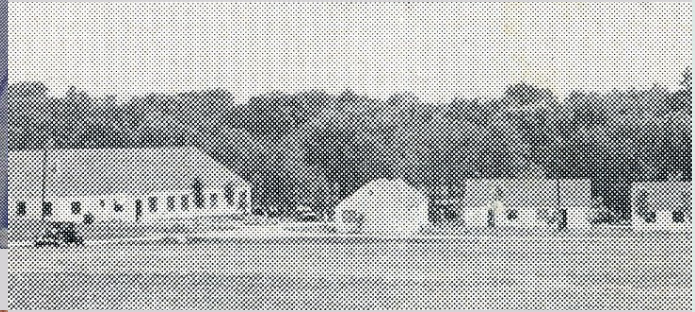
Lakeview Park consisted of men's and women's dormitories, a dining hall, an administration building, seventeen cabins and cottages, two small lakes, two athletic fields, a twenty-four by thirty-two-foot children's ministry structure, and the district center's main building: a large 100 by 120-foot tabernacle with a seating capacity for 2,000 people. The tabernacle was built in 1948, and the twenty-fifth Kansas City District Assembly and Conventions were held in it for the first time the following year. Throughout its over thirty-year history Lakeview Park served as a home for district children's camps, youth camps, district camp meetings, laymen's retreats, ministerial and lay trainings, district board meetings, and many other kinds of district events throughout the church year. In 1978, after extensive study and discussion of challenging financial realities and facilities usage, the decision was made to close the camp. The Kansas City District Office is currently located at 7640 Antioch Road on the original Lakeview Park site. While it is the only district building at the site today, a stone from the tabernacle sits in the front of the district office with the inscription: "Nazarene Tabernacle, Kansas City District, 1948, Jarrette Aycock, D.D., Dist. Supt."⁵

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THE ASSEMBLIES AND SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE KANSAS CITY DISTRICT

A highlight of the annual Kansas City District calendar has been the Kansas City District Assembly and Conventions. This days-long district gathering has occurred in either July, August, or September every year since the first one at Kansas City First Church in 1925. One of the important duties of the district assembly is to elect the district superintendent. Over the past century ten ministers have followed N. B. Herrell to serve as Kansas City District Superintendent, providing oversight and giving leadership to both the district itself and its annual assembly.

Lakeview Park Nazarene Campground



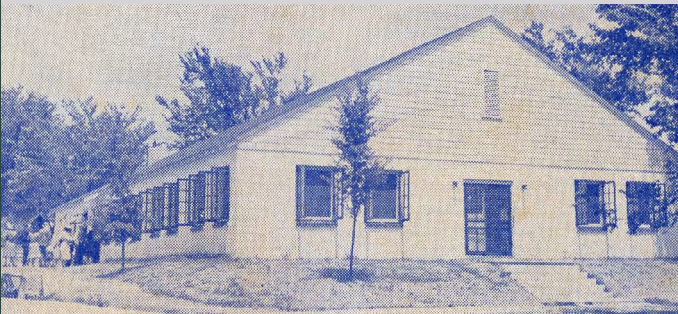
Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp Tabernacle



An Advertisement for the 1948 Kansas City District Encampment at Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp

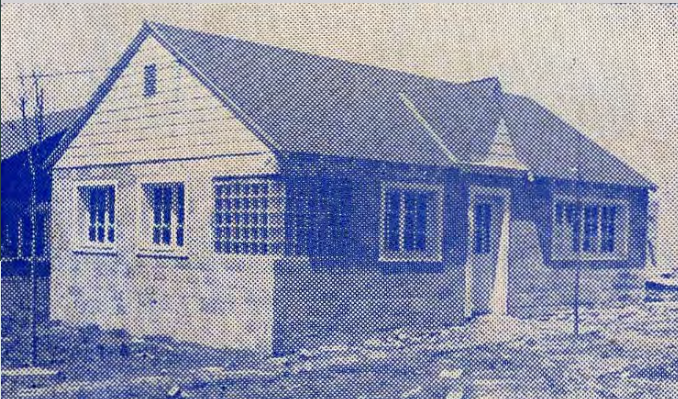


Inside the Tabernacle at Lakeview Park



Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp Dining Hall

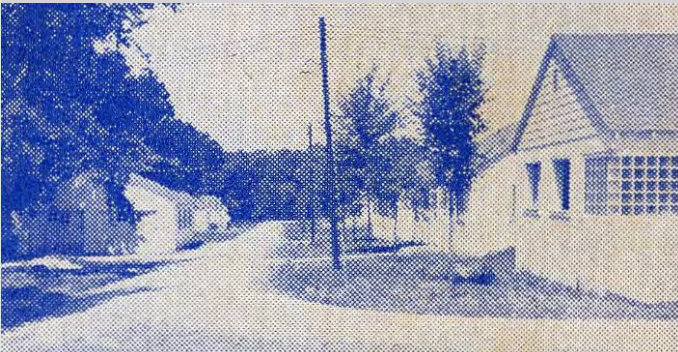
Memorial Stone from the Tabernacle at Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp. This stone sits today in front of the Kansas City District Office.



Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp Registration Building



The current Kansas City District Office in Overland Park. This building sits on the grounds where Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp was once located.



Driving through Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp





Kansas City First Church, 6401 Rockhill Road, the site of Kansas City District Assembly from 1962 to 1975



Olathe College Church of the Nazarene, the site of Kansas City District Assembly from 1976 to the present (except 2020)



Spring Hill Grace Community Church of the Nazarene, the site of Kansas City District Assembly in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic

From 1962 to 1975, Kansas City District Assembly and Conventions were held at Kansas City First Church when its building was located at 6401 Rockhill Road. From 1976 until today, these district gatherings have taken place at College Church of the Nazarene in Olathe. The one exception to this was the ninety-sixth assembly in 2020. That year, the formal gathering of the assembly was cancelled due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The District Advisory Committee was charged with conducting assembly business and did so from Grace Community Church of the Nazarene in Spring Hill, Kansas.

The Kansas City District Assembly has traditionally included inspiring services of corporate worship, the election of district leaders, and the annual reports of the district superintendent, district boards, and pastors. A highlight of the gathering each year is the ordination service. At this special service, ministers qualifying for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene are ordained as elders or deacons by the presiding general superintendent. All ordained ministers who are present lay their hands on the ordinand and pray for them. In addition to all of these things, the annual conventions of the Kansas City District Nazarene Missions International (NMI) and Nazarene Youth International (NYI) have typically been held in conjunction with the district assembly.

For many Kansas City Nazarenes, the annual Kansas City District Assembly and Conventions is much more than meetings and worship services and elections, important as those things may be. It is also a gathering of friends. I once attended a worship service at which the pastor announcing the upcoming district assembly described it as "one big Nazarene family reunion!" He was not wrong.

The District Superintendents of the Kansas City District

In its century of existence, the Kansas City District has been led by eleven district superintendents. N. B. Herrell, the inaugural superintendent, served in the assignment from 1924 to 1934. As mentioned previously, Herrell was a pioneer Nazarene. Just two years after the Church of the Nazarene was officially established as a denomination, Phineas F. Bresee, the denomination's first general superintendent, appointed Herrell as the first district superintendent of the Pittsburg District. He served as a district superintendent of three more districts before coming to Kansas City. Following his service to the Kansas City District he accepted the pastorate of the Church of the Nazarene in Coffeyville, Kansas.

Glenn E. Miller

Glenn E. Miller was elected Kansas City's third district superintendent in 1939 and served until 1942. Prior to his election he pastored Coffeyville First Church of the Nazarene. At least eight new churches were planted on the Kansas City District during Miller's three years of district leadership.



1934

Edwin E. Hale

The second Kansas City District Superintendent was Edwin E. Hale, who led the district from 1934 to 1939. Prior to this Hale served as a district superintendent in New Mexico and as pastor of Indianapolis First Church of the Nazarene. Hale transitioned from the Kansas City District to accept the call to the pastorate of Kansas City First Church. He later became a chaplain in the United States Army and served in that capacity during World War II.

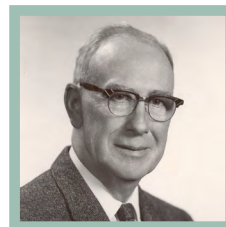


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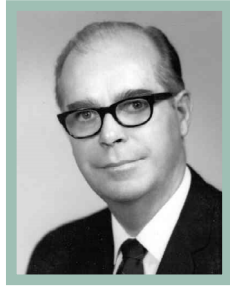
Jarrette Aycock

Jarrette Aycock served as Kansas City District Superintendent from 1942 to 1961. Aycock ministered as a Nazarene evangelist both before and after his appointment to the Kansas City District. During his nineteen-year tenure as district superintendent the district organized approximately sixty new churches, and a portion of the growing district was divided to form the Joplin District. Aycock was instrumental in establishing the former Kansas City District Center at Lakeview Park Nazarene Camp in Overland Park, as well as the ministry known today as Shelter KC.



Orville W. Jenkins

Orville W. Jenkins served as Kansas City district superintendent from 1961 to 1964. Prior to this Jenkins pastored on the Kansas City District at both Topeka First Church and Kansas City First Church. While serving as district superintendent, in 1964 Jenkins was appointed Executive Secretary for the Church of the Nazarene's Department of Home Missions. In 1968 he was elected the twenty-first general superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene.

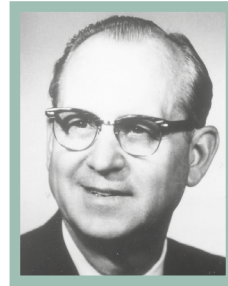


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Roy F. Stevens

Roy F. Stevens was elected to serve as district superintendent in 1964. Prior to his election Stevens served as a pastor in Ohio and Washington D.C. and as the district superintendent of the Minnesota District. After years of faithful leadership in these assignments, Stevens unexpectedly died of a heart complication the very year he was elected superintendent of the Kansas City District. Stevens was an accomplished musician and served for several years as chairperson of the Church of the Nazarene's music commission.



Wilson Lanpher

Wilson Lanpher served as district superintendent from 1964 to 1971. At the time of his election Lanpher was the pastor of College Church of the Nazarene in Nampa, Idaho. MidAmerica Nazarene University was established on the Kansas City District during Lanpher's tenure as district superintendent. Lanpher served as the first chairperson of MNU's Board of Trustees and one of three signatories on the institution's articles of incorporation. Lanpher Residence Hall, constructed on the MNU campus in 1972, was named in his honor.

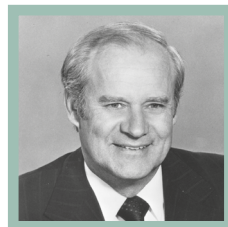


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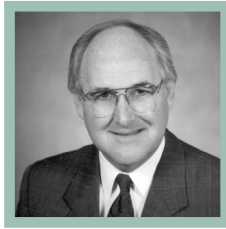
Milton Parrish

Milton Parrish succeeded Lanpher as district superintendent in 1971 and served until 1990. Prior to his tenure as district superintendent Parrish pastored churches in Texas, Maryland, and Kansas, including Rainbow Boulevard Church of the Nazarene on the Kansas City District. Parrish was also a decorated United States Army chaplain. At the time of his election to the Kansas City District he was serving as district superintendent of the South Africa European District. During Parrish's nineteen years as Kansas City District Superintendent, church membership on the district nearly doubled and nine new churches were planted.



Keith M. Wright

Keith M. Wright followed Parrish and served as district superintendent from 1990 to 2005. Prior to his election Wright was pastoring Kansas City First Church. During his tenure as district superintendent Wright introduced and emphasized two core values of the Kansas City District: "Lost and broken people matter to God, therefore lost and broken people must matter to us," and "we must pray, plan, and expect a supernatural invasion of God in our churches."⁶ More than thirty new churches were planted on the district under Wright's leadership.



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Jeren L. Rowell

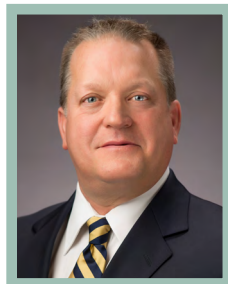
Jeren L. Rowell served as Kansas City District Superintendent from 2005 to 2017. Prior to his election Rowell pastored Shawnee Church of the Nazarene on the Kansas City District for fourteen years. A prolific author, Rowell has written or contributed to a number of books and periodicals.⁷ For several years he co-edited the Church of the Nazarene's Preacher's Magazine. In 2017, Rowell transitioned from the office of district superintendent to accept the presidency of Nazarene Theological Seminary.



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Eddie Estep

Eddie Estep has served as district superintendent from 2018 to the present. Prior to his election Estep served for twelve years as district superintendent of the South Carolina District. Before that he pastored churches in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio. Hallmarks of Estep's service to the Kansas City District have been the development of leaders and the movement of the district to become a truly multicultural district. Estep's vision during his years of service has been to "start churches, strengthen churches, and develop leaders."⁸ Estep has authored four books on biblical leadership development.⁹



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None of these eleven ministers who have led the Kansas City District has served alone. All of them have ministered under the guidance of jurisdictional general superintendents and alongside district ministries leaders and office personnel. They have also served with a corps of faithful pastors and with the care and support of their own spouses and families. As Eddie Estep has written in one of his books, "Some of the greatest joys in leadership come from the relationships with those who accompany leaders on the journey."¹⁰ Several family members, friends, and ministry colleagues have accompanied these district leaders on their journeys. The Kansas City District has thrived from generation to generation due in no small measure to their faithfulness.

04

SEVEN KANSAS CITY DISTRICT CHURCHES THAT WERE THERE FROM THE BEGINNING

The twenty-third General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene convened in the summer of 1993 in Indianapolis, Indiana. At that global gathering the delegates elected two local church pastors as general superintendents.

One was Paul Cunningham, pastor of the Olathe College Church of the Nazarene on the Kansas City District. In his acceptance remarks Cunningham interpreted the assembly's election of two local church pastors in this way: "I think it is a recognition of the fact that the local church is where the action is—that's where lives are being changed."¹¹

The local church has indeed been where the action is on the Kansas City District, even with the district's uniqueness as a home to several denominational entities. The celebration of a district centennial is very much a celebration of the good work that has been accomplished in and through the local church. The impact of Kansas City District churches on individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities during the past one hundred years is incalculable and will continue for years to come.

Since 1924 the Kansas City District has served as a home for some 275 expressions of the local church.¹² Several of those churches joined the Joplin District when it was formed out of the Kansas City District in 1957. Other churches merged with neighboring churches to plant new churches. Some churches that were once a part of the Kansas City District are now inactive; others have only become active within the last few years. Whatever the case, no one local church is any more important than another. The faithful ministries of every church that has ever existed on the Kansas City District, regardless of their attendance statistics, years of existence, or any other similar metric, are worth honoring, respecting, and celebrating.

To provide even a brief account of the individual histories of all 275 Kansas City District local churches would extend well beyond the scope of this little booklet.¹³ It seems appropriate on the occasion of the district centennial, however, to say something about the seven churches that have been a part of the district since its beginning and remain active today. These seven congregations have stood as models of resilience and persistence. Their holiness witness in their communities pre-dates the Kansas City District itself.

Lawrence First Church

Pride of place as the first organized local church on the Kansas City District goes to Lawrence First Church. This Nazarene congregation was organized in north Lawrence on June 26, 1910 with twelve charter members. Pioneer Nazarene founders C. B. Jernigan and Joseph Speaks appointed Ira Stevens as its founding pastor. Stevens received a salary of five dollars a week. The church began with meetings in the upstairs portion of a rented hall that still stands at Fourth Street and Elm Street in north Lawrence. Four years later, Lawrence First built their own facility at the intersection of Fourth Street and Lincoln Street. That building is now a residential home but an inscription on its foundation remains legible: "Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene 1914." Lawrence First currently gathers in a spacious facility at 1470 N. 1000 Road on the south side of town.¹⁴



Lawrence First Church, the first organized local church on the Kansas City District, first met in this facility in 1910

Kansas City First Church

Kansas City First Church was organized just a few months after Lawrence First in the spring of 1911 under the authorization of founding Nazarene General Superintendent Phineas Bresee. Pastor A. S. Cochran and twenty-six members began this congregation in a small rented facility at the corner of 19th Street and Walrond Avenue. Four years later, Kansas City First relocated to its own facility at the corner of 24th Street and Troost Avenue. That building served as the meeting place of the fourth, fifth, and sixth General Assemblies of the Church of the Nazarene in 1915, 1919, and 1923. Decades later, Kansas City First purchased property at Rockhill Road and Meyer Boulevard, just west of the Church of the Nazarene's former International Headquarters. The church has gathered at its current location at 11811 State Line Road in Kansas City, Missouri since 1992.



The 1915 General Assembly at Kansas City First Church, 24th Street and Troost Avenue

Topeka First Church

Although Topeka First Church was not officially organized until 1912, a record exists of Phineas Bresee preaching in Topeka in August of 1905, three years before the Church of the Nazarene as it is known today was officially established as a denomination. On that occasion Dr. Bresee was hosted by J. K. Mayberry, the minister who years later would be installed as Topeka First's founding pastor. One year after Bresee's first preaching experience in Topeka, Bresee returned to the capital city and held an eight-day outdoor revival from August 14–22, 1906. Reflecting on his time in Topeka, Bresee wrote: "Topeka, like every other city in America, needs a center of fire where the work of salvation is really carried on. As of old, there are wide-open doors, but many adversaries. The God who has brought us thus far, can lead us on, even to greater victories. We shall pray for triumph in this important center."¹⁵ The prayers of Bresee were answered when Topeka First was organized in 1912 under a tent near 10th Street and Buchanan Street. For many years now the church has worshipped at a permanent building at this same location. Over the years Topeka First has parented other Nazarene congregations in the city, including Topeka Oakland, Topeka Lakeview, Topeka Fairlawn, and Topeka Family Life.



Topeka First Church in 1972

Ottawa Nazarene

In Kansas District Superintendent H. M. Chambers's annual report to the Kansas District in 1916, Chambers listed several locations throughout the state in which churches had been organized that year. One was Ottawa. J. C. Walker was listed as Ottawa's founding pastor and the church was planted with eight charter members.¹⁶ Ottawa Nazarene was without its own building until 1919. That year, Kansas District Superintendent E. J. Lord reported, "At Ottawa a nice property has been purchased and the building on it converted into a church, with several rooms for Sunday School classes. This splendid property has been dedicated to the Lord and the Nazarene church."¹⁷ Ottawa Church of the Nazarene gathers today at 7th Street and Elm Street.



Ottawa Church of the Nazarene in June, 1969

Canaan Hill Church of the Nazarene

Canaan Hill Church of the Nazarene in Lawson, Missouri, was organized in 1918. Many of its charter members were previously members of the local Christian Union church, but in 1917 these members testified to the experience of entire sanctification. Since the Christian Union church does not view entire sanctification as a second work of grace, these individuals were asked to seek a new church home. They found it in the Church of the Nazarene. Charles W. Davis served as Canaan Hill's founding pastor. Charter members included Jim Clevenger, Minnie Green, Bertha Holman, and Mr. and Mrs. Bill Stout. Another woman, Fern Atkins, would have been a charter member but her horse was not fast enough for her to arrive at the organizational meeting on time! Among the highlights of Canaan Hill's early history was a three-week-long revival led by renowned Nazarene pioneer and general superintendent J. B. Chapman.



Canaan Hill Church of the Nazarene in October, 1970

Victory Hills Church of the Nazarene

Victory Hills Church of the Nazarene in Kansas City, Kansas, was organized in 1921–1922. Under the leadership of Elmer D. Russell a small cluster of believers joined together with the intent of planting a new church. The congregation later became known as Quindaro Church of the Nazarene. Its building was originally located at 13th Street and Kimball Avenue. In 1961 the church moved to its present location at 6200 Parallel Parkway and changed its name to Victory Hills Church of the Nazarene. Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Cook, charter members of the church, were influential in the decision to move it to its present location. Known locally as “the church on the hill,” one of the noteworthy features of its current facility is its beautiful stained-glass window portraying Christ. From 1930 to 1931, Victory Hills was pastored by pioneer Nazarene educator and theologian H. Orton Wiley.



Kansas City Victory Hills Church of the Nazarene 100th Anniversary Service, September 25, 2022



Kansas City CityLife Church of the Nazarene, formerly Kansas City Grace, in 1943

Kansas City CityLife

Kansas City CityLife, formerly known as Kansas City Grace Church of the Nazarene, was organized in August of 1922 near the close of a tent revival meeting. Like many churches in America, in 1933 Grace lost its first building due to the financial challenges of the Great Depression. The members of this church remained faithful, however, gathering at several locations until the following year when they secured a house near Independence Avenue and Kensington Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri. The house was reconstructed as a basement church. This facility served Grace for many years until a new building was constructed and dedicated in 1960. The church was recently relaunched as Kansas City CityLife and gathers at 4300 Independence Avenue.

More could be said about these seven churches, not to mention the other local congregations that have been a part of the Kansas City District throughout its history. As a compliment to this booklet, in 2024 the pastors of the Kansas City District have been asked to include a brief historical summary of their local church in their annual pastor's report. Those reports might be good sources of additional historical information about the churches of the Kansas City District. Every church represents a group of holy people who responded to the call of a holy God to plant a "center of fire" in their community. Believers are still responding to God's call to plant churches on the district today. Others sense a call to continue investing in their established churches. In each one the local church remains where the action is. That's where lives are being changed.

05

NAZARENE DISCIPLESHIP INTERNATIONAL, NAZARENE MISSIONS INTERNATIONAL, AND NAZARENE YOUTH INTERNATIONAL ON THE KANSAS CITY DISTRICT

Three organizations often referred to simply by their acronyms have proven essential to the growth and reach of the Kansas City District. These organizations, known as Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI), Nazarene Missions International (NMI), and Nazarene Youth International (NYI) are encompassed in what the Church of the Nazarene has labelled its "Local Church Ministries." The denomination and the district have their own expressions of these three organizations but their essential purpose is to provide a support structure, equipping, and resourcing for discipleship, missions, and ministries to youth in and through the local church. As this purpose has been fulfilled in Kansas City District churches over the past one hundred years, many of the ministries sponsored by these organizations, along with the people who have led them, have become a part of the very fabric of Nazarene life on the Kansas City District.

Nazarene Discipleship International on the Kansas City District

The organization known today as Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI) was known to the first members of the Kansas City District as the committee on Sunday Schools. The proceedings of the first Kansas City District Assembly in 1925 includes a report from the Sunday Schools committee recommending the creation of a district Sunday School Board of three members. Following the pattern of the larger denominational entity known today as Nazarene Discipleship International, eventually the district's Sunday Schools program was referred to as Sunday School Ministries and later Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International (SDMI). In 2022 the name was changed to Nazarene Discipleship International.

The change of names over the years has reflected the church's desire to envision Sunday School and similar programs as one component of a larger journey of Christlike discipleship. As the Church of the Nazarene's NDI website states, "the mission of Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI) is to carry out the Great Commission to children, youth, and adults in preparation for a lifelong journey of being and making Christlike disciples in the nations."¹⁸ In light of this, while the Kansas City District organization originally known as Sunday Schools has highlighted the ministry of Sunday School it has also championed much more, including equipping local churches for effective children's discipleship, women's discipleship, and men's discipleship.

Throughout its history the Kansas City District has invested in Children's discipleship through multiple initiatives, including summer camps, lock-ins, retreats, children's Bible quizzing, and various children's ministry leader training events. Adult discipleship has been impacted through ministries such as the "Dwell" and "Deep and Wide" women's discipleship events, the district men's softball tournament, district grandparenting summits, and retired minister's and spouse's luncheons. A highlight of the NDI calendar in recent history has been the annual TEAM ("Training Every Available Minister") Day and EquipKC discipleship training event. Usually held on a Saturday in February, this one-day event has drawn impressive numbers of lay and ministerial leaders from across the Kansas City District together for a memorable day of training workshops, fellowship, team building, and really good breakfast burritos.



EquipKC at Olathe College Church, February 19, 2024



Nazarene Missions International on the Kansas City District

Just before Jesus Christ ascended into heaven he commissioned his disciples, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19–20, NIV). Various groups and denominations have established missions organizations in response to this "Great Commission." One such organization authorized by the Church of the Nazarene is known today as Nazarene Missions International (NMI).

NMI traces its origin primarily to the Church of the Nazarene's parent body on the Atlantic coast, the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America. In 1899 that group established what it referred to as its "Woman's Missionary Society." After the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America merged with other groups to form the Church of the Nazarene the Woman's Missionary Society was officially recognized as a denominational ministry. "Woman's Missionary Society" is what the original members of the Kansas City District called the organization referred to today as Nazarene Missions International. Like NDI, over the years NMI has also gone by other names, such as Women's Foreign Missionary Society, Nazarene Foreign Missionary Society, and Nazarene World Mission Society (NWMS). The idea behind the organization, however, has always been the same: to increase the church's knowledge and interest in global missions. As its website states, "Nazarene Missions International (NMI) is the organization responsible for engaging and mobilizing the local church to engage in missions in the Church of the Nazarene and is the denomination's representative for missions on the district and in the local church."¹⁹

This has happened in churches on the Kansas City District as local NMI councils have rallied their churches to pray for missionaries, read missionary books, participate in Faith Promise missions emphasis weekends, go on Nazarene Missions Teams (formerly known as Work and Witness) mission trips, and give to the cause of missions through programs like the Alabaster Offering. NMI councils have also been instrumental in facilitating the Care and Connection program (also known as the Links program) for their churches, in which churches and missionaries regularly correspond with one another.

The Kansas City District has regularly held its district Nazarene Missions International convention as a part of the annual district assembly. The district NMI convention has traditionally featured a missionary speaker, the report of the district NMI President, updates from local NMI councils, and a worship service with a global missions theme. Over the past one-hundred years the efforts of Nazarene Missions International have inspired Kansas City District Nazarenes to support missionaries through prayer and giving, to send out missionaries, and to go themselves to make disciples of all nations.



Kansas City District NMI Convention, August 5, 2008



Nazarene Youth International on the Kansas City District

The Church of the Nazarene has always believed that younger generations are vital to the life of the church, taking seriously the Scriptural admonition, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity" (2 Timothy 4:12 NIV). The denomination has believed so strongly in its youth, in fact, that since 1923 it has had an organization specifically devoted to youth ministry. Originally this organization was known as the Nazarene Young People's Society (NYPS). That is how it was known to the members of the Kansas City District for over fifty years. In 1976 the name was changed to Nazarene Youth International (NYI), the name it has gone by to this day. NYI has been represented in Kansas City District churches by local NYI councils that have championed the development of local church youth ministry. On the district level, NYI has done the same through the leadership of its Kansas City District NYI Council.

Nazarene youth ministry has a rich history on the Kansas City District. The first global Nazarene Youth Convention took place in Kansas City on September 19, 1923, before the Kansas City District itself was established. Seventy-two delegates were present, representing a total of 12,768 youth members of the Church of the Nazarene. That group of 72 delegates would go on to lay the organizational groundwork for NYI as a denominational entity.

They elected leaders and adopted local, district, and general constitutions. Decades later, in 1964 a brand-new program was launched called Youth Bible Quizzing. This program has aimed to help students hide God's word in their hearts through memorizing Scripture in an atmosphere of fun and friendly competition. In 1988 the first ever General Invitational Youth Bible Quizzing tournament was held in the boundaries of the Kansas City District on the campus of MidAmerica Nazarene University.

It would be impossible to measure the impact of NYI on Kansas City District teenagers over the past century. Thousands of lives across the district have been touched through the various ministries of this organization and the youth workers who have led them. In addition to NYI conventions and quizzing, Kansas City District students have participated in summer youth camps, weekend Breakaway retreats, and Youth in Mission projects. They have also participated in International Institutes, World Youth Conference, and Nazarene Youth Conference (NYC) events in which students gathered with other students for multiple days of training and inspiration. Numerous students have made deep, lifelong commitments to Jesus Christ as a result of their participation in such experiences. Many members of the Kansas City District will also remember reading NYI literature such as Bread Magazine, Crosswalk, and Teens Today. They may even recall quadrennial NYI themes such as Each One Win One, Dare to Run, Lead the Way, and Build A Bridge.



The Kansas City District adult sponsors for the 450 KCD student participants in Nazarene Youth Conference 2023 in Tampa Bay, Florida

Arguably the most enduring impact of Nazarene Youth International on the Kansas City District, however, has been made through the ministries of youth Sunday School teachers, small group leaders, volunteer youth workers, and local church youth pastors. In congregations across the Kansas City District these servants have mentored, encouraged, protected, supported, and invested time and energy to serve students. Kansas City District churches are populated with adults who have spent countless Wednesday or Sunday evenings with students, spent their Saturdays at quiz meets, and donated funds to send students to summer camps and Nazarene Youth Conferences. From generation to generation, these caring adults have answered God's call to serve students, embracing the three strategies introduced at the Global NYI Convention in 2013: to "be," "do," and "go"—to be God's light in the world, to do good works in the world, and to go into all the world as examples of Christlike discipleship.²⁰

06

PURPOSEFUL COMPASSION ON THE KANSAS CITY DISTRICT

The most recent edition of the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene identifies “the seven Characteristics of the Church of the Nazarene” as “Meaningful Worship, Theological Coherence, Passionate Evangelism, Intentional Discipleship, Church Development, Transformational Leadership, and Purposeful Compassion.”²¹ Kansas City District Nazarenes have displayed these characteristics in various ways over the past one-hundred years. Evidence of the seventh characteristic, “purposeful compassion,” could be found in churches across the Kansas City District by way of food pantries, soup kitchens, clothing drives, volunteer opportunities, child sponsorships, emergency response kits, Christmas giving, and a host of other compassionate ministry expressions. On a district level, purposeful compassion has been displayed in Kansas City especially through the efforts of two ministries: the former Kansas City Rest Cottage, and the ministry known today as Shelter KC.

The Kansas City Rest Cottage

From its earliest days the Church of the Nazarene has sought to minister to the needs of the marginalized in society. One way it has done that is through the work of maternity homes. From 1904 until the 1930s one such home existed in Kansas City. The Kansas City Rest Cottage exemplified what compassionate care looked like for women and families in the Kansas City area and beyond. The work of Rest Cottage reminded women of their dignity, affirmed them as children of God, and assisted them as they brought new life into the world.

The Kansas City Rest Cottage was established in 1904 and came under the direct sponsorship of the Church of the Nazarene in 1927. It was supported primarily by Nazarenes on the Kansas City, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri districts. Miss Antonio Fischer served as the home's first matron. She was succeeded in 1905 by Miss Lue Miller Roberts, who served in the role until 1930. The home occupied four different locations, increasing in its capacity with each move until it settled at 2905 Campbell Street in Kansas City, Missouri. The three-story brick structure at that location consisted of sixteen rooms. The first floor included a kitchen, dining room, reception room, and two parlors where residents could receive guests and socialize. The second and third floors contained the bedrooms which housed anywhere from two to five residents per room, along with a separate nursery. The home regularly housed between twenty-one and twenty-seven residents, providing annual assistance to over one hundred women and sixty newborns. Financial constraints resulted in the closure of the home in the 1930s but the work and the generational impact of the Kansas City Rest Cottage on all who benefitted from its important ministry long outlived its years of formal operations.²²



The home that once served as the Kansas City Rest Cottage at 2905 Campbell Street, Kansas City, Missouri



Lue Miller Roberts, Matron of Kansas City Rest Cottage in the 1920s

Shelter KC

In his report to the Kansas City District in 1950, district superintendent Jarrette Aycock expressed his desire to open a rescue mission in Kansas City. "For years it has been on my heart to open a mission where the doors would swing out every night, making a bid for the lost and hopeless" he said. "I was saved in just such a mission in the slums of a great city, and it is my hope that many a young man who has lost his way as I had mine will come in and find the same Christ I found so long ago and that He will save them from sin and habits as He saved me."²³ Elsewhere Dr. Aycock reflected on his own experience as a young man at Union Rescue Mission in Los Angeles: "As I sat in chapel looking at the derelicts, drunks, and dope addicts around me, I got to thinking that I had been like them before and would be like them again if I didn't get free of the old habits and ceaseless downward pull that had plagued my life for years."²⁴

Aycock was indeed set free through the ministry of that mission, and his dream of opening a similar one in Kansas City became a reality when in 1950 he founded the Kansas City Rescue Mission, the ministry known today as Shelter KC.

In the early days of Shelter KC the mission moved three times before eventually locating to a three-story structure at 523 Walnut Street in Kansas City, Missouri. This location served as its home for nearly three decades. The city government of Kansas City purchased the mission's property at this location in 1991. From then until 2001 many Kansas City Nazarenes and other friends contributed expertise, labor and materials to complete renovations to its current four-building complex at 1520 Cherry Street. This work was completed under the leadership of Joe Colaizzi, Executive Director of Shelter KC from 1985 to 2019. Like Dr. Aycock, Rev. Colaizzi also found freedom from a life of hopelessness and fear through faith in Jesus Christ.



The home that once served as the Kansas City Rest Cottage at 2905 Campbell Street, Kansas City, Missouri



Lue Miller Roberts, Matron of Kansas City Rest Cottage in the 1920s

In the early 1990s, Shelter KC launched what is known today as the Christian Community of Recovery, a program with a goal "to help individuals receive from God a Christian life within a healthy community for a lifetime of recovery." In July of 2013 it opened a new twenty-bed Women's Center, a residential facility offering homeless women a secure environment where they can heal, learn, and grow. Through these programs and many others, Shelter KC has served as a refuge in the heart of Kansas City where many have come to find help, hope, and restoration. Perhaps the purposeful compassion exhibited through the work of Shelter KC is best summarized by Joe Colaizzi in his final report to the Kansas City District Assembly in 2019 following over three decades of service: "Since its inception the Lord has worked mightily through the Mission, offering hope and extending grace to literally thousands of people."²⁵

07

NAZARENE HIGHER EDUCATION ON THE KANSAS CITY DISTRICT

The founders of the Church of the Nazarene invested significantly in higher education. They believed a quality education was essential for the formation of the church's ministers and the training of the church's laity. The Kansas City District has been privileged to serve as a district home to some of the denomination's finest educational institutions. Two institutions of Nazarene higher education have stood within the boundaries of the district for as long as the institutions themselves have stood. No discussion of the life and times of the Kansas City District would be complete without discussing MidAmerica Nazarene University and Nazarene Theological Seminary. Along with these undergraduate and graduate schools, clergy education pathways have also been made possible on the Kansas City District through Nazarene Bible College and the Kansas City District Multicultural School of Ministry. Across the years, students who have been educated through these entities have been well prepared for the mission of making Christlike disciples in the Kansas City area and beyond.

MidAmerica Nazarene University

In 1964, the sixteenth General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene was held at Memorial Coliseum in Portland, Oregon. On the morning of the fifth day of the assembly, Thursday, June 25th, a recommendation was adopted to create two new educational zones for the denomination and establish a new "junior college" within each of them. The intent was that the two colleges would eventually become four-year liberal arts schools. One of the educational zones became known as the North Central zone. Today it serves the Church of the Nazarene's, Iowa, Joplin, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Prairie Lakes, and Kansas City districts. Until its junior college could be given its official name the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene designated it simply as "College B."



The General Board elected the first Board of Trustees for the new college in 1966. As mentioned earlier, its first chairperson was Kansas City District Superintendent Wilson R. Lanpher. Under Lanpher's leadership the board elected R. Curtis Smith as the new college's first president. Through the enthusiasm of R. R. Osborne, a banker in Olathe, and Paul Cunningham, the pastor of what was then known as Olathe Church of the Nazarene, the city of Olathe was chosen as the site for the new college. Numerous names were voted on for the school, including Midwest Nazarene College, Kansas City Nazarene College, Mid-Continent Nazarene College, Central Nazarene College, Central America Nazarene College, Bresee Nazarene College, Missouri Valley Nazarene College, and MidAmerica Nazarene College. The latter was the top vote-getter, and in August of 1968 the college, affectionately referred to by many as MANC, opened its doors in Olathe. The campus opened with five colonial-style brick buildings (Osborne Hall, Lunn Hall, Snowbarger Residence Hall, Stockton Residence Hall, and Campus Center) and an enrollment of 263 students. In remarkable time the college was accredited as a four-year institution by the state of Kansas in 1969.

In 1997, the institution changed its name to MidAmerica Nazarene University. Its spacious Olathe campus now boasts twenty-three buildings, including ten academic buildings, nine residence halls, a performing arts center, a library, several athletic facilities, and a new student center. Its total enrollment has grown to over 2,000 undergraduate and graduate students. More than 30,000 alumni now call MNU their alma mater. Many of these students were, and are, members of the Kansas City District. They attended classes, ate meals in Campus Center, served as resident assistants and associated student government leaders, sang in Heritage Choir and travel groups, played on intramural and intercollegiate athletic teams, and starred in events like "Dorm Follies" and "Mr. MANC" pageants. They spent time at places like Land Gymnasium and Blue Stem Pond and Weatherby Chapel and Mabee Library. They enjoyed study breaks in The Tropics. They walked across "hurricane highway" from the main campus to chapel at College Church of the Nazarene. They might or might not have pulled a few campus pranks during finals week. They went on mission trips. They responded to God's call on their lives and continue to live out that call today in Kansas City and beyond.



MidAmerica Nazarene College, the year it opened in 1968



MidAmerica Nazarene University in 2024

True to its founding fifty-six years ago, MNU's mission today is to be "a transformative university that nurtures Christlike community, pursues academic excellence, and cultivates a passion to serve." Its vision is "to impact the world for Jesus Christ through servant leaders recognized for their excellence, integrity, and spiritual vitality."²⁶ The institution initially referred to as a junior college now offers more than thirty-five undergraduate programs, fifteen professional and graduate degree programs, and employs eighty-one full-time faculty members.

The same week MidAmerica welcomed its pioneer class of students in 1968, Wilson Lanpher included these words in his annual report to the Kansas City District: "Another miracle—just a few miles southwest of here, five beautiful buildings face westward from the rolling Kansas prairie, making the 'impossible dream' come true. MidAmerica Nazarene College is opening this week with unsurpassed faculty, excellent buildings, and an enthusiastic group of pioneer students. Our love and approval of MidAmerica runs deep on the Kansas City District."²⁷ The "impossible dream" has continued for over half a century, as has the Kansas City District's support for its regional Nazarene college. As noted earlier, every year since 1976 (except for 2020) the Kansas City District Assembly has been held near the campus of MNU at College Church of the Nazarene.²⁸

Nazarene Theological Seminary

Twenty years before the 1964 General Assembly that voted to establish MidAmerica, the eleventh General Assembly was held in Municipal Auditorium in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1944. The delegates to that assembly voted to establish Nazarene Theological Seminary. Leading up to the vote, the Board of General Superintendents appointed a commission to study the need for a seminary. The commission met in Kansas City for three days to discuss the issues involved. One of their recommendations included a clear statement concerning the reason for establishing the institution and the primary purpose of the school:

The object shall be to establish a school ... to provide courses of study of graduate level preparatory for pastors, missionaries, religious educators, song evangelists, children's workers, teachers and any other fields for the carrying out of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the corporation is authorized to conduct institutes, lectureships, and any other courses of study which will better equip Christian workers. Finally, the primary purpose of the institution shall be to conserve, maintain, advocate and promulgate the great Bible doctrine of "Entire Sanctification" as a second distinct work of divine grace wrought in the heart of the believer subsequent to regeneration.²⁹

While the official decision to establish NTS occurred in 1944, several Nazarene leaders had been pushing for a central denominational seminary long before that. Leaders like General Superintendent J. B. Chapman and college president H. Orton Wiley believed the Church of the Nazarene needed an institution that could provide a quality seminary-level education for graduates of Nazarene colleges and universities who were called to preach the doctrine and experience of Christian holiness from Nazarene pulpits. Chapman had been calling for a denominational seminary since the 1920s. By the time the 1944 General Assembly finally voted in favor of it a lot of discussion about it had already taken place.

The logo for Nazarene Theological Seminary is presented in a white rectangular box with a thin border. The text inside the box is in a bold, white, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines: "NAZARENE", "THEOLOGICAL", and "SEMINARY".

NAZARENE
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

One of the major decision points had to do with the location of the seminary. Some thought NTS should be located near an existing Nazarene college campus. Others thought it should sit near a bustling educational metropolis with excellent libraries, such as Boston, Los Angeles, or Chicago. Still others thought it most ideal to locate the seminary close to the denominational headquarters in Kansas City, an area with numerous employment opportunities and Nazarene churches in which prospective students could gain pastoral experience while attending classes. In 1940 the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene received a report concluding that a majority of interested persons favored Kansas City as the location. When Nazarene Theological Seminary held its first class and chapel service on Thursday, September 20, 1945 it did so in Kansas City at the Nazarene Headquarters building at 30th Street and Troost Avenue. The seminary opened with an enrollment of sixty-one students. In 1954 the seminary moved to its current location, a ten and half acre site at 1700 East Meyer Boulevard near the former Nazarene Headquarters complex at 6401 The Paseo Boulevard.



NTS President Hugh C. Benner speaking at the first chapel service at Nazarene Theological Seminary, September 20, 1945



Like MidAmerica, NTS's connection with the Kansas City District runs deep. The first president of the school, Hugh C. Benner, was pastor of Kansas City First Church at the time of his election by NTS's first Board of Trustees. The seminary's eleventh president, A. Gordon Wetmore, also pastored Kansas City First Church. Its thirteenth president, David A. Busic, pastored Central Church of the Nazarene in Lenexa. NTS's current president, Jeren Rowell, pastored Shawnee Church of the Nazarene prior to his election as Kansas City District Superintendent, the assignment he was serving in at the time of his election to NTS in 2017. Other NTS leaders have served Kansas City District churches, and the churches of the Kansas City District have been well served by NTS students and graduates. The mission of Nazarene Theological Seminary continues today "to form faithful and effective ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to participate in the reconciling of the world to God (2 Corinthians 5:18–20)."³⁰ Among the many faithful and effective ministers formed by NTS over the years are a substantial number of Kansas City District pastors and leaders.³¹



Kansas City District Multicultural School of Ministry graduation ceremony on April 27, 2024



The Nazarene Bible College administrative offices were located in the Global Ministry Center in Lenexa from 2017 to 2024

Clergy Education in Kansas City through Nazarene Bible College and the Kansas City District Multicultural School of Ministry

The same 1964 General Assembly that established MidAmerica also authorized the opening of Nazarene Bible College. A board of trustees was elected and Charles H. Strickland was chosen to serve as the first president. Colorado Springs, Colorado was chosen as the site for the college. Dr. Strickland and his team of administrators and faculty opened the doors of the institution in 1967. For all of its history, Colorado Springs was where the physical campus of NBC was located. From the outset, NBC has focused on adult education. In the 1980s the institution decentralized its educational model by partnering with districts across the US, including the Kansas City District, to offer ministerial education preparation for students right where they live. Several Kansas City District ministers subsequently enrolled in Nazarene Bible College extension courses held at local Kansas City District churches. Through these courses they were able to complete the course of study requirements for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. In 1998 NBC became the first Nazarene institution of higher education to offer a degree online. In 2017 the school continued its legacy of effective adult education by becoming a fully online institution. One of the outcomes of this was a relocation of NBC's administrative operations from Colorado Springs to the Global Ministry Center in Lenexa prior to transitioning to a fully remote office model.³²

Another option for clergy education on the Kansas City District began around 2015 as the Kansas City District Hispanic School of Ministry. While primarily focused on Spanish-speaking students, this institute has grown into the Kansas City District Multicultural School of Ministry, with an expanded focus on ministerial preparation for all district languages and cultures. Under the leadership of Carlos Fernández, the Multicultural School of Ministry has offered various educational pathways for students to meet the requirements for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. Students can also earn a bachelor's degree, earn a master's degree, and receive continuing education through the institute. In 2022 the Multicultural School of Ministry held its graduation exercises at Nall Avenue Church of the Nazarene with fifteen graduating students. Enrollment has continued to increase each year, with eighty-one students registered for classes during the 2022-2023 school year.³³



The Kansas City District is unique among the districts of the Church of the Nazarene. Local churches and a district office are not the only Nazarene entities present within its geographical boundaries. In addition to these and the educational institutions mentioned previously, the Kansas City District has also served as the district home to regional and denominational organizations and institutions.

Nazarene Publishing House and The Foundry Publishing

The single most influential decision for the Church of the Nazarene's strong organizational presence in Kansas City was to locate the Nazarene Publishing House there. Publishing holiness literature has always been a key missional strategy for the Church of the Nazarene. At the third General Assembly in Nashville, Tennessee in 1911—just three years after the memorable Pilot Point assembly of 1908—a motion was adopted to elect a board for the purpose of raising funds for “the establishing of a central publishing house, which shall be a repository for our church and Sunday School related publications, and such supplies as our Church shall need and desire to use.”³⁴ The board was elected and they picked Kansas City as the site for the publishing house. Nazarene historians Floyd Cunningham, Stan Ingersol, Harold E. Raser, and David P. Whitelaw rightly recognize this as a watershed decision for Nazarenes in Kansas City: “This decision proved momentous. It initiated the relationship between the Church of the Nazarene and metropolitan Kansas City.”³⁵

Situated in an ideal location in the heart of the nation and at the center of the national railroad system, Kansas City became the official home of the “Pentecostal Nazarene Publishing House” in 1912. The original location was at 2109 Troost Avenue.

08

DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRIES ON THE KANSAS CITY DISTRICT

f THE
FOUNDRY
PUBLISHING



NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE



The original Nazarene Publishing House at 2109 Troost Avenue



Nazarene Publishing House at 2923 Troost Avenue

From there a new denominational publication entitled the Herald of Holiness was launched on April 17, 1912. Now known as Holiness Today, this periodical has served as the flagship publication of the Church of the Nazarene for the past 112 years, circulating in both print and digital form from Kansas City to the far reaches of North America and beyond. In 2018 Nazarene Publishing House changed its name to The Foundry Publishing, a nod to the Foundry Church in London where John Wesley ministered in the 1700s. The offices of The Foundry Publishing are now housed within the Church of the Nazarene Global Ministry Center in Lenexa. Today The Foundry Publishing remains not only the Church of the Nazarene’s denominational publisher but also one of the largest publishers of Wesleyan-Holiness literature in the world. Their work is “to empower people with life-changing ways to engage in the mission of God.”³⁶ In the first district report of the Kansas City District’s committee on Publishing Interests, the committee urged every member of the Kansas City District “to pray earnestly for the Nazarene Publishing House that it fail not in its divine commission and undertaking—‘The Gospel of Full Salvation to the Whole World by the Printed Page.’”³⁷ No doubt many members of the Kansas City District responded to this call to pray for the ministry of their denominational publishing house.

Nazarene Headquarters and the Global Ministry Center

With the establishing of the publishing house in Kansas City the denominational administrative offices of the Church of the Nazarene soon followed. For as long as the Kansas City District has existed the executive offices of the denomination have called Kansas City their home. Kansas City District Superintendent Jarrette Aycock noted in his report to the Kansas City District Assembly in 1951 that “in the heart of our district is located the General Headquarters of our denomination. We are often referred to as ‘The Headquarters District.’ This is an honor, but a grave responsibility. If so considered, then we should be an example in spirituality, in progress, and in Christian activity.”³⁸

In the earliest days the offices of the general church were located in the same residence as the Nazarene Publishing House at 2109 Troost Avenue. Around 1921, the first stand-alone Nazarene General Headquarters residence was secured just down the road at 2905 Troost Avenue. Various buildings on Troost Avenue served as the headquarters offices between then and 1955, the year that the International Headquarters buildings were constructed at 6401 The Paseo Boulevard. These buildings, noteworthy for the famous globe which hovered on top, stood adjacent to Nazarene Theological Seminary and served as the administrative hub of the denomination for fifty-eight years.

Church of the Nazarene International Headquarters at 6401 The Paseo Boulevard in Kansas City, Missouri, 1955–2008





Church of the Nazarene Global Ministry Center at 17001 Prairie Star Parkway in Lenexa, Kansas

On September 15, 2008, to coincide with the centennial anniversary of the Church of the Nazarene's founding at Pilot Point, the Church of the Nazarene Global Ministry Center opened its doors at 17001 Prairie Star Parkway in Lenexa. Located conveniently near the intersections of 95th Street, Renner Boulevard, and Interstate 435, this 109,000-square-foot, two-story complex functions today as the administrative support center for Nazarene personnel, churches, missions, and ministries around the world. Included within its walls are the offices of the Board of General Superintendents, the General Secretary, the General Treasurer, World Mission, the denomination's Local Church Ministries (NDI, NMI, and NYI), Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, and much more. As its mission states, the Global Ministry Center exists for the purpose of "Resourcing Nazarenes Everywhere."

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Global Ministry Center took place on Sunday, February 26, 2006. Several hundred Nazarenes attended, most of whom were members of Kansas City District churches. General Superintendent Jerry Porter spoke to the assembled crowd in Lenexa that day:

Today, we gather from around the world to visually and symbolically launch this historic endeavor for our denominational family. As we approach our centennial in 2008, we are mindful of that great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us to share the good news of Jesus Christ with people everywhere. In fact, we are here because someone cared and introduced us to Jesus. That mission compels us—it is not primarily about a physical building but rather a 'Global Ministry Center' that will foster productive global disciple-making endeavors.³⁹

Two and a half years later the Global Ministry Center opened its doors. On the first work day, September 15, 2008, employees and guests were welcomed by the Board of General Superintendents. All six Nazarene regional directors were present that day in Kansas City to represent their world regions. Members of the Board of General Superintendents led all who were present that day in a time of worship, including "giving thanks for God's blessing on the work and vision that led to the creation and occupancy of the GMC."⁴⁰ Today the Global Ministry Center continues to serve and resource the local ministries of the Church of the Nazarene from Kansas City to 165 world areas.

The USA/Canada Regional Office

The Kansas City District is one of seventy-eight Nazarene districts that make up the Church of the Nazarene's USA/Canada Region. The region is led by a Regional Director and includes a Regional Education Coordinator, Director of Strategy, Administrative Coordinator, NYI Coordinator, a Director of Evangelism and New Church Development, Multicultural Ministries, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, and various other ministry coordinators, leadership personnel, support staff, and program initiatives.

The vision of the USA/Canada Region is four-fold: "Mobilizing all Nazarenes in unity in the midst of a polarized world; calling our churches to engage in blessing our community; bringing people to Jesus especially our younger generations; and embracing the transformation of the whole person through becoming Christlike disciples."⁴¹ The ministries of the USA/Canada Region span the entire North American continent. Their offices are located within the Global Ministry Center in Lenexa.

Since its founding in 1924 the Kansas City District has served as the home district for all of these regional and denominational ministries. Like the seven local churches mentioned earlier, the publishing house and the general headquarters of the Church of the Nazarene were serving out of Kansas City long before the Kansas City District was established. From generation to generation, the relationship between the district, its local churches, and these regional and denominational entities has been mutually beneficial for the mission of making Christlike disciples in both Kansas City and in the nations.



09

AFTERWORD

It may not have taken a prophet to predict that the Kansas City District would become a strong district, but it certainly has not grown strong by accident.

It has grown strong because its people were open to the creative idea of starting a new district.

It has grown strong because a spirit of unity and earnestness has permeated its gatherings.

It has grown strong because its leaders have been faithful and effective.

It has grown strong because its churches have been places where lives are being changed.

It has grown strong because its organizations have championed discipleship, missions, and ministries to the young.

It has grown strong because its people have practiced purposeful compassion.

It has grown strong because its people have invested in Nazarene higher education.

It has grown strong because it has partnered well with regional and denominational ministries.

But mostly it has grown strong because a holy God has been faithful, from generation to generation, to God's holy people.

If the Kansas City District is to keep growing strong for the next one-hundred years, it will be for the same reasons.

Forever God is faithful.

May all who come behind us find us faithful.

And "now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:21-21 NIV).



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- 3** Proceedings of the First Annual Assembly of the Kansas City District Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1925), 18.
- 4** "The New Kansas City District," Herald of Holiness (October 14, 1925): 2.
- 5** A nice story on Lakeview Park and some of its history was written by Barbara Magerl, "Lakeview Park Recalls Days Spent Deepening Spiritual Life," Northeast Johnson County Star (July 11, 1986), 7.
- 6** In his district superintendent report in 2003, Wright admitted to saying these core values "over and over" to the district. See Seventy-Ninth Annual Assembly Journal of the Kansas City District Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2003), 81.
- 7** For a sampling see his books What's a Pastor to Do? The Good and Difficult Work of Ministry (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2004); Thinking, Listening, Being: A Wesleyan Pastoral Theology (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2014); Preaching Holiness: Pastoral Considerations (Kansas City: The Foundry, 2019); Joy: Choosing Hope in an Age of Uncertainty (Kansas City: The Foundry, 2022).
- 8** One of many occasions on which Estep mentioned this was in his district superintendent's report in 2023. See Ninety-Ninth Annual Assembly Journal of the Kansas City District Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2023), 64.
- 9** Eddie Estep, Who's Got Your Back? Leadership Lessons from the Life of King David (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2014); Who's By Your Side? More Leadership Lessons from the Life of King David (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2016); What's in Your Hand? Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses (Kansas City: The Foundry, 2020); Who Can Be Against Us? Leadership Lessons from the Life of Paul (Kansas City: The Foundry, 2023)
- 10** Estep, Who Can Be Against Us, 65.
- 11** "Cunningham Elected 30th General Superintendent," 23rd General Assembly & International Conventions Daily Summary 10 (July 30, 1993), 1.
- 12** Many thanks to Nazarene Research Services for providing me with this statistic.
- 13** Brief information about the churches that were active on the Kansas City District in 1999 is recorded in the booklet God With Us ... Celebrating 75 Years: Stories of God's Faithfulness to the Congregations of the Kansas City District. Much of the historical information found in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, was gleaned from this booklet.
- 14** Lawrence First has kept excellent records of their church's history. Most of this information was gathered from these records.
- 15** Quoted in E. A. Girvin, Phineas F. Bresee: A Prince in Israel (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1916), 305.
- 16** See Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Assembly of the Kansas District Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Pentecostal Nazarene Publishing House, 1916), 5, 29, 36.
- 17** Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Assembly of the Kansas District of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Pentecostal Nazarene Publishing House, 1919), 20.
- 18** See nazarene.org/ndi
- 19** See nazarene.org/nmi
- 20** See nazarene.org/nyi
- 21** Church of the Nazarene Manual 2023 (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2023), 5.
- 22** Beth Plank, a recent graduate of MidAmerica Nazarene University, created a research poster entitled "Nazarene Nurturing: The Rest Cottage of Kansas City" in fulfillment of a requirement for her Nazarene Heritage course. Beth's poster was a convenient source for much of the information provided here.
- 23** Twenty-Sixth Annual Assembly Journal of the Kansas City District Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1950), 48.
- 24** This quote along with much of the information in this section was drawn from the Shelter KC website: shelterkc.org/about/history.
- 25** Ninety-Fifth Annual Assembly Journal of the Kansas City District Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2019), 99.
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- 41** See usacanadaregion.org.



KANSAS CITY DISTRICT