

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE SILENCE OF PERFECT LOVE:
THE ABSENCE OF CONVERSATION AND CONFESSION OF RACISM
IN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

DISSERTATION IN THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN
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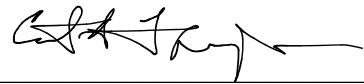
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ABSTRACT

Michael W. Stipp

THE SILENCE OF PERFECT LOVE: THE ABSENCE OF CONVERSATION AND CONFESSION OF RACISM IN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

The doctrine of perfect love is rarely applied to racial attitudes. Historically, there has been a lack of teaching on racism in the Church of the Nazarene (COTN). There exists a core of silence regarding racism within the denomination from a vocational pastoral context. While the denomination's cardinal doctrine is entire sanctification and perfect love, there is silence in applying holiness teaching to racial justice matters. Analyzing a silent response to racism involves a thorough examination of Nazarene history and theological literature. Coupled with Wesleyan thought are contributions from sister denominations and theological underpinnings of the *imago Dei*. An applied thesis will discuss how the COTN has responded to cultural attitudes in the US since 1908. The method of this research is qualitative through content analysis. The scope of research includes texts on racism and studies Wesleyan Holiness theological themes discovered through books, dissertations, conversations, and web content. The research includes an artifact that is a series of interviews with Nazarene leaders who serve the church and have keen insights into systemic racism. The artifact interview topics are based upon the COTN *Manual* ¶15. Thus, including Black leaders' voices and insights strengthens and completes this research.

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

Biblical justice is a heavy topic of discussion in any context and is often avoided among Nazarenes. Few Nazarenes are stirred to write about racism as it is seen through the lens of Wesleyan Holiness theology and applied to US culture. This writing originates from a pastor's perspective and is intended to be a practical resource for laity and clergy in the Church of the Nazarene in the USA/Canada Region.

As of 2025, the Board of General Superintendents (BGS) in the Church of the Nazarene is a diverse board of six individuals. Three are from the US (two men and one woman), one is from Africa, and two are from Latin America. This board leads a global church with grace and optimistic hope. The BGS speaks with one voice in addressing global social concerns and communicates to its membership where the Church of the Nazarene stands on many social issues. The BGS focuses on people and leadership, not siding with nations when there is violence and war. The board serves as a voice of the Church of the Nazarene to guide its adherents under the polity set forth in its *Manual*.

While there are many points of celebration of growth, diversity, and inclusion globally, in the denomination, the minority status of African American members and churches in the USA/Canada Region is not widely represented. Thus, it is difficult to have discussions about race when there are few members of that minority serving in leadership roles. Perhaps it is a dream! A day in the future when African Americans will play an important role in leading districts, contributing to periodicals and textbooks, teaching on university campuses, and pastors of large congregations.

Assumptions

The research was initiated due to the perceived issue of minimal documentation on racial attitudes in the Church of the Nazarene, which has existed for more than a century. The holiness movement articulates entire sanctification of heart and life, an experience that John Wesley called perfect love. Although the church carefully guides its membership in social and spiritual matters, there has been mere silence in racial matters. Clarity is needed to teach how biblical justice is to be incorporated into perfect love theology. The denomination could benefit from resources such as vetted authors and contributors familiar with the challenges of race-related conversations.

A theme from multiple works speaking to an evangelical audience is the *imago Dei*. If all humanity is created in the image of God, then the *imago Dei* is a biblical underpinning to the conversation about race. Evangelical researchers Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith have shaped policy and understanding of racism for several sister holiness denominations. Emerson and Smith establish a vision of hope. “If anyone should be doing something about the racialized society and if anyone has the answer to the race problem, . . . it is Christians. Their religion calls for it, and their faith gives them the tools and moral force needed for change.”¹ Still, no record exists where the Church of the Nazarene leadership has studied Emerson and Smith's work. Emerson and Smith’s book can help expand and challenge Nazarenes to consider applying Wesleyan teaching to much-needed race conversations.

Diane Leclerc, Wesleyan theologian and professor at Northwest Nazarene University, traces the influence of Irenaeus, who taught that Jesus Christ recapitulates humanity. It is through

¹ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17.

Christ that we see what humanity is created to be and know what it means to be fully human. It is through Christ that humanity is renewed, and the *imago Dei* becomes the avenue by which the capacity to love is restored. “[The *imago Dei*] the capacity to love and be loved in divine and human relationships, as well as loving the creation. Thus we may appropriately claim that the sanctified life is a life where the ability to love as God loves is enabled in us.”² Leclerc reminds us that holiness involves what we are to be and do. When love is restored in one’s “being” and “doing” enlightened, holy people will speak up when there is injustice. Biblical justice includes putting biblical holiness into practice when one sees that all people are made in the image of God.

A valuable resource from a sister denomination was “*Let’s Talk About . . . Racism*,” written by The Salvation Army (TSA).

“True repentance is a decision to move away from sin and towards God. As believers, apology and forgiveness are not only a universal human need but are Kingdom values that Scripture points to as key to opening doors to healing in even the most difficult circumstances. And as we engage in conversation about race and racism, we must keep in mind that sincere repentance and apologies are necessary if we want to move toward racial reconciliation. We recognize that it is a profound challenge to sit on the hot seat and listen with an open heart to the hurt and anger of the wounded. Yet, we are all hardwired to desire justice and fairness, so the need to receive a sincere apology is necessary. We are also imperfect human beings and prone to error and defensiveness, so the challenge of offering a heartfelt apology permeates almost every relationship.”³

The resource was a conversation guide for TSA congregations in North America, but there was unwanted drama. Fox News created misleading stories about “*Let’s Talk About . . . Racism*” that resulted in negative public opinion and the abrupt removal of the resource from electronic

² Diane Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2010), 144.

³ The Salvation Army, *Let’s Talk About . . . Racism*, Internet Archive (April 2021): 5.
<https://archive.org/details/salvation-army-lets-talk-about-racism>

distribution in December 2021. The TSA produced a quality resource, but it was misunderstood and misrepresented. The 2021 controversy involving the news and distribution of a local church resource for TSA highlights the fact that issues related to racism can be highly sensitive and provocative. Even though the sixty-page resource was clearly written, in the wrong hands bad press sabotaged good work.

Paragraph 915 of the Church of the Nazarene *Manual* encourages the development of resources to guide its members in race-related matters. Given the TSA incident, there is potential for similar consequences and risks. Despite those potential risks, twenty-first-century resources are needed for local Nazarene pastors, districts, and university students.

Problem statement

In the forty years this author has served in the Church of the Nazarene, African Americans have died at higher rates than White Americans. This includes the deaths of Trayvon Martin (2012), Breonna Taylor (2020), and George Floyd (2020) at the hands of White people ostensibly upholding the law. Their deaths and the public reaction to their deaths were headline news, and in the local church, attitudes and opinions about these deaths were shaped by social media and cable television news agencies. Few members of the local church were comfortable discussing our nation's struggle with racial attitudes, the United States history of violence, and biblical justice issues. Instead, many congregants voiced concerns over riots and questioned the social backgrounds of the victims. Congregants also expressed fears that law enforcement officers were not protected and cited criminal activity of the Black Lives Matter organization. Cable news shaped congregants' opinions and talking points. Meanwhile, denominational leaders missed the opportunity to instill a response of biblical justice and the *Manual* teaching of paragraph 915. The world rioted after George Floyd's tragic death, but in the field, pastors

needed resources to guide the voice and expression of holiness. There was silence instead of directions, and it is difficult to interpret silence. Did the silence mean that denominational leaders had no opinion, had no authority to voice outrage, and did not want to cause political reaction to the point that members would leave the church? The lack of resources and support from the Church of the Nazarene and the USA/Canada Region has inspired this research.

The problem statement is one of disconnect. When appropriately defined and applied to personal experience, should a Wesleyan understanding of perfect love include perfect love in racial attitudes and conversations?

Goals

With a dearth of published teaching on racism in the Church of the Nazarene, it is necessary to explore and include research from holiness and evangelical scholars outside the denomination. Research resources include books, dissertations, articles, and conversations that provide foundational guidance for Nazarene pastors and congregations in applying the doctrine of holiness to racial tensions in America.

This project culminates in an artifact to better serve the local church, university students, and the Church of the Nazarene in the US. The artifact explores the Church of the Nazarene *Manual* ¶915 through interviews. This section of the *Manual*, entitled “Discrimination,” encourages dialogue about racism and speaking up for biblical justice.

Significance of the study

Social media and cable news pundits have stolen the church's Wesleyan holiness voice. There is work to be done to remind the church that it has a strong prophetic voice. Tensions occur when voices from the church become sound bites and talking points from social media rather than vetted, trusted literature. There are limited resources for pastors and laity to support

race-related conversations. These conversations are essential for the Church of the Nazarene USA/Canada Region to expand its tent and more widely include Black leaders in the district, regional, and global structures.

Scope and Limitations

This study examines writings related to racial attitudes within the Church of the Nazarene in the USA/Canada Region. The primary focus will be to discover the extent of systemic racism in the Church of the Nazarene. Systemic racism refers to systems that reinforce inequalities in which policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work to reinforce inequalities.

Closely aligned with systemic racism is Institutional Racism.

“Institutional racism operates with discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, inequitable opportunities and impacts within organizations and institutions, based on race, that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for White people. Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they reinforce racial inequities.”⁴

These two expressions of racism are similar and will be used interchangeably. Systemic racism is a product of the culture, and institutional racism is primarily viewed within an organization.

Since racism has many layers and there are space restraints in this document, this body of work will not thoroughly examine internalized racism and structural racism.

Internalized Racism is the set of private beliefs, prejudices, and ideas that individuals have about the superiority of Whites and the inferiority of people of color. Among people of color, it manifests as internalized oppression. Howard Thurman described internal oppression as a disinherited effect that is “burned into you that you do not count and that no provisions are

⁴ Cynthia Silva Parke, “Undoing Racism-By Design,” *Interaction Institute for Social Change*, (November 1, 2012), <https://interactioninstitute.org/undoing-racism-by-design>

made for the literal protection of your person.”⁵ Sociologist Robin DiAngelo explains that internalized White supremacy sets White people as the standard for humanity, viewing people of color as deviations from this norm.⁶

Structural Racism is "A system in which . . . policies, institutional practices, [are] . . . reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality. It involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors including history, culture, . . . and . . . policies that systematically privilege White people and disadvantage people of color.”⁷ Although internalized and structural racism will not be included in this study, the impact of racial expressions is an important acknowledgment since they will be represented in the candid responses of the interviews located in the artifact.

The scope of research will include writings from various authors and theologians affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene. However, there is a problem with the amount of data. There is little written to explain why the denomination has offered a small amount of guidance on the topic of racial attitudes. The lack of data constrains analysis; therefore, additional data is collected from sources from sister holiness denominations and scholars within the evangelical community.

Questions to be addressed in this study

The following questions shaped the search for collected data and were used to create an artifact for the project.

1. To what extent does the doctrine of perfect love apply to racial attitudes?

⁵ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 29.

⁶ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard For White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press 2018), 33.

⁷ Parke, “Undoing Racism-By Design.”

2. Is there silence* within the Church of the Nazarene regarding racial matters? (*Silence means lack of literature written in periodicals, a dearth of theological training, few resources for local churches on race and racial conversations, and no formal response or outrage in racial unrest in the US.)
3. Describe how the Church of the Nazarene practices systematic racism.
4. How do the practices and policies regarding racism found in sister holiness denominations compare with the Church of the Nazarene?

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUGGLE

Racism is a difficult focus to address in any context – churches, communities, government, families. It is a heavy topic that is weighed down by personal stories, perceptions, emotions, trauma histories, and pain. There is no single list of definitions that all Americans embrace. These following terms provide a foundation and are woven into the fabric of the American context. This helps us follow threads back to opinions, prejudices, and origins of slavery that started in the US in 1611. Today, these definitions offer a framework for understanding, ensuring that discussions about race have a basis. Practices by the Church of the Nazarene (USA/Canada Region) toward the African American community will be examined. The following definitions will be included in the study.

Biblical Justice: the concept of restoring individuals and communities by ensuring fairness and impartiality. Justice arises from God's heart and character. God seeks to make the object of his holy love complete and whole.⁸

⁸ Paul Louis Metzger, “What Is Biblical Justice? The Theology of Justice Flows From the Heart of God,” *Christianity Today*, Summer 2010, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2010/09/biblicaljustice>

Race: “a socially constructed set of categories created to justify and maintain social hierarchies. Although race has no biological or scientific basis, social hierarchies are real and create a landscape of opportunity and disadvantage.”⁹

Racism: (1) “The conscious or unconscious belief in the superiority of one race over another race . . . which manifests itself in a variety of dismissive, oppressive or exploitive ways.”¹⁰ (2) “The diminishment of worth in men and women in and through bias, systems, and power structures that disadvantage them in tangible ways based on skin color.”¹¹ (3) “A belief, philosophy, or ideology that can be internalized by an individual. It undermines the recognition of racism as structural, institutional, and systemic. Racism also undermines the powerful role of policymakers, policies, and practices in the operation of racism.”¹²

Whiteness: Whiteness and White racialized identity refer to the way that White people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. “Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal. Whiteness is at the core of understanding race in America.”¹³

⁹ Cynthia Silva Parke, “Transforming Racism-Personal and Social Transformation,” *Interaction Institute for Social Change* (August 11, 2013), <https://interactioninstitute.org/transforming-racism-personal-and-social-transformation>

¹⁰ Tony Evans, *Kingdom Race Theology: God's Answer to Our Racial Crisis* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2023), 19.

¹¹ Ken Wytsma, *The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 2.

¹² Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York, NY: One World, 2023), 9.

¹³ Columbia College, “Whiteness in American History,” (accessed January 15, 2025), <https://www.ccis.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/conversations/whiteness-in-american-history>

White supremacy: (1) A racist ideology that is based upon the belief of White superiority. It is an attitude, a way of thinking, and extends to how systems and institutions are structured to uphold White dominance.¹⁴

(2) “A description of the culture we live in, culture that positions white people . . . (whiteness) as ideal. White supremacy is more than the idea that whites are superior to people of color; it is the deeper premise that supports this idea - the definition of whites as the norm or standard for human and people of color as a deviation from that norm.”¹⁵ These definitions describe the culture of racial tensions in the twenty-first century.

The challenge is two-fold in this research. In seeking ways to reveal systemic racism, the author seeks to discover how the definitions above apply to racial attitudes in the denomination. The second challenge is the most daring. It is hoped that those who read this dissertation and review the artifact reach a conclusion there is systemic racism in the Church of the Nazarene. If research reveals that the Church of the Nazarene, USA/Canada Region has been complicit in racism through its silence, the denomination must undertake a thorough self-examination to identify conclusions that are constructive and not dismissive. Noted author Jemar Tisby teaches that racism has become an evolving topic and is difficult to identify.

In previous eras, racism among Christian believers was much easier to detect and identify. Professing believers openly used racial slurs, participated in beatings and lynchings, fought wars to preserve slavery, or used the Bible to argue for the inherent inferiority of Black people. And those who did not openly resist these actions--those who remain silent--were complicit in their acceptance. Since the 1970s, Christian complicity in racism has become more difficult to discern. It is hidden, but that does not mean it no longer exists. . . . Again, we must remember; racism never goes away; it adapts.¹⁶

¹⁴ Layla F. Saad, *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2020), 12.

¹⁵ DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 33.

¹⁶ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise, The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2019), 155.

The definitions above are not part of Nazarene nomenclature; few Nazarenes seem to be struggling with them. Conversations about race and race relations are not included in the fabric of Nazarene social concerns. The denomination has historically remained silent and complicit when action was needed. To paraphrase Tisby, the movement adapted, and racism has not gone away.

On Our Watch

The origin of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene took place in 1907 in Chicago, Illinois. This first General Assembly comprised several groups or holiness associations that merged to form one body. The name was established at the first General Assembly, and Phineas Bresee was elected as the first General Superintendent. One year later, in 1908, the founders celebrated the second General Assembly at Pilot Point, Texas, where additional holiness associations were added. The founding of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene was like a marriage where deep and lasting commitments were made. Historians cite the 1908 General Assembly as its anniversary year at Pilot Point, Texas. Visibly, they celebrated that holiness groups were coming together, and a Northerner and a Southerner could shake hands. The gesture of Northerners, acknowledged for their participation in Union forces during the Civil War, shaking hands with Southerners, who experienced economic losses due to the end of slave labor, represented a commitment to unity despite ongoing challenges related to the nation's racial issues.

The *Manual* was established to guide the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. Many founding ministers, including Phineas Bresee, had a Methodist Episcopal background. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene mirrored the doctrines and polity of the *Doctrine and*

Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Not all positions and structures were adopted word for word. Both the 1908 Methodist *Discipline* and the 1908 Nazarene *Manual* included a section called Special Advices. While the 1908 Methodist *Discipline* addressed Slavery, Dress, Marriage, Divorce, Amusements, Temperance, and Tithing,¹⁷ the Special Advices of the 1908 Nazarene *Manual* omitted slavery and the admonition of the kindness of the Golden Rule. The advices of the *Discipline* and the *Manual* both shared a common goal of providing guidance for putting holy living into practice.

Both the Church of the Nazarene and Methodist denominations reflected their times. Both taught that perfect love was a doctrine to be lived out in character and conduct of its adherents. While the Church of the Nazarene was just beginning, the Methodist church had a much longer history to draw from. Even after the Civil War, the 1908 Methodist *Discipline* provided a firm foundation to treat others with kindness and respect, following the principles of the Golden Rule:

I. Slavery

¶64. We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of Slavery. We believe that the buying, selling, or holding of human beings, to be used as chattels, is contrary to the laws of God and nature, and inconsistent with the Golden Rule, and with that Rule in our Discipline which requires all who desire to continue among us to “do no harm,” and to “avoid evil of every kind.” We therefore affectionately admonish all our Ministers and people to keep themselves pure from this great evil, and to seek its extirpation by all lawful and Christian means.¹⁸

Attitudes toward race and the wounds of the Civil War lingered into the twentieth century throughout the US. The Civil War ended in 1865, yet forty-three years later (1908), the “evil of

¹⁷ Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, NY: Eaton & Mains, 1908), 55-59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

slavery” language was still apropos for the Methodists. The position on slavery reminded Methodists of the importance to “do no harm” and “avoid the evil of every kind.”

In 1907-1908, the Church of the Nazarene embraced conservative holiness ethical standards shaped by its forebearers; however, research does not find any written position on race before the founding years. Germain to this research is a discovery of what the nineteenth-century holiness pioneers taught and influenced future holiness teaching. One of the early holiness and abolitionist voices was Charles Finney, a Presbyterian evangelist who helped usher in the Second Great Awakening. His teaching on slavery and his strong position on original sin (a diseased condition rather than an imputed guilt) were like the Wesleyan doctrine of original sin.¹⁹ As an abolitionist, Finney played a significant role in establishing the Oberlin College in Ohio and the Underground Railroad. On the topic of slavery, Finney stated, “What!? Shall men be suffered to commit one of the most God-dishonoring and most heaven-daring sins on the earth, and not be reproved? It is a sin against which all men should bear testimony, and lift up their voices like a trumpet, till this giant iniquity is banished from the land and the world.”²⁰ Finney advocated for Christian perfection and refused to offer communion to slave owners, and many Wesleyans agreed with his strong teachings.

Another early and influential leader who connected social holiness and racial attitudes was J. O. McClurkan of Tennessee. McClurkan’s early ministerial teaching was in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. In 1898, McClurkan formed the Pentecostal Alliance (later named Pentecostal Mission). According to J. Kenneth Grider, McClurkan taught, “The sanctified

¹⁹ Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1957), 28.

²⁰ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures to Professing Christians* (Oberlin, OH: E. J. Goodrich, 1879), 71.

heart is absolutely cleansed of all . . . race prejudice. Holiness deepens and sweetens and broadens the nature until every man of all and every section and nationality and color or condition is loved as a brother. There is no North, no South, no Jew, nor Greek, no Barbarian to the sanctified.”²¹ After his death, McClurkan’s group merged with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene in 1915 finding solid points of agreement, but McClurkan’s view on race is not reflected in the Nazarene *Manual*. Guiding the denomination on racial matters was not the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene’s central priority.

The Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene may have omitted a statement on slavery as the Civil War had concluded forty-three years before its founding. Evidence from the Methodist *Discipline* and contributions from McClurkan suggest the aftermath of the Civil War still weighed upon the minds of early Nazarenes.

As the Church of the Nazarene was preaching and reflecting the doctrine of perfect love at its beginning, sister holiness denominations also preached perfect love and maintained an abolitionist language in their church disciplines. The Wesleyan Methodist Church (WMC) departed from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1843 as an abolitionist denomination. In its 1907 *Manual* the WMC prohibited: “The buying or selling of men, women, or children, with an intention to enslave them, or holding them as slaves or claiming that it is right so to do.”²² On their watch, the WMC took a stand against slavery in the name of holiness.

The Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene was not born in a vacuum, but in a cultural context. The US was divided after the Civil War and racial attitudes were part of the cultural

²¹ J. O. McClurkan, *Zion’s Outlook* (February 1901), 7, quoted in J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994), 466.

²² Wesleyan Methodist Church, *Disciple of the Wesleyan Connection (or Church) of America* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishing Association, 1907), 20.

landscape. The denomination was started after Jim Crow was initiated. The US Supreme Court case of Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 was the case that provided the legal foundation for racial segregation as the law of the land with the term “separate but equal” brokered for schools, train cars, bathrooms, and drinking fountains. There is no reference to Jim Crow culture in the denomination’s early writings. The church did address a smattering of social concerns that included orphaned children and declared that alcohol was a sin against humanity. On its watch, the church maintained that perfect love was best expressed by holiness through standards that represented lives transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

During its first decade of existence, the Church of the Nazarene’s major focus was to preach the doctrine of entire sanctification and perfect love. That primary theme has carried the movement well into the twenty-first century. There was silence about attitudes toward African Americans established in the denomination’s first decade, and that silence also followed the church well into the twenty-first century. From 1907 to 1916, the US recorded more than six hundred lynchings of African Americans, and that silence is haunting.²³ It is true that the denomination did not exist during the Civil War, but on its watch, there were six hundred thirteen lynchings of African Americans, and there is no record of response.

Racial concerns were not reflected in the *Manual*, and the topic was largely omitted from the denominational magazine, the *Herald of Holiness*. Between 1917 and 1919 there were only a few articles in the *Herald of Holiness* that encouraged outreach ministry to people referred to in the early 1900s as Negroes. In his research, Nazarene historian Brandon Winstead recognized an evangelistic strategy, including social assistance to African Americans.

²³ Aaron O’Neill, “Annual number of lynchings in the U.S. by race 1882-1968,” *Statista.com* (August 7, 2024), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1147507/lynching-by-race/>

. . . the few northern Nazarene churches that were located in urban areas where southern Blacks were migrating should “reach out” to the “Negro people” by helping them to find employment and adjust to the new social environment of the North. By doing this, he felt that northern Nazarenes could exhibit an “applied Christianity” to southern migrants and evangelize them with a message of Christian holiness.²⁴

A similar encouragement in the *Herald* was written by Rev. R. J. Kirkland, who tried to “convince his readers that the denomination needed to extend a hand of fellowship to a “few independent-Colored holiness churches” so that the Church of the Nazarene could evangelize and start Black churches in the South.²⁵ The Herald of Holiness published articles encouraging advancing ministries to African Americans, but no new churches were started for the Black community in the 1910s and 1920s.

Published materials focused on evangelism and the propagation of holiness as the primary message of the church. Evangelism was a constant focus and priority. Limited writings challenged readers to reach the African American population because that group appeared unreached. Expressing the idea in a “White” vernacular: *We need “them” to help “us” grow as a denomination; therefore, let us declare “them” to be a mission field.* The evidence to draw this conclusion is like strands of thread in fabric. These threads are visible reminders in a tapestry of century-old investigations of the historic attitude toward race-related conversations.

In its recorded history from 1908 to the late 1940s, there are very few places where Black churches were established in the Church of the Nazarene. The first reference to the “Colored” work was in Brooklyn, New York, in 1914. Immigrants from the West Indies populated the Brooklyn church and the immigrant Black population and the American Black individuals were

²⁴ M. Brandon Winstead, *There All Along: Black Participation in the Church of the Nazarene 1914-1969* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2013), 9.

²⁵ Ibid.

categorized under the name “Colored.” For the next thirty years, there were only three more Colored works started, two in Kansas and one in Rhode Island. Reflecting upon the church’s first fifty years, Mendell Taylor states, “This composite picture reveals that an interest was present in promoting work among the [C]olored people, but altogether too often the efforts did not produce anything permanent.”²⁶ Taylor does not explain why efforts to produce more “Colored” churches failed. According to Winstead, the early African American Nazarenes were team players and participated in the mission of the denomination’s emphasis on evangelism and personal holiness. The Church of the Nazarene as a denomination had “largely forgotten to evangelize (African Americans) on a systematic level.”²⁷ Evangelizing during Jim Crow was fraught with difficulty, especially in the South. Nazarenes were open to evangelizing African Americans, which would increase their membership, but were not open to welcoming willing African Americans as brothers and sisters.

In 1940, there were two expressions of the missionary arm of the church: home mission (for the US) and world mission. Dr. C. Warren Jones, director of World Missions and Home Missions departments, challenged the predominantly White church to reach out to Black culture. Jones acknowledged the Church of the Nazarene’s failure to establish Black churches in the US in his report to the General Board, Jones said:

When it comes to the Negro race, we have done nothing. We have a few and very few missions for the Colored people, of which there are 12,000,000 in the United States. We have talked and promised ourselves to do something but that is as far as we have gotten. We seem to fail when it comes to consistency. We keep thirty-five missionaries in Africa and spend \$40,000 a year to evangelize 1 1/3 million people and neglect the millions of the same race in the homeland. [*At this point in time, we had only two organized Black*

²⁶ Mendell Taylor, *World Outreach Through Home Missions*, vol. 3, *Fifty Years of Nazarene Missions* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1958), 149.

²⁷ Winstead, *There All Along*, 13.

churches.] We would not do less for Africa, but do you think we should do something for the Black man in our own land? They may be Black, but they go to make up the human race and were surely included in the ‘all nations’ of the Great Commission.²⁸

Jones' primary focus was “evangelism,” which was tied to the Great Commission. As a director, Jones had budgetary responsibilities. A case could be made that his encouragement to evangelize African Americans was based upon proximity. His speech included the expense of keeping missionaries in Africa and declared the importance of reaching the Black population in the US. The report made to the General Board by Jones combined elements of missionary enthusiasm with practical considerations for missionary funding. According to church historian Stan Ingersol, there was an economic constraint in the 1940s. The Great Depression and land deal in North Dakota caused cash flow issues for the church. It was not until World War II concluded that the denomination could gain its financial footing. Jones’ report was historic in that he admitted failure in reaching the neglected millions of African Americans. His heartfelt transparency moved the 1940 General Assembly to act.

The Colored Works

World War II ushered racial integration into the US military, and the Church of the Nazarene launched a new emphasis to reach the African American population. “The fact that our church did not have an organized program for the evangelization of this vast segment of our population disturbed some of our leaders. But an action was forthcoming at the General Assembly of 1944.”²⁹ In the fall of 1944, the Board of General Superintendents issued a “Policy

²⁸ C. Warren Jones, “Report to the General Board Church of the Nazarene 1940,” Accessed through USA/Canada website. PowerPoint presentation “Black History” by Oliver Phillips.
https://www.usacanadaregion.org/sites/usacanadaregion.org/files/BlackNazHistory%20Oliver%20Phillips_0.pdf

²⁹ Taylor, *World Outreach*, 149.

Covering the Setup and Organization for Colored Work” and established a new designation called “The Colored District of the Church of the Nazarene.” All District Superintendents in the US were encouraged to start African American churches called “Colored Works.” The Colored Works were any Black church started by any district in the US. The new emphasis required buy-in from each US district superintendent, but the statistics indicate the new designation was not successful. The new Colored Work churches were invited to provide a verbal report at annual district assemblies of which they were a part. Allowing African American pastors to speak before White district delegates was a change. Structurally, the entire program was administered by the Department of Home Mission.³⁰

There was modest financial assistance from the Home Mission Department with the hope that White churches could supervise the new ministry initiative. The Colored District designation was not geographic; the name recognized new Black ministries initiated by existing churches and districts. The White majority held leadership and structure of districts; therefore, the name was perfunctory, and often the racial attitudes of district superintendents reflected the attitudes of the South. Starting a new ministry among African Americans did not result in attitudinal change among most of the district leadership.

The Nazarene Bible Institute

In 1948, the denomination committed to training Black pastors and formed a new segregated school in Institute, West Virginia, named the Nazarene Bible Institute.³¹ The Nazarene Bible Institute had a committed staff and yet a small enrollment. Faculty and students pioneered their new work with religious fervor during this African American leadership training

³⁰ Ibid. 149-150.

³¹ Ibid. 152.

initiative. First, the message of holiness was lived out personally despite the challenges of “ecclesiastical segregation and jurisdictional patterns.”³² Second, despite small growth, the Black congregations were team players and contributed financially to global and domestic budgets. Third, these new churches' mission mirrored the denomination's mission by preaching a message of holiness of heart and life. Winstead concluded:

It must be remembered that most African American Nazarenes throughout the country did not focus on challenging societal or denominational racism or trying to create a stronger Black body within the Church of the Nazarene that could have created a wider voting base to challenge segregation in the South or denominational racism.³³

This statement captures the heart/attitudes of how the Nazarene Black community cooperated with the denominational structures of the Church of the Nazarene from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s. The school closed its doors in 1964 and merged with the Nazarene Bible College in Colorado Springs, Colorado. However, the school will always be remembered for its impact on a generation of young African Americans who were mentored by Black leaders and educators.

The Gulf Central District

The Colored District was dismantled in 1952, and in 1953, a new initiative began called the Gulf Central District. At its formation, there were five churches with a membership of fifty-four in the newly formed district.³⁴ Church growth was slow. In 1953, the total number of Colored Work churches (Black churches located in White Districts and outside the Gulf Central District) in the United States was 15 churches with 409 members.³⁵

³² Winstead, *There All Along*, 119.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 54-55.

³⁵ Taylor, *World Outreach*, 153.

The Gulf Central District aimed to align with the district structures described in the *Manual* and appoint an African American district superintendent, Black officers, and Black auxiliary ministry leaders from within the geographic area. History does not explain why there had to be White leaders on the district advisory board of the Gulf Central District, but this author assumes mentoring was important in those early years. Taylor stated that “a district advisory board was nominated and elected, composed of one White minister and layman and one Negro minister and layman.” It is also important to note there was a cross-cultural element in leadership as three White pastors and one Mexican pastor were leading Black congregations.

Numbers do not tell the entire story. Despite meager attendance and membership beginnings, the vision and leadership of the Gulf Central District were exemplary. With an optimistic outlook, District Superintendent Rev. Leon Chambers, a White visionary leader, encouraged the church to pray for Negro evangelism with a hope toward a well-developed Gulf Central District.³⁶ Chambers was a military chaplain during World War II and was assigned to be the chaplain of the Black troops. He knew how to build rapport and trust with people of Color. When his term ended, its first Black District Superintendent, Rev. Warren Rogers, led the Gulf Central District.

Cultural Changes in the 1950s

On the Church of the Nazarene’s watch the attitudes across America were changing in the 1950s. US popular evangelist Billy Graham began to shift the segregation policies of his crusades in the South. His first desegregated meeting was held in Washington, D.C. in 1952. In

³⁶ Ibid. 155.

1953, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Graham requested that the segregation ropes be removed, but in that same year, in Dallas, Texas, he accepted segregation at his meeting.³⁷

While Billy Graham was making new inroads with race relations at his crusades, the US Supreme Court's landmark 1954 ruling of *Brown vs. Board of Education* was the court's unanimous decision that ended segregation for public schools, overturning the *Plessy v Ferguson* ruling of 1896. The *Brown v Board* decision created a pathway to ending segregation based on race. The argument of *Brown vs. Board of Education* recognized that “segregation created a ‘feeling of inferiority’ among black children, adversely affecting their hearts and minds in ways that could never be undone. It was a transformative moment in American history.”³⁸ The decision also reaffirmed the importance of birthright citizenship provided in the 14th Amendment.³⁹ After *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Billy Graham no longer segregated his crusades held in the South.

The 1956 *Manual* introduced teaching on race and discrimination, and the language was historic. The section highlighted biblical themes that reflect God's attitude toward humanity and recognizing the sacredness of the Genesis creation account. The *Manual* paragraph marks the first time Nazarenes are encouraged to practice perfect love in response to racism.

Racial Discrimination

§ 1. That the almost world-wide discrimination against racial minorities be recognized as being incompatible with the Scriptures' proclamation that God is no respecter of persons, and furthermore with the basic principle of the Christian faith that God is the Creator of

³⁷ Emmerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 47.

³⁸ “Brown v. Board of Education: The End of Segregation,” SocialStudiesHelp, (accessed January 15, 2025), <https://socialstudieshelp.com/ap-government-and-politics/brown-v-board-of-education-the-end-of-segregation/>

³⁹ Mitchell Yell, “Brown v. Board of Education and the Development of Special Education,” *Intervention in School and Clinic (ISC)* 57, no.3 (January 2022): 198-200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10534512211014874>

all men, and that of one blood are all men created, and furthermore is contrary to the experience and doctrine of perfect love.

§2. That each member of the Church of the Nazarene humbly examine his personal attitudes and actions toward other races as a first step in achieving the Christian goal of full participation by all in the life of the community.⁴⁰

The 1956 *Manual* statement has no scripture references, but it does contain admonitions that are scripturally based.

- **“God is no respecter of persons”**: Acts 10:34, Ephesians 6:9, Romans 2:10-11.
- **“God is the Creator of all men”**: Genesis 1:26-27
- **“Of one blood are all men created”** Acts 17:26-28.
- **“[Racial Discrimination] is contrary to the experience and doctrine of perfect love.”** The experience and doctrine of perfect love underscore an expectation that perfect love would be expressed in behavior.

The 1956 *Manual* carried a familiar admonition of J. O. McClurkan, who led the Tennessee Holiness group, the Pentecostal Mission, to unite with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene in 1915. The Church of the Nazarene’s Appendix section of the *Manual* includes several special paragraphs teaching how holy people should live and represent a life transformed through the experience and work of entire sanctification (synonymous with “perfect love”). Entire sanctification is a transformative second work of grace through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The General Rules of the *Manual* stated that members were to incorporate holy ethics of a

⁴⁰ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: History, Constitution, Government, Ritual, 1956* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1956), 325-326.

“godly walk and vital piety.”⁴¹ The Appendix expands and explains in detail what the lifestyle for holy living looks like. The 1956 *Manual* Appendix includes a list of prohibited public morality-related activities. A life filled with the Holy Spirit was to be “a witness” to culture. Prohibited activities included in the Appendix are Mixed Public Bathing, Modern Folk Dancing, Magazines, Radio, Television, and Movie Theatre. Nazarene colleges at the time were not allowed to compete in athletics with other schools (only intramural competition). Also, schools and colleges were advised that dramatics were “a danger” to Nazarene college students.⁴² In spite of its bold statement on racism, social action was not included as the denomination’s priority. Social transformation was to be achieved by evangelism through congregations and individual piety.⁴³

The Church of the Nazarene was conservative in its doctrines and cultural expressions, including a few statements about racial attitudes. The holiness denomination strongly emphasized grace, which was extended to all individuals. It held the belief that sinners could experience conversion through genuine repentance. Following this significant act of salvation, Christians sought to experience a desire for deeper spiritual development, known as entire sanctification and also called a second work of grace. With the work of the Holy Spirit, an individual would be made free of original sin. Further, the sanctified heart that was made holy and pure would experience “obedience of love made perfect.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid., 36.

⁴² Ibid., 322-325.

⁴³ Winstead, *There All Along*, 67-68.

⁴⁴ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual 1956*, 31.

Eight years later, the *Manual* expanded its teaching about racism. The 1964 *Manual* taught that the work of the Holy Spirit in the entirely sanctified person would bring an end to racial strife. “We believe the real solution for misunderstanding between racial groups will come when the hearts of men have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ and the crux of true religion consists in loving God with one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one’s neighbor as himself.”⁴⁵ This 1964 *Manual* statement clarified the Nazarenes' approach to racism, that perfect love was the solution to racism. To paraphrase: When a person is filled with perfect love and wholly submits to the Lord, “racial misunderstandings” will find lasting solutions. On its watch, the Church of the Nazarene provided a teaching on racism while ignoring ongoing acts of violence in the US. Unfortunately, racial discrimination was practiced in the denomination while professing the experience of perfect love.

Nazarene sociologist F. O. Parr observed some ambiguities among holiness people when defining race. “What a caricature do we holiness people make of the Gospel of perfect love! We follow blindly along with the world in its attitudes, and while we do not hate, we discriminate and segregate. We are dominated by its bigotry though we are not bigots.”⁴⁶ Parr says that right beliefs are not automatically reflected in correct practices.

The United States faced cultural upheaval in the 1960s, and the denomination’s culture was interwoven with the US culture. The Church of the Nazarene expressed a moderate view of civil protests that one could support a non-violent approach to civil rights. Author Jemar Tisby discusses a “moderate approach” to race by documenting how a group of moderate religious

⁴⁵ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: History, Constitution, Government, Ritual, 1964* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1964), 347.

⁴⁶ F. O. Parr, *Perfect Love and Race Hatred* (Bourbonnais, IL: self-published, 1964), 15.

leaders communicated with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during his imprisonment in Birmingham in the 1960s.

This group of (clergy) contended that civil rights remedies should be pursued through litigation instead of through boycotts and marches: “When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets.” While they recognized King’s rhetoric of nonviolence, they still believed that his tactics would actually undermine democracy and increase the likelihood of bloodshed.⁴⁷

The views of the clergy who visited King represented many White church leaders. Tisby pointed out the danger of moderation as it applied to racism. At a key historical moment, the White church in America failed to see the urgency. The idea of negotiating with Black minorities and the patience needed for the established laws to occur yielded little to no progress. Giving a problem more time was not an equitable solution. What was missing then from the White church in the 1960s is what appears to be missing in the White church in the twenty-first century. The White church of the 1960s was not outraged by lynchings, bombings of Black churches, and the known beatings of those who encouraged segregation. The moderate approach was to offer prayer for victims, with the idea that a gradual approach to accepting civil rights and relying upon the laws of the land would safeguard the progression of change. The White church of the twenty-first century continues to seek a moderate approach to racial challenges.

On its watch the Church of the Nazarene did not record its position during the Civil Rights movement. There were no articles written about race relations and protest marches in the *Herald of Holiness* magazine in the 1960s, only a few anecdotes. One of the fears of the 1960s was a mix of races. Interracial marriages were against the law until 1968 in several states in the US.

⁴⁷ Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 137-138.

One of the well-recognized Nazarene theologians of the late twentieth century was Richard S. Taylor. Taylor provides a glimpse of how he understood race relations by using the phrase “one’s own kind.”⁴⁸

It is not racism to have a natural preference for one’s own kind, for the simple reason that with them we have more in common. However, the saved are “one’s own kind” at a deeper, more fundamental level, regardless of nationality, color, or race. Therefore, grace can transcend the natural (and innocent) preference for cultural and racial affinities, by creating a new kind of affinity.⁴⁹

Taylor’s statement is troubling because at the core of Wesleyan-Arminian theology is the basic understanding that sin is a choice or a willful transgression against a known law of God. In teaching readers about the choices in temptation, Taylor goes beyond the subject matter to make an application about racial preferences. His application of choice to race relations shines a spotlight on his own racial preference. It is tragic for a leading theologian to teach Christians of a predominantly White Nazarene movement that it is not “racist” to have a “natural preference” for “our own kind.” This is an example of White supremacy.

In the Introduction to the Struggle section, two definitions were established. White supremacy is a racist ideology that is based upon the belief of White superiority. It is an attitude, a way of thinking that extends to how systems and institutions are structured to uphold White

⁴⁸ [A personal story. I was raised on a farm in central Illinois in the mid-1960s. When I was eleven, my mother took me to the backyard to watch the birds. First, robins fluttered and splashed in the birdbath. Then the sparrows took their turn in the birdbath. Then the yellow finches had their turn in the birdbath. My mother said, “Did you notice that the birds stick to **their own kind**? That is how God made us; God created us to stay with our own kind. And that is why White people should marry White people, and Negro people should marry Negro people.”]

⁴⁹ Richard S. Taylor, *The Theological Formulation*. vol. 3, *Exploring Christian Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985), 219.

dominance.⁵⁰ White supremacy describes the culture we live in, with the idea that being White is the norm or standard for human, and people of color as a deviation from that norm.⁵¹ Perhaps, this attitude of seeking out “one’s own kind” is the silent explanation for the perceived resistance to inclusion in the Nazarene movement. Taylor suggests that the White majority are more comfortable with their own kind, a designation that was misleading at best. Justifying “choosing one’s own kind” establishes a dangerous precedent for leading a diverse denomination and misses the opportunity to love the men and women of the world who are made in the image of God.

Outside theological circles, the famed scientist Albert Einstein recorded these observations about the nature of racism in the United States in 1944. Einstein condemned racism and explained that racism is rooted in learned behavior or traditions. Einstein, known for his intelligence, concluded that intellect was not enough to overcome racial differences. “Aristotle, one of the great Greek philosophers, declared slaves inferior beings who were justly subdued and deprived of their liberty. [Aristotle] was enmeshed in a traditional prejudice from which, despite his extraordinary intellect, he could not free himself.”⁵² Einstein went on to describe that prejudice is conditioned within the thoughts and opinions of humanity. He believed that children learn “unconsciously” from their environment. And went on to say, “I believe that whoever tries to think things through honestly will soon recognize how unworthy and even fatal is the traditional bias against Negroes.” There was no clear agreement theologically with Niebuhr, nor was there a clear intellectual alignment with Einstein.

⁵⁰ Saad, *Me and White Supremacy*, 12.

⁵¹ DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 33.

⁵² Albert Einstein, *Out of My Later Years* (Secaucus, NJ: The Citadel Press, 1979), 133.

Nazarene theologian J. Kenneth Grider weighed in on racism in the late twentieth century. Consistent with Einstein's position, he saw prejudice as learned and expanded on how the experience of entire sanctification fits into the conversation. Grider sub-titled a book section, *The Human and Its Aberrations*, where he explored the theology of a sanctified heart with the Holy Spirit and sought to clarify the teachings of prejudice. Grider taught that the heart might be free from sin but not from prejudice. Freedom from prejudice, Grider contended, must be unlearned. The example given by Grider was Peter. "If Peter's Pentecost did not rout his prejudice against Gentiles, . . . we may suppose that our Pentecost will not nullify such matters either."⁵³ If Grider's assertion is correct, then a pure heart becomes holy instantaneously in Acts 2, but prejudice may remain. Acts 2 records the Church's birth on the day of Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit caused non-Hebrew speakers to speak in tongues in the temple court. God poured out the Holy Spirit upon the nations. But Peter did not accept the Gentiles until his Acts 10 experience. Peter was prejudiced toward the Gentiles until he received a vision to see non-Jewish people as God sees them. In comparing race relations found in Acts 2 and Acts 10, people can only change their hearts toward race relations as God gives them revelation. Twenty-first-century believers can embrace Peter's example in Acts 10 with a fresh vision of seeing the dispossessed in American culture.

Church of the Nazarene *Manual* Survey

The Church of the Nazarene is a holiness denomination with core values to be Christian, missional, and holiness. With a humble beginning in 1907-1908, the denomination is more than a century old and is recognized as the largest Wesleyan-holiness denomination in the world. The

⁵³ J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994), 414.

Nazarene's objective throughout its history has focused its teaching on holiness evangelism, missional outreach, discipleship, and church planting. With the biblical mandates of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37), the denomination has remained faithful to the message of holiness as its primary focus.

The primary mechanism used to teach the doctrines, beliefs, and polity of the Church of the Nazarene is its *Manual*, the denomination's book of order. The *Manual* is used to guide the movement's members through its articles of faith and offers guidance for holy living. The *Manual* provides a way for the church to reflect on how it sees itself as a witness and participant of culture. Today, the Church of the Nazarene is global, with voices and delegates worldwide. Every four years, delegates from approximately one hundred seventy countries gather to update how the movement responds to culture. The *Manual* provides a way for its members to give witness to society through lifestyle, conduct, character, and ethical behavior.

The *Manual* has consistently upheld the principle of holiness of heart and life without attempting to address every social concern individually. P. F. Bresee, the first General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, wrote an article entitled, *Why Have a Nazarene Church?* that demonstrated Bresee's desire to avoid side issues. "The Church of the Nazarene has set its face towards the north star of perfect love and will not swerve to the right or to the left. Side issues are no part of her plan or teaching, but the glorious, cleansing power of the blood of Jesus to purify from all sin and the everpresent Holy Ghost to sanctify and anoint for his own glory."⁵⁴ The church has remained on course from Bresee's statement. The Church of the Nazarene has expressed social concern in various ways throughout its history, but biblical justice

⁵⁴ P. F. Bresee, "Why Have a Nazarene Church?" *Nazarene Messenger Magazine*, August 18, 1904, 6-7. <https://nubo.nazarene.org/index.php/s/ggYPW7dFmty8d?path=%2F>

has never been its primary theme. Instead, there is ample demonstration that the church's main concern rests upon an individualist experience through piety, service, and love. An individual's holy experience is vital to faith formation, and statements recognizing and contending with racial disparities have not been denominational priorities.

The church has “taken positions” on race relations and human rights, as noted in the 1956 *Manual* through the 2023 *Manual*, but stating a position is not the same as advocacy. A case could be made that the teachings of racism have been what Bresee called a “side issue,” while the denomination's main objective has been and continues to be a pursuit of evangelism and perfect love. The Church of the Nazarene has gone on record and voiced its concerns through *Manual* statements and established positions that reflect culture. The *Manual* survey that follows identifies how attitudes toward US culture are often mirrored in the Appendixes.

In 1928 the church encouraged its members to support the Eighteenth Amendment aligning with the legislation that prohibited alcohol use and discouraged “corruption in politics in general.”⁵⁵

In 1936, the church declared that Communism was a menace to society and the US government under FDR encouraged patriotism: “patriotism in this age when the foundations of human society and government are seriously threatened by the forces of atheistic political radicalism.”⁵⁶ This *Manual* statement was provided during the economic crisis of the Great Depression that began in 1929. While searching for cohesive solutions to its economic

⁵⁵ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual of the History, Doctrine, Government, and Rituals of the Church of the Nazarene 1928* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1928), 249.

⁵⁶ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: History, Constitution, Government, Ritual 1936* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1936), 276.

challenges, some US citizens asserted that Communism presented an alternative ideology to Capitalism. The church of the Nazarene went on record and encouraged patriotism as a social response to growing concerns about the radical ideologies of Communism.

The 1956 Manual was the first document where Nazarenes provided a formal statement about race. The 1956 General Assembly offered a historic *Manual* Statement on Racial Discrimination two years after the *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The statement was the first of its kind for the fifty-year-old denomination. In 1956, the winds of change shaped the landscape of social prejudice and integration in the US and the global outlook. §2 aligns the holy expression of perfect love with “personal attitudes and actions toward other races . . . in achieving the Christian goal of full participation by all in the life of the community.” The *Manual* applied to horrific practices during the Holocaust of European Jews during World War II and apartheid in South Africa.

The 1964 *Manual* statement of race and discrimination policy was broadened to include language about voting and equal access to public space.

We urge our churches everywhere to continue and strengthen programs of education to promote racial understanding and harmony. We also feel that the scriptural admonition, “Follow peace with all men” (Hebrews 12:14), should guide the actions of our people lest racial prejudices be intensified and by “sowing to the wind” we “reap a whirlwind” of bitterness, hatred, social disorder, and lawlessness.

We also wish to state once again our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for all right living. We believe the real solution for misunderstanding between racial groups will come when the hearts of men have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ and that the crux of true religion consists in living God with one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one’s neighbor as himself.”⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: History, Constitution, Government, Ritual* 1964 (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1964), 346-347.

The *Manual* statements reflected the language of the US's 1964 Civil Rights Act, and Nazarenes added scripture to support its position that church members should follow the new US law enacted by Congress.

From 1980 to 2023, *Manual* teaching on discrimination and race was expanded and revised. The position of the 1980 *Manual* includes compassion for men of all races, as God was the Creator of men. The edits of this *Manual* revision contain equality language adopted in 1964 and states that love between racial groups will come when people completely submit to Jesus. Notice again the historical theme of Nazarenes asserting that the experience of the holiness of heart and life will impact behavior.

We emphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We believe that Christian charity between racial groups will come when the hearts of men have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ, and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself.⁵⁸

Mutual respect and understanding are the desire of every culture, but in 1980, the year Nazarenes adopted internationalization as their program going forward, the aim was to unify the nations with one standard.

The teaching on discrimination was expanded even more in the 2017 *Manual*. The teaching included strong statements encouraging creative forgiveness, reconciliation, and action opportunities. After establishing a foundation with teachings from 1956, 1964, and 1980 *Manuals*, an additional paragraph was included in 2017 that introduced the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation.

⁵⁸ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: History, Constitution, Government, Ritual 1980* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1980), 342.

Further, we acknowledge that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and overcome all personal, institutional and structural prejudice responsible for race and ethnic humiliation and oppression. We call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized.⁵⁹

A much-needed section, “Affirmation and Declaration of Human Freedom,” was added in the appendix encouraging Nazarenes to call for restoration. It promoted freedom for “the marginalized, oppressed, broken and hurting, and justice to right injustices and cease selfish influence by sin until all things are restored in God’s reign.”⁶⁰ It is a lengthy, detailed statement that outlined the church's position and affirms the commitment to voicing and responding to injustice globally. Based upon the position statements of the 2017 General Assembly, the denomination had an opportunity to make a statement against hate crime and stand in solidarity with Black Americans who have historically been oppressed.

There was no denominational statement or press release that expressed outrage at the death of George Floyd or Breonna Taylor in 2020. Although *Manual* statements were published, no resources were available to guide the church in the USA/Canada Region. While the world protested the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd local church pastors in the USA/Canada Region were not coached on how to respond. Without resources, local pastors remain unequipped to speak out about injustice, while social media and 24-hour news programs provide teaching that is against principles set forth in the *Manual*.

⁵⁹ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: History, Constitution, Government, Sacraments and Rituals 2017-2021* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017), 392-393.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 395.

Social media captures the attention of its audience – including some of the godliest people in our churches. They are the ones who tithe, carry Bibles and pray. Social media leaves these good people misled, on edge, upset, and disillusioned with culture and suspicious of race-related conversations. In an interview conversation with the author, James Heyward, pastor of Fredericksburg, Virginia, made these cautionary remarks:

There's a price to be paid. And even more so now than in 2020. There's a price to be paid for addressing issues of race. I believe we have great General Superintendents, and I believe at the end of the day, the bottom line is if we address this issue, or we are going to lose our older White folks who do ministry and give most of our support. You always have to count the cost. The Salvation Army from my perspective . . . took the risk, and they got burned. And they had to decide: Do we stand our ground and lose the money we collect to give to hurting people, or do we get the money? That's the choice you have to make [in the Church of the Nazarene]. And I believe our Generals and District Superintendents are in a very difficult situation.⁶¹

While the Church of the Nazarene was silent by not providing resources, sister denominations provided printed resources, podcasts, and web magazines. The voices from those groups that share similar understandings of holiness allowed their young Black leaders to guide their adherents in the US context. When there was a need for direction, silence from leaders in the USA/Canada Region demonstrated complicity with systemic racism.

The Church of the Nazarene positioned itself as a “global” or “international” church in 1980. Since then, the Manual's language was written so that its policies and positions could be adapted to global cultures. Globalization made the mirroring of a specific culture more difficult for the church.

⁶¹ James Heyward, pastor, interviewed by author on Zoom on January 23, 2025. Full transcript is located in the artifact.

In 2017 no US legislation sparked the update in the *Manual*. However, leading up to the 2017 General Assembly, there was more attention to violence against unarmed Black US citizens. Trayvon Martin was killed in February 2012, and the person who killed him, George Zimmerman, was acquitted in 2013. In response, the Black Lives Matter movement was born as a modern civil rights movement. Black Lives Matter awareness was global. In the meantime, the number of unarmed individuals assaulted by police grew throughout the US. Eric Garner died in July 2014. Michael Brown died in August 2014. Brown's death triggered a Ferguson, Missouri riot. Laquan McDonald died in October 2014. In 2015, the deaths of young unarmed Black men who were killed by police included Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, and Jamar Clark. Then, in 2016, the death of unarmed Black men included Alton Sterling and Philando Castile.⁶²

Perfect love allows leaders in a conservative church to speak for the worth and dignity of individuals globally. If a person has perfect love in their heart, Nazarenes can voice their concern and condemn the lynchings of hundreds of Black men the Jim Crow era. Nazarenes can protest the injustice of the brutal death of Emmitt Till in 1955. Nazarenes can have a blessing of perfect love in their souls but at what point shall those who are filled with holy love speak when there is injustice? At what point does the *Manual* statement regarding “personal attitudes and actions toward other races . . .” become so important that holy living means that we are to speak up and address social injustice as instructed in Isaiah and Micah?

⁶ “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see

⁶² “From Eric Garner to George Floyd: Recent U.S. Police Killings of Black People” (Ottawa: Ontario CA: CBC Ottawa Production Centre, June 01, 2020), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/police-killings-recent-history-george-floyd-1.5593768>

the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? (Isaiah 58:6–7 NIV)

⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8 NIV)

Engagement with the Black Strategic Readiness Team

The Board of General Superintendents (BGS) appointed a Black Strategic Readiness Team (BSRT) to offer guidance for the USA/Canada Region. Nazarene history shows the BSRT has operated under various names since 1968. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the BSRT put together a two-page document offering suggestions to the denomination, including a request for equity and inclusion throughout Nazarene institutions. Specifically, the BSRT offered race-related suggestions for the BGS, USA/Canada districts, local churches, and pastors. The aftermath of George Floyd’s murder brought about the following statement: “In light of recent events in the USA and other parts of the world, the BSRT is renewing its mandate to help guide the church to take actions that will strengthen our fellowship and witness. The BGS joins with the BSRT in this prophetic call to action.”⁶³ A complete prophetic report of the BSRT is located in Appendix 2.

Unfortunately, the “form” of a committee did not follow through with its “function.” The BSRT committee was established to guide the church's response to racism. The documents produced by the committee offered candid reflections and were highly supportive of the denomination. The structure was present; however, the function of the BSRT was not widely

⁶³ USA/Canada Region, Church of the Nazarene, *Engagement with the Black Strategic Readiness Team*. Lenexa, KS: Nazarene Resources, July 2, 2020. <https://resources.nazarene.org/index.php/s/MbZasZ54rJsTBc2>

implemented. In a conversation with the author on February 3, 2025, David Solomon had this to say about his involvement with the BSRT in preparing a position paper after Floyd's death.

The BSRT got together, and we drafted a statement. Hodgson was the USA/Canada Region Director of Multicultural Ministries. Roberto got involved and the position paper was distributed. There was some blowback and pushback. The statement had to be recalled to make it a little more *palatable*. We were told it was recalled for 'easier-reading purposes.' I have no problem with that. We're not an island by ourselves; the parts are not greater than the whole. I understand that clearly. But there has to be that statement that Dr. Tillman [BSRT Director] is going to put out along with his team, and it is valid. A position statement must be strong but not so strong that it is going to hurt the church. But I think a strong statement will enhance the church when it comes to race relations with our White pastors or Black pastors. So once it's watered down, then it just changes the whole intention of the whole thing, and that's frustrating. It is especially frustrating to this new generation of Black pastors.⁶⁴

While the BSRT was asked to guide to the USA/Canada Region's race crisis, one forty-eight-hour meeting did not fill the void of silence that committee members have experienced in their own denomination. The document created by the BSRT is difficult to locate. The work of the BSRT is not listed in the list of documents endorsed by the BGS website, nor is it easily located on the USA/Canada Region's website. The entire document is presently hosted on the denomination's Facebook account. This form of communication is problematic because it is a lesser-known communication platform of the denomination.

Summary

Racism is layered, and the response of Nazarenes to evangelize African Americans also has a variety of layers. Nazarenes cannot escape the fact that the denomination was born in the Jim Crow culture, when segregation was widely practiced in the American North and South. As the Church of the Nazarene came together, the holiness points of origin included New England,

⁶⁴ David Solomon, pastor. Interview by author, Zoom call, February 3, 2025.

Middle Atlantic states, Southeast and Southwest states, and the Pacific coast. When the denomination was formed, racism was prevalent everywhere. Within this social context, the denomination started as “a marriage.” From its inception, the denomination has embraced the beauty of holiness and love. Nazarenes have always placed an emphasis on evangelism, education, and missions. Although attempts were made to evangelize African Americans as a mission field in the US, the denomination experienced success by evangelizing cross-cultural people outside the US.

The *Manual* cannot, nor has it attempted to remove layers of racism by decree. The “form” which is the *Manual*, as well as the BSRT report, has not brought about the “function” of healing systemic racism. The Church of the Nazarene’s core teaching of evangelism and perfect love have not connected with layers of generational trauma the culture has allowed on the African American community. The denomination has not embraced the labor of love necessary to build bridges and address racial disparities. Nazarene race relations must become more than a personal experience of perfect love in heart and discover its voice for biblical justice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review explores how the experience of perfect love can be defined and applied to the practice of perfect love in race relations. The Church of the Nazarene has fallen short in race-related teaching and practice. The topics include racialized trauma that exposes a culture that keeps African Americans at the “low rung” of the social ladder. The Christ and Culture section shows the denomination’s awkwardness and weakness in establishing Black Nazarene Churches beginning in the 1940s in a broad social context rife with structural racism. The structures of the denomination are rooted in US individualistic culture. Perfect love is experienced individually, but as a White-majority denomination developed with race relations, there appears to be evidence of isolation and White supremacy, white privilege, systemic racism, and individualism.

The literature review follows threads of Nazarene race relations in the broader USA/Canada Region's history. Its history has been and continues to be influenced by Western culture. The fabric has been threadbare. Very few authors have taken the time to study and write about race relations in the Nazarene movement. The absence and silence in teaching lead to a void of information and detail. Good-hearted Nazarenes have been led to believe that perfect love, when properly understood and applied, will end racism. The literature review paints a different story.

Racial Trauma

Andrea Saccoccio said that “behavior patterns associated with racism in America are essentially trauma behaviors, a persistent cycle of personal and cultural responses of harm and

shame for both the perpetrators and victims of its violence. This cycle cannot be broken without addressing racism in its most basic form: trauma.”⁶⁵ Experiences of racialized trauma in the US can be traced from slavery, through the Jim Crow period, and to today. Joy DeGruy’s writing described the loss of hope within slave families. The physical abuse that took place was brutal, and the psychological abuse ran deeper and longer than anyone could imagine. If the slaves were bought, sold, and treated like livestock, then the hope of a loving family was not at all possible for a person enslaved or a person born in slavery. DeGruy suggested that trauma is transmitted through generations from how we learn to raise our children.”⁶⁶ DeGruy provides a social framework that contextualizes the experiences of millions of African Americans.

The Church of the Nazarene needs awareness of generational trauma to equip its churches to make a significant impact on a people it has never properly understood. The disconnect could be seen as latitudinal circles on a globe that never intersect. While the Church advocates for a doctrine of perfect love, it is imperative to acknowledge that African Americans require cultural understanding, which encompasses their historical trauma.

DeGruy makes a sociological application for African Americans in the twenty-first century by illustrating that children learn from their parents. There are structures of love, boundaries, consequences, laughter, education, and nurture. However, if addressing children's survival needs becomes all-encompassing while neglecting their basic needs, trauma can often result in dysfunctional behaviors. If the slave family of origin was damaged through physical and

⁶⁵ Andrea Saccoccio, “Changing the Story of White Supremacy in the Church: Towards a Trauma-Informed Model of Racial Reconciliation” (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2021), 7, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/405/>

⁶⁶ Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Portland, OR: Joy DeGruy Publications, 2017), 102.

psychological abuses, the foundation of the family born in slavery would experience trauma. The outcome of historical racial trauma impacts future encounters. If not healed, racialized trauma will continue to impact future generations. It is essential to find ways to partner with trauma healing in the African American community.

The literature that describes how generational trauma is transmitted is vast. DeGruy, who is mentioned above, followed the pathway of generational trauma transmitted through genetics (DNA). At the same time, Michelle Alexander examined how racism is integrated into various aspects of US laws, immigration policies, housing, healthcare, education, and mass incarceration. Alexander explained that the US has created a modern-day caste system in the twenty-first century.⁶⁷ Through centuries of oppression placed upon the backs of African Americans, laws were (and are) written to keep those on the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder oppressed, incarcerated, and blocked from access. This truth-telling establishes a narrative that the US needs to hear with their ears, see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts. The US needs to turn (repent) and seek forgiveness for its long history of complicity with racism.

The work before the US as a nation and even in evangelical circles is arduous. Ibram X. Kendi discussed policy, structures, and systems. He encourages Americans to consider refreshed terminology, revised narratives, and a new way of thinking. “As long as the mind thinks there is something behaviorally wrong with a racial group, the mind can never be antiracist. As long as the mind oppresses the oppressed by thinking their oppressive environment has led to inferior behaviors, the mind can never be antiracist. As long as the mind is racist, the mind can never be

⁶⁷ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2020), 19-23.

free.”⁶⁸ The contribution Kendi makes to the discussion of race is profound. His work helped influence the Salvation Army’s resource, “Let’s Talk About . . . Racism,” and he examined what racism truly is.

There are resources available to encourage race-related conversations. Discussion prompts are included in works by Morrison,⁶⁹ McNeil,⁷⁰ Bowen & Edwards,⁷¹ and a workbook by DeGruy.⁷² Menakem appeared to decline participation in such discussion prompts and instead offered therapy guides for both victims and perpetrators. With Menakem, White Americans inflicted pain upon African Americans for centuries; therefore, to ask African Americans for coaching and direction was outrageous! “Americans have lived under a strange and contradictory delusion: Black bodies are incredibly strong and frightening and impervious to pain. . . . But White bodies are extremely weak and vulnerable, especially to Black bodies. So, it’s the job of Black bodies to care for White bodies, soothe them and protect them.”⁷³ Menakem saw that requesting help/coaching for healing was comparable to asking the oppressed to heal the oppressor. As African Americans gather and hold Black conferences at the request of the Board

⁶⁸ Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, 116.

⁶⁹ Latasha Morrison, *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2019), 15-208.

⁷⁰ Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2020), 23-130.

⁷¹ Lisa M. Bowens & Dennis R. Edwards, editors, *Do Black Lives Matter?: How Christian Scriptures Speak to Black Empowerment* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023), 3-214.

⁷² Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing, The Study Guide* (Portland, OR: Joy DeGruy Publications, Inc., 2009), 4-43.

⁷³ Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 98.

of General Superintendents and the USA/Canada Region, White leaders must converse with African American leaders.

Those in power must engage in racialized healing because the virus of systemic racism keeps White Americans on pathways of avoidance but rarely on the roadway of reconciliation. “Racism never goes away; it adapts.”⁷⁴ Like a virus that mutates and adjusts each new year, racism continues to keep African Americans at the lowest rung of the social ladder of progress.

Christ and Culture

History teaches that change comes slowly with race relations in the US. Solutions are not as instant as a drive-up window at a fast-food restaurant. We cannot order up change to generational effects of hope destroyed and opportunities denied. There is a role for the church to bring healing through expressions of grace in the name of Jesus through His Church. J. Deotis Roberts states that the best avenue for elevating African Americans in an oppressed society is the Church. The Church carries a message layered with hope, optimism, and structure. The life of the historical and liberating Jesus is foundational. “We seek a Christ above culture who is at the same time at work in culture and history for redemptive ends – setting free the whole person, mind, soul and body.”⁷⁵ This good news of Jesus reaches the nations but also (ideally) transforms communities to wholeness. When the human rights of individuals are oppressed, that oppression spills over into economic, education, and housing/community access. The impact of community suffering includes health outcomes and services. If services and rights are to be restored, structures and opportunities must be in place to heal the communities that experience oppression.

⁷⁴ Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 155.

⁷⁵ J. Deotis Roberts, *A Black Political Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974), 119.

For Roberts, the application of Jesus Christ awakens us all to dream and hope for cultural transformation. Jesus is the “Messiah-Savior . . . (who) is part of the liberation struggle of the oppressed.”⁷⁶

In this author’s local church context, struggles of poverty are witnessed weekly. It appears that systemic racism has held most Black families in a system where class change comes slowly. Hope is based upon a Savior who weeps with those who weep and understands individuals, families, communities, and nations. Jesus is the God of the oppressed and disinherited. In this author’s context, the local church remains only one small thread of the mosaic of a Church of the Nazarene serving one local community. While there are cultural challenges in leading a multicultural church, the goal remains elusive: to have the congregation's demographics reflect the community.

In the last decade, the USA/Canada Region has declined. The attendance of Black churches has dropped by 53%, and the attendance of Multicultural churches has fallen by 39%. In 2023, Nazarene Research reported that the average worship attendance of Black churches in the US was 4,046 (down from 8,645 in 2013). The worship attendance of Multicultural churches stood at 8,335 (down from 13,575 in 2013).⁷⁷ This attendance report illustrates the seriousness of the need to communicate and strengthen the connection with African Americans in the USA/Canada Region. Based upon the USA/Canada Region’s report, only ninety-five (95) Black congregations are in the region.

⁷⁶ Ibid: 124.

⁷⁷ “Cultural Groups Report – USA/Canada Region” (Lenexa, KS: Church of the Nazarene Research Center, 2023), https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fusacanadaregion.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2024-02%2FCulturalGroupReports_2013-2023.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

Winstead identifies Nazarene “structures” as to the reason for slow and declining growth among Black congregations in the US. There is no record of adjusting the polity of the Church of the Nazarene to be more inclusive. Instead, Black churches and Black leaders were invited to become integrated into an existing structure where the White majority was in power. Winstead’s description is one of structural racism, in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work to reinforce and perpetuate racial group inequality.⁷⁸

To reverse structural racism within the institution, Nazarenes should discover and celebrate the value the African American community brings to the organization. It is essential for the USA/Canada Region to design ways be more inclusive. Foundational themes of evangelism and individual piety were pillars of the Nazarene message throughout its history, but Winstead stated that lack of inclusion through policies hampered the growth of African American churches.

History teaches that initiatives and changes take time. The US Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. But it took time for the country to follow that ruling. Busing was eventually mandated in the early 1970s. The US Supreme Court ruled in 1971 that mandatory bussing was a law to be implemented. The rule was swiftly applied to North Carolina but then had greater implications throughout the US.⁷⁹ This seventeen-year observation underscores that change in racial attitudes comes slowly. The law was passed in 1954, and integration in some public schools did not occur

⁷⁸ Parke. “Undoing Racism-By Design.”

⁷⁹ (*Encyclopedia Britannica* "busing") <https://www.britannica.com/topic/busing>

until 1971. The Church of the Nazarene, reflecting broader societal changes, gradually adjusted its views on race in line with shifts in US cultural attitudes.

Cultural attitudes are difficult to pinpoint; however, in 1964, Nazarene Sociologist F. O. Parr published a limited publication book documenting the racial attitudes of Nazarenes in the Midwest. Parr asserted in *Perfect Love and Race Hatred* there are two main reasons people avoid the topic of race in preaching and teaching. First, a fear of hurting someone's feelings may cause conflict. "Many who are not strongly prejudiced and fervently love the lost of all races remain silent."⁸⁰ Second, people have mistaken ideas taught to them and struggle to change.⁸¹ Parr provided some interesting assumptions about free will and the sinful nature.

Prejudice is an internal part of the person's whole being . . . The prejudiced person knows the facts that substantiate his conclusions. They are also integrated with his sin nature. The carnal minded man, believing his own security is threatened by another race, reacts with hatred and aggressive, exploitative behavior toward members of that race. Prejudice is also part of our emotional conditioning.⁸²

The writings of Parr and theologian J. Kenneth Grider agree that prejudice is learned behavior and not innate. Parr states that parents and peer groups are the teachers and shape the emotions of others. Parr also asserts that "feelings of inferiority or superiority become a part of and distinct from our intellectual options and apart from the particular spiritual condition we may happen to be in. . . hate goes out when perfect love comes in, but fears and other emotions remain."⁸³ By teasing apart the components of prejudice, whether prejudice is a part of the sinful nature, one

⁸⁰ Parr, *Perfect Love and Race Hatred*, 2-3.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 19.

⁸³ Ibid., 29.

can better understand how the experience and expectation of what perfect love can do in one's life.

In the mid-1960s, prejudice was considered to be amoral. Parr sets forth that prejudice becomes a moral matter when the light of understanding is shed upon people who display racial disparities. General Superintendent G. B. Williamson, a contemporary of Parr, said that "the character of the individual and his response to the light he has received are the criteria of judgment."⁸⁴ Williamson was reflective as he coached the church on how to respond to racial matters in the mid-60s. Williamson's remarks are important because it is one of the few times that any General Superintendent gave specific remarks about race relations to the church body. His remarks are also echoed in the teaching of the 1964 *Manual*. "People of all races have capacity for progress . . . any person may lawfully live, lodge, eat, travel, and do business according to the state of his prosperity. . . He shall not be excluded by law or practice from school, church, place or privilege because of his color or race or position or previous servitude."⁸⁵ Williamson's remarks clearly illustrate the mindset of leadership was to guide the cultural understanding of race. In the article the General Superintendent stated that the position of race where "the moral obligations involved are such that personal responsibility is inescapable."⁸⁶ Although Williamson did not mention the word prejudice, the content of his teaching dismissed the idea that the White church was superior to any other race and that White privilege should not be part of our position. However, Williamson overlooked in his article

⁸⁴ G. B. Williamson. "Meritocracy" *Herald of Holiness*, July 1964, <https://jstor.org/stable/community.37314860>

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

entitled “Meritocracy” that merit has its privileges. He ignored the weight of poverty that many minorities are born into or a lifetime of trauma that is beyond their control. Meritocracy puts the focus of success upon an individual, and bootstrap mentality begins to emerge with priorities and talent rooted in Capitalism.

White Privilege

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan friar, wrote a powerful description of White privilege:

White privilege is largely hidden from our eyes if we are White. Why? Because it is structural instead of psychological, and we tend to interpret most things in personal, individual, and psychological ways. Since we do not consciously have racist attitudes or overt racist behavior, we kindly judge ourselves to be open minded, egalitarian, "liberal", and therefore surely not racist. Because we have never been on the other side, we largely do not recognize the structural access, the trust we think we deserve, the assumption that we always belong and do not have to earn our belonging, the "we set the tone" mood that we White folks live inside of--and take totally for granted and even naturally deserved. Only the outsider can spot all these attitudes in us. It is especially hidden in countries and all groupings where White people are the majority.⁸⁷

In the above paragraph, Rohr describes some of the challenges and complexities of racism.

Attitudes run deep when it comes to White privilege. These attitudes are not easily recognizable; once they are seen, they are not quickly confessed. Ken Wytma states in his book *The Myth of Equality* that “Everyone wants to think they have a good understanding of race. We often treat it like a yes or no category. Are you a racist? No. Therefore, are you good with race? Yes. The problem is, it’s *not* a yes-or-no category but something with a hundred layers of nuance.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Romal J. Tune, “Richard Rohr on White Privilege,” *Sojourners* (January 19, 2016), <https://sojo.net/articles/richard-rohr-white-privilege>

⁸⁸ Wytma, *The Myth of Equality*, 132.

The nuance mentioned above was described by Nazarene author Ivan Beals in his book, *Our Racist Legacy*. Beals pulled back the layers of history to reveal the patterns of past traditions informing the *status quo*.

Present customs of American race relations show the tragedies of chattel slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction, segregation and paternalism. Though people try to erase their memories and build a new base for the community, the past haunts them. Our racial history sets a pattern of relations between Blacks and Whites. What some call paternalism, the *status quo* presumes, and by long usage it seems right and good.⁸⁹

Beals links the history of chattel slavery to racism in the 1990s. The strength of his book was to recognize that historically the church has played a role in racism. He prophetically warns the evangelical church that she will be held accountable. “The reluctance of the Church to face up to racial problems presents a troublesome repetition of history . . . churches remain accountable for their role in allowing such problems to go unchecked, for giving silent support to racism.”⁹⁰ Later, Beals offers an optimistic hope for the church in America along with a vision that the church “in true Christian ministry is the only American institution that can heal racism. Conflicts will not be won in the courtroom or by decrees of the Supreme Court. Racism will not be legislated away by Congress or be eliminated by forced school integration or subsidized housing. The conflicts of racial color will not fade away.”⁹¹

When Beals’ book was published in 1997, the Promise Keepers movement was filling stadiums throughout the US and challenging men of all denominations to repent and become committed to the Lord, their families, and their churches and seek reconciliation with Black and

⁸⁹ Ivan A. Beals, *Our Racist Legacy: Will the Church Resolve the Conflict?* (Notre Dame, IN: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc., 1997), 171.

⁹⁰ Ibid. XIV.

⁹¹ Ibid. 177.

Brown men in their communities. The Promise Keeper's challenge was bold, honest, and powerful. It should also be recognized that in 1995, the Southern Baptist Convention offered a public apology for its role in historical racism. In an interview with National Public Radio, former head of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Richard Land explained the statement to interviewer Jennifer Ludden:

Land: Well, it says that slavery played a role in the formation of the convention and that too often we had not acted to promote racial equality, and we apologize for that. We lament that. We grieve over that, and we repent of it and we ask for the forgiveness of our African American brothers and sisters.

Ludden: The plea also asked forgiveness for Southern Baptists having failed to support the civil rights movement.⁹²

Apologies are important. Though sometimes misconstrued apologies and confession bring healing. On the other hand, silence on systemic issues implies no harm has been done or time will heal. It took the Southern Baptist Convention 150 years to extend an apology that covered not only slavery but also included its behaviors during the Civil Rights era in the 1960s. For the Church of the Nazarene, an apology was extended by one General Superintendent but not embraced by the Board of General Superintendents.

A Narrative: the USA/Canada Region attempts to address racial values

There were tensions in the Church of the Nazarene addressing racial attitudes and difficulty in creating racial conversations. Teaching about racism and prejudice emerged in the early twenty-first century in the Church of the Nazarene. Tom Nees, Regional Director for USA/Canada Region from 2003-2008, stated in a recorded interview. "Racism must be called sin

⁹² NPR, "Southern Baptists Apologize For Slavery Stance" (August 28, 2009), <https://www.npr.org/2009/08/28/112329862/southern-baptists-apologize-for-slavery-stance>

that requires forgiveness and repentance. Prejudice must be questioned and shown to be false. And persons who are members of the majority and the minority must be taught to accept, celebrate, and express agape love in spite of the differences in our backgrounds.”⁹³ Nees knew there were very few documents, articles, sermons, and theological positions for the denomination. Nees understood that while the Southern Baptist Denomination issued an apology for systemic racism, the Church of the Nazarene remained silent. As USA/Canada Regional Director, Nees authorized free printed literature to help change the conversation about racism. Included in one of his books was an excerpt from General Superintendent Paul Cunningham:

. . . we must remember as we work together in celebrating our diversity that discrimination, prejudice, domination may be sin issues. It’s a sin issue. . . . I believe cultural diversity is providing us with one of the greatest opportunities the church has ever had because we have the message that enables us to live together . . . You can’t hate somebody and have holiness of heart and life. You can’t be discriminating against somebody if you have holiness of heart and life.⁹⁴

Early in the twenty-first century, Nazarene theologian Roger Hahn agreed with Cunningham's message and suggested a solution where the person whose heart is sanctified might need a process where new light might be shed upon areas of prejudice and sin:

To change our perspective, or maybe I should say *assumptions*, we need a process to develop an awareness that even though holiness of heart instantaneously addresses my wholehearted commitment to Christ, there will arise now and again moments of awareness of new areas of need.⁹⁵ . . . we need to strengthen and embrace both entire sanctification as a crisis experience and the growth that follows. For many, the crisis experience doesn’t deal with racism. Often the seeker for holiness is not aware of racism.⁹⁶

⁹³ Neil B. Wiseman, ed., *And Now Next Door and Down the Freeway, Developing A Missional Strategy for USA/Canada* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2001), 74-75.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 75-76.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 76.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 77.

Another church leader committed to teaching the dangers of racism was General Superintendent Jerry Porter. Porter's theological lesson was one of confession. He literally confessed the sin of racism at a national conference held in Oklahoma. This is part of his story:

. . . after hearing several Black Nazarene ministers speak of the pain and frustrations they experienced serving as minority leaders in our fellowship, I felt compelled to ask them to forgive the White race and to forgive their church for these offenses. On my knees I asked Native American Johnny Nells to please forgive my race for all the broken promises and treaties, for the Trail of Tears, and for the present insensitivity to the plight of the nations he represents. I bowed at Roger Bowman's feet asking him to forgive me on behalf of my ancestors who participated in the African American slave trade in order to create an economic system that would benefit the White race while denying that the African Americans even had souls. . . I asked these Nazarene church leaders to forgive our church for our insensitivity that forced them to "act, talk, and even think *White* in order to survive and minister in the ranks of the Church of the Nazarene."⁹⁷

Porter's 1998 apology in Oklahoma was the first public apology made by a denominational leader for systemic racism. As a General Superintendent, Jerry Porter was a bold, prophetic voice, but to the disappointment of many, his colleagues serving on the Board of General Superintendents did not endorse his apology. Porter's apology was viewed as an apology of a General Superintendent, not by the BGS, his colleagues did not follow his example.

In an email correspondence, Dr. Porter was asked to reflect upon his inspiring apology in Oklahoma. "Believers who suffer from racism are not guilty of such until they realize their racial prejudice and choose to do nothing about it. Our denomination suffers from systemic racism. Some have not fully understood the reality of our racism while others have seen it and are guilty of not addressing it."⁹⁸ Porter's apology resonated with many people. It was an emotional time of weeping and shouts of praise could be heard. Rev. Belinda Robinson, an African American

⁹⁷ Ibid. 84-85.

⁹⁸ Jerry Porter, email to Michael Stipp, Normal, IL, September 13, 2022.

lead pastor in Michigan, remembered her response to Porter's apology: "I was there. It brought tears to my eyes. I have never witnessed an apology like that before in my life. Honestly, his words are why I am a Nazarene today."⁹⁹ Racism must become part of a discussion and confession if there is to be lasting healing in the Church of the Nazarene.

Another discussion took place on the campus of Point Loma Nazarene University in 2020. In *Viewpoint* magazine, Jamie Gates, Ph.D., reflected upon his South African upbringing during apartheid. Having seen the effects of deeply institutionalized racism, Gates was moved by the report of General Superintendent Porter's humble apology. While studying in South Africa, Gates was impacted by the humility of a leading officer of the Church of the Nazarene, who apologized and confessed that the Church of the Nazarene had been complicit in racial practices.¹⁰⁰ Porter's apology established a courageous example of humility and captured the imagination of many who longed to experience improvements in race-related conversations.

The church continues to struggle with racism. In its struggle, there have been attempts to build bridges of healing with the Black community. Despite clarifications with *Manual* statements, initiatives to establish Black churches, offering a segregated Black district, providing a Black college, and an apology by a leading General Superintendent, the White culture remains the dominant culture. Until the White culture actively pursues integration, the Church of the Nazarene will likely remain unchanged. In a 2007 doctoral thesis, Todd Renegar states, "When African Americans see that we are interested in their culture, history, and students, they will join

⁹⁹ Belinda Robinson, interview with Michael Stipp, Atlanta, GA, July 12, 2024.

¹⁰⁰ Makayla Renner and Christine Spicer, "Standing Together: Embracing Diversity and Opposing Injustice," *Viewpoint*, (Point Loma, CA: Point Loma Nazarene University, November 11, 2020), <https://viewpoint.pointloma.edu/standing-together-embracing-diversity-and-opposing-injustice/>

us. When they come, they need to find people who understand their history and who will acknowledge it with honesty, courage, and a hope for a better future.”¹⁰¹ What Renegar is challenging Nazarenes to consider is a new pathway of inclusion. Currently, the Church of the Nazarene is in the deep mirey clay of systemic racism.

Making the Case about Systemic Racism

Up to this point, we have touched upon the guidance provided by the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene regarding race. The positions have been amended since the 1950s to align the movement to reflect the cultural norms of the United States. There have been attempts made to heal systemic racism in a piecemeal fashion, with reports receiving little publicity and articles with little traction. The next part of the literature review is a bit more pragmatic. To be clear, no one uses racial slurs in our church culture (locally, district, or regionally); however, there are observations that are difficult to dispute.

In the spring of 2024, a focused gathering through Nazarene Theological Seminary provided an opportunity for candid dialogue about race and race relations. A Zoom session was assigned a breakout leader, and instead of a conference of 100, there was a computer screen of nine people. One of the voices was a Black leader from New York, Dr. Sam Vassel. Vassel was a district superintendent of the Metro New York District and an elected member of the board of trustees for the seminary. “When I was elected to become part of the seminary board of trustees, it was an honor. And some of the board members approached me and said, ‘I am so glad you are on the board. We need more people of color on this board.’ And I looked around, I was not the only person of color on the board of trustees . . . I was the only person of color in the

¹⁰¹ Todd Renegar, “Reconciliation with African American Christians: A Biblical Model for Anglo American Christians in The Church of The Nazarene” (DMin dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2007), 182.

building.”¹⁰² It may be valuable to investigate the racial representation within Nazarene institutions in the US and Canada, including the racial composition of African Americans at the seminary, the Global Ministry Center, the seven Nazarene undergraduate schools in the USA/Canada Region, and Nazarene Bible College. According to Pew Research, African Americans comprise 14.4% of the US population. Vassel posed another question to our Zoom chat, “Why is it that in this country (US), we are not seeing in our large group gatherings African Americans comprising 14% of our group? A person must ask this question: Do I really belong in this denomination?”

That last question by Dr. Vassel, “Do I belong in this denomination?” is a haunting question. That question has to do with the silence that was heard after the question has been asked. One Black leader asked the denomination a question about its bias and/or blindness to its systemic racism.

From 1974 to 1984, this author had no African American teachers in his graduate and undergraduate work. American White or European authors wrote all textbooks. Through those years of higher education, there were only two class sessions where race was discussed. The lack of exposure to discussions about race, exposure to African American theology, and the absence of African American contributors to literature adds to the indifference and underlying complicity of silence in racial matters. Robin DiAngelo describes how fragile and volatile the topic of race can be for White people:

There is no guarantee we will discuss racism . . . when we try to talk openly and honestly about race. White fragility quickly emerges as we are so often met with silence, defensiveness, argumentation, certitude, and other forms of pushback. These are not natural responses; they are social forces that prevent us from attaining the racial

¹⁰² Sam Vassel, “Black and Wesleyan: What Can Greater Inclusion Look Like?” Guest speaker presentation, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO, February 28, 2024.

knowledge we need to engage more productively, and they function powerfully to hold the racial hierarchy in place.¹⁰³

The Church of the Nazarene must recover from its century-old fragilities to enter conversations helping us recognize and address the sin of racism. Prophetic voices are needed in the Church of the Nazarene. Hopefully, new and inspiring resources will be created to assist future conversations along with resources for pastors leading Nazarene congregations.

Henry Mitchell encouraged twenty-first-century Christ followers to emulate the character of those who walked before us. The need for “vision, courage, commitment, and wisdom of our enslaved ancestors . . . and our emancipated ancestors” are key to building a hope-filled future.¹⁰⁴ The conversation of race/racism does not simply need to be laid to rest so we can “move on.” Oppression of African Americans happened on plantations and in Christian churches throughout American history. As the US struggled with its attitudes toward social justice during Jim Crow, those same attitudes were widely accepted in the evangelical churches. How shall we create meaningful and lasting conversations to learn how to embrace Black and Brown sisters and brothers? Perhaps the Lord will raise up prophetic voices to enlighten the hearts and minds of church leaders so that African Americans might take their place in the Church of the Nazarene. The opening verses of Hebrews 12 states:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

¹⁰³ DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 8.

¹⁰⁴ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 181.

The ancestors of African Americans are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses cheering them on. Witnesses' voices encourage their clan to look to Jesus and love and sacrifice like Him. Courage and wisdom are needed for contemplative dialogues that will chart a new pathway for much-needed race-related conversations.

THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALISM IN SYSTEMIC RACISM

Individualism is a form of Western culture and experience. Social psychologist Geert Hofstede asserted that the United States espoused individualism more than any country in the world. Free will and free speech are part of Western culture and experience. What a neighbor does, thinks, and says is nested under a philosophy of shared social equality. Claudia Williamson Kramer states, “Individualism transcends racial identities, fostering attitudes of racial tolerance.”¹⁰⁵ Kramer’s study builds upon the global theory of Geert Hofstede. Hofstede compared international societies and global groups by language and culture. One of the six categories created by sociologist Geert Hofstede is “Individualism vs. Collectivism.” The following diagrams by Chris Drew briefly describe how “individualism culture” differs from “collectivism culture.” The charts below illustrate how Hofstede’s “Individualism and Collectivism” is expressed in US culture.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Claudia Williamson Kramer, “Individualism and Racial Tolerance,” *Public Choice* 197 (July 5, 2023): 347, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11127-023-01079-4>

¹⁰⁶ Chris Drew, “Collectivism vs. Individualism: Similarities and Differences,” *The Helpful Professor* (September 13, 2023), <https://helpfulprofessor.com/collectivism-vs-individualism/>

Strengths of Individualism	Weaknesses of Individualism
Freedom and Autonomy: Individualism promotes personal freedom and autonomy, where individuals are encouraged to pursue their own path in life (Cohen, Wu & Miller, 2016).	Social Isolation: Individualism means that societies tend not to feel the need to look after one another to the same extent as collectivist cultures. This lead to social isolation for vulnerable and marginalized people (Triandis, 2018).
Innovation and Creativity: Individualistic societies tend to embrace and celebrate innovation and creativity. Independent thinking and a unique identity are encouraged (Oyserman et al., 2002).	Inequality: Individualism celebrates success and wealth, but this can also lead to social and economic inequality as it embraces competition and self-interest over collective welfare (Cohen, Wu & Miller, 2016).
Personal Growth and Self-Reliance: Personal achievements tend to be celebrated and encouraged. Individuals are lauded for their achievements and their successes are rewarded (Triandis, 2018).	Lack of Support: In highly individualistic societies, there might be a lack of social support such as a social safety net, universal welfare system, etc. (Oyserman et al., 2002).
Direct Communication: Individualistic cultures tend to be low-context in communication styles, meaning they typically favor direct communication, which tends to be very efficient for productivity and problem-solving in workplace cultures (Cohen, Wu & Miller, 2016).	Potential for Conflict: The emphasis on personal rights and freedoms and less focus on conformity means interpersonal clashes are less taboo (Triandis, 2018).

Strengths of Collectivism	Weaknesses of Collectivism
Group Cohesion and Support: Collectivism has a strong focus on group bonds and mutual support among the group's community members (Triandis, 2018).	Suppression of Individuality: Unfortunately, collectivism tends to suppress expressions of individuality, where it's often frowned upon or seen as abnormal (Cohen, Wu & Miller, 2016).
Collective Welfare: Collective welfare is prioritized highly, and the individual is expected to have a responsibility to the group. This tends to reduce social and economic inequalities (Oyserman et al., 2002).	Resistance to Change: Collectivist societies may be more resistant to change than individualistic societies because change is seen as having the potential to upend the balance of group harmony (Triandis, 2018).
Conflict Avoidance: Collectivist cultures tend to avoid conflict, instead choosing to prioritize the group's harmony. This often leads to non-confrontational conflict resolution strategies and the use of implied disciplinary strategies such as social shaming (Cohen, Wu & Miller, 2016).	Groupthink: When a society highly values consensus, it can fall into groupthink, where people are expected to accept the dominant viewpoint uncritically (Oyserman et al., 2002).
Respect for Traditions: Collectivist cultures have strong respect for their elders and the traditions that have served them well for generations, providing a sense of continuity and predictability (Triandis, 2018).	Pressure to Conform: People in these societies can feel intense pressure to conform, including from their parents, which potentially leads people to feeling lack of personal fulfillment in their lives (Cohen, Wu & Miller, 2016).

Hofstede's research showed that the US, Australia, and Great Britain measured the strongest in Individualism compared to Indonesia, Columbia, and Costa Rica, with the highest societal Collectivism result. One must remember that African Americans comprise only 14% of the US population. As a minority, their voice and influence will not hold sway in measuring racial attitudes of tolerance and intolerance. Tajana K. Graves stated, "People of African descent have a social philosophy that embraces collectivism, while people of European descent have a

social philosophy that embraces individualism.”¹⁰⁷ George Yancey applied Hofstede’s theory to perceived attitudes between the races and stated that individuals perceive economic inequality as problematic before creating a desire to eliminate racial disparities. “If individuals perceive such inequality through a ‘frame’ of pure freewill individualism and believe racial minorities have not been successful because of their own personal failings, then there is not a strong likelihood of seeking racial reform.”¹⁰⁸ To paraphrase Yancey, the “bootstrap” mentality for an individualist culture believes that success and wealth are available to all people in the US if only a minority culture would try harder and pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. The research of Hofstede and others who follow social theory agree that White culture responds to life differently than an African American culture.

Kramer’s work incorporated Hofstede’s theory and offered some encouraging indications. Her work explored cultural norms of racial tolerance empirically. Racial attitudes in a society with a high measure of individualism were linked to racial tolerance.¹⁰⁹ This means the stronger the independent self is in advancing and achieving, the greater the likelihood of tolerance to accepting a neighbor from a different race.

However, there was an “enduring existence of racial intolerance by connecting [her study] to deeply ingrained and persistent cultural values. [Kramer’s study] suggests that

¹⁰⁷ Tajana K. Graves, “Individualism and Collectivism: Well-Being Within the African American Community” (MA thesis, Eastern Kentucky University, 2021), 6.
<https://encompass.eku.edu/do/search/?q=author%3A%22Tajana%20Graves%22&start=0&context=1485146&facet=>

¹⁰⁸ George Yancy, “Reconciliation Theology: How a Christian Ethic Tackles the Problem of Racism” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 32, no.1, (Fall 2002): 94.
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/201313006?fromopenview=true&pqrigsite=gscholar&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>

¹⁰⁹ Kramer, “Individualism and Racial Tolerance” 349.

individualist–collectivist values, which originated in the distant past, continue to impact contemporary social outcomes.”¹¹⁰ In an individualistic society, individuals will take care of themselves. But in a collective society, individuals will care for the strength of groups.¹¹¹

This research highlights that within the context of a denomination primarily led by White leaders in the US, there has historically been an individualist culture prevalent in the White majority church. To paraphrase Hofstede's framework, Nazarene churches and their members are structured to be self-reliant, operate autonomously, and foster an independent personal relationship with the Lord. It may warrant future research to investigate the extent to which the polity of the Church of the Nazarene aligns with the principles of Individualism. DiAngelo said that it is difficult for White people to see themselves in the unfolding story in which they participate. Individualism teaches “we stand apart from others, even those within our social groups . . . that it is possible to be free of all bias. These ideologies make it very difficult for White people to explore the collective aspects of the White experience.”¹¹² Individualism, then, is one of the societal underpinnings of White culture in the US that contributes to the causes of systemic racism, and the Church of the Nazarene in the US cannot escape the impact that society has had upon its history and polity.

Isolation and Systemic Racism

Emerson and Smith provide in-depth research on how evangelicals respond to racism in the twenty-first century. If an evangelical dives into isolation and ignores the impact of history,

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 350.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 351.

¹¹² DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 9.

then there becomes a shared ignorance of how history impacts the present.¹¹³ The authors set forth that, for the most part, White evangelicals have few interactions with African Americans. Respondents to their surveys are self-described as “sheltered, unexposed to racial diversity, insulated, in their own small world.”¹¹⁴

In a 2016 Barna study, a large percentage of Americans believed that racism was not a problem in America. The question was posed: “Racism is mostly a problem of the past, not the present.” The results of those who *strongly disagreed* are as follows: Black Americans (59%) are twenty percentage points more likely to *disagree* that racism is in the past, while White Americans strongly disagree at twenty percentage points lower (39%).¹¹⁵ The summary of the Barna study was written by Brooke Hempell, vice president of research.

Our research confirms the fear that the church (or the people in it) may be part of the problem in the hard work of racial reconciliation. . . If you’re a White, evangelical, Republican, you are less likely to think race is a problem, but more likely to think you are a *victim* of reverse racism. You are also less convinced that people of color are socially disadvantaged. Yet these same groups believe the church plays an important role in reconciliation. This dilemma demonstrates that those supposedly most equipped for reconciliation *do not see the need for it*.

More than any other segment of the population, White evangelical Christians demonstrate a blindness to the struggle of their African American brothers and sisters . . . This is a dangerous reality for the modern church.¹¹⁶

A by-product of isolation is that Whites in America as a whole have not seen racism to the degree of Black/Brown/Asian Americans. Pew Research asked in a survey of Americans if they

¹¹³ Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 81.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 80-81.

¹¹⁵ *Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension in America* (Ventura, CA, Barna Group, May 5, 2016), <https://www.barna.com/research/Black-lives-matter-and-racial-tension-in-america/>

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

have experienced discrimination because of their race or ethnicity. The results are telling. “About three-quarters of Blacks and Asians (76% of each) – and 58% of Hispanics – say they have experienced discrimination or have been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity at least from time to time. In contrast, about two-thirds of Whites (67%) say they’ve never experienced this.”¹¹⁷ The work needed to understand culture is paramount for the church to address racism, for, without a solid foundation, isolation from the Black community will be the easiest avenue to choose.

Another cautionary note is that political systems play a role in isolation. In the twenty-first century, the role of social media and cable news shapes the attitudes of the evangelical church and promotes fears, causing White evangelicals to mistrust the Black population. But it is incongruous. Barna Research observed that conflict exists within the rhetoric of the White evangelical church. Ninety-four percent of evangelicals believe that the church plays an important role in racial reconciliation and hopes to bring an end to racism. Hempell said, “By failing to recognize the disadvantages that people of color face—and the inherent privileges that come from growing up in a ‘majority culture’—we perpetuate the racial divisions, inequalities, and injustices that prevent African American communities from thriving.”¹¹⁸ The existing mistrust within the evangelical community will not be quickly resolved. Racial mistrust runs deep even during a professed belief that the Church is the only hope to end racism.

¹¹⁷ Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Anna Brown and Kiana Cox, “Race in America 2019,” *Pew Research* (April 9, 2019), <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/04/09/race-in-america-2019/>

¹¹⁸ Barna Group, *Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension in America*. Ventura, CA: Barna Group, May 5, 2016. <https://www.barna.com/research/black-lives-matter-and-racial-tension-in-america>

White Supremacy and Systemic Racism

It is difficult for White evangelicals to discuss how racism is linked to White supremacy.

Robin Di Angelo stated that

Naming white supremacy changes the conversation in two ways: (1) it makes the system visible and shifts the focus of change on the White people where it belongs. (2) It also points us in the direction of the lifelong work that is uniquely ours, challenging our complicity with and investment in racism. This does not mean that people of color do not play a part but that the full weight of responsibility rests with those who control the institutions.¹¹⁹

DiAngelo described White supremacy is visible in US culture and is persuasive and subtle. The bottom line for her is that culture places the highest value on white people as ideal.

Earlier in this document, an example of White supremacy was noted from Richard Taylor's remark that White people are more comfortable with White people - "one's own kind." To be sure, the term has many threads of historical examples, and this discussion will not explore the extreme expressions of White supremacy nested in Naziism or the Ku Klux Klan. Saad defined White supremacy as an attitude, a way of thinking and extends to how systems and institutions are structured to uphold White dominance.¹²⁰ Certainly, the term "White supremacy" is the most difficult term to discuss because it immediately puts people and organizations on the defensive. In and of itself, racism is a difficult topic, but White supremacy is a term that pulls people out of their comfort zone. There is only one human race, but as a culture, we have been socialized to observe people through racial lenses. And the construct of Whiteness was created to "legitimize racial inequality and protect White advantage."¹²¹

¹¹⁹ DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 33.

¹²⁰ Saad, *Me and White Supremacy*, 12.

¹²¹ DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 17.

James Cone carefully lays the foundation of the “lynching era” in the United States, spanning sixty years: 1880-1940. After the Civil War in the US, the systemic actions of violence, prejudicial laws, and silence of the Christian communities (Catholic and Protestant) created a culture of White supremacy. At the same time, African Americans experienced many atrocities of terror. This is the era where African Americans suffered unspeakable trauma and injustice without the protection of federal, state, and local law enforcement. The underpinnings of injustice, suffering, and trauma are linked to violent acts of White supremacy.

In the mid-twentieth century, few White voices were clearly speaking out about racism in the US. James Cone was seeking a “White theologian” to speak up and address the injustice of lynching and White supremacy. Cone expressed deep disappointment that influential theologian Reinhold Niebuhr neglected the opportunity to teach and write about cultural racism. To his point, Cone respected Niebuhr and wanted him to use his influence of a bully pulpit to achieve greater clarity of injustice for the African American community. Niebuhr spoke up about the injustice of the Jim Crow South and addressed the need to overcome structural racism.

And yet, at crucial points, he [Niebuhr] pulled back from the opportunity to commit himself fully and publicly . . . While he never backed away from describing racism as an injustice and a sin, his insistence that pride and self-interest infected even the noblest movements for social reform sometimes caused him to declare “a plague on both your houses” in the struggle for racial justice precisely when it was most important for him to stand unambiguously against racism and on the side of its victims.¹²²

¹²² Scott Paeth, “Reinhold Niebuhr’s Complex Legacy on Race,” *Political Theology Network*, (February 29, 2016), <https://politicaltheology.com/reinhold-niebuhrs-complex-legacy-on-race-scott-paeth/>

It was Cone's opinion that "Niebuhr had eyes to see Black suffering, but he lacked the heart to feel it as his own."¹²³ Cone went on to describe Niebuhr's silence this way: "During most of Niebuhr's life, lynching was the most brutal manifestation of White supremacy, and he said and did very little about it. Should we be surprised, then that other White theologians, ministers, and churches followed suit?"¹²⁴ The words of Cone sting. His words are straightforward and confound the mind of a sincere scholar desiring to know the extent of truth found in his arguments. In searching for an example of outrage for lynching in the US the Church of the Nazarene offers an empty silence.

A theologian who spoke out was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who recognized the injustice of racism and said that in Jim Crow America, African Americans were depicted as subhuman, which served as an excuse to mistreat them. "The narrative forced Black compliance with the story of White supremacy by training fear of violent retaliation into the Black psyche and habituating them to compliance with their artificial role as subordinates to their fully human White superiors."¹²⁵ Bonhoeffer spent time with the African American community and spoke from firsthand experience living among African Americans. His life was not comprised of "oughts and shoulds"; he daringly lived out what he professed and died a martyr's death alongside Jews during the Holocaust.

White supremacy is a layered reality for America and the evangelical church in the US. What seems so puzzling to Black theologians of the late twentieth and twenty-first century is the

¹²³ James H. Cone, *The Cross and The Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 40.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 45.

¹²⁵ Reggie L. Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021), 23.

glaring silence of White theologians to speak out in opposition to racism. Raphael Warnock said, “Centuries of Western reflection and debate about the meaning of Christian faith and the mission of the churches did precious little to undermine slavery and segregation but offered much in support of it. Often through the complicity of silence and sometimes through conspicuous biblical hermeneutics of White supremacy.”¹²⁶ Silence continues to be power for the church just as it has been since the time of slavery. The Bible warns in Proverbs 31 that those who follow the ways of God should speak up for truth, justice and righteousness.

White supremacy is subtle and often not acted upon by the White evangelical church. DiAngelo taught that White supremacy has morphed beyond a description of Whites as superior to people of the African diaspora and come to mean that White is the “norm or standard” and people of color are a “deviation” from what is normal. However, the nuances of terminology have not negated the importance of the conversations needed. Calling out White supremacy points a finger at an entire system. It highlights instances where White supremacy may be visible and encourages challenging conversations about potential complicity in racism. Bear in mind that the conversation is a two-way street, meaning African Americans also play an important part in the discussion.

The work involved in recognizing and discussing White supremacy lies at the feet of pastors, conversation facilitators, theologians, and denominational leaders. All holiness churches have a solid statement on racism today. Although the Church of the Nazarene does not mention White supremacy, it does offer a *Manual* statement of repentance and lament to those who have

¹²⁶ Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety & Public Witness* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014), 18.

been wounded in race relations by the church around the world.¹²⁷ Although the *Manual* uses these terms, many in the African American community are longing for the church to practice biblical justice and end systematic racism.

There is hard work to do if confession and lament are to be incorporated into the fabric of the denomination. Changing a system and bringing about racial reconciliation will take more than a few statements, individual acts, speeches, or decisions. It is up to the members of the Church of the Nazarene to explore the depths of systemic racism and encourage conversation over silence. Unfortunately, silence continues to be a major component of White supremacy. Althea Taylor said, “ You can have the experience of entire sanctification and never see the problem. But without the experience, we will never solve the problem.”¹²⁸ We must extend prayer, repentance, and ask for grace to those who have been marginalized. We must publicly speak prophetic truth to power and end our complicity of silence when unjust actions by the courts and law enforcement terminate the lives of unarmed African Americans in the US. May the Church of the Nazarene’s watchword and song be lived out in its character and conduct in the activity of perfect love.

¹²⁷ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: History, Constitution, Government, Sacraments and Rituals 2023* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 2023), 401.

¹²⁸ Althea Taylor, District Superintendent, interview with author on Zoom, February 24, 2025

CHAPTER 3

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Building bridges to discuss racism within the Church of the Nazarene

There is no roadmap for race-related conversations in the Church of the Nazarene. The church has had its share of missteps and blunders. Those mistakes are archived in the denomination's storage facility cave in Lenexa, Kansas. Nazarene archives has articles from African Americans that did not get published in the *Herald of Holiness*, letters written to the BGS from Southern District Superintendents containing racial slurs, and a copy of a magazine that was printed and destroyed before it was mailed because the cover art was a painting by an African artist that depicted the Holy Family as Africans. The magazine cover was replaced with a picture of white children singings Christmas carols. These painful and anecdotal stories point to the evidence of both systematic and structural racism. This chapter of the dissertation seeks to build a bridge to the core of a Wesleyan term called the *imago Dei*. The past mistakes and blunders will someday need to be addressed with grace and truth. Moving forward, this work will provide a place where human dignity is found in the *imago Dei*.

The discussion of the *imago Dei* will serve as an initial launching place. There are centuries of discussion following the *imago Dei* that is found in Genesis 1:26-27. Olivia Metcalf identifies the Western and Eastern understandings of the *imago Dei* in her 2023 dissertation. The Western tradition emphasizes that Adam and Eve made a willful choice to sin against God. That sinful action moved them into a state of disobedience that resulted in a lasting impact on humanity. The Western church sets forth the fallen human condition is marked with guilt, shame, and powerlessness not to sin.

In describing the Eastern Church, Metcalf relied upon Randy Maddox's teaching found in his book, *Responsible Grace*. Eastern Christianity taught that there was room to grow in the *imago Dei*, and the Fall was a decision to be like God. The guilt that humanity experiences come from imitating Adam and Eve. The Fall was viewed as a weakness in the human condition that leads to sickness, disease, and death. While the Western view is defined by the Fall or original sin, the Eastern view is defined by human experience.¹²⁹

Wesleyan understanding of the *imago Dei* is rooted in the teachings of Irenaeus and later informed John Wesley's theology. Irenaeus was fighting Gnosticism of his day which denied the incarnation of Christ and argued that deity could not (would not) assume human flesh.¹³⁰ Most of Irenaeus' teaching brought a defense against the truth of scripture that was challenged by heresies. Irenaeus observed that just because humankind was created in God's image, that divine and holy action did not make people good. Paul Bassett referred to the original works of Irenaeus:

For in the past, it was truly said that man was made in the image of God; but it was not demonstrated. The Word, in whose image man had been created, was still invisible then. And that is why man easily lost the likeness. But when the Word of God was made flesh, both points were established in fact. He manifested the authentic image by becoming just that; and he restored the likeness by conjoining it, making man like the Father by means of the visible Word.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Olivia Metcalf, "The Prison Is Our Parish: A Historical, Theological, And Praxis Based Exploration of the Prison in the United States From a Wesleyan-Holiness Perspective" (DMin dissertation, Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2022), 51-52.

¹³⁰ Paul M. Bassett and William M. Greathouse, *The Historical Development*, vol. 2, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985) 44.

¹³¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.16.2 quoted in *The Historical Development*, 44.

Genesis 1:26-27 states that Adam was created in the image of God. Adam was created to be like God and unlike the animals. But humanity finds its true meaning and purpose not in creation but in a soteriology through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation” (Colossians 1:15) John Wesley was inspired by Irenaeus and taught that the image of God was corrupted by sin in the Garden, but that condition of the soul could be restored. Wesley set forth that through entire sanctification or perfect love the soul could experience God’s holy indwelling Holy Spirit and be restored to the same condition of Adam. Wesley carefully described the three purposes of the *imago Dei*: a natural image, a political image, and a moral image.

Why must we be born again? . . . The foundation of it lies near as deep as the creation of the world; in the scriptural account whereof we read, “And God,” the three-one God, “said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him:” (Gen 1:26,27) – Not barely in his ***natural image***, a picture of his own immortality; a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections; -- nor merely in his ***political image***; the governor of this lower world, having “dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth,” – but chiefly in the ***moral image***; which according to the Apostle, is “righteousness and true holiness,” (Eph 4:24.) In this image of God was man made. “God is love:” Accordingly, man at his creation was full of love; which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity; and so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot; otherwise God could not have pronounced him, as well as all the other work of this hands, “very good” (Gen 1:31.)¹³²

There is a bridge to be built from the topic of the *imago Dei* to an application of racism. The image of Adam that was corrupted and broken can be restored through a holy encounter of

¹³² John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley: Third Edition, Complete and Unabridged*, reprint of *The Works of John Wesley* 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978). 6:66-67.

perfect love. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, a Wesleyan scholar, observed that Wesley did not speculate what the “image” was but focused the discussion on religious terms and found that the *imago Dei* had a spiritual quality. Wesley established the direction of soteriology and theology of love for Methodism and the many branches of faith that followed.¹³³ Diane Leclerc states that what was lost in Adam’s disobedient fall is restored in the obedience of Christ.”¹³⁴ It is through Christ we see what humanity is created to be and know what it means to be fully human. Through Christ, humanity is renewed and restored.¹³⁵

Wesleyan theology embraces an optimistic hope that humanity can be restored through Christ. The *Imago Dei* becomes the avenue by which the capacity to love is restored. The entirely sanctified life is our true humanity restored, and the individual’s capacity to love as God loves is enabled.¹³⁶ The transforming grace of entire sanctification is made possible by the sacrificial life of Christ – through Jesus’ powerful death on the cross.¹³⁷ Humanity can be renewed and restored through the full *imago Dei* and thus become Christ-like in character and conduct. The *imago Dei* resides in sinful humans but not in its fullness, and therefore, new life in Christ and the process of sanctification leads to restoring the fullness of God’s image in us. Perfect love is the love of God bestowed upon those who seek a holy life, and is exemplified in character and conduct. Dennis Kinlaw summarized the teaching of perfect love in Romans 12-13.

¹³³ Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 106.

¹³⁴ Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 144.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

The ones who are full of agape love do not think of themselves more highly than they ought. They think soberly, recognizing that they are members of a body larger than any individual. (Romans 12:3-5)

They honor each other more than themselves in mutual devotion to one another (Romans 12:10)

They bless those who persecute them and do not curse. Nor do they avenge themselves. They feed their enemies and give drink to those who are thirsty. (Romans 12:14-20)

They submit to the authorities over them. (Romans 13:1-7)

They hold no debts except to love one another. They love their neighbors as themselves and thus fulfill the law. (Romans 13:8-10)¹³⁸

When perfect love is restored and the heart becomes holy, individuals will display God's love in every aspect of their lives.

Application of perfect love through a Wesleyan view of the *imago Dei* can be expanded to include racial attitudes. Another way of coining the question is this: Can the awakened soul experience the *imago Dei* through new lenses? Wesleyan theology can be expanded and grow to include nuances that include dignity for African Americans.

The *imago Dei* establishes the foundation and framework that God resides with and lives in Black history. When it was prohibited for slaves in America to worship God freely, Black churches sought freedom of expression, freedom for praise and worship in remote places uniquely called "hush harbors." In those remote areas, slaves discovered not only freedom of worship but also a sacred conviction that they were created in the image of God, which brought dignity to their understanding of self even while they were mistreated in chattel slavery.¹³⁹ Enslaved people came to believe that God saw them as human beings in spite of their deplorable living and working conditions. It was during slavery that African American preachers built upon

¹³⁸ Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Let's Start with Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 151.

¹³⁹ Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 41.

the foundation of the *imago Dei* in Old and New Testament stories. God heard the cries of an oppressed slave, Hagar. God heard the cries of an oppressed people in Egypt. God made way for Daniel in the Lion's Den. God was with Christ as he suffered upon the cross.

The Hagar Narrative

The Hagar narrative of Genesis 16 provides an example of practical theology. Like a magnifying glass that makes images larger and sometimes easier to read, the goal is to magnify this story and explore how it may be interpreted. Nested in the story are two important terms *El Roi* and *Ishmael*. *El Roi* means “God sees” and Hagar introduced this characteristic of God when she was facing trauma. *Ishmael* means “God hears” and is introduced when Ishmael was suffering in trauma. Both, *El Roi* and *Ishmael*, underscore the nature of God and the sacredness of the *imago Dei*.

Sixteenth-century Dutch theologian James Arminius discussed God’s sovereign will over Ishmael in his writings of Romans 9. Arminius viewed the passage as an allegory that teaches God’s role in salvation history. Arminius taught that Ishmael represented children of the flesh and Isaac represented children of promise. In application Arminius’ argument was that God cares more about an individual’s character than an election of someone’s destiny.¹⁴⁰

A womanist scholar, Renita J. Weems, reveals the raw truth that Hagar was a victim. The story of Sarai and Hagar is “a story of ethnic prejudice exacerbated by economic and sexual exploitation. There is a story of conflict, women betraying women, mothers conspiring against mothers.”¹⁴¹ Scripture introduces Hagar as an immigrant slave from Egypt. She is chattel. She is

¹⁴⁰ James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols.(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956), 3:533-540.

¹⁴¹ Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away: Understanding the Timeless Connection Between Women of Today and Women in the Bible* (West Bloomfield, MI: Warner Books, 2005), 2.

not considered a person – she is considered property. Hagar is called “the Egyptian”, “the maid” and “the slave woman” by Sarai or Abram, but only God calls her by name.

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, “The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai’s proposal. ³ So Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. ⁴ So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, “This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she’s pregnant she treats me with contempt. The LORD will show who’s wrong—you or me!” ⁶ Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away. –Genesis 16:1-6

Hagar had no form of social support. She was exploited and trapped in a system where she had no rights. She had her dignity taken away and was told to be a surrogate mother whose offspring would belong to someone else. She was labeled “the Egyptian,” “the maid of a servant,” or “slave woman.” Hagar was not a person in this story, but her body was used to serve the purpose of her owners. She became pregnant and trapped, abused, alone, and on the run. There were thousands upon thousands of Hagars who were abused during the years of chattel slavery in the US creating generational trauma for African Americans. And if one is not careful, one can miss the implications and applications as the story easily can be applied to race relations. Hagar was from a different country. She was treated as property and “less than.” She was alone and only God could see her need. Only God gave her a drink when she was thirsty. God spoke by giving her son Ishmael a Hebrew name. Often Ishmael is remembered for the prediction that he would be a wild character. What is often forgotten is the meaning of his name, “God hears.” It is fascinating that Hagar experienced *Ishmael* just as deeply as she experienced *El Roi*.

⁹ The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.” ¹⁰ Then he added, “I will give you more descendants than you can count.”

¹¹ And the angel also said, “You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to

name him Ishmael (which means ‘God hears’), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress. ¹³ Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, “You are the God who sees me.” (Genesis 16:9-11, 13)

¹⁷ God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸ Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. (Genesis 21:17-19)

The central teaching of the story is that God becomes the One who sees Hagar in her weakness, vulnerability, and trauma. Hagar thought she was all alone until the Lord spoke to her, called her by name, and saw *her*. She was not a woman of privilege like Sarai. In her lonely desperation, God called out to *her*. Then Hagar gave God a name, which became one of her life's greatest moments. She named God, (*El Roi*) the God who sees. God saw her and had a conversation with her. The holy moment in Hagar's history was her *imago Dei*. Hagar was made in the image of God just as equally as Abram and Sari. She encountered a God who saw her and provides dignity and worth to her as a person.

Wesleyan theology misses this observation and application that the account of Hagar is her creation moment. Wesleyan theology focuses on two major themes of the *imago Dei*. The image of God was lost at the Fall, and that entire sanctification restores an individual to regain the image of God. But in Hagar's story, she is not a forgotten minority, she encountered and interacted with God. The *imago Dei* applies to Hagar and no woman in the Bible had longer conversations with God than Hagar.

All people desire to encounter *El Roi* and *Ishmael*. All people desire to experience God seeing them and hearing them. Hagar's story mirrors what happens in systemic racism where inequalities are reinforced. In the eyes of Abram and Sarai, Hagar was called “slave” and

“Egyptian” which reinforced the differences in cultural representation. Abram and Sarai were “above” and Hagar was “below.” The lesson that is embedded in this body of work is that God, the hero of the story, continues to be the God of the unwanted and trauma-ridden victims of society. He is a God who sees and hears the forgotten and neglected. He has placed his stamp of His image upon the hearts and lives of all humanity.

In 1940, Rev. William Holmes Borders, Sr., wrote a poem entitled, *I Am Somebody*. During Jim Crow, Borders wanted to be seen and heard. Rev. Jesse Jackson popularized that same poem in 1971 after Civil Rights laws (1960s) were passed and the US struggled with racial unrest. Jackson engaged audiences across the US, that they are seen by God. In the wake of twenty-first-century deaths of unarmed Black US citizens, protest marches have swept America. When people carry signs of protest in the twenty-first century, they convey a message that is linked back to days when it was illegal for enslaved people to gather. Without any rights and without permission, enslaved people gathered to worship God in “hush harbors.” They knew God saw them and as long as God saw them hope was renewed. Signs of the twenty-first century point to their being seen by God. “Say Their Names”; “Black Lives Matter”; “I Can’t Breathe,” and signs pointing to the sacredness of life rooted in the *imago Dei*. Some White Evangelicals had a quick retort to “Black Lives Matter” and declared “All Lives Matter,” but that retort eroded the point. The retort did not see, did not hear, and ignored generational trauma impacting African Americans.

In 1936 a large protest banner was placed on the national headquarters of the NAACP building in New York City, stating, “A Black man was lynched yesterday.” The banner was a stark reminder of racism’s brutalities woven into the fabric of the US. For the most part, the church in America was silent during Jim Crow lynchings as if to say through the silence that the

lives of Black Americans do not matter and are expendable. Americans have a history of cruelties against Black and Brown citizens.

Many adherents to evangelicalism speak up for the rights of the unborn. Just as the church defends the rights of the unborn in debates about abortion as a witness to the *imago Dei*, the church must speak out on behalf of African Americans. The people who follow the Wesleyan holiness tradition practice the love of God. It is time for those in the holiness tradition to include compassion and biblical justice just as God did for Hagar. May the God that makes us holy empower us to participate in His nature of the *imago Dei*.

The Praxis of the *imago Dei*

A person whose life has been transformed by the grace of God will exemplify the *imago Dei* and will be active in a loving ministry. Leclerc reminds us that holiness involves “what we do” and “how we act.” The heart of Wesleyan theology is Praxis. Holiness is meant to be lived out and practiced. The nature of holiness is manifested in action. If a life is transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit, then that life exemplifies holy love. Lives transformed and exemplifying the *imago Dei* will be active in ministry. “A theology of love brings those who need spiritual freedom and redemption to God and God to them.”¹⁴² “We are created to love. Love is the very definition of the *imago Dei* that God renews within us. The very purpose of our humanity is to love, and we are only truly human when we love by humanizing others and love our Creator above all else.”¹⁴³

Holiness of heart and life is a thrilling, life-changing, and beautiful experience. In 1744 John Wesley’s definition of sanctification was “To be renewed in the image of God, in

¹⁴²Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness*, 227.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 275.

righteousness and true holiness.”¹⁴⁴ The theology behind this statement includes the truth that love is the essence of God. So, at creation, man was spotless and filled with love. Wesley set forth in his Works that the love inside [Adam] at creation encompassed the same characteristics of God, such as “thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth. . . God is spotless purity.”¹⁴⁵

Wesley described the fall of man as a dreadful impact of original sin. (See Wesley’s description of original sin. Appendix 4) Because of original sin, the love of God that was inside Adam was forfeited or, in Wesley’s words, “extinguished.” Adam’s heart was filled with selfishness rather than being filled with love. As a modern-day voice of Wesleyan holiness truth, Nazarenes offer hope that the state of the human soul does not have to remain in a state of selfish rule. Subsequent to regeneration, believers can experience a second birth with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁶ Entire sanctification is a powerful remedy to original sin, for the *imago Dei* is restored and the soul finds purity where attitudes of racism can be revealed and cleansed.

Challenges for the twenty-first-century church

The church needs theologians to fill in the vacancies where there is silence in applying perfect love to race-related conversations. It is not possible to be pure of heart and remain silent when racial disparities are witnessed. The pure in heart declare that systemic racism is a sin.

If ministries and purposes of Nazarenes are narrowly and simplistically summarized as outreach and evangelism while social voices are silenced when the world is seeking the authority of its leaders to address violence upon African Americans, then we must question the purpose of

¹⁴⁴ Wesley, *Wesley’s Works*, 8:279.

¹⁴⁵ Wesley, *Wesley’s Works*, 6:66.

¹⁴⁶ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual 2023*, 27-28.

the church. “Repentance” and “Lament” are mentioned in the *Manual*, but lament must be modeled and functional. People of God who lead holiness churches in the tradition of John Wesley must seek God and lament that our witness and example fall short of holy love. We must weep real tears when there is injustice and not simply explain a political position or form a committee to appease the urgent news cycle. African Americans must know they are loved by the Church of the Nazarene without anticipating that “the Blacks” are a mission field. We must include Black and Brown speakers, teachers, writers, and leaders within the White majority congregations.

In the context of a small multicultural church in the Midwest where this author currently serves, the foundation of outreach to the community is formed through an understanding of creation. All of humankind is made in the image of God. Daniel Hill said in the book *White Awake* that recognizing differences is not the issue. The theological danger comes with a system of race assigns value based on differences. Assigning varying degrees of value to human beings is in direct contradiction to the heart of God, and it is sin in the highest order.¹⁴⁷ The doctrine of the *imago Dei* insists on recognizing every human being as an image bearer of God and, therefore, as valuable and worthy.¹⁴⁸ This same kind of logic serves as the foundation of the sanctity of life and the reason to serve the poor, the widow, and the orphan. In Matthew 25, we understand that Jesus lives among the poor, the naked, the incarcerated, the thirsty, the homeless, and the undocumented.

¹⁴⁷ Daniel Hill, *White Awake: An Honest Look at What It Means to be White* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 60-61.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 61.

Individualism in society pulls systems, cultures, and denominations away from societies that have collectivist needs. Individualism in society teaches that original sin is personal. As a society we are taught to repent individually and say our own prayers individually. With individualism, original sin rests upon each person – to deal with in a private matter as individuals see fit. Although the word lament is biblical and a part of spiritual formation, Nazarenes struggle to build bridges of lament for the sin of systemic racism. There is no liturgy that encourages how a denomination might respond corporately for its history of silence and unjust racial practices.

In Cone's work in *A Black Theology of Liberation*, there is a clear teaching that God is familiar with the poor and the dispossessed. God aligns himself with the Black community. "Our loyalty belongs only to him who has become like us in everything, especially Blackness. To take seriously the lordship of Christ or his sonship or messiahship is to see him as the sole criterion of authentic existence."¹⁴⁹ If the image of God is seen through Jesus Christ, then perhaps it is equally fair to recognize that perfect love must be experienced personally and expressed culturally. This author celebrates the historical tradition, practice, and experience of a personal encounter with God through the infilling of the Holy Spirit. May Nazarenes apply this experience of perfect love along with expressions of biblical justice toward the African American community.

James Cone's liberation theology has influenced this study. The aim was to explore perfect love in Wesleyan holiness tradition and bridge a connection to a liberating God that brings dignity to minority races. In liberation theology, God sees and rescues the disinherited. In Wesleyan holiness theology, God purifies the heart so that holy people express *agape* love.

¹⁴⁹ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022), 129.

People in the Wesleyan tradition are held responsible for the light/understanding they receive in that believers are responsible for what they know. Wynkoop discusses this moral capacity in her classic book, *A Theology of Love*. She states that moral awareness is held in tension as people face ethical situations. “Not only do we say, I can choose or I must choose, but in this choice I am violating or approving the right . . . A moral being recognizes these ethical demands in interpersonal situations.”¹⁵⁰ There are ethical demands placed upon denominations that embrace perfect love. The basis for the opportunity to speak out in favor of justice is the foundation of the *imago Dei*. In a conversation with the author on January 23, 2025, pastor Irene Lewis-Wimbley added to the discussion and said, “Holiness cannot be in the same presence as evil and injustice. Our goal is not that we can arrive somehow at a profession of holiness in a moment but to begin to engage in the process of discerning about what the Holy Spirit – what love looks like – in each and every situation our witness is love.”¹⁵¹ Lewis-Wimbley’s full account is recorded in the artifact of this document.

The foundational understanding of original sin can be part of the solution to healing systemic racism, yet this is where the tensions lie. Most Wesleyan theologians do not mention racism, let alone link racism to personal or original sin. Grider included the topic of prejudice in his theology book but concluded that prejudice is not a sin issue because Pentecost (Acts 2) did not cleanse Peter of his attitudes toward the Gentiles until Acts 10 (Appendix 3). Other Wesleyan denominations have spoken out about racism and have not remained silent.

¹⁵⁰ Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 175.

¹⁵¹ Irene Lewis-Wimbley, evangelist and director of a compassionate ministry center, interviewed by the author on January 23, 2025.

In a conversation with the author on January 28, 2025, Dr. Jerry Porter recalled the central teaching of Acts 2. “Our denomination was born after the Civil War. It was blind to its racism when it was formed. We will answer to the Lord someday because of our insensitivity. Acts 2 was about a church for all people. The Jews were never supposed to use foreign languages in worship God, and yet all languages were included at Pentecost.”¹⁵² Porter went on to say that the Church is for everyone and that Pentecost points to God’s plan that His message is for all people.

Expressions of perfect love observed through sister denominations

In the Salvation Army, the Wesleyan Church, and the Free Methodist Church, Wesleyan theology seeks ways for a life made holy to express love with sincerity of heart. Wesleyan theology includes “loving our neighbor” by seeing each person as one who is made in the *imago Dei*.

The Church of the Nazarene and the three denominations mentioned above have their individual *manuals* and *disciplines*, but they also find alignment and support for the Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy conferences and the Global Wesleyan Alliance (GWA). The GWA is comprised of sixteen holiness denominations that gather annually to discuss various social position topics ranging from immigration, LGBTQ+, and human trafficking, as well as procedures in protocols for transferring clergy/elders from one denomination to another. Following the GWA meetings, position papers are made available for the denominations and their leaders.

The GWA provided a platform for voicing a collective stance on social issues of the twenty-first century. Their collaboration underpins the Wesleyan understanding of the *imago Dei*

¹⁵² Jerry Porter, retired General Superintendent, interviewed by the author on January 28, 2025

and perfect love theology. A position letter was discovered in the aftermath of the Charlottesville Riots of 2017 that Nazarene and other holiness groups expressed a unified voice and clearly demonstrated outrage. The GWA issued a statement on Bigotry. The letter *After Charlottesville: Bigotry Denounced* (Appendix 5) expressed not only anger and pain but clearly sounded a warning signal of the impact upon our churches if silence is maintained. The warning is a social one *and* a spiritual one in which the world can squeeze and shape the Church by becoming desensitized to bigotry and violence. Warnings are not new; the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and said:

1-2 With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity. (Romans 12:1-2 Phillips)

The GWA provided the language to respond when the *imago Dei* is violated. These words underscore what can be proclaimed as we lead people into open and honest discussions about race. The GWA letter originated from a core belief that life is sacred and as a holiness organization, we must clearly speak out when culture is adrift. Unifying Statements provide clear direction to the membership as if to say: *This is where the church stands on the matter*. By providing such an instrument of clarity, pastors will have the support and direction from its denominational leaders.

Emerson and Smith's book, *Divided by Faith*, has been heavily cited by the Salvationists, Wesleyans, and Free Methodists. The authors challenged evangelical churches, stating, "If anyone has the answer to the race problem, it is Christians. Their religion calls for it, and their

faith gives them the tools and moral force needed for change.”¹⁵³ Religious leaders must recognize that there is a moral obligation to make corrections. Because a denomination is a force, the organization has the collective power and willpower to make changes to reach desired outcomes. The challenge lies in finding motivation and determination for implementation. Overcoming these obstacles can prevent organizations from creating new frameworks or bringing people together to work towards racial unity and reconciliation.

What holds holiness churches from moving forward to making structural changes to build bridges of reconciliation is the “view [of] their primary task as evangelism and discipleship; they tend to avoid issues that hinder these activities. Thus, they are generally not countercultural.”¹⁵⁴ There is a risk of misunderstanding. There is risk involved when speaking out or providing resources that could be misrepresented or misconstrued.

In 2021, the Salvation Army developed a sixty-page small group resource entitled *Let's Talk About . . . Racism*. The resource was written as a small group discussion guide to encourage race and race relations dialogue. The booklet encouraged frank and open discussions along with confession. The wording expressed lament: “The Salvation Army acknowledges with regret, that Salvationists have sometimes shared in the sins of racism and conformed to economic, organizational and social pressures that perpetuate racism.”¹⁵⁵ The resource included a description of America’s role in the African slave trade as well as scripture references that

¹⁵³ Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 17.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 21.

¹⁵⁵ The Salvation Army, *Let's Talk About . . . Racism*, 2.

illuminate the biblical position of the Salvationists. The discussion taught that the denomination should move forward with open and honest dialogue.

Whole restoration includes embracing diversity as God’s design for humanity and rooting out racism, bias and discrimination from our lives. If we indeed seek to fully meet human needs, we must combat everything that stands against those whom The Salvation Army serves, and racism is not exempt from this decree. As a holy people, we are called to stand against this evil and dispel it from our ranks.¹⁵⁶

The discussion guide was designed for participants to move from dialogue to lament and serve as a tool for healing conversations. The resource was thoughtfully organized, carefully constructed, and heavily footnoted. The guide was released in the spring of 2021 and then was attacked during the Christmas bell-ringing season by Fox News, and social media. Those outlets made false claims and sabotaged the resource. The headline to the news blurb was this: “Salvation Army denies asking donors to 'repent' for their skin color.”¹⁵⁷ Reckless reporting damaged the holiday funding drive so much that donations ground to a halt, and *Let’s Talk About . . . Racism* had to be removed from distribution. In response to reporting, the Salvationist offered a rebuttal:

We have never said that America is a racist country. We have never said that our donors should apologize for the color of their skin. And we have never endorsed a political or social ideology other than that found in the Bible. The fact that any politically motivated group is working so hard to force a faith-based organization to conform to that group’s chosen ideology should give pause to all reasonable individuals. It’s wrong, and it’s reckless. (November 25, 2021)¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Fox News, “Salvation Army denies asking donors to 'repent' for their skin color,” November 27, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UtFkiFIP88>

¹⁵⁸ Kenneth Hodder, “Responses from Our National Commander,” presented through *The Salvation Army*, December 3, 2021. <https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/setting-the-record-straight-about-false-claims-made-by-color-us-united/>

The Salvation Army's race resource caused its donor base to pull much-needed funding for social services for the underserved in US and global areas. The church's intention to bring racial healing, understanding, and justice was overcome by the power of biased reporting of Fox News. May the Lord protect and guide those in the Wesleyan holiness tradition who engage in racial healing conversations.

The Wesleyan Church describes its denominational history dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. Wesleyans were a social mission. They served as salvation stations of the Underground Railroad, and several church buildings sustained gunshot damage of Confederate soldiers. However, Wesleyans changed their focus during the spiritual awakening of the early twentieth century by emphasizing a personal experience of being baptized with the Holy Spirit. The confession and lament of race-related decisions of the Wesleyan church was printed in 2016. To their credit, the Wesleyan Church went on record for its part in collective racism practices.

While our denomination was born in an anti-slavery movement, we have sometimes ignored our own heritage and been guilty of both personal and collective racism and prejudice. For this sin, we have collectively repented and asked for God's forgiveness, and we intend to strive for complete racial reconciliation, for we know that this is the will of God.¹⁵⁹

Statements and resolutions are insufficient but necessary for lasting change in understanding to racism. Apologies and statements are impactful. The Free Methodist Church USA (FMC) modeled to its followers how the three General church leaders exchanged their ideas in a transparent discussion on the topic of race. The leadership knew that adherents of the FMC

¹⁵⁹ The Wesleyan Church, *Church and Culture 2016* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2016), 11. <https://cdn.resources.wesleyan.org/wesleyanrc/wp-content/uploads/2016-ChurchCulture-WebPDF.pdf>

needed to be informed beyond a decree. The denomination strategically provided video discussions, a web magazine with topical options for race issues, and clarity and harmony with its church discipline. Communication about racism is so much more than “are we for it” or “are we against it.” Racism is layered, and the more information shared, the better constituents will be served. Bishop Keith Cowart reflected on the *imago Dei* and pleaded for more diversity among Free Methodists. Cowart stated that the Trinity “is a picture of diversity. . . Diversity is an essential part of community. Three separate persons make up the image of God. We desperately need that relational connection with people.”¹⁶⁰ Cowart underscored that diversity is sacred as it is linked to the character and diversity of God.

When pondering the connective lynchpins between these four sister denominations, all are all in harmony theologically with John Wesley’s teaching of perfect love and entire sanctification. Each denomination understands the *imago Dei* and the sacredness of life as a gift God gave, but the cautions and challenges of Emerson and Smith served as a roadmap of instruction as they processed and incorporated new understandings for the twenty-first century.

Applying Hofstede social theory to these four denominations, Individualism of the White dominant culture created systemic racism. As precious as the experience of entire sanctification is, it did not remove the vast chasm that separated the dominant culture’s thinking, practices, and expectations. A new deepened theology recognizes that the *imago Dei* as so sacred that people of

¹⁶⁰ Jeff Finely, “Continuing the Conversation: Disarming Racial Divides in the Church,” *The Free Methodist Church* (August 2020), <https://lightandlife.fm/continuing-the-conversation-disarming-racial-divides-in-the-church/>

the holiness tradition will clearly and consistently speak out in favor of the oppressed and dispossessed. Proverbs 31 says:

⁸ Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves;
ensure justice for those being crushed.

⁹ Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless,
and see that they get justice. (Proverbs 31:8–9 NIV)

It bears repeating that there are risks involved in speaking up for the oppressed. The dominant White culture might not understand, might withhold contributions, might declare there is no problem, might ignore the voices of denominational leaders and theologians, and might be detrimentally influenced by cable news and social media. The cost of leadership risks of implementing change must not block the beautiful side of leading the US away from systemic racism. Now is the time to raise the level of love and support for Black and brown congregations and leaders throughout the US by supporting minority voices in leadership planning, theological expressions, and hiring opportunities throughout the US. The Church of the Nazarene can move beyond token placements and purposefully include more people of Color in denominational offices, university campuses, district representation, and local church leadership.

CHAPTER 4

PROPOSED SOLUTION METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative, interpreting texts and themes on racism. It examined books, dissertations, magazines, and web content using content analysis. The benefit of content analysis is that it can be replicated for future studies and provide resources for local pastors in small group discussions. The artifact is a series of interviews with Nazarene leaders who serve the church and have keen insights into systemic racism. The content analysis of the first three chapters has informed the interview questions of the artifact. The interviews then add to this body of work, providing a better foundation for future review. The interviews add voice inflection, passion, and a deep understanding of Wesleyan-holiness theology. These voices come from the “boots on the ground.” The content analysis has a two-fold benefit. First, the written work provides evidence of systemic racism. Second, the interviews provide an oral history that will be helpful for future review.

The subtitle of this dissertation includes the phrase, *the absence of conversation and confession of racism in the Church of the Nazarene*. The primary focus of the research was on the Church of the Nazarene's involvement in its race-related ministry efforts throughout its history. The research indicates that most of the efforts were for the White dominant culture of the US church to establish African American churches, but that strategy has not been successful. The artifact illuminates that African American leaders want to be included and heard. Adding more diverse voices around the tables of decisions will strengthen the ministries in the Church of the Nazarene.

The content analysis did not discover one main problem; there was no “smoking gun” to point to one single source of failure. There have been missteps of leadership throughout the

denomination's history. In fact, the artifact reveals a weakness of one of the initial goals of this dissertation. This author was hoping to discover a place of weakness that could be repaired, provide steps for confession and lament, and help White Nazarenes deepen their understanding of the Black diaspora. The hope was for the first three chapters to describe the problems and then the interviews would support the assumptions and propositions of the introduction. Fortunately, the interview remarks from Black Nazarene leaders accomplished more in the artifact than what was first imagined. The enrichment of voices, testimonies of grace, personal stories of ministry efforts, and firsthand perspectives of ministers who embraced and practiced Wesleyan-holiness theology brought an awareness of the godly strength and wisdom that is available to the USA/Canada Region. Interviews with experienced Black ministers highlighted the significance of each leader's narrative and perspective. It is true that each Black leader shared experiences of institutional racism and provided firsthand accounts of those incidents. But the richness of the interviews tells how perfect love was expressed in each person's life. When the project began it was assumed the interviews would be an added feature of the dissertation. Instead, the interviews have become a witness of the love of God and a deep love and appreciation for the Church of the Nazarene. Thus, including Black leaders' voices strengthens and completes this research.

The Zoom interview questions were based on *Manual* ¶915. Despite its accessibility, the paragraph is not a significant focus since it is in the back of the book. During a Zoom call, former General Superintendent Jerry Porter suggested that ¶915 be moved to The Covenant of Christian Conduct section of the *Manual*. Porter stated that if one hundred or more District Superintendents support relocating the paragraph, the motion will be considered at the next General Assembly. This change would increase the visibility and significance of the

denomination's teachings on racism. If implemented, this paragraph would appear alongside sections on Christian stewardship, sanctity of life, human sexuality, and marriage.

The recorded Zoom sessions highlighted that race-related conversations have been and continue to be challenging for the Church of the Nazarene. This study provided a comprehensive review of the literature and examined the theological perspectives of Wesleyan leaders on race relations, focusing on both historical and contemporary communications.

Communication plays a significant role in the Hagar narrative. It is essential to remember two significant names encountered in her interaction with God: *El Roi*, meaning "God sees," and *Ishmael*, meaning "God hears." God's divine communication bestows worth and dignity upon Hagar, the Gentile Egyptian slave. Communication is vital to all relationships; human beings must be seen and heard. The same concept would apply to the health of race relations in the Church of the Nazarene.

Situations become unhealthy when communication is shut down, cut off, ignored, and silenced. God calls His Church to communicate and stand with the disinherited and speak up in the name of biblical justice. Those of the holiness tradition have the theology to practice perfect love and now it is time to implement the delivery of that belief. Providing resources to the Church of the Nazarene's members is essential to the health and well-being of the denomination's race-relations future. But there is one thing that each of the conversations brought out the Zoom calls: "We need to do more of this." There was a clear consensus that the voices of Black Nazarenes need to be heard, and the contributions of Black ministers must be acknowledged and recognized.

On its watch in 2025, US culture is bombarded with social media and cable news that provide misleading stories and misinformation. At home and on the go, what US culture sees and

hears stirs fears of the elderly and influences young minds. For the USA/Canada Region, this research serves as a resource to deal with culture narratives. Through research and through the artifact, current leaders of the region can expand their knowledge and be more inclusive. The positions held by the Church of the Nazarene are strong in word but are not lived out in deed.

This dissertation was written to assist local church pastors and provide scriptures and resources to benefit dialogue regarding race relations, but cable news and social media seem to be winning the battle of influence. Perfect love and holy living are at the core of those who adhere to the Church of the Nazarene. This work underscored the foundations of the holiness theology of perfect love and provided the framework for a new narrative. Namely, that people of the Wesleyan tradition can be holy in heart and life as we stand with the oppressed. Our witness to the world is that the *imago Dei* is sacred. This paper acknowledged that biblical structures are vital to race-related conversations, but there remains a need to practice what we know and incorporate beliefs into what we do and who we are.

Praxis involves the church supporting those facing oppression. Actions such as joining community marches, placing signs, or discussing issues can be undertaken by local ministers, but these efforts often appear to be isolated instances. And yet there is a witness of the Spirit that *El Roi* sees the attitude of the heart. Through the artifact, communication with White and Black colleagues led the author to understand that ministry colleagues were united. This journey encourages communication in the rank and file of pastoral ministry regarding race-related conversations. If biblical justice must be woven into the fabric of our watchword and song, it is appropriate to express outrage when the *imago Dei* is snuffed out in a street in broad daylight. When the Church of the Nazarene was formed evangelism was its priority. While that need still is true in the twenty-first century, holy living must permeate the souls of men and women if race-

related conversations are to have a fresh beginning. While the *Manual* states that the denomination “acknowledge[s] that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and to overcome all personal, institutional and structural prejudice,”¹⁶¹ the work is found not in the acknowledgment of an idea but in living out a life of holy love.

Interview sessions based upon Paragraph 915

The Church of the Nazarene's *Manual* guides its polity, with the most recent update on discrimination made in 2017. Although the policy statement on Discrimination is well-written, there is no teaching guide to unpack the deeper truths of the church's position. The interviews provide reflection and insight into the *Manual* statement by sharing personal experiences and opinions. The voices of practitioners and leaders are all Nazarenes in the USA/Canada Region. The interviews will cover six topics the author assigned to *Manual* ¶915.

During USA/Canada leaders' department meetings, USA/Canada Regional Director, Dr. Tom Nees (2003-2008) frequently emphasized that “The Church of the Nazarene is a connectional system.” The artifact established significant connections with Black Nazarene leaders who served the church in various roles, including pastors, directors of compassionate ministry centers, district superintendents, and university chaplains. Additionally, two White leaders who held positions as General Superintendent and Human Rights pioneer in Southern California were included in the discourse. The artifact's purpose is to aid a future audience within the USA/Canada Region concerning culture, theology, practice, and faith.

The *Manual*, which is celebrated and updated every four years, unites the global community. Ministers, called by God to vocational ministry, are committed to “know,” “be,” and

¹⁶¹ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual* 2023, 401.

“do” for the cause of Christ. A significant statement in ¶915 emphasizes the importance of this implementation plan for advancing race-related discussions: “We urge our churches everywhere to continue strengthening education programs to promote racial understanding and harmony.”¹⁶² This study provides a framework for discussing race based on agreed theological principles. While systemic racism is a complex topic eliciting deep subjective responses, the Church of the Nazarene addresses it with commitment. During ordination services at district assemblies, the theme song, *Holiness unto the Lord*, is sung, with the chorus proclaiming: “Holiness unto the Lord is our watchword and song.” It is hoped that all individuals will embrace the truths within this document to address and heal systemic racism.

Recorded interviews

To help provide clarity, the artifact will provide recordings of online interviews. The aim is to host the interviews as a series of podcasts hosted by the USA/Canada Regional website, where it can be linked to students learning at Nazarene Theological Seminary, seven Nazarene universities, the Nazarene Bible College, and seventy-eight Nazarene districts in the USA/Canada Region. If the USA/Canada Region provides space on its website, then space could be provided to add a bibliography of books that will inform race-related conversations. A bibliography resource would be the first of its kind since ministers are seldom asked to read literature on race-related issues in ministerial preparation.

Each episode will have a declared purpose with its roots nested in the dissertation. Following introductions, guest responders will be asked to respond to the topic related to ¶915 and biblical texts that apply to the topics. Most responders will be African American pastors and

¹⁶² Ibid., 400.

leaders residing in the USA/Canada Church of the Nazarene Region. The interviews will be one-hour sessions.

Inviting guest responders to the discussion makes it possible to keep the heaviness of the topic manageable. Providing a platform where African American voices lead the discussions is equally important. The interviews will serve as a way of modeling a better way of incorporating Black voices and experiences into the denomination's story. Since no resources are available to guide our pastors on a theological discussion of race, it is hoped that the church will request the creation of such resources.

The Church of the Nazarene has provided through its *Manual* ¶915, and it is a solid foundation. The concern is that conversations quickly become anecdotal without an investment of resources. Without the guardrails of biblical theology, a group could fall into the pit of shortsighted notions and opinions. The *Manual* serves as the voice of authority for the Global Church of the Nazarene. (See Appendix 1 for a copy of *Manual* ¶915.)

Interview Outlines

The outline below describes how the six sessions will be organized and structured. Two to three discussion leaders will be invited to participate. The author will be responsible for hosting, recording, and editing the interviews. The goal is to present the project to a host landing page. This educational work aims to promote racial unity and harmony within the church.

Session 1 (¶915, par 1) “The Church of the Nazarene reiterates its historic position of Christian compassion for people of all races. We believe that God is the Creator of all people, and that of one blood are all people created.”¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Purpose or Objective: This content examines the concept of *imago Dei*. Wesleyans uphold the teaching and tradition that associates the *imago Dei* with the love of God. The interview delves into how the holiness tradition can encompass African American theology, particularly highlighting all individuals' inherent dignity and sacredness. While Wesley emphasized the soteriological aspect of the term, this interview seeks to understand the scarcity of references connecting the *imago Dei* to the value and dignity of humankind.

Theme: the *imago Dei*.

Stipp Dissertation: The *imago Dei* (Chapter 2, pages 77-90)

Facilitators: (possibly) J. C. and M. W.

Manual phrase: Christian compassion for all races. God is the Creator of all people.

Scripture: Genesis 1:26-27

Questions:

- A. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
- B. Read through Genesis 3. What is the effect of sin upon the image of God and the actions and attitudes toward others?
- C. In what ways has race affected the Church?
- D. How has racism affected society?
- E. How are individuals affected by racism?
- F. The literal image of God is unknown. What do you understand about the being made with the nature of God?

Session 2 (§915, par 2) “We believe that each individual, regardless of race, color, gender, or creed, should have equality before law, including the right to vote, equal access to educational

opportunities, to all public facilities, and to the equal opportunity, according to one's ability, to earn a living free from any job or economic discrimination."¹⁶⁴

Purpose or Objective: This session will review Nazarene's history of race relations. The paragraph notes that there is an understanding of equality and freedoms based upon "one's ability." Recently, 2025 politics has removed the language of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Attendance of Black worshippers in the US Nazarene churches have decreased by 50% in the last decade, a case could be made for the need to implement a pipeline for training and communication.

Theme: Nazarene's history of race relations

Stipp Dissertation: Individual rights and equality introduced in the 1956 and 1964 *Manuals* and Hofstad's Individualism discussion. (Chapter 1, pages 29-40; Chapter 2, pages 65-69)

Facilitator: (possibly) B. W.

Insert: Hofstad charts from dissertation

Manual phrase: Each individual should have equality before the law . . . equal opportunity

Scripture: Exodus 3. *I have seen their misery*

Questions:

- A. What are some biblical examples of oppression? In your opinion, can you cite examples of oppression in the Church of the Nazarene?
- B. The dissertation uses terms like systematic racism and White supremacy. As a historian, do these terms describe the Church of the Nazarene?

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

- C. The civil rights laws of the 1960s happened a generation ago. What do you recognize as progress since the 1960's? What do you see that still needs to be addressed?
- D. How do you see your writing represented within the denomination?
- E. As of 2022, 257 Black and multicultural churches are in the USA/Canada Region (100 Black churches and 157 multicultural churches). What suggestions would you have for experiencing renewal and growth?
- F. The *Manual* uses the phrase “equality before the law . . . equal opportunity.” From your study of Nazarene history, how do those terms apply?

Session 3

(¶915, par 3) “We urge our churches everywhere to continue and strengthen programs of education to promote racial understanding and harmony. We also feel that the scriptural admonition of Hebrews 12:14 should guide the actions of our people. We urge that each member of the Church of the Nazarene humbly examine his or her personal attitudes and actions toward others, as a first step in achieving the Christian goal of full participation by all in the life of the church and the entire community.”¹⁶⁵

Purpose or Objective: This session aims to hear the heart of leaders actively serving on the frontlines of ministry. When reading the words “without holiness, no one will see the Lord,” how can these leaders unpack this understanding from their ministry assignments? A second objective is to explore how personal attitudes and actions are reflected in the mission of Jesus in their context but also in their observations of Nazarene structures.

Theme: How to bring health and healing to race relations.

Stipp Dissertation: The danger of White supremacy (Chapter 2 pages 71-76)

Facilitators: Irene Lewis-Wembley (Illinois) and James Hayword (Virginia)

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Insert: Fox News video clip¹⁶⁶

Manual phrase: Strengthen programs to promote racial understanding and harmony.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:12-14

Questions:

- A. Hebrews 12:12-14 was placed in the *Manual* in 1956. In your opinion, what are the best ways to practice peace?
- B. The USA/Canada Region is primarily composed of White leadership. What suggestions would you have to promote racial understanding and harmony?
- C. What ideas/suggestions might you have to get to know someone of another race
- D. Why do you suppose racial integration is so difficult?
- E. To what extent should the church address the community's social needs or “bless” the community?
- F. Compare these two scriptural ideas: “Without holiness, no one will see the Lord” and “A house divided against itself will fall.” What is our greatest strength in a holiness church, and what are our greatest challenges?

Session 4 (§915, par 4) “We reemphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We believe that Christian charity between racial groups or gender will come when the hearts of people have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one’s neighbor as oneself.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Fox News, “Salvation Army denies asking donors to 'repent' for their skin color,” (November 27, 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UtFkiFIP88>

¹⁶⁷ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual 2017-2021*, 393.

Purpose or Objective: To examine the influence of the experience of “heart holiness” on race relations, this section aims to investigate how being Spirit-filled can lead to the elimination of prejudice. The session will also delve into the significance and priorities of the Black Strategic Readiness Team (BSRT) and their response following the death of George Floyd in 2020.

Theme: A discussion of “holiness of heart and life” and prejudice attitudes

Stipp Dissertation: J. Kenneth Grider and BSRT Chapter 1 pages 36; 43-45)

Insert: BSRT paper (see Appendix 2) and Grider quote (Appendix 3)

Facilitators: David Solomon (New York), Charles Tillman (Virginia)

Manual phrase: We believe Christian charity will come when the hearts have been changed.

Scripture: Acts 10. Peter’s vision

Questions:

- A. Peter experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, and yet he had to have an Acts 10 experience to see that he was prejudiced. Describe how that is possible.
- B. Christian charity will come with hearts that are completely submitted to God. Can an entirely sanctified person be prejudiced?
- C. What does a safe place look like when a person is free to talk about race and racism?
How could the discussion of race cause or trigger trauma?
- D. What actions would you recommend for change for the local church (or denomination) that could strengthen racial equality?
- E. In Luke 10 Jesus provides the story of the parable of the Good Samaritan. How are prejudice and compassion described in the parable?
- F. To what extent is compassion connected with holiness?

Session 5

(¶915, par 5) “Therefore, we renounce any form of racial and ethnic indifference, exclusion, subjugation, or oppression as a grave sin against God and our fellow human beings. We lament the legacy of every form of racism throughout the world, and we seek to confront that legacy through repentance, reconciliation, and biblical justice. We seek to repent of every behavior in which we have been overtly or covertly complicit with the sin of racism, both past and present; and in confession and lament we seek forgiveness and reconciliation.”¹⁶⁸

Purpose or Objective: The objective is to learn from Jerry Porter, who extended an apology on behalf of the Church of the Nazarene and explore how that apology was not unanimously accepted or practiced by the Board of General Superintendents. Another objective is to discuss what it means for a denomination to express lament. What behaviors still exist in the movement that hurt race relations?

Theme: Get Honest with God

Stipp Dissertation: Jerry Porter’s Apology¹⁶⁹ (Chapter 2, pages 58-60)

Insert in email: Jerry Porter’s Apology from *Next Door and Down the Freeway*

Facilitators: Jerry Porter (Texas), Jamie Gates (California), and Belinda Robinson (Michigan)

Manual phrase: We lament the legacy of racism. We seek to repent of every behavior, with the sin of racism.

Scripture: Psalms 13, 44, 88

Questions:

- A. How is Porter’s Apology linked to reconciliation and lament?
- B. How does this section relate to your own racial history?
- C. Describe how Nazarenes can lament a legacy of racism.

¹⁶⁸ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual 2023*, 401.

¹⁶⁹ Wiseman, *Next Door and Down the Freeway*, 83-85.

- D. What behaviors have you witnessed that Christians should recognize as sin? Explain.
- E. Have you had experiences with systemic racism?¹⁷⁰
- F. How should Nazarenes respond if they believe repentance for slavery is unnecessary due to its distant past?

Session 6

(¶915, par 6) Further, we acknowledge that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and to overcome all personal, institutional and structural prejudice responsible for racial and ethnic humiliation and oppression. We call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized.¹⁷¹

Purpose or Objective: Discover recommendations for developing resources to help the Church of the Nazarene understand race-related conversations and teaching. Discuss the struggles and offer suggestions on overcoming prejudice within the church. The objective is to describe the work to be done. Explore when (working with youth on a college campus or systems within a church structure) it is appropriate to speak out when there is injustice.

Theme: Reconciliation and Take Action

Stipp Dissertation: Barna and the difficulty in reconciliation (Chapter 2, pages 69-70)

Facilitators: Antonio “Tone” Marshall (Illinois), Althea Taylor (Hawaii)

Insert: Barna Study¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 50.

¹⁷¹ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual 2023*, 401.

¹⁷² *Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension in America* (Ventura, CA Barna Group, May 5, 2016), <https://www.barna.com/research/black-lives-matter-and-racial-tension-in-america>

Manual: There is no reconciliation apart from struggle . . . We call on Nazarenes to seek forgiveness, reconciliation, and action.

Scripture: Acts 16:35-40. Paul and Silas' prison experience and John 17:21-23

Questions:

- A. Do you see apology to be a part of reconciliation? Explain.
- B. How is Paul's appeal to Rome part of his protest?
- C. Describe how you envision reconciliation taking place in the Church. Who makes the first move?
- D. What signs of progress have you seen that provide hope for reconciliation?
- E. In what ways can the message of reconciliation become short-circuited by news and social media?
- F. Read John 17:21-23. What is God's desire for his people?

Anticipation of participation

The idea of the interviews has been met with enthusiasm by people invited to share their thoughts. Many invited participants said "yes" enthusiastically, while others wanted more information. Some wanted to know how many people would be on the recording, the questions that would be proposed, and details on how the interviews could be distributed. One offered a caution that his ideas might be too extreme for the USA/Canada Region but welcomed the invitation despite initial reservations. One stated that he was not comfortable with podcast interviews, and several had schedule conflicts.

Planning for Zoom call recording sessions checklist:

1. Purchase a Zoom account so that a recording can fulfill the one-hour time commitment.

2. Email potential interviewees. (See Appendix 6 and 7)
3. Review the questions to be asked. Incorporate sections of the dissertation to be included in the discussion.
4. After the recordings, listen to the responses. Evaluate how the interviews aligned with the dissertation.
5. In what ways did the recordings strengthen and add to the dissertation?
6. In what ways did the recordings offer a differing perspective of the dissertation?

The interviewees will be Black and White Nazarene clergy, both men and women. The interviews will be recorded on a Zoom call, but the goal is to extract the audio files for distribution. Once all six interviews are completed, the author will contact Nazarene clergy colleagues to evaluate and provide feedback on the sessions. If the reviews are favorable and the dissertation is approved, the author will contact the USA/Canada region for broader distribution.

Posted Interview Sessions

Session 1: TBD.

Session 2: TBD

Session 3: Artifact section. The transcript is included in the body of the dissertation under the heading Artifact. The guest interviewees are Rev. Irene Lewis-Wembley and Rev. James Heyward.

Summary of session 3: The highlights of this session addressed Hebrews 12:14 “follow peace with all people.” There is a price to be paid for peace and harmony in the church. If there is to be racial harmony, White leadership must make room for training to make the denomination

“better” by sharing power. The session acknowledges the difficulty Nazarenes have to make space for “Black experiences” and searches for solutions asking who could lead the conversations that would bring peace. This is a transcript of session three as an artifact of the dissertation.

Session 4: The guest interviewees are Rev. David Solomon and Dr. Charles Tillman. Audio link: <https://gracenaz.sermon.net/22374533>.

Summary of session 4: Although there have been flickers of hope, Solomon and Tillman agree that expressions of holiness are not expressed evenly toward people of Color. Both leaders serve on the BSRT and agree that there has been incremental progress in conversations about race and express a need where Black leaders can express themselves freely. Both ministers discuss the value of Acts 10 noting that Peter became aware of his prejudice by a vision prompted by the Holy Spirit. The leaders concluded that it takes an education for the impact of racism to change.

Session 5: The guest interviewees are Dr. Jerry Porter, Dr. Jamie Gates, and Rev. Belinda Robinson. Audio link: <https://gracenaz.sermon.net/22374526>.

Summary of session 5: A major portion of the session revisited the actions of General Superintendent Jerry Porter in a 1998 conference in Oklahoma. Porter retold the story and added personal reflections. Both Jamie Gates and Belinda Robinson were personally impacted by an apology. Gates studied apartheid in South Africa and compared the racism in America with the racial struggles he witnessed and studied in an advanced degree. Robinson attended the conference in Oklahoma, and it had such a profound impact upon her, she became a Nazarene. The session also included a discussion on the importance of corporate lament stating that racism is one of the deepest social sins of the world.

Session 6: The guest interviewees are Rev. Althea Taylor and Rev. Antonio “Tone” Marshall.

Audio link: <https://gracenaz.sermon.net/22374511>.

Summary of session 6: This session provides a robust discussion of *Manual* ¶915 and acknowledged that to be in the world for God, it is essential to embody holiness in our being. When we are transformed by God, we die to self and place Christ as the center of all we say and do. Taylor and Marshall agreed that systems and structures are important, but to change a system, we must be rooted and grounded by the Holy Spirit. There is a brief discussion of Black Lives Matter but noted that there needs to be a priority on “real conversations” and develop “important relationships.” Changes will occur when people feel safe and added that how people relate to God is how they interact with people of Color.

The content analysis of this dissertation explored the history, theology, and polity of the Church of the Nazarene. By adding the artifact, the body of this work was strengthened. The artifact included conversations with several African American leaders in the Church of the Nazarene and two White leaders making a difference in race relations. The Zoom call recordings contributed several hours of discussions, providing additional depth, voice, and perspective to the agreed *Manual* ¶915.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This dissertation serves as a resource for racial conversations within the Church of the Nazarene context of the USA/Canada Region. The text and the artifact provide an innovative tool to understand the historical positions that have developed in the denomination's history. What is unique to the conversation is reflections of the church's *Manual* positions across its years of existence. Notably, many of the *Manual* changes reflect the timing of US cultural moods across the decades. In the future, it is hoped that resources can be developed for the local church regarding race-related issues that exist in the US. Without those resources, we are apt to continue to extend silence when conversations are needed.

There is also hope that new communication “form” and “function” with race relations can be developed. Specifically, while the Board of General Superintendents supports the Black Strategic Readiness Team “in the form,” it would be appropriate for the BSRT to play a more dominant role in its leadership. In other words, policies have been created by the BSRT, but the Church of the Nazarene leaders in the USA/Canada Region must provide a more prominent place of contribution for action by the region. The BSRT needs visibility for its recommendations; adding action steps would make the BSRT more effective.

Leslie Parrot once said that the worst thing that can happen to a neighborhood church is that it would be “ignored” by the community. This author contends that in a denomination, no minority wants to be ignored, and as the title states there is a “silent treatment” in the Church of the Nazarene instead of conversations. The term “silent treatment” could appear trite; therefore, the following was observed. At the 2024 National Black Nazarene Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, a few White denominational leaders attended. Of the seventy-eight districts in the

USA/Canada Region, only four district superintendents were present. The USA/Canada Regional leadership team sent a few representatives. No one represented the Board of General Superintendents. Only two representatives came from eight Nazarene colleges to meet with young Black high school and college students. And no literature was available from the denomination's publishing house. A case could be made that Black Nazarenes were ignored, and the mood among some of my Black friends believe their voices are not valued. Although the Church of the Nazarene wants to do better with race relations, the inactions from July 2024 communicated disinterest in the Black community.

In 1970, the Apollo 13 spacecraft had an electrical problem that could have been a fatal disaster. Craft commander Jim Lovel sent a communication to Mission Control with an oft-quoted understatement: "Houston, we've had a problem . . ." ¹⁷³ Similarly, the Church of the Nazarene has had and continues to have problems with race relations.

A question was asked in chapter one. Is there structural racism in the Church of the Nazarene? Based on this body of research and current observations, the response is "yes." Along with that answer is an admonition to increase communication. If the church desires to make a lasting change, communication must be strengthened. Relationship-building through casual conversations is part of establishing trust, community, and endorsement. Thankfully, there was denominational funding for the Black conference in 2024. However, the White majority holds power in policy and key denominational positions. It would behoove the denominational leaders to forge new pathways in overcoming White supremacy. Black and Brown sisters and brothers deserve our best encouragement and appreciation for their faithful service and partnership in

¹⁷³ (*Encyclopedia Britannica* "Apollo 13") <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Apollo-13-mission>

ministry. No one, no matter what age, wants to be ignored. Instead, as a Nazarene movement, there must be an investment in creative ways to include more voices at the conversation table to make the church stronger and more viable.

The problem statement of this dissertation describes disconnect. *Should a Wesleyan understanding of perfect love, when appropriately defined and applied to personal experience, also include perfect love toward racial attitudes and conversations?* In the name of holy love, may the Church of the Nazarene actively see Black and Brown adherents. Creatively including Black and Brown leaders cannot be legislated in the *Manual*. One must see there is a need before lasting changes can take place. The paragraphs about race and discrimination in *Manual* ¶915 provide a useful framework for local church conversations and applications. In that paragraph, the Global Church of the Nazarene is encouraged to provide teaching resources and training. But truth be told, it is doubtful that Appendix paragraphs will be taught in classrooms or referenced from pulpits. Those paragraphs can easily be ignored and forgotten.

What was proclaimed in 1940 by C. Warren Jones still holds today. To paraphrase his remarks would sound something like this: When it comes to race relations, we have done poorly. We have a few and very few Black churches, and there are 48,300,000 people who identify as Black in the United States. We have talked and promised ourselves to do something but that is as far as we have gotten. We seem to fail when it comes to consistency.

There is an excellent opportunity for the Church of the Nazarene to reach African Americans for Christ. Casting that vision into a reality will take investment and commitment by its leaders to become vulnerable, inquisitive, curious in reading literature, and confident with leaders already in place. History teaches and mirrors back to the church its reflection that careful study is needed to understand Black culture better.

A question was posed in the introduction: to what extent does the doctrine of perfect love apply to racial attitudes? This document referenced the teaching of theologian Grider that prejudice is learned behavior. That could be true. However, if prejudice is learned, the movement must provide proper teaching on race relations to overcome learned behavior. This author has not found it to be true that the holiness of heart and life will end racial tensions even though the *Manual* states, “We believe that Christian charity between racial groups or gender will come when the hearts of people have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ, and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one’s neighbor as oneself.”¹⁷⁴ In the artifact interview, District Superintendent Althea Taylor said that if there is to be change in the church, we must begin in paragraph three. Briefly, the third paragraph discusses a holy heart filled with love that will end racial tensions. The sixth paragraph is one of action that includes removing structures of prejudice and taking actions toward empowering the marginalized. Taylor said:

I think it's important to recognize sometimes how we compartmentalize things in our minds. The church and Christians often are about ‘doing.’ We do a lot of things; we're busy and we don't necessarily feel as though we're being productive, or we're being Christians if we're not busy doing. I think there's a line that we need to draw from paragraph six to paragraph three. The third paragraph talks about the fact that Christians emphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We can only do these things that we're talking about in the 6th paragraph; out of a place of being and out of a place of right living. You can legislate behavior, but the legislation of behavior does not stick. I'm not saying that we don't need to have legislation. I think we do. But it will only begin to stick when it comes out of what has happened in a heart that has experienced transformation.¹⁷⁵

Through the experience of entire sanctification and perfect love, lasting changes can be made.

The denomination will be judged not for its belief statements but more for its outcomes. In

¹⁷⁴ *Manual, Church of the Nazarene*, 2023. 400-401.

¹⁷⁵ Althea Taylor, District Superintendent, interview by author, Zoom interview, February 24, 2025.

theology, it is not enough to declare that the *imago Dei* is the foundation of perfect love. Perfect love must be lived out by speaking out when there is injustice. Historically, the Church of the Nazarene has not spoken about racial issues throughout its first century. Therefore, the conclusion is an appeal to Nazarene leaders to ponder the benefits of speaking truth where there is injustice. Simply stating and restating Wesleyan doctrinal truths has not changed the culture.

Without key voices of theologians and denominational leaders to address justice matters in the US, Nazarene laity and clergy will likely be aligned with social media pundits whose influences are dangerous. Only the Lord can open the eyes of leaders to see the need so that racism can be openly and willingly confronted. There is “value added” with diversity and inclusion that strengthens an organization. To make long and lasting changes, boldness and imagination are needed from the academies of higher education and congregational health and growth. But if there is to be heartfelt change based upon the experience of perfect love, the institution itself must lament unhealthy racism practices in its history and current structures.

The challenge of a predominantly White-led institution is that it is nested in an individualist culture. Based on the Hofstede model, US culture is the most individualist culture in the world. As a result, it appears the movement has grown comfortable with a small representation of African American members. The USA/Canada Region invites minority cultures to join the church, but there is little change in church polity to incorporate minorities for District and General Assembly representation. When the polity practices are left alone, the church will continue to participate in White supremacy. Saad defines White supremacy as “A racist ideology that is based upon the belief of White superiority. It is an attitude, a way of thinking and extends

to how systems and institutions are structured to uphold White dominance.”¹⁷⁶ Individualism is woven into the fabric of the US and the denomination's mentality. The interview with James Heyward and Irene Lewis-Wembley mentioned as a cautionary side note and asked what if the Board of General Superintendents speak ex cathedra when considering the influence of race. Most position statements published by the BGS's website are in close alignment with the *Manual*.

When individuals in White Nazarene congregations do not see the need to participate in lament for past racial tensions, then it is likely that biblical justice will not be understood or practiced. Nazarenes believe that original sin is personal, and few understand the corporate nature of original sin. Therefore, when it is encouraged to lament racism, “Whiteness” becomes a stumbling block. It is difficult for someone to lament something without recognizing that something is wrong. In the interview with Porter, Gates and Robinson, it was said that racism is the deepest sin and one that is practiced throughout the world. Lament becomes a preamble for what we do to tear down the walls of racism. That is why the artifact of this dissertation is important for future adaptation. By listening to the voices of African American leaders, the church can better understand why there is a need for race-related conversations.

At the time of this writing, the tensions of race have subsided since George Floyd's death in 2020. The Black Strategic Readiness Team came together after the death of Floyd to help the denomination form a response. To summarize the findings from the interview in the artifact, there was a desire for meaningful conversations and financial considerations. The work of the BSRT brought key Black Nazarene leaders together. They formed statements and felt

¹⁷⁶ Saad, *Me and White Supremacy*, 12.

empowered to guide the USA/Canada region. And yet there was an absence of conversation with White leaders discussing with Black leaders what solutions would benefit the denomination. The communication pattern established by church leaders with the BSRT was symbolic at best. Unfortunately, continuing conversations have not taken place. Financial observation follows a historical pattern of the denomination. The Black leadership recognizes that mission resources continue to be invested in global mission areas. The financial investment of mission work outside the US is a painful reminder that African Americans are a minority in the Church of the Nazarene. The BSRT represent a population that desires resources in reaching the forty million African Americans living in the US.

Discussions about race must be utilized during times of peace, rather than as immediate solutions during periods of racial tension. Resources should include books, articles, and research papers indicating that ministry leaders are lifelong learners. There is a glaring lack of resources and instruction about race relations in the Church of the Nazarene. Race-related conversations are not part of the course of study for ministers. Most African American ministerial students are often not exposed to Black theology and racial diversity from theologians and instructors. It is essential to carefully consider methods for enhancing communication and preparing ministry resources for individuals within the Black diaspora.

The artifact illustrates by example the value, depth, and wisdom current Black leaders could provide for the region. This resource shows the value of how additional communication through a podcast could inspire additional media programs that could be developed for the USA/Canada Region. For instance, it would be profitable to host interviews on additional topics that are not currently discussed by the region, including immigration, gun violence, morality, “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion,” and human trafficking.

The question remains: Who shall be the person or entity to speak up when the region seeks direction? When Dr. Jerry Porter apologized on behalf of the Board of General Superintendents, his apology was not endorsed or practiced by other members of the BGS. But it should be remembered that in 2012, President Barack Obama addressed the US about his support of gay marriage. The next day, May 10, 2012, the Nazarene Newsletter (NCN News) issued an open letter to the denomination and highlighted the Church of the Nazarene's *Manual* statement on human sexuality. In its history, the church has had moments when it has spoken swiftly and clearly. In 2012, the issue was moral, and this study of race relations calls for a centralized voice to speak truth to culture in race relations.

It is worthy of future study to determine what entity truly has the voice of authority in the Church of the Nazarene. The General Assembly can edit and change the *Manual* every four years. The General Board creates policies and actively supports the mission of Global leaders. The Board of General Superintendents has authority to ordain ministers and has authority over Regional Directors and District Superintendents. The Nazarene colleges, universities, and seminaries have the authority to educate students under Nazarene theology and doctrines. Future discussions should explore who is responsible for addressing social needs and facilitating race-related conversations.

It is recommended that the Board of General Superintendents and USA/Canada Regional leaders read and recommend books by Black authors. Young Black Nazarenes must have a place to address national matters with swiftness. The USA/Canada Region can provide the BSRT with the authority to advise, lead, and communicate beyond a memo.

Historian Nazarene Brandon Winstead influenced this dissertation. The church had always encouraged African Americans to join the Nazarene movement when there was

agreement to Wesleyan holiness theology. In essence, the majority “White church” invited the “minority” to join what was already in progress. The majority of White Nazarene churches continue to be a dominant culture with the expectation that Black minority culture must conform to what already was in existence. This author recommends the denomination seek new ways of being intentionally diverse and inclusive.

Future implications

Racism in the US has many layers of painful and complicated history that started with slavery in 1611. Race relations in the United States have been marked by significant events such as the Civil War in the nineteenth century and the Jim Crow era in the twentieth century, which included the Civil Rights marches of the 1960s. In the twenty-first century, the White majority church continues to watch silently as Black minorities are pushed to the margins. The White majority must become caring enough to see and respond when there are inequities. When someone of Color is incarcerated and not treated with equal treatment in the courts, in the streets, and the community, the church should express outrage. George Floyd died in 2020. His death occurred during an encounter with a White police officer. As a holiness denomination, the sacredness of human life must be remembered. Holiness churches and their adherents must know that holy love includes every person bearing *imago Dei*. The foundation of the image of God is love; therefore, we must speak and act out of love. There must not be silence in perfect love for African Americans seeking justice.

There is no road map for reconciling race relations in the Nazarene movement. It will take time for the new Black leaders to be included in creating lasting changes in race relations and conversations on the local, district, and regional levels. Only through God's grace will change occur so that the Nazarenes see, celebrate, and incorporate every person as *imago Dei*.

This dissertation briefly examined the number of worshippers in Black congregations, which has declined more than 50% in the last decade (2013-2023). That fact is a stark reminder of the seriousness of this work that needs to be done to strengthen race relations in the Church of the Nazarene. Future studies might include racial representation of Nazarene institutions in the US and Canada. An analysis could evaluate the hiring practices at regional colleges, universities, the seminary, the publishing house, and the Global Ministry Center to determine if there are policies in place that promote equity and inclusion within the institution. Hiring practices should be explored throughout the USA/Canada Region.

Potential studies should also include the work done by smaller sister holiness denominations in the US. It bears repeating that the work of Emmerson and Smith profoundly impacted the Free Methodists, the Salvation Army, and the Wesleyan Church. There are easy-to-find web articles, podcast programming, and reporting of General Superintendent voices weighing in on hot-topic issues. The reporting from the sister holiness groups includes racially diverse responders of men and women. These holiness groups have modeled that policies and practices can be communicated through media and written policy statements.

The introduction asked why there is silence regarding racial matters in the Church of the Nazarene. Although it may be viewed as shortsighted, remaining silent is often the simplest course of action. Choosing silence does not necessitate any changes or the offering of prayers of lamentation. A silent response allows an institution, like the Church of the Nazarene, to continue to propagate a message of holiness without investigating and working through the implications of racism. The church and its adherents need to see and hear the impact of its silence. In summary, the following sections are intended to encourage future scholars:

To White readers

You are privileged because you are White, and doors of opportunity open wider for White people. When you see signs that *Black Lives Matter*, it is not a sign to say that the White lives do not matter. When Althea Taylor said, “My life matters. I am Black. So I would like to think that my Black life matters to God and to you.” It is important to be seen. The God of Hagar, *El Roi*, sees the victimized. If you see a sign that reads, *Stop killing Black people*, think back to the history of Jim Crow segregation and lynching; even though you personally were not involved in harassment and brutality, these days are our Jim Crow days. If Black life mattered, perhaps we can agree as White people to stop supporting a culture that assumes White people are good and need to be protected from Black folks.

As a White minister, it is a privilege to be a part of the first Black cohort at Nazarene Theological Seminary in its Black Leadership and Ministry program. This doctoral program has introduced Black authors who spoke of trauma, rich traditions, and overcoming grace. May God help the Church of the Nazarene go beyond token representation by inviting guest Black speakers to conferences or vocalists to lead worship. May the church’s thinking expand to consider that Black voices can be included in what we believe about holiness and the *imago Dei*. We must come together and offer opportunities for Black brothers and sisters.

To Black readers

Thank you for all you have endured for the cause of Christ. The history of the Church of the Nazarene tells stories of many painful anecdotes. Nazarenes have attempted to “get it right” by starting a Black district and a Black Nazarene college. Thank God for the gifted and godly men and women who were raised up for the sake of the Kingdom of God. I hope you see that

White people in this country are susceptible to the cultural norms of individualism and lead in a way that is sometimes the opposite of collectivism. We will likely continue to struggle unless dramatic changes are made in the church's power structure. I interviewed Rev. Larry Lott, a Black inner-city pastor in Kansas City and asked him what drew him to the Church of the Nazarene, and without hesitation, he said, "Brother Mike, it is the message of holiness. When God sanctified me, he filled me with love. I know there are challenges with race in the church. But this is the place God has called me." Lott proclaimed how he experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace. His testimony will sound familiar to many of you. God has called you to be an essential part of our tribe. Thank you for your patience and grace; we need your voice, wisdom, and direction.

Time and space parameters limited some of the profound stories of African American Nazarene influencers of the twentieth century. Rev. Charles Johnson, an elder in the Church of the Nazarene, was a Civil Rights leader in Mississippi during the 1960s. His story is a tribute to those who exemplified holiness behavior despite the challenging situations and structures of his city and race relations in the denomination. Johnson was not afraid to speak up and speak out on social justice issues. The Church of the Nazarene did not endorse protests of the 1960s, but it should be noted that Nazarene leaders did not prevent Johnson from speaking out.¹⁷⁷

In 2011, my family moved to central Illinois so my wife could serve as an Assistant Professor at Illinois State University in Normal. The President of ISU at that time was Dr. Al Bowman, the son of Clarence Bowman. Clarence Bowman was the dean of students at the West Virginia Institute and later transitioned to teach at the Nazarene Bible College. Clarence

¹⁷⁷ Chet Bush, *Called to the Fire: The Story of Dr. Charles Johnson* (Nashville, Tn: Abingdon Press, 2012)

Bowman was a gifted teacher, but most importantly, he left a legacy of modeling grace and holy living. My point is that the Church of the Nazarene has been surrounded by gifted and godly “eagles.” These pioneers of faith exemplified perfect love in character and conduct. Our history is filled with exemplary godly women and men; now, we must celebrate their contribution to the Church of the Nazarene movement.

To students and researchers

When I began this doctoral program, I was thinking of the future church. Please know that when you experience the holy fire of Entire Sanctification, the Holy Spirit in you can become like a fire in your bones. As you seek and experience perfect love, become sweet and bold. Speak the truth when there is injustice in the neighborhood and love people. Embrace the poor and marginalized and get to know their names. Perfect love is an amazing experience! May that experience be celebrated in your character and conduct.

The challenges seem steep. Social media captures the attention of its audience, including some of the godliest people in the local church. The most vulnerable to social media reporting are the ones who tithe, carry Bibles, and pray. Many good people are misled by social media so profoundly that they are upset and disillusioned with culture. Extra effort is needed as you prepare your heart and mind to minister to those who become misled and vulnerable.

Next steps for the author

Deep-seated attitudes and fears associated with systemic racism are rooted and embedded in cultures throughout the world. Although this paper is written from a US perspective, the principles in this dissertation would be valuable for any group of people of color that has sensed they were “invisible” to a dominate culture. From a pastor’s perspective, please know you are

visible in the eyes of God. May *El Roi* make His presence real to you. And if you are in a position of leadership, may you sense the call of God upon your own heart and life to pick up this torch of light and use this resource in fulfillment of your calling to lead conversations in the classrooms. As I dream about how the Lord might use this body of work to address systemic racism, I hope that it would be beneficial in institutions of higher education. There is an earnest cry among young people to discover gateways to see the world of oppression and address racial disparities. This work has the potential to influence young people of the majority culture to become antiracist. When it comes to racial matters, silence is not our friend. Silence and inaction only deepen the *status quo*.

I settled some questions early in ministry to follow the Lord's calling upon my life. I hope to continue that same kind of obedient life into my retirement years. I want to implement this body of work in praxis. I intend to build upon communication opportunities and offer race-related conversations through podcasts. It would be interesting to build bridges with sister holiness groups and learn from some of their successes. Partnering with sister holiness denominations could expand the pipeline of Black ministers needed in the Church of the Nazarene. If there are opportunities to speak, teach, or write prophetically, I am confident this body of work will serve as a foundation for any future endeavor. Can we in the holiness movement continue a path where silence is valued over justice? God's holy love calls us to be set apart to voice His concern for the oppressed with courage.

Those who follow the Wesleyan Holiness tradition must preach that God, who is the essence of love and prevenient grace, invites us to recognize that love is the essence of the *imago Dei*. From hearts made pure through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, may we see Black and Brown people as God sees and hears them. As a holiness denomination, we are called to serve

the least and the lost and practice lament in our ongoing communication struggles. May we come to understand that the same God who has called us to serve has also called us to include our Black and Brown leaders.

May the Holy Spirit shape the heart and life of Nazarenes. May members of holiness churches have racial attitudes more profoundly shaped by the *imago Dei* than any media source or news program. The message of holiness is filled with optimistic hope. May the Lord help the church create new structures of communication and fairness in hiring practices. May the silence be lifted, and may godly leaders speak when there is injustice, as we love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: *MANUAL* Paragraph 915

¶915. **Discrimination.** The Church of the Nazarene reiterates its historic position of Christian compassion for people of all races. We believe that God is the Creator of all people, and that of one blood are all people created.

We believe that each individual, regardless of race, color, gender, or creed, should have equality before law, including the right to vote, equal access to educational opportunities, to all public facilities, and to the equal opportunity, according to one's ability, to earn a living free from any job or economic discrimination.

We urge our churches everywhere to continue and strengthen programs of education to promote racial understanding and harmony. We also feel that the scriptural admonition of Hebrews 12:14 should guide the actions of our people. We urge that each member of the Church of the Nazarene humbly examine his or her personal attitudes and actions toward others, as a first step in achieving the Christian goal of full participation by all in the life of the church and the entire community.

We reemphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We believe that Christian charity between racial groups or gender will come when the hearts of people have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ, and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself.

Therefore, we renounce any form of racial and ethnic indifference, exclusion, subjugation, or oppression as a grave sin against God and our fellow human beings. We lament the legacy of every form of racism throughout the world, and we seek to confront that legacy through repentance, reconciliation, and biblical justice. We seek to repent of every behavior in which we have been overtly or covertly complicit with the sin of racism, both past and present; and in confession and lament we seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

Further, we acknowledge that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and to overcome all personal, institutional and structural prejudice responsible for racial and ethnic humiliation and oppression. We call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual 2017-2021*, 392-393.

Appendix 2: The Black Readiness Team Papers

Engagement with the Black Strategic Readiness Team July 2, 2020

The Black Strategic Readiness Team (BSRT) was established by the 1968 General Assembly (then named the “Black Council”) as a resource to help develop strong Black leadership and to guide the church regarding issues of race. Throughout the intervening years, they have worked tirelessly for the Black Church of the Nazarene in the United States. The names and faces of the Council have changed, but today, the members are second and third generation Nazarenes who have a deep love and commitment to the message of scriptural holiness and the Church of the Nazarene.

Organized by the BSRT and supported by the USA/Canada Region, a National Black Nazarene Conference meets bi-annually and celebrates the life and work of the numerous Black Churches of the Nazarene in the United States and Canada. Desiring to enhance the commitment of the denomination to Black Nazarenes and their communities, the Board of General Superintendents has been specifically engaged for the last 18 months in strategic planning and prayer with the BSRT. Additional funding has been provided to Black ministries to help foster real and lasting change for the future of the church.

Addressing systemic issues of injustice is not a comfortable exercise because it requires us to reflect upon ways we may have contributed to the problem. The current conversations around racism in the United States, and around the world, call us to a time of self-examination.

The Church of the Nazarene has made clear our statement on discrimination in *Manual* 915. The highest governing body of the Church of the Nazarene, the General Assembly, added the following paragraphs to the statement during its most recent meeting in 2017:

Therefore, we renounce any form of racial and ethnic indifference, exclusion, subjugation, or oppression as a grave sin against God and our fellow human beings. We lament the legacy of every form of racism throughout the world, and we seek to confront that legacy through repentance, reconciliation, and biblical justice. We seek to repent of every behavior in which we have been overtly or covertly complicit with the sin of racism, both past and present; and in confession and lament we seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

Further, we acknowledge that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and to overcome all personal, institutional, and structural prejudice responsible for racial and ethnic humiliation and oppression. We call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized.

This is a powerful statement that calls the church to action. The biblical message of holiness challenges us not only to examine our hearts but to assume corporate responsibility to speak

against and proactively reject any systems or structures that oppress our brothers and sisters in Christ, including those that may exist in the church.

In light of recent events in the USA and other parts of the world, the BSRT is renewing its mandate to help guide the church to take actions that will strengthen our fellowship and witness. The BGS joins with the BSRT in this prophetic call to action. Click [here](#) for the action steps recommended by the BSRT. May God help us to live out the message of holiness, individually and corporately, reflecting on where we have come, and with holy boldness be filled with the Spirit's power to embrace God's vision for reconciliation and healing in the world.

– **Board of General Superintendents**¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ USA/Canada Region, Church of the Nazarene, *Engagement with the Black Strategic Readiness Team*. Lenexa, KS: Nazarene Resources, July 2, 2020. <https://resources.nazarene.org/index.php/s/MbZasZ54rJsTBc2>

Action Steps Recommended by the Black Strategic Readiness Team

[Link from Black Strategic Readiness Team, Action Steps July 2, 2020]

Action Steps:

As we continue to pray and ask God to guide us in this process, we believe, as a holiness people, that we are called and prepared for action.

We, hereby, recommend the following action steps as we engage in longer-term planning.

USA/Canada Region:

1. The Board of General Superintendents (BGS), the General Board members of the USA/Canada Region, and the District Superintendent's Advisory Committee (DSAC) welcome, support, and facilitate honest conversations with church leaders at every level about the residual effects of systemic racism in the Church of the Nazarene.
2. It is our desire to see a regional office that reflects the diversity of the region, including the 40 million Blacks in the population. We encourage the hiring of a Black or Brown individual to serve in the regional office to help develop and enact recruiting practices that intentionally seek out Black and Brown candidates. In addition, this individual would partner with the Multicultural Ministries director to be a voice and advocate and serve as an expert resource consultant to the districts.
3. We encourage the BGS and the USA/Canada regional director to prayerfully consider, make informed decisions, and include qualified Black and Brown individuals to fill district superintendent vacancies, appointments, and interim assignments.

District:

1. We encourage district leadership to provide ongoing anti-racism and cultural diversity training with follow-up and accountability for all local pastors and leaders. We recommend that this training be led by a qualified person of color, preferably from outside the district.
2. It is our desire that district leadership reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the district that it serves. While this cannot be legislated, there can be creative and intentional actions taken with vacancies and non-voting members.
3. District leadership is encouraged to intentionally develop relevant action steps aimed at increasing the presence of Black leaders and churches of color that reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the population of the geographic region of the district. This may include recruiting or retaining a Black Ministries coordinator.

Local Church:

1. We prayerfully encourage pastors and congregations to intentionally address the structural inequality and/or systemic challenges faced by Black and Brown people.
2. We encourage pastors and local church boards to promote and encourage intercultural activities and conversations to cultivate mutual understanding and fellowship.

3. We encourage pastors and congregations to seek opportunities to exchange pulpits with Black and Brown ministers who are in harmony with the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness.
4. We encourage local leadership to develop a plan to reflect the diversity of the community at large and provide resources and support ministry in the local community.
5. We encourage pastors and congregations to promote and provide a platform for open dialogue on racism with children, youth, and young adults.
6. We encourage all pastors and churches to open their doors to community forums that address their community's racial disparities (i.e. health, economics, education, etc.).

Black Pastors and Leaders:

1. We encourage Black pastors and leaders to emphasize and support parishioners to exercise their right to vote both in the church and in the community.
2. We encourage our pastors to seek opportunities to exchange pulpits with Anglo pastors and other Black and Brown ministers who are in harmony with the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness.
3. We encourage our pastors to seek opportunities to preach about racial harmony, justice, and proper response to unjust treatment within a Wesleyan-Holiness framework.
4. We encourage our pastors and churches to open their doors to community forums that address their community's racial disparities (i.e. health, economics, education, etc.).
5. We encourage Black pastors, church leaders, and parishioners to participate in district and general church activities throughout the year.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ USA/Canada Region, Church of the Nazarene, *Action Steps Recommended by the Black Strategic Readiness Team*, Lenexa, KS: Nazarene Resources, July 2, 2020.
<https://resources.nazarene.org/index.php/s/J4WLip85ezNdanY>

Statement Toward Racial Justice and Righteousness

Black Strategic Readiness Team - Church of the Nazarene USA/Canada, June 5, 2020

We, the Black Strategic Readiness Team of the Church of the Nazarene – USA/Canada Region, long to see our denomination better connect with and support Black communities, churches, and leaders throughout the United States and Canada. Be it known to all that we stand against racial injustice. We are personally affected and also caring for many who are affected by the recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. We acknowledge that their deaths represent many similar unjust and systematically unheard stories of unarmed Black and Brown people at the hands of those who are tasked to “protect and serve.” Words cannot adequately express our heartbreak for families, churches, communities, and all of humanity in this season of communal grief and urgency. A national outrage ensued that has rapidly spread across the nation and many parts of the world. “Enough is enough!” is the wearied outcry reverberating through the streets of our cities as protesters and allies call for change, not only against another incidence of racial injustice, but against the structures and systems that have historically and continuously devalued and marginalized the lives of Black and Brown people. Indeed, the historical sin of racism is very much a present reality and challenge for the church to address.

We are seeking more than a statement. The complex issues of racism are deeply ingrained in the fabric of our nation, and a mere statement does not alleviate the constant searing anguish Black families and communities continue to endure. As a denomination, the Church of the Nazarene heralds a message of holiness and transformation but tends to remain comfortable with the status quo as the calls for racial justice ring through our congregations and communities. We acknowledge those who recognize and empathize with our raw pain, and we recognize our denomination’s *Manual* statement against racial “discrimination.” However, this is a crucial moment for the Church of the Nazarene to make commitments toward real change. We sense the need to move toward prayerful, thoughtful, and expeditious action. Our denomination’s growth in righteousness and justice must not be separated. Let us take seriously the Word of the Lord spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6)*

We ask leaders and congregations in the Church of the Nazarene to commit to breaking the chains of racial injustice. Join us in both lament and advocacy:

We lament. We lament that racism continues to narrate the nation and negatively affect Christians’ imagination of what is possible. With the Psalmist, we cry out, “How long, O Lord?” We plead for the Holy Spirit to open calloused hearts and closed minds. We plead for the Holy Spirit to make the truth plain to those accustomed to finding their way around the Way of Jesus. Amidst this lament, we recognize that God has given human beings agency to participate in the Way forward and has empowered the church to bear witness to the kingdom of God here and now.

We stand. We stand with every church and pastor who continues to trumpet the call for true justice and peace. We stand in alignment with God’s heart for justice to set the oppressed free. (Luke 4:18)

We affirm. We affirm God's call to holiness of heart and life, which necessarily includes a commitment to racial justice. God chose the oppressed Hebrew community. God also identified with the oppressed people of Nazareth. We are called to illuminate the lives of people who have been systematically devalued in the United States. Affirming the significance of black lives is an essential way of resisting the evil fist of an unjust and prejudiced system that capitalizes on the suffering and death of Black people. We affirm that Black lives matter.

We call. We call on the church to welcome and support courageous conversations about race and take bold action against racism in America and the Church of the Nazarene. This includes reflection upon the way racial injustice may be linked to other forms of injustice and will take commitment and intentionality from all levels of our denomination.

We seek. We seek unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We seek the peace of our communities. We seek shalom for all, recognizing that we can no longer settle for false notions of amity and reconciliation. True peacebuilding requires the uncomfortable work of unmasking and naming oppressive power structures as well as embracing the diligent work of change.

We, hereby, recommend the following immediate action steps as we engage in longer-term planning:

USA/Canada Region:

1. The Board of General Superintendents (BGS), the General Board members of the USA/Canada Region, and the District Superintendent's Advisory Committee (DSAC) welcome, support, and facilitate honest conversations with church leaders at every level about the residual effects of systemic racism in the Church of the Nazarene.
2. It is our desire to see a regional office that reflects the diversity of the region, including the 40 million Blacks in the population. We encourage the hiring of a Black or Brown individual to serve in the regional office to help develop and enact recruiting practices that intentionally seek out Black and Brown candidates. In addition, this individual would partner with the Multicultural Ministries director to be a voice and advocate and serve as an expert resource consultant to the districts.
3. We encourage the BGS and the USA/Canada regional director to prayerfully consider, make informed decisions, and include qualified Black and Brown individuals to fill district superintendent vacancies, appointments, and interim assignments.

District:

1. We encourage district leadership to provide ongoing anti-racism and cultural diversity training with follow-up and accountability for all local pastors and leaders. We recommend that this training be led by a qualified person of color, preferably from outside the district.
2. It is our desire that district leadership reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the district that it serves. While this cannot be legislated, there can be creative and intentional actions taken with vacancies and non-voting members.
3. District leadership is encouraged to intentionally develop relevant action steps aimed at increasing the presence of Black leaders and churches of color that reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the population of the geographic region of the district. This may include

recruiting or retaining a Black Ministries coordinator.

Local Church:

1. We prayerfully encourage pastors and congregations to intentionally address the structural inequality and/or systemic challenges faced by Black and Brown people.
2. We encourage pastors and local church boards to promote and encourage intercultural activities and conversations to cultivate mutual understanding and fellowship.
3. We encourage pastors and congregations to seek opportunities to exchange pulpits with Black and Brown ministers who are in harmony with the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness.
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3. We encourage our pastors to seek opportunities to preach about racial harmony, justice, and proper response to unjust treatment within a Wesleyan-Holiness framework.
4. We encourage our pastors and churches to open their doors to community forums that address their community's racial disparities (i.e. health, economics, education, etc.).
5. We encourage Black pastors, church leaders, and parishioners to participate in district and general church activities throughout the year.

May we move together toward racial justice and righteousness as we seek to bear witness to the kingdom of God here and now. May we move with faithfulness and urgency.¹⁸¹

Grace and peace,

Dr. Charles A. Tillman, Facilitator

Rev. John Wright

Rev. David Solomon

Dr. Sidney Mitchell

Dr. Montague Williams

Rev. Dianne Bonner

Rev. Althea Taylor

Min. Cassandra Trotman

¹⁸¹ USA/Canada Region, Church of the Nazarene, *Statement Toward Racial Justice and Righteousness by the Black Strategic Readiness Team*, Lenexa, KS: Nazarene Resources, July 2, 2020.
<https://resources.nazarene.org/index.php/s/B4aGqXa5sdefRGc>

Appendix 3: Excerpt from *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, by J. Kenneth Grider

One whole set of deficiencies we come by during this life, not nullified when the carnal mind is expelled at the time of our entire sanctification, is prejudices. Take racial prejudice. It is not inherited from Adam; we do not enter the world with it. We acquire it from our environment. The apostle Peter was prejudiced against Gentiles, and it obtained well after the time of his entire sanctification at Pentecost, as his initial reluctance to visit Cornelius demonstrated (see Acts 10). It required a special revelatory vision to convince him that he “should not call any man unholy or unclean” (Acts 10:28, NASB) and that “God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him” (vv. 34-35, NASB).¹⁸²

If Peter’s Pentecost did not rout his prejudice against Gentiles, . . . we may suppose that our Pentecost will not nullify such matters either. Prejudices against races, classes, and genders do not automatically varnish when one is sanctified wholly. They will be corrected under the continuing tutelage of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸³

¹⁸² J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 414.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Appendix 4: “Description of Original Sin” By John Wesley

Now, God had told him before, in the day that thou exist of the fruit, thou shalt surely die. And the word of the Lord cannot be broken. Accordingly, in that day he did die: he died to God, -- the most dreadful of all deaths. He lost the life of God: he was separated from him, in union with whom his spiritual life consisted. The body dies when it is separated from the soul; the soul, when it is separated from God. But this separation from God, Adam sustained in the day, the hour, he ate of the forbidden fruit. And of this he gave immediate proof; presently showing by his behavior, that the love of God was extinguished in his soul, which was now “alienated from the life of God.” Instead of this, he was now under the power of servile fear, so that he fled from the presence of the Lord. Yae, so little did he retain even of the knowledge of him who filleth heaven and earth, that he endeavored to “hide himself from the Lord God among the trees of the garden: (Genesis 3:8:) So had he lost both the knowledge and the love of God, without which the image of God could not subsist. Of this, therefore, he was deprived at the same time, and became unholy as well as unhappy. In the room of this, he had sunk into pride and self-will, the very image of the devil; and into essential appetites and desires, the image of the beast that perish.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ John Wesley, “The New Birth,” in *The Works of John Wesley, Third Edition Complete and Unabridged* XIV Vols., (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, reprint 1978) 67-68:vi.



After Charlottesville: Bigotry Denounced

The tragic and offensive events of Charlottesville are only the latest in a series of high profile killings across the world generated by deep selfish bigotry. Whether Barcelona, Paris, Brussels, or London in Europe, or in Asia, South America or other cities of North America we see in graphic and painful realism the effects of fallen human nature dominating and imposing itself on the innocent lives of others.

We are deeply saddened by the pain and hurt these heinous acts cause in the lives of untold numbers of family, friends, and communities. These violent behaviors cannot be allowed to desensitize us to the high calling of God to reflect love, generosity, acceptance and grace.

In the face of such tragedy, the church may naturally seek to express anger at the offense, sadness for the families of the victims, and challenge to meet the needs of those affected. In the midst of these responses, may we be most vigilant to the subtle influence of such extremism on the thinking of the church. May we see these acts for what they truly are – the human heart acting violently and selfishly in evil ways that attempt to assert ideology, religion, preference or power over others in indiscriminate abuse. Whether it is religious fanaticism, racial prejudice, political activism, or institutional dominance these are acts perpetrated at the impulse of the evil one who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy.

May the people of God rise up. May they declare the righteous call of our Holy God to a higher way of love and grace. May our voice be one of truth and one that both confronts offense and offers the hopeful vision of God's love and holiness.

Kevin Mannoia
Chair
www.HolinessAndUnity.org

Appendix 6: Sample email, Initial communication

Dear (name),

Greetings in the name of our Liberating Lord! I hope this email finds you in good health and experiencing the blessing of God's wonderful provisions.

I am a doctoral student at Nazarene Theological Seminary. I have devoted the last several years to studying race and race relations in the Church of the Nazarene. (. . . I still have so much to learn!) I am putting together six interviews to contribute to the discussion. And I want to invite you to be a guest on *one* of my future podcasts.

Purpose. The podcast's purpose will serve as an artifact for my dissertation, and I hope it will be a resource for local church pastors in the US and Canada. These six episodes will “strengthen education programs to promote racial understanding and harmony.” (*Manual* ¶915)

How the podcasts will be promoted: I am hoping the podcasts will one day be hosted on the USA/Canada regional website as a resource to all regional colleges, districts, and pastors. Paragraph 915 in our *Manual* guides the Church of the Nazarene on “Discrimination”. There are six sub-paragraphs in that section. And I have broken down each of those six sub-paragraphs with the following schedule:

1. ¶1 Imago Dei.
2. ¶2 Equal Opportunity regardless of race, color, gender, or creed.
3. ¶3. Racial understanding and harmony. Strengthen education programs.
4. ¶4 Charity between racial groups.
5. ¶5 Lament
6. ¶6. Reconciliation and what it means to take action.

My role in this is recording and editing the Zoom call. Then, make the recordings available as a six-session series. If you are willing to help me, I will provide questions in advance.

The session I invite you to discuss revolves around the final paragraph of *Manual* 915 (¶6. Reconciliation and what it means to take action.) Your words, wisdom and practice will make your contribution ideal for the topic. Please let me know if you are interested and I will then put together the schedule and let you know other people who will join our podcast session.

Many thanks,

Mike Stipp

Cell 309.445.XXXX Email: myname@outlook.com

Appendix 7: Sample email, Instructions for the Zoom call recording

Greetings (name),

Thank you so much for leaning in and assisting me with the artifact section of my dissertation from NTS. You likely have some questions about the interview. The title of my dissertation is THE SILENCE OF PERFECT LOVE: THE ABSENCE OF CONVERSATION AND CONFESSION OF RACISM IN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE.

There is encouragement from the denomination to develop resources that could help the Church of the Nazarene understand race and race-related conversations and teaching. The paragraph I am asking you to discuss is an integral part of my dissertation. At what point does prejudice become sin? We have struggled with this issue for decades as a church. Theologians do not include race relations in their understanding of holy living. One of the only theologians who spoke in addressing prejudice was Grider. He offers the line of thinking that Peter did not have his eyes opened to prejudiced notions in Acts 2, but it took a “God moment” in Acts 10 to open his eyes. Peter's experience with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 suggests we can't expect Nazarenes to recognize prejudice immediately after the sanctification experience. (Please see the attached document for Grider)

I will be asking you to share your responses to the questions I have provided. You are free to share Bible illustrations, opinions, and theological examples. The first day I entered the doctoral program, I was told that “really, no one will read your paper.” While that might be true, I hope this conversation might stir those who listen to ask for more conversations in the future. I hope God will bless it so that we in the Church of the Nazarene might turn a corner and have a new day in race-related conversations. I am hoping you can add insights as we discuss the BSRT. I am not aware of how the document and its proposals have or have not created changes in the USA/Canada Region.

The fourth paragraph in *Manual* Par 915 allows us to explore and promote racial harmony. But we also need to ask if “the holiness experience” creates love (charity) between the races to the point that “perfect love” is all we need.

Possible times for a Zoom call. (fill in time) If either of these days and times work, please let me know. My role is to serve as a facilitator of the conversation and edit the resource. Once I hear from both of you, I will send a Zoom link to record the session.

Again, thanks for the hour you will offer to me and many within the Church of the Nazarene.

Blessings,

Mike Stipp

Cell – 309.445.XXXX

Manual paragraph:

Purpose:

Theme:

Dissertation pages:

Insert:

Manual phrase:

Scripture:

Questions:

ARTIFACT

James Heyward and Irene Lewis-Wimbley discuss the 3rd paragraph of *Manual 915*

(¶915, par 3) We urge our churches everywhere to continue and strengthen programs of education to promote racial understanding and harmony. We also feel that the scriptural admonition of Hebrews 12:14 should guide the actions of our people. We urge that each member of the Church of the Nazarene humbly examine his or her personal attitudes and actions toward others, as a first step in achieving the Christian goal of full participation by all in the life of the church and the entire community

Overview

The discussion centered on the intersection of holiness, love, and racial harmony within the Church of the Nazarene. Irene Lewis-Wimbley emphasized the importance of radical love and good works, referencing Hebrews 10. James Heyward highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of peace beyond the absence of conflict, sharing personal experiences from his time in the Church of the Nazarene. Michael Stipp and Irene Lewis-Wimbley discussed the necessity of diverse leadership and the challenges of addressing racial issues, citing examples of systemic change and the impact of fear on church culture. The conversation concluded with a call for intentionality and long-term solutions to promote racial harmony and healing.

Action Items

- [] Develop a dialog workbook for churches to facilitate discussions on racism.
- [] Advocate for the church leadership to address issues of race and racism more directly and with courage, even in the face of potential backlash.
- [] Explore resources and strategies for promoting racial understanding and harmony within the church.
- [] Encourage local churches to intentionally diversify their leadership and make space for underrepresented voices.

Outline

Holiness and Love in Action

- Irene Lewis-Wimbley emphasizes that holiness cannot coexist with evil and injustice, and the goal is to discern what love looks like in every situation.
- Lewis-Wimbley references Hebrews 10, stating that radical love and good works are essential reflections of God's character.
- James Heyward discusses the definition of peace, suggesting it is more than the absence of conflict but a sense of wholeness and solidarity.

Defining Peace and Solidarity

- James Heyward shares a personal anecdote about his experience in the Church of the Nazarene, highlighting the lack of solidarity with African American churches.
- He argues that the definition of peace in the Church of the Nazarene often means the absence of conflict rather than true solidarity and wholeness.
- Irene Lewis-Wimbley agrees, stressing that holiness is about standing in solidarity with the marginalized, as exemplified by Jesus.
- Michael Stipp adds that holiness involves helping those who are struggling, making level paths for others to heal.

Promoting Racial Harmony

- Michael Stipp asks for suggestions on promoting racial harmony and understanding within the USA/Canada Region, which is primarily composed of white leadership.
- James Heyward suggests that having more diverse leadership can help address issues of race more effectively.
- Heyward shares an example of a white leader stepping down to make room for diverse leaders, which led to a more inclusive and effective mission.
- Irene Lewis-Wimbley emphasizes the importance of sharing power and having intentional conversations at the local church level.

Challenges and Opportunities in Addressing Racial Issues

- James Heyward discusses the challenges of addressing racial issues within the Church of the Nazarene, including the potential loss of support and resources.
- Stipp mentions the example of the Salvation Army's resource on racism, which was misinterpreted and led to backlash.
- Stipp shares his own experience of waiting to address George Floyd's death.
- James Heyward highlights the need for long-term solutions and the willingness to sacrifice for the kingdom ethic.

The Role of Fear and Emotions

- Irene Lewis-Wimbley discusses the role of fear in the church, noting that fear is a significant barrier to addressing racial issues.
- She emphasizes the importance of naming and addressing emotions, including fear, to move towards healing and reconciliation.

- James Heyward agrees, stating that the church often mirrors the culture's fear rather than challenging it.
- Both speakers stress the need for the church to be intentional in addressing racial issues and to choose love over fear.

Local Church Initiatives and Systemic Change

- James Heyward shares examples of local church initiatives that are making progress in addressing racial issues.
- He believes that local church efforts can lead to systemic change within the Church of the Nazarene.
- Irene Lewis-Wimbley agrees, emphasizing the importance of local church initiatives and the healing process for systems and institutions.
- Both speakers highlight the need for long-term, intentional efforts to address racial issues within the church.

The Importance of Intentionality and Healing

- Irene Lewis-Wimbley stresses the importance of intentionality in addressing racial issues, including the healing process for systems and institutions.
- She references her doctoral work on the healing process and the need for truth-telling, lament, confession, repentance, and repair.
- James Heyward agrees, noting that the church often mirrors the culture's fear rather than challenging it.

The Role of Leadership and Community

- James Heyward discusses the role of leadership in addressing racial issues, including the need for diverse leadership and mentoring.
- He shares an example of a white leader stepping down to make room for diverse leaders, which led to a more inclusive and effective mission.
- Irene Lewis-Wimbley emphasizes the importance of community and the need for the church to be a place where everyone feels welcome and valued.

The Impact of Systemic Issues

- James Heyward discusses the impact of systemic issues on addressing racial issues within the Church of the Nazarene.
- He mentions the challenges of addressing racial issues within the church, including the potential loss of support and resources.

- Irene Lewis-Wimbley emphasizes the importance of addressing systemic issues and the need for long-term, intentional efforts.

Recorded interview with James Heyward and Irene Lewis-Wembley, January 23, 2025

Michael Stipp: I appreciate you joining me. This is the first of six recordings that'll be part of an artifact. It'll be part of my dissertation through Nazarene Theological Seminary. The idea behind it is that rather than me studying some of the deficiencies of the denomination and some of the things that that Nazarenes have done to try to encourage voices of the African-American community, I thought, how about we just put together several hours of people just talking about their experiences . . . reflecting upon the *Manual* so that we can stay within that kind of a context.

Several years ago, at the loss of the life of George Floyd, I became burdened. I was burdened by the national response to his death, and I needed resources to assist in my local church. However, no resources were available to guide me as a pastor of a local congregation. And there weren't any resources. I wanted to do something. I wanted to do something that could open up more conversations about race relations and race conversations.

I will start with a little about your background. Irene, you are in Peoria, Illinois, right? You are at the Southside Community Center and a graduate of the Nazarene Bible College. You also have a master's degree from Olivet Nazarene University, and you're working on a doctorate at NTS. Is that right? Tell us what you do at the community center.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: Southside Community Center is a reconciliation space. I grew up in the Northwestern Illinois District. I am one of (from my count) four or maybe five African American pastors in the state of Illinois. But I grew up around the corner across the street from the Nazarene church, so my family and I have always been "the only" and "the firsts." I, too, struggle with the 2% black population in our statistics.

And I know a lot of folks who would make really great Nazarenes, but they're not going to become Nazarenes walking the path that I've walked. So, really, talking (with others) about (race to white friends) I'm often the only black person they know. If you can't talk to me, then we can talk too. Because we're called to be one. And there's some healing we have to do. I left social work and did trauma and attachment home visiting and parenting and helping individuals get some freedom. I am a natural child of an adopted family and adoption attachment trauma.

My life has been under the guidance of God to show me a path to healing for the church so that we can be one. And the truth is He will still set us free. So that's what we're working to do. But we go through parent support and education. We have a parent support group called MOMS, a "moms offering moms support" group, and a holistic discipleship space that helps moms with an open door for people to connect with the Southside Community Center at a point of need. Single moms need stuff and support, and so do their kids. Our other branch of programming is youth development, and we work with high-risk kids. But no, there's a lot of trauma. Kids who are struggling with a lot of trauma and have a lot of needs. So, we work through that. We do performing arts and healing through the performing arts, and our after-school program is called Freestyle Studios. In the summer, we do Leadership Academy. And Leadership Academy still

includes art and performing arts. So, we have a performance, like a talent show, every session. We're growing. We're not fulfilling the vision in my mind, but we're getting there, man. We're “a thing” and are six years old.

James Heyward: Congratulations.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: Yeah, so we're doing the thing. We're doing a lot of community organizing and discussing racism. We're in one of the two cities on the Illinois River that allowed black people to live—Peoria and Joliet. We are located in the red line zone. Folks get to see their first red line map when they hang out at Southside Community Center. So, when we talk about reconciliation, we're discussing deconstructing, dreaming, and building a new future.

Michael Stipp: Thank you for sharing that, Irene. I knew only a portion of what you just shared, but you have opened my eyes more to the frontline missionary work that you're involved in. Thank you for that. James, you grew up in New York, Bronx. Is that right?

James Heyward: Born there, born there.

Michael Stipp: You've served in Washington, D.C., and I got this off your website: I think you are interested in rebranding relevant churches, leadership development, and encouraging adoption and foster care services. Can you share anything else about your journey and what you do?

James Heyward: I was born in the Bronx, but I grew up in Prince George's County, outside of Washington, D.C., and, you know, I grew up in a small church. The church took me in, and I was a foster kid, adopted a kid, and returned to my biological parents. It was a dysfunctional home. So, I got connected with the Church of the Nazarene, which was 500 feet up the road. A situation where they knocked on the door and said, come to Vacation Bible School. And I never left. I learned many leadership skills in that small church, where you did everything. There were no associate pastors. You did everything. I was the janitor and the... vacation Bible school director and did everything. And that equipped me to get a guy like me “called to ministry” and fought the call.

I did a deep dive into the pig pen of life, and God called me out at about 20 years old. I went to Eastern Nazarene College to prepare for that call. I've been fortunate to be at some very different churches, some very large, white churches that became more diverse when I arrived. And so, I've done a lot of stuff. I've been a family ministry pastor. I've been an executive pastor. And now I'm the lead pastor at the church I'm in in Fredericksburg.

I lead a K-church, which is very interesting because you would know I'm the only African American leading a K church in the denomination. And, you know, we're trying to bring people together. I found that we spend a lot of time trying to identify churches. And what I've discovered is that people don't necessarily want identity churches. They want churches where people are coming together. And so, I try to be a part of helping the church in Nazarene think through what it means to do multi-ethnic churches. Where we can do multi-ethnic church. And sometimes, you have a language barrier, but I always tell people.

You know, the interesting thing is that black and white folks speak the same language. So what's our speech, right? You know, I understand the Spanish speakers or the French speakers or the Portuguese speakers. But we speak the same language, yet we... We have this thing where we allow some, I think, what I would call some secular stuff to keep us segregated and to keep us apart. And so, I think there are some real serious conversations that need to be had around that. We don't really want to have those conversations.

Let me be frank with you. I've talked to many general superintendents and asked the questions, and it always gets deflected because we don't really want to have those conversations. And the fact that, as you would say, Irene, 2% of our leadership in the Church of the Nazarene are African American is a shame. And I challenge this all the time. Now to be fair, I think the powers that be, and I'm probably going further than you want me to go, Michael. The powers that be -- have tried. And they must fight against their own laity. So let me leave it at that, and then you can ask the questions you want to ask.

Michael Stipp: All right. Well... That's a great introduction. I was concerned that we might not be able to fill our hour, but I think we're going to be just fine.

James Heyward: You got the right two. You have the right two people.

Michael Stipp: Yeah, you guys, this is going to be our foundation. This is paragraph 915 in the *Manual*.

We urge our churches everywhere to continue and strengthen programs of education to promote racial understanding and harmony. We also feel that the scriptural admonition of Hebrews 12:14 should guide the actions of our people. We urge that each member of the Church of the Nazarene humbly examine his or her personal attitudes and actions toward others, as a first step in achieving the Christian goal of full participation by all in the life of the church and the entire community.

One of the things that unites us is this *Manual* statement. What I like about the third paragraph is that it encourages us to develop resources. So, this interview is going to be a resource. And maybe... the conversation we have here today will inspire others to have conversations with folks about race relations.

I've outlined just a few questions for us to consider today. First, we'll kick it off with this reference to Hebrews 12. I remember going home after my first year of seminary. My grandfather did not want me to go to seminary. He felt that I should preach. And he was concerned that I wasn't getting real holiness teaching at the seminary. And so I remember he took me aside and he said, son, Do they still preach that without holiness no one shall see the Lord? And I assured him that they did. So, this is an important verse. It's been an important verse in our movement for a long time. Hebrews 12:14 goes like this. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Now, what do you think that has to do with race relations? How do you see that?

Irene Lewis-Wimbly: Holiness can't... be in the same presence as evil and injustice. Our goal isn't that we can arrive somehow at a profession of holiness in a moment but to begin to engage in the process of discerning what the Holy Spirit -- what love looks like -- in each and every

situation that our witnesses is always love. That we err on the side of love, and therefore, when we see injustice, we don't condone it. We don't allow it to happen. We bring and make peace.

It is our mission to be known for love. And what does that look like in action? Is it Hebrews 10? That we are to stir up faith in good works. It's just a radical love. That's what it is, radical love and good works. Those two go together because that is the reflection, the image of God's character that he wants to see in us.

Michael Stipp: Thank you.

James Heyward: I think the first part of that passage is an important part of the passage. I think the way that you quoted it was that we need to make an effort ourselves in “getting along with” and “being at peace with” all men and all humanity.

And I think that you have to ask the question, what is peace? It's the absence of sensation. Or is peace, as described by some theologians, this sense of wholeness, everything coming together? I believe sometimes in the Big C church and the Church of the Nazarene, our definition of peace is the absence of conflict. So as long as I'm not in conflict with then “I'm good”. Which... I would say if we were talking about this sense of wholeness and everything coming together then I have to ‘engage with’ and “stand in solidarity with”. I must open my mouth and speak and engage.

Wholeness for everyone and not just for me. I just think it's this absence sensation. Let me give you a good example of this. When I was growing up in a church in Nazarene. I was on the Washington District, Mid-Atlantic District now. It was DC. And in DC, there were about three churches uh they're about, well, there were two churches that were African American churches And we did more fellowshiping and more working together with Baptist churches in the area than we could with Nazarene churches in the area.

Because they didn't want to be in our part of our town. They didn't want to engage with us. If we can define what live at peace means... It might help us. But my sense is that in the Church of the Nazarene, big C, not just Church of the Nazarene, in the church. Let's say the evangelical church. This meant the sensation or the absence of conflict. And so, if we're not fighting, if we're not at each other's throats. Then I'm golden. And if I'm golden, then I'm holy. And so, the definition of that first part of that passage, if that's going to be the key passage, I think we have to define what that means. What do we mean by live at peace?

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: I agree, because if we leave it obtuse and unclear, then we can mold it. If we're not specific and we don't see that God came here to stand in the margins. There's not a single story of Jesus not aligning himself with those who are weak women, children, orphans, prisoners and strangers. That's what holiness is. That's what God's model is through Christ Jesus is. And when we don't define those things and be specific then we become surprised over sheep and goats issues. When I was naked, hungry, a stranger ... We use that metaphor for a lot of things.

But is it compassion? We don't use it for the actual context and that extinguishes our responsibility to be peacemakers. When we're also extinguishing the Holy Spirit's ability to convict our hearts and compel us. You close the door. Don't have context.

Michael Stipp: Good. Well, one of the things you just said that I've always marveled at is when you help those who are struggling along the way. You begin to include verse 13 of that same chapter where the writer says, make level paths for your feet so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. And so, holiness is coming alongside those who are struggling and making peace in that struggle. I agree with you, James and Irene.

Many people say, well, I'm at peace, so I must be good, you know, and without looking around to see how they're involved in culture. So very good. You guys... knocked that one right out of the park. The USA Canada region is primarily composed of white leadership. We talked about that already. What suggestions would you have to promote racial understanding and harmony? How do we promote more racial harmony? Any ideas come to mind on this?

James Heyward: Let me say this, because there's almost two questions there. That question begs to So the first thing that I would speak to is... the statement of it's mostly composed of white leadership. So does a percentage of leadership color help the way that we address issues of race and getting along. Because, you know, the person who stood with me. That person who stood with me and helped me be a leader in the church in Nazarene were David Bowen and Reba Bowen who were white and almost Mennonite. In their effect they had six or seven African American leaders come out of that church who are key leaders in denominations all over the country. One of them is the executive pastor for the largest African American church in a DC area. Wayne Dickens. So that's one thing. And I would say that having more leadership of African Americans helps color our view of the world differently. And the other question is how, what was the second part?

Michael Stipp: I guess promote some kind of racial harmony, and racial understanding? How do we get better?

James Heyward: From my perspective, from my perspective I think we're going to be better as we get more leaders that are diverse. I've been saying to the church forever. Let's train up leaders. Let's have an incubator. Incubator Leadership where we go to churches when the folks are still young. We're engaged. And we are the church, the big church is engaged and is empowering and is giving opportunity is mentoring and those kind of things in the early days.

Because what I've discovered is by the time you get a person of color to a Nazarene College and different things like that, they leave and they're gone. They're not staying in the Church of the Nazarene. But if you can get them early, that makes a difference. It's a leadership and those things connect. So let me speak about how we fix the problem of getting along.

Well, let me just talk about this in this current culture. We're going to have to be willing to surrender some of our seats at the table. Privilege is a really tough word right now. But I think we have to be willing to surrender some of our seats at the table. Let me give you a good example of this. I had a board at a church in Northern Virginia. And I had a board, and it was mostly a white board. And I remember one of the guys coming up to me one day and saying to me, you know, we need people who look like our community on the board. And I know I would be elected again. But I believe we have a number of people here who can be elected. I'm pulling my name off the board. Because I believe that there are people here who can be elected to the board and if I pull off and give up my seat, they will be.

And he was right. That began and I didn't have to force it. That began our board looking like the community that we were in. And those leaders brought to the table issues and ideas and missional strategy that the Anglo folks that were on the board before who were a certain age would have never brought to the table. And it was the beginning of us adopting a mission that allowed us to reach one of the most diverse communities in the United States of America. All because one person, who was an older person decided I was going to step off so I could make room for someone else at the table.

Michael Stipp: Good.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: That sharing of power is super important. And to be intentional and have those systemic kinds of principles. On the opposite end, the micro end, having those conversations at the local church level. My parents, for example, are a biracial couple raising four kids in the church around the corner and across the street. We have a vantage point to see how the world reacts because no matter what we have in a lot of ways been guests in our church. They were never seen as potential leaders. I mean, my mom running huge ministries and doing great things but never being even nominated as a delegate to the Sunday School convention.

And the Dorcas chapter and all these omissions . . . It was a society that brought my mom in, a young Mexican girl, young mom. Each senior lady took her into their home. It was the Chic Shaver stuff when it was fresh off the presses back then. And they took and passed her to the next person. And I remember playing on the floor under the table. At my mom's feet while they're doing the Bible studies with my mom and pass her to the next one.

And continuing to grow even to George Floyd when we get to this conversation with the African American, not Black. Not a monolith. We can be in relationship with Caribbean African descent black people however we avoid the healing process when it comes to the effects of slavery and white supremacy on our religion. It's a scary concept. It's a scary conversation. And you begin to see the matrix unravel. And that you've been believing lies and there is a principality that has been at work to keep his children from being one. And we can pretend like there's no problems and everything is awesome. Or we can get and be obedient and grow.

Michael Stipp: Yeah.

James Heyward: Irene, you should be the lead pastor of a predominantly white church. Some think that we are diverse and that they get a pass because of me. Because they'll say something like this. Well, my pastor's black. And I would always say, you're not getting a pass. You're not getting a pass from me because your pastor is black.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: Hey, I don't need evidence. Just because I'm on staff, you don't get a pass. No, no, no.

James Heyward: And... So basically, the statement, you know, here's what the statement basically is. I chose to go to a church. Whereas a pastor is black. So, I can't have any issues. I don't have to do anything to work on myself.

Michael Stipp: Right.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: Jumping from wound to scar. Oh, you missed some conversations, so learning some basic information -- that's going to help you be a little better because I won't lie, deny, minimize, and blame all those little tactics. I got you. You're getting away with nothing here. And that opportunity is a place to just address the fear. Name the fear. Heal from your racialized trauma, whether you were a powerless witness (even just reading about it and learning about it). It does something to you. Honor that. That's the first step in the healing process. Lament. Feel it. Allow yourself to feel it. And continue to allow yourself to hear people's stories and make space for their story in your heart.

You have to do that as a skill. How do we disciple our children and model it for them so that that becomes the culture? We're disciplining children that are ready for mission. These little ministers are ready if we can get to the young people. We got a lot of healing to do, a lot of hot messes with Christian labels on it. And it's not just race. It's healing in a lot of different areas. This is just one, but there is, you're right. There's no... catechism for this conversation; I've asked two even general superintendents. Who can lead this conversation and bring peace?

Michael Stipp: Yeah. I think your topic concluded with something I'd like to pick up on. When I began the study, I had in mind, over the past couple of years, to develop some dialogue workbook for churches. After George Floyd, I was looking for resources, and there were no resources available. And so, I stumbled across a resource developed by the Salvation Army, Let's talk about racism, a 60-page online format. Very well done. It had a bibliography. And it was made available to all of their salvationist outposts across United States. It came out in April of 2021. And then at Thanksgiving. Newsweek and Fox News decided to exploit and misread. They twisted the words, changed the meaning, and created such a ruckus among Americans that the Salvation Army had to rescind the book. Take it offline so that their giving around the Christmas holiday could be reinstated.

James Heyward: I am familiar with it. And since she did this stuff, you sent the stuff ahead of time I was able to check into it.

Michael Stipp: I just felt so powerless. Fox News had already sanitized the minds of people. These people pray for our church they bring their Bibles to church. I mean, they're good people. But they didn't want to talk about racism. They didn't want to talk about George Floyd. They didn't want to talk about any racial stuff at all because they feel like they're good and let the past be in the past.

James Heyward: In my own church. It took me... two months. Before I address George Floyd because if I would have addressed it. When it happened. They probably would have fired me. That's how close it was. And even when I did address it. I had my right-hand person, a policeman say I disagree with you. And I said, I don't care if you disagree with me because you're not a black man. And you don't know the trauma. You don't know what we have to do to teach our sons. You don't know any of this stuff. Let me say this to you, Michael. I think that... That whole video speaks for itself.

There's a price to be paid. And even more so now than in 2021. There's a price to be paid. For addressing issues of race. In our nation and especially in our church. I believe with all my heart that we have great general superintendents, And I believe at the end of the day, the bottom line is

if we address this issue, or we are going to lose our older, White folks who do ministry and give most of our support . . . Who serve as leaders of our church; who pay into missions and do all of these things. And you always have to count the cost.

The Salvation army from my perspective is more Wesleyan than American holiness movement. So, they took the risk, and they got burned. And they had to make a decision: Do we stand our ground and lose the money that we collect to give to people who are hurting, or do we get the money? That's the choice you have to make. And I believe our generals and all our district superintendents are in a very difficult situation.

Because I remember when Jerry Porter, our general superintendent, started to make apologies. He was the district superintendent on my district. And when he came on board and began to address this issue, that's when people stopped liking him. When he became a general superintendent, he started to address this issue, that's when he started getting the worst [renewal] votes. They were still all right but the worst votes that any general superintendent had gotten because he was addressing these kinds of issues. Until we... are willing to deal with the potential losses and say the kingdom and say the kingdom ethic is more important than what we gain financially what we gain culturally.

We'll never do this subject justice because we saw how this worked in culture. All the businesses came out and said, We're not going to do this, and we're going to do this, and we're going to do this. And within one year, they had turned back and rescinded everything that they did. Because, as my wife would say: It was just this knee-jerk reaction. And we weren't willing to pay the long-term consequences for addressing this in a long-term way that dealt with our systemic issues. And we still are not in that place, and so no one is. This is a really straight statement no one at the Foundry [Publishing House]. Or in any of those contexts are going to handle this third rail issue. We will give lip service to it. But we will not handle it, because the implication; even in my own church, I have to ask the question.

In my last church, I did this "Ism" series. And we did all the isms. I didn't do racism. I let the white female who was my associate pastor due racism. I did sexism, ableism, whatever. You have to ask the question if I address this issue: What people are going to [leave and] walk out of the church? How's my tithes going to go down? And you know, how is that going to impact my staff when the tithes go down? I got to lay people off. You have to ask those questions. And for many people, we're not willing to deal with the sacrifice that it takes to do justice to a long-term solution. Not just on paper, but even what we have to do coming together, and inviting people to our tables and being in relationship with people. We're not just willing to do that. We just want a quick fix.

I remember when all this came out, I waited and waited and waited for the church to put out a memo on this. Now I can hear our general say this is not just a USA, Canada church. General superintendents say we have this global church. But most of our membership and most of our resources are out of the context of USA Canada. And we did not.

I think we got shamed into addressing it. And even when we try to address it in the really milquetoast way, people lost their minds. I remember someone saying at the General Board, General superintendents do not speak ex-cathedra. And it was just a big blow-up.

And so... I love what you're trying to do. I love what you're doing. But I wonder if we have the... intestinal fortitude to address this issue in a way that is... that will address some systemic things.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: Well, I do agree that fortitude. The fragility is this desire to avoid ever feeling dis-ease to have your peace disrupted. Again... We got to be careful that we're not extinguishing the Holy Spirit's conviction. There's a difference between hurting your feelings and God trying to tell you something and bring something to the surface that he wants to address.

It is a freedom issue for the church. We are in bondage to fear. [Fear is in the Bible] 365 times in some kind of fashion. Because we need to be told we're okay, He's with us daily. He called him Emmanuel for a reason. Because it's scary out there and the devil is real. And our lack of understanding the global south Because we've created the whole world into this us and them. Ephesians 2's dividing walls in the kingdom of heaven, those things do not exist.

And Jesus Last words before he died is, it is finished.

So how do we begin to live into this idea that God is trying to show us and our analysis has been lacking? There is now resources. People are talking about it. There are spaces, people holding space for emotions that are giving us more people, and black theologians. You know, Augustine, Constantine, and all our favorites, Moses at the top of Mount Sinai is in Egypt, Africa. It's so much bigger than black and white African Americans, the effects of slavery. This is a global issue.

But... It is a holiness issue. It is not for us to figure out the world. It's just for us to love. It's our superpower. And we don't name things. I've learned about things Oh, with her name. Mildred Wynkoop learning about her and i love her book But Bless God, I just wanted her to name it. I know you're talking about the 60s. I know you're talking about what you're talking about in general. But we don't name anything. Right. And I'm like, come on, Mildred. I believe you're just going to say it, but she just doesn't do it for me. No. And so that's... Right. With your back against the wall and the Lord was with her. And so, God bless her, she began to prepare a place for me to have some fodder for my doctorate so that I could

James Heyward: Look at where she was. Think of where she was. And who she was, one of the few you know Yeah.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: Finally help us understand that Nehemiah heard the truth. And then he lamented. And confessed sins that weren't even his. He wasn't even there. Ancestral lineage sins. In that place, he was able to turn around and look at things differently from God's point of view and clean up the mess. And God gave him favor with the king. Gave him all the resources, human resources, monetary materials, anything you need, and the job got done. It was strategic. And if we continue to grope around in the dark. Great. We'll get there eventually. But I'm tired of it. I don't know about y'all. We could be intentional. And the intentionality of your friend, your pastor and the district leaders who made sure that they made space to bring up native leaders because they knew white folks being in charge is not going to sustain And it's continuing to be transactional instead of being guests in our church, we could actually be part of the family.

Michael Stipp: Outstanding response. Thank you so much. Both of you on this one issue have really gotten to the heart of our struggle in our culture. And I sure appreciate it. Why do you suppose it's so hard? Why do you suppose that we struggle here. Shouldn't we be better by now?

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: I think we could be better by now, but we are scared of our emotions. And American white individualist culture. In my Native American blood, which is what Mexicans are, especially since the border landed beneath my family and my heritage. And it's Texas. You're expected to be expected to grieve. And I mean, for real, for real ... renting your clothes and public shows of emotion Jesus weeping we're afraid of that in individualized culture. You have to have it all together.

We live in community and if I'm hurting, you're hurting. That's what's missing from our holiness. As those retentions, which is truly the root of all Christianity. That's the background and the context of the story but we still have Jesus If we can't even tell the truth about that. We have got a lot of work to do. And it's a developmental process. We're doing some social-emotional learning. And it's our testimony. Can we just tell the truth? No matter where we're at, whether we're at the truth telling, we're still lies, we're at the truth telling lament, confess, repent, repair. Can we just share a testimony because God's with us in all of it. It's not as scary as we make it. And fear, monkey can't drive the buzz. We can't let fear drive the bus anymore church. We must choose Love.

James Heyward: Yeah, I know I agree with you 100%. Yeah, we're mirroring the culture. Instead of challenging the culture. Romans 12: 1 and 2. Don't be squeezed into the world's culture but by the renewing of your mind. And I feel like... many times, we are just squeezed, and we just mirror the culture because the culture right now is all about fear. And when I look at the church, I don't think, I don't see the difference.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: We're in bondage.

James Heyward: I see what we're about and fear will keep us from doing anything. And actually fear will fear kill. Because if surrender... It's about dying to ourselves, then it's also about dying to our fear. And... we're just... I feel like... We are mirroring our culture. I think that's the best way to say it. And I think locally, I think there are local patches of this kingdom of God coming. I think there are patches. There are pieces of it. There are examples of it.

My church. When I got back to my church, I was the executive pastor. I went away for 15 years. I came back. It was all white. It was all 60. It was all Republican. Conservative. And I came in and I just said, Why don't we look like our community? Any church that's growing in this community is diverse. In Fredericksburg, Virginia, where we mostly commute to DC, or Richmond. The churches that are happening churches are churches that are making a difference for the kingdom of God are diverse. And so, we begin. We begin this movement of prayer and fasting to begin to look like our community. And so, in our little patch of the world, some of this stuff is happening. I still have the outliers, right? I still have the people who aren't moving in the direction, but pieces of it, I see the sunlight like breaking through.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: Yes. That's okay. Yes. It is hopeful days.

James Heyward: And, you know, which is exciting. But I think it's because we're not fearful of what we're going to lose. We're more excited and rejoicing in what we gain. And we believe that the God who's in charge of the church, the bridegroom. Right. Has the ability to make up any losses ... losses that happen when we decide to be about the kingdom of God and seeing its inauguration. And so, I think for an institution, the Church of the Nazarene is harder. It'll take more time. It's harder for the institution, that depends on what things are here today and gone tomorrow, to make that change. But I believe that in places, I believe in what Irene is doing there in Illinois, I believe I see it all over the place.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: Little pockets here! Fan it in the flame gun.

James Heyward: Little pockets of breakthrough and here's the reality. Reality is maybe it's not a top-down model. Maybe it's a local church - out model. Local community out model that changes everything.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: I really think so, yes. And I think it goes even more finite, the mind has to have the healing process. The body has to have a healing process. Our spirits have a healing process. But just like individual hearts, so do systems, so do institutions. So the process is the same. Truth, lament, confess, repent, repair. Kingdom is her testimony and share it with people on the way.

James Heyward: It's your curriculum right there. There's your curriculum right there.

Michael Stipp: Good. Good.

Irene Lewis-Wimbley: That's directly out of my doctorate of my word. I'm going to use you.

Michael Stipp: This hour has flown by, and I am blessed to have you in this conversation. And I believe that God will use it. To stir us as a denomination. He can do whatever he wants to do. He's God. But may the Lord bless these ideas. And your leadership, your voices, let me pray for you before we close.

Father in heaven, thank you for James and Irene. Thank you for their ministry, their frontline ministries, and Virginia and Illinois. And I pray a blessing upon all their activity and use them for your glory in Jesus' name Amen and Amen.

David Solomon and Charles Tillman discuss the 4th paragraph of *Manual* ¶915

(¶915, par 4) We reemphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We believe that Christian charity between racial groups or gender will come when the hearts of people have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself.

Overview

Mike Stipp, David Solomon, and Charles Tillman discussed the Church of the Nazarene's efforts to address racism and racial relations. David Solomon, a senior pastor in Long Island, highlighted the progress made since the George Floyd incident, including increased conversations and the Black Conference in Atlanta. Charles Tillman, a leader in the Black Emphasis for the USA and Canada region, emphasized the need for more inclusive leadership and intentional efforts to address racial prejudices. Both speakers noted the importance of ongoing conversations and the need for the church to take serious action to mend racial gaps. They also discussed the challenges of addressing trauma and the need for better representation in church leadership.

Action Items

- [] Explore opportunities to have more open dialogues about race and trauma within the Church, potentially through workshops or conferences.
- [] Revisit the BSRT's past statements and efforts to address racial issues and make them more widely available.
- [] Advocate for more intentional and inclusive hiring practices at the denominational level to better reflect the diversity of the Church and society.

Outline

Introduction and Participant Backgrounds

- Mike Stipp introduces the purpose of the meeting, focusing on experiences with the Black Strategic Readiness Team (BSRT) and racial conversations in the Church of the Nazarene.
- Mike Stipp mentions his dissertation on racism and race relations in the Church of the Nazarene.
- David Solomon introduces himself as a senior pastor for the Community Wide Edge Community Church of the Nazarene in Long Island, where he has served for almost 30 years.
- Charles Tillman introduces himself as the leader of the Black Emphasis for the USA and Canada region and a member of the BSRT, mentioning his past roles in Richmond, Indiana, and Memphis.

Discussion on *Manual* Statement and Prejudice

- Mike Stipp discusses a *Manual* paragraph on prejudice and race-related ideas, expressing his difficulty in interpreting it.
- The *Manual* paragraph emphasizes holiness of heart and life as a basis for right living and Christian charity between racial groups.
- David Solomon and Charles Tillman share their mixed experiences with racial relations, noting inconsistencies between holiness and actions.

- Both speakers acknowledge small steps in improving racial relations but emphasize the need for continued progress and serious action.

Progress and Challenges in Racial Relations

- Charles Tillman recounts the positive responses from his Anglo colleagues after the George Floyd incident, highlighting increased conversations about race.
- David Solomon and Charles Tillman discuss the importance of having uncomfortable conversations to address blind spots and prejudices.
- Both speakers mention the incremental progress made through conversations and initiatives like the Black Conference in Atlanta.
- Mike Stipp expresses a desire for more public statements and resources to equip pastors in handling racial conversations.

Role and Function of the BSRT

- Mike Stipp inquires about the BSRT's role, meeting frequency, and agenda-setting process.
- Charles Tillman explains the BSRT's history, its purpose in advising the general church on matters related to the Black Church, and its evolution over the years.
- The BSRT aims to strengthen Black churches and pastors and provide opportunities for non-Black pastors to learn about Black ministry.
- David Solomon shares his positive experience on the BSRT, emphasizing the need for a safe space for Black expression and the importance of the Black Conference.

Communication and Statements on Racial Issues

- Mike Stipp asks about the process of creating and disseminating statements on racial issues like the George Floyd incident.
- Charles Tillman describes the BSRT's role in crafting statements and pushing for their release, despite some pushback from Anglo pastors.
- David Solomon shares his frustration with the watering down of statements to make them more palatable for the global church.
- Both speakers emphasize the need for the church to take a strong stance on racial issues and the importance of public statements.

Personal Experiences and Trauma

- Charles Tillman shares a personal story about his son's traumatic experience with police, highlighting the ongoing trauma faced by Black families.
- David Solomon discusses the trauma experienced by Black families due to systemic racism and the importance of addressing these issues in the church.
- Both speakers emphasize the need for intentional efforts to develop friendships and understand the experiences of people of color.
- Mike Stipp reflects on the challenges of addressing trauma in multicultural congregations and the importance of listening and empathy.

Recommendations for Improvement

- Charles Tillman expresses a desire to see more diverse leadership in the Church of the Nazarene, reflecting the broader society.
- David Solomon supports the need for intentional efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to bring in qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- Both speakers emphasize the importance of continuing conversations and taking serious actions to address racial issues.

- Mike Stipp concludes the meeting by expressing gratitude and reiterating the need for ongoing efforts to improve race relations in the church.

Transcript of interview with Charles Tillman and David Solomon February 3, 2025

Michael Stipp:

Oh, thank you so much for joining me today. I'm hoping we can just kick back and just talk about what your experiences have been with black strategic readiness team and so this call is going to be recorded. -- My dissertation is on racism and race relations and racial conversations in the church of the Nazarene and I wanted to do more listening than talking. And I wanted to have some key individuals to the table here to talk about experiences, and behaviors within the church that you've noticed and observed. And then how we might be able to do better as well. Some of the conversation today is based upon not only the BSRT, but also a theological one that J. Kenneth Greider description of prejudice. And so we'll talk about that today.

Charles Tillman:

Alrighty!

Michael Stipp:

Alright, so I'll start off with you, David. Could you tell us a little bit about yourself, and where you're located?

David Solomon:

Sure. **David Solomon** is my name, and I am a senior pastor for the Community Church of the Nazarene in Long Island and I've been there now almost 30 years.

Michael Stipp:

Oh, wow! Oh, congratulations! Thank you. I remember working with you at a PALCON out in Eastern Nazarene College at one time.

David Solomon:

Okay. Yes.

Michael Stipp:

And Dr. [Charles] Tillman, you have several hats. You're the leader, I understand, of the black emphasis for the U.S.A. Canada region.

Charles Tillman:

BSRT. [Black Strategic Readiness Team]

Michael Stipp:

The BSRT, all right. Did I understand from your bio that you started the church where you're at in Virginia?

Charles Tillman:

Not the one here in Virginia. I actually started in another Richmond, which was Richmond, Indiana. -- Coming out of Bible College, I planted a church, my wife and I in Richmond, Indiana, and we stayed there. We led that church for 13 years, and then we moved to Memphis, where we pastored for 7 years, and then we moved here to Richmond, Virginia, and we've been here now 21 years.

Michael Stipp:

Oh, wow! Wow! That's amazing.

Charles Tillman: Yeah.

Michael Stipp: Well, I I've said this in a couple of posts and emails to you -- the black conference that was held in Atlanta last summer of 2024 was over the top! Amazing, amazing, to be a part of. So you and your team that put that together, I just applaud that that was so well done, so well done!

Charles Tillman:

Reverend Solomon is one of the key people to help to put that together. Him and Cassandra Trotman really work close with me. So you're talking to the right folks. Okay.

Michael Stipp:

I just wanted to see more people there [at the conference], more leaders. And just -- Oh, I was just how can I say it? I just wanted more people to buy in and share in that experience. So good, so well done. Now, one of the things that I want -- I'll just start for the top. And that is a *Manual* statement. You know, the *Manual* paragraph 915 has 6 paragraphs on, prejudice -- race related ideas and concepts. And I think the one that we're going to talk about today is one that I kind of trip over. It's a little bit of a stumbling block for me. That's my personal reading of it. But maybe you could help me. It says: We reemphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We believe that Christian charity between racial groups or gender will come when the hearts of people have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself.

So from that reading it's my understanding that the teaching is that holiness of heart and life. Once you get the love of God deep within you then all racial barriers will be gone. I've spent the last 3 years studying some of the struggles we've had in the church by the Holiness people. I think it might be a goal -- that we have, but I don't know if you've seen it as a reality. Or maybe you guys could share with me your experiences, and your take on that *Manual* statement.

Charles Tillman:

Pastor Solomon, I'll let you go first.

David Solomon:

No! No!

Charles Tillman:

If you don't mind.

David Solomon:

Oh, man! Well, it's wow! Where do I begin?

Charles Tillman:

That's what I was thinking. Where do I start? I mean.

David Solomon:

Bag of nuts, I tell you right -- especially these days.

Michael Stipp:

Especially these days.

David Solomon:

Yes, yes, yes, I certainly do embrace this paragraph. I love the paragraph well written. But then I wonder? How do we actualize this? How do we? How do we? Where the rubber meets the road? Is it happening from my experience? I guess not. To put everyone on the same roof. There are some flickers of hope that we may have had personal experiences with some of our white brothers and sisters that has been very positive -- moving in that direction. But then there have been other experiences, it hasn't been too healthy. And so, there is this inconsistency. Between, holiness of heart and inconsistency with entire sanctification and my action. And how I react to people that are not like me -- that do not sound like me may not be from the same socioeconomic status like me? How do I? How do I now engage, embrace and love them? As I love my neighbor, -- love my neighbors myself. So that has been. That has been a uphill challenge or battle.

Michael Stipp: Sure.

David Solomon: For me and there are some (again Michael and Pastor Tillman knows well) there is some movement. There are small steps in improving relations with our fellow brothers and sisters in the Church of the Nazarene. But I think we're still a long way from where we need to be.

Michael Stipp: Okay. Good reply.

Charles Tillman: We certainly have made progress. But I agree with Pastor Solomon. We have a lot further to go ironically. You know, a few years ago, when the George Floyd incident happened, there was a lot of conversation that that took part as a result of the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. I believe I got more calls and more conversation was initiated by my Anglo brothers and sisters, who are fellow laborers in the ministry, wanted to know what I thought what I felt and wanted to pick my brain. And wanted me to be a part of conversations that was happening all around the U.S.A./Canada regarding race relations, and I don't want to call the name. I want to be very careful, because I was called by District Superintendent when it happened, and I'll never forget what he said to me, he said, Charles, I get it. I said. What are you talking about? He called me on a Sunday night, he said. I get it, he said. I watched the entire [incident] when the policeman put his knee, or whatever on George Floyd's

neck, and he said, I get it. I get what you were saying when you talked about. You know black and white relations in society, and your concern for your sons. Because I told him about raising 3 sons, and my fear that I had, and them going out and dealing with, in the public. And he said, I get it, he said. I just want you to know, he said. I didn't get it before, but I get it now. We're treated differently, not just in society at large, but also in the denomination. Now, I do believe in getting back to the topic of what you want to talk about in terms of. Can a person be prejudiced and holiness?

Well, I hate to say gosh! It's a tough one. I'll put it this way. That sanctification I believe there is. It's a process we talk about progressive sanctification, and that a person gets sanctified and give their heart to the Lord. But there are still areas in their life that they don't recognize, and there are blind spots that they do not see that until it comes up in conversation, or until they are, I'm not going to say confronted, but care-fronted about it, that that they don't really address it. And I think we have-to-have those, those conversations, those uneasy conversations with individuals to help them to see those areas, those blind spots that they may not otherwise see. And I have those conversations on my district all the time. When I go to District Assembly, we actually (Dr. Fuller, here on our district) actually formed a focus group, and we had a conversation about race and so forth here on the district. And I thought it was very fruitful. I brought a couple people from my church. And we had not just black and white -- but we had many different ethnicities that were on our district. We had a great conversation, and I really thought it was beneficial, and I know the Anglo pastors who were there said that it really helped them a lot. So we have to have those conversations. They're uneasy at times. But if you have a willingness to learn and to grow, those are the conversations you want to be a part of.

Michael Stipp:

Good. Pastor David, you said something about making incremental progress along the way. Can you talk about those? I mean, you've been at it a long time. What have been some of the ways that you've seen the progress being made even though we have a ways to go. What progresses have you seen?

David Solomon:

Well, I think Pastor Tillman mentioned the coming together of several key leaders in our denomination, along with some of our BSRT members to flush out the George Floyd situation and also Michael Brown, situation in St. Louis. And so, would that have happened if this [event] didn't [happen]? If George Floyd's life wasn't taken the way it was taken? I don't know. So when I say we've made progress, we've made these incremental steps. At least we are coming there. -- There was some sense of coming together to have a conversation. Was the conversation initiated by the BSRT Team? I don't remember. I thought it was initiated by one of our General Superintendents. -- But so, with that regard, yes, we have. We have made some small steps. We have taken some small steps. However, Mike, I feel that we need to ask: Are we continuing the conversation?

You know. There may have been some conversations along the way. I know I've been involved in in a couple along with Pastor Tillman, but the conversation needs to continue. There is no silver bullet with (this whole) racial challenges that we have in our denomination. However, I feel we need to have more conversation, and take some serious, significant action to show that the Church that the church of the Nazarene is serious about mending the gap between races. So yes,

we have had made some steps forward and that was one of them. When we got together, there have been some subsequent conversations, but the conversation needs to continue.

Michael Stipp:

Okay, excellent! Excellent! Well, my gratitude to both of you for offering guidance. I went searching for documents of those conversations and I couldn't find any. I couldn't find where you guys met with leadership. And a statement was made about George Floyd or Breonna Taylor, those kinds of atrocities and so I'm with you. The conversation and the publicity needs to be informed so pastors like myself, just one pastor in Illinois, is equipped to know how to handle some of the conversations in my in my local church. If I come out as a as a minister to say, this is what the Church of the Nazarene believes and stands on, social media has opened the floodgates of misinformation. And social media has really sullied the minds of really good people. And so, for me to be equipped to say, this is the stance the Church of the Nazarene has, I would like personally to see more conversations, more people going on record. Let there be some podcasts. Let there be something that we can listen to and even have printed advisories. It's not outside the realm of possibility that advisories can be given to ministers in U.S.A. and Canada regarding events that are horrific. -- When you talk about the BSRT guys, I looked at some of the bullet points of suggestions that you have made [on the BSRT summary had to dig to find them. I mean, I found them really buried on the website. And that's out of your control. You don't have your own staff. You don't have your own web programs, or whatever. You're part of the U.S.A./Canada web page. And just one of the clicks of many clicks.

So, talk to me about your experiences, because I've never been on your team. And what's it like to be on the BSRT team? And how long do you meet? And what do you discuss? And who sets the agenda? And what is your goal, and what is your role? How often do you meet.

Charles Tillman:

Well, typically in the past, we've met once a year. I believe they were moving to us, meeting every other year, and that part, I think, may have been based on resources, funding, and so forth. But in the past, we've met once a year, and we come together, and I believe, years ago this committee was formed to serve as an advisory body to the General Church on matters relating to the Black Church, and how to best help the Black Church. How to help plant black churches and things of that nature. At least that's what I originally think it was about. Over the years it has, it has changed. Individuals have changed. It has totally changed in the years I've been on it, because all the guys, mostly all the guys who on it, when I got on the committee are either past, or they're very much aged [out]. The only one that I could think of who's left is Roger Bowman. I think he's and he's in his nineties.

Michael Stipp:

Oh, my goodness! Wow!

Charles Tillman:

Yeah. But all the other guys -- they're gone. And at one time it's called the Black Strategy Committee, I believe. Okay? And then they renamed it BSRT [Black Strategic Readiness Team], and that's what we became. But in any regards, we do talk about matters of race, and we are intentional. When we plan our conference every other year, we want to strengthen our black

churches and black pastors, but also, we want to be a vehicle whereby other pastors could come, be it. You know. non-black pastors can come and can learn about black ministry can come in and sit in our services and get a flavor of what it's like to be in a black church, because we just worship different. And I said, the black church experience is unique in itself, and you have to just come and sit there. When I went to Bible College, and when I would go to some of the other Nazarene churches, and I sitting there, and I was like, man -- this is what they call church It just didn't have the same effect as my home church and the churches that I was accustomed to. Well, I came out of the African American tradition. The singing is different. The preaching is different. The whole aura of the church is different. And so, you know, I had to learn to be able to adjust. So, when I go to district events and things like that oh, I enjoy it! But it's not the same as what we would have if we were running it. And so I tell them when you come to the Black Conference, you're going to get a Afrocentric worship experience. You're going to get Afrocentric preaching. You're going to get Afrocentric theology – but [it's] holiness. I tell folk listen. I am unashamedly black, but I am also unashamedly, a Holiness preacher, and I'm Wesleyan. I don't think I have to change my culture in order to be a good Nazarene preacher. I don't think we asked Hispanics or any other group to change their culture, to be Nazarene, so we shouldn't do that with African Americans.

So that's some of what we discuss -- those kinds of issues, and we'll be getting together. In fact, this year and planning for next year's conference, and we'll talk about what are the needs in the black community? What are the issues that we need to confront? You know, a few years ago, when the when the George [Floyd and Breonna] Taylor all that came out, and the violence against black folk, that was a big issue that came up. We wanted to talk about it in our conference, the incarceration of black males, and so forth. We talked about a wide range of topics. I didn't bring, that to this session here. But Dr. Montague Williams is the one who puts together the workshops, and he's done an excellent job and getting top notch speakers to come in that deal with issues that really, gets to the core of what it is that. We want to work with, and what we want to address, equipping our black pastors as well as our, Anglo pastors, and whoever comes. I don't mean to ramble. I can go on for days. Help me stay on target, you know.

Michael Stipp:

You are doing a good job. All right, David. What's your experience with the BSRT.

David Solomon:

Oh, my experience has been, my experience has been exceptional. It's a committee where I feel it's a safe space where I can express myself. I wear multiple hats on the committee. And I think it's a very productive committee, and we get things done. I'm just honored to serve on the committee. Because it's we need a place where we can [serve] and this goes with the conferences as well. We need as African Americans; we need a place where we can express ourselves. We need a place where we can a safe place where we can again be ourselves and not be judged or not be like our Anglo brothers and sisters. You know we are who we are, and so the conference does that, and even out before leading up to the conference, if you travel to our brothers and our sister churches, black churches, you'll find a variety of worship styles. And so that's the beauty. When we all gather together under the same roof at our conference we blend, there is this awesome blend of individuals. Same part of the diaspora. And yet respecting the diversity within the diaspora. And so and so it's been. It's been awesome for me, and I would encourage Pastor

Tillman. It's not for us only -- we encourage our Anglo brothers and sisters to come as well to be a part of this awesome celebration of the black culture.

Michael Stipp:

I don't have this question on my notes, and you don't have to answer it if you don't want to. But part of my study is when there are things that happen like the death of George Floyd or Breonna Taylor or others, and you and your spirit feel the church needs to say something. But the church doesn't say something. Is that the role of the BSRT to say, Come on, we gotta get a message to the U.S.A./Canada? I don't know who pulls those strings? The generals? Do you wait for the General Superintendent to contact you or the director of the of the [USA/Canada] Region to contact you? Or do you feel empowered to say I'm the leader, or we are the leaders. We're gonna make a statement and we're gonna get it out there. I don't know how that communication -- just the nuts and bolts of the communication. It is not clear to me.

Charles Tillman:

Well, the last part of your statement is correct that we feel empowered. I know I feel empowered to make a statement, and when the George Floyd incident happened, we got together as a group and began talking about it, and we hashed out a statement. I believe we sent that statement to the Board of Generals. And we sort of pushed that issue with them, that a statement needs to be put out. And again, we understand that we are a global church. We hear that. Well, that's an issue here in the U.S.A/Canada. But this is where we stay. This is where the headquarters is for the Church of the Nazarene, and we feel something of that nature. And with other denominations speaking out [like] Southern Baptist, [and] other Anglo denominations, that we needed to speak out and be one of the voices heard. I did not hesitate in getting our group involved and getting a statement written and putting it out there. And believe you me, I took some shots from some of my Anglo pastor who are friends. And one said to me, and he's a good friend of mine, he says, Well, Brother Charles we don't understand, -- there was even a need to put that statement out there. Well, really, he was speaking to me, -- he is just really uninformed. -- I don't want to say ignorant, because I don't want to be offensive, but just was clueless as to why it was necessary to say something. He didn't see any reason for it, but he's also the same one that agreed with another statement. One of my professors said years ago, and I'll never forget it, that if we just quit talking about racism and prejudice, it would go away. And I thought to myself, that's the dumbest thing anyone could ever say. If you just quit talking about it?! I said, That's like telling a woman who's been raped. Well, just quit talking about it, and you'll get better. It doesn't happen that way, and for someone who has not lived the black experience to make that statement is offensive. How can you dare even speak to something that you don't have a clue about? Walk a mile in my moccasins, and [then you will] have a clue as to why we feel so strong about it.

And so, anyway, we I know I feel empowered. I don't know. I I would. I can't speak for Pastor Solomon, but I did not hesitate.

David Solomon:

Oh, yes, absolutely. And we got together, we crafted a statement. And so, this is how it's done, Mike. We did the statement. Roberto [Hodgson], our director, U.S.A. Canada region Director of Multicultural Cultural Ministries, got involved and it went out, and there was some blowback;

push back, and so -- then the statement now had to be re calibrated [to be] maybe softer, softer tone. Make it a little more palatable, easier for reading purposes, I guess. Those are some of the things where I think it's good. I have no problem with that. I realize we are part of a

larger body. We're not an island by ourselves where the parts are not greater than the whole. All of that I understand that clearly, but yet there has to be a trust. That a statement that Dr. Tillman is going to put out along with his team is valid, and is strong enough that it's not going to hurt the church, but I think it will enhance the Church when it comes to race relations, and conversations with our white pastors or black pastors. So once it's watered down -- then it just changes the whole intention of the whole thing, and that's frustrating, especially to the this generation of pastors, black pastors.

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00:35:06.660 --> 00:35:12.770

Michael Stipp: Well, that's information I didn't have. And you, that's good to know. It's [info I] couldn't find. -- You couldn't find anything that the BSRT put out there is.

David Solomon:

It's available. It's there.

Michael Stipp:

I'll have to go dive in again.

David Solomon:

Yeah, it's there. It went to every DS. And I believe to every it was sent to every pastor as well in U.S.A./Canada Region.

Charles Tillman:

Let me add on that. If you check with NTS, I know Dr. Jess Middendorf, we did some kind of interview or podcast some years ago, where we had the same type of conversation that we're having about racism in the church. And we had a great conversation. I imagine you could find that in the in the NTS Archives. But it was a conversation that I had with Dr. Jess Middendorf, maybe 6, 7 years ago, or somewhere thereabout.

Michael Stipp: Okay, all right. Thank you for that. The next thing we're going to transition a bit. Let's talk about Grider's statement. And maybe you'll agree with this -- maybe not. What happens to the soul when it is entirely sanctified? In a nutshell, Dr. Grider believed that prejudice is not taken care of at the work of entire sanctification and his point was validated by a Scripture of Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit fell upon Peter [and he] preached. But Peter also had an Acts 10 experience where he sees the Gentiles in a brand-new light. And so, his point was that -- maybe I can just read it here.

If Peter's Pentecost did not route his prejudice against Gentiles, we may suppose that our Pentecost will not nullify such matters either. Prejudices against races, classes, and genders do not automatically vanish when one is sanctified wholly. They will be corrected under the continual continuing tutelage of the Holy Spirit.

So, tell me your reactions and thoughts about Grider's statement, and maybe even provide some of your experiences as well.

Charles Tillman:

Well, I would like to concur with his statement. I don't think that when a person gets sanctified, at least my experience anecdotally from what I see that it happens that they are cleansed of that prejudice. I think it's something that has to be pointed out to them. For instance, I think about when I got sanctified, and I gave God everything that I knew to give him. But yet, as I continue to grow and mature. I understood, to recognize other areas in my life that I needed God to cleanse and to help me with, that I was not yet aware of, and I think that it is so embedded in the psyche of so many of our Anglo brothers and sisters that they just don't see it. They just don't see it. And so, they don't recognize that it is an area that needs to be given to God and be sanctified. Maybe because of their upbringing. Maybe because of their education. I don't know. But I have friends that have had blind spots when it when it comes to it, and after having conversation with me, they said, I never thought about that, and I need to pray about that. I need God to help me with that [to] help me understand. And one superintendent said to me, that's why I need to have conversations with you. I need to better understand, so that I can be more effective in my relations with black pastors, and how I communicate with them. Because, he said, I don't understand as a white male coming from, and he gave me his background, and I totally understood that. Okay, but what I appreciated is that he had a willingness and an openness to listen -- to learn, to change, and to modify his perceptions. Things that he had not thought about. You know, black folk, I reminded him. Let me tell you, black people are not monolithic. We're not all the same, I said. That's like me looking at one white person to say, all white people are the same. -- All black folk don't come from the Ghetto. We don't all watch Sanford and Son, and things like that. That's not the average black person One of the great things that happened back in the nineties, is when [Bill] Cosby came out with his show with two professional blacks. He was a doctor, and I think she was a lawyer. -- We have professional black families -- we're not all junkyard dealers, and so. I agree with his statement. That if -- it's intentional on their part. But again, once you come to that awareness. Once you come to the place where you recognize that, hey? -- I've got blinders here, and I need the Holy Spirit to help me.

Michael Stipp:

Good. Thank you.

David Solomon:

And one of the ways to for the Holy Spirit to help is intentionally developing friendships with people of color. Go out of your way. In other words, don't keep us at an arm's length, but intentionally, move in that direction -- move toward us. And when our white brothers and sisters begin to do that, -- we will move forward as well. And so the idea of sanctification -- No, it takes time; it takes education; it takes conversation; it takes empathizing; wearing my shoes for a day or a week or two. Perhaps, coming into my neighborhood [and] see what it's like, and really feel what I am feeling. And if you don't do that -- that's not going to happen if you live elsewhere and try to figure out what's happening in my community.

Michael Stipp:

Good, good. I gave you guys a few questions and one of the questions has to do with trauma. I serve as a minister in Central Illinois, and we have a small multicultural congregation and working with those that might be poor -- and the black community who carry with them the baggage of trauma. And I don't think there's any seminary class that will prepare you to work with generational trauma. And I don't know if in your context, in Virginia and New York, if you work with families or persons with trauma and that's race related. [As a white leader] when I'd venture into the discussion as a white leader, [in a cross-cultural context], they know I'm white, but immediately there's this disconnect. They say you have no idea the depth of what I've gone through as a family member and family structures, -- because, I am white, and I need to be a listener.

I don't know. I'm kind of hem hawing around here, but my question is, How could the "discussion of race" cause, or even trigger trauma? Bringing together -- just to say we're going to listen together is at least a step in the right direction. But for some folks just to having a conversation about trauma can trigger resistance. To say, Oh, this is a heavy subject, and I don't want church to feel bad. I want church to feel good. So I feel I can't talk about trauma like this because it leaves [a heavy feeling]. I enter in heavy, and I leave heavy. You see what I'm trying to say?

Charles Tillman:

Well, I'm not quite sure if this speaks to your question. But let me say this in terms of trauma. This is something that I shared years ago with my DS. I think I shared it with Dr. Middendorf, and I talked about raising 3 black boys, Well, 2 of my sons, it happened. One specifically my younger son, who was driving, and pulled over for no apparent reason except what we call DWB, Driving While Black in an area that is where they thought he should not have been. And I'll never forget what he told me, he said, Dad, when the police came up to my car he already had his gun drawn. And he walked up to me with his lights and the gun drawn and he said, I thought at that moment I was gonna die. Now he's getting pulled over for traffic stop, and he doesn't even know why, he's getting pulled over. He didn't get a ticket -- Why would an officer approach the car of a young black man, hit them with the lights, and you already have your finger on your gun drawn? And they wonder -- you talk about trauma? My son was traumatized but he remembered what I had told him, and what I told all my sons. When you get pulled over, I said, keep your hands on the steering wheel. Don't make any sudden moves. Don't reach for your cell phone. Don't give them a reason to say. Well, I thought he was reaching for a gun, and you get shot to death. I said, Just be very still -- and when they come there, be as polite as you cannot attitude -- just be as polite as you can. Because at that point he is the one who has all the power. And if for some reason you were shot, they're gonna take his word because you're gonna be dead. So you can't speak, -- So this is the kind of trauma that many black families have to deal with. -- You know, we are middle class black family. My boys were raised in the church, and it just so happened. My son thinks he said they saw me driving a nice car. I think we had given him my wife's, and it was an older Mercedes Benz that wasn't -- nothing great, but it was a nice, Mercedes Benz older model. And he said, "I think that he thought that this must be a drug dealer." He's out there driving at 1030, 11 at night. And I said, you didn't have any lights out? You weren't speeding or anything? He said, No, nothing, but he pulled me over and approached the car with his gun drawn.

Michael Stipp:

Oh, gosh!

Charles Tillman:

Wow. So that's a kind of trauma. That's the kind of thing, and that, I told my wife I'm tempted to be fearful whenever my boys leave the house with this kind of stuff going on? That's here in the last 10 years.

Michael Stipp:

Right.

Charles Tillman: I'm not talking about the 1960s I'm talking about after the in the 2000s. That still happens today.

Michael Stipp:

Sure! Thank you for sharing that story. Do you have a few more minutes, or do you have to.

Charles Tillman: No, I can stay a couple of more minutes.

Michael Stipp:

All right, all right. Good deal, I guess. -- How do we? What kind of pointers or recommendations would you have so that a white community and a black community could share together to hear that story? How do? How do you arrange that.

Charles Tillman:

To hear that story?

Michael Stipp:

To hear the story you just told. I mean, what's that look like? How do we get that kind of story out where you know it's not just something going sideways in another state, but that's one of our Nazarene minister families experiencing that trauma? And you know it kind of resonates with the heartbeat that -- this is one of our guys. This is one of our families. How do we increase communication?

Charles Tillman:

I wrote an article on Trying On New Lens, that was published in our Grace and Peace Magazine. Back in 2018, the winter of 2018. I would recommend that you go back and read it. In fact, I'll be doing a workshop at the M25 Conference next week, and I'm going to make copies of that article and give it to participants because I'm going to be talking about ministering in African American community. And if you're going to be effective administering the African American community, you must become aware of their concerns. The issues you must be able to put on a different set of lenses and look at it through the lens of a person of color, and not through the Anglo lens. And that's what my article is all about, trying on a new pair of lenses, seeing things from our viewpoint of what we have gone through as black people in a predominantly Anglo church at least here in the USA/Canada right?

Michael Stipp:

Right.

Charles Tillman:

You know, I said to Dr. Middendorf I'm not talking about the 1960s, I'm talking about after the in the 2000s. I said, we do an excellent job in world missions, and so forth. I said, but it'd be nice if they could go across town to the black area of town, and we could make a dent in terms of African Americans. I said, we're not doing a good job here in America. I said so when you talk about the missions and everything that we're doing, I'm elated. I'm very happy, but I want to know when we're going to get serious about ministering to black folk here right in America. I said, when you have folks that will go into a grocery store, and you're afraid to speak to a black person or at an assembly, or whatever I said, hey, but you'll give money in your offering to, send them a missionary over there, and we'll give to Alabaster and so forth. I said, how about being, a witness right in your community, in your own town?

David Solomon:

And that's a big deal, because I'm sure we all know that years ago that the Church really left urban America and went to other places. Left the ghettos and went to other parts of the world, including the Caribbean. The church left the city and went to the suburbs. When Anglos were not happy with the number of blacks moving into their community, they moved to the suburbs, and the church followed them. All right, let me share with you a traumatic experience. It wasn't necessarily personal. A member of my church moved. And her family relocated to the Woodlands of Texas outside of Houston, looking for a church. [Her family] had been part of the church of the Nazarene for a long time looking for a home church. So they went to several churches, and they landed in an Anglo Nazarene church, and oh, my goodness! They were the only people of color. No one spoke to them for a long time. -- Things were said to them about why are they here? There's a black church, not a Nazarene church, but there's a black church, a couple miles away. And those kinds of things were very traumatic for this family, and they would call me. As a matter of fact, they have moved back to New York and that was one of the reasons. Because they just didn't feel comfortable in the whole church. With that kind of mindset, and it was extremely traumatic for them. So, my advice to them, to make a long story short, is, there are two types of churches: within the denomination. U.S.A./Canada. You know there is the Black Church, and there's the Anglo Church. Make the choice you want? There are other churches you can go to, but you are loyal to the Church of the Nazarene like Pastor Tillman and I are, and most all of us are. And so do you stay with it? Do you stay with it? Regardless of what has been said to you, regardless of how you're being treated, how you're looked at? You walk in, you and your husband and kids walk into the church. Everyone looks back [at] you -- what are you doing here? You know people grab their handbags. So, it was very, very super uncomfortable for them. So, there were times when I was at a loss for words. To what do I tell them? What do I tell this young family? So eventually, I said, it may be better to find a different church home. Go to the 1st Baptist Church. Find a different church home where you are welcome. -- Don't even bother to go to this church, this sister church in Texas, and so very traumatic. And they did. But eventually they decided to move back to New York. And that's the end of the story -- with that situation. -- But it is difficult in the church.

Michael Stipp:

Thank you for that story, and thanks for popping back on [the call]. I just have a few minutes left. Would either of you have any recommendations for things (we're about the same age) to happen on our watch? You don't have a crystal ball, or whatever. But what would you like to see happen when it comes to race relations in the church of the Nazarene on your watch? What would you like to see improved or strengthened.

Charles Tillman:

Wow! My watch is about to be over. I tell you that. As I said earlier, and I think Pastor Solomon said, we have seen progress. It's been incremental, [we've] not seen the progress that I would like to see. When I look across and see the District Superintendents and I'm looking for Superintendent that looks like me. I'd like to see something happen in that regards. Now, of course, we do have a black person Dr. Chambo on the Board of General Superintendents, but I mean gosh! We had to go all the way to Africa to get in. We couldn't elect someone, you know, from U.S.A/Canada. But I thank God for him that he is there, but in terms of our leadership. When we look at GMC (Global Ministry Center), when you walk through GMC, and you look around there -- I don't think I ever saw Blackface there. The last time I went there was one African American lady there who was in some kind of a administrative secretarial position. One. One out of all the years I've been going okay. I'd like to see that change. I'd like to see leadership that is reflective of our society at large. Okay, I think the church should be a microcosm of society. When I look at the leadership of the Church of the Nazarene, it does not look like our society, and if we are going to be effective in reaching all cultures and all people, our leadership needs to be reflective of that.

Michael Stipp: Well, said. Good. Brother David?

David Solomon: I'm 100% in support of Dr. Tillman, and what he just said, I think the church needs to be more inclusive. And I know this is a very hot topic these days with the DEI. We talked about this about 5 years ago, when we were at GMC. And the church being more inclusive intentionally. We talked about hiring practices at GMC. I would love to see some of the hiring practices open to all people and intentionally marketing job positions, opening positions in areas where they are. Where people like us live. So, they can retain qualified people of color. And so -- it added to what Pastor Tillman said. You know I think we definitely need to do some more work with DEI. And I'm a big DEI person. So, pardon me for going that way.

Charles Tillman: Somehow, there are folks that think DEI means that they are less qualified, and that's not what it means at all. It means that we are taking intentional steps to bring in people that are qualified for other cultures that we may not normally interview and see. I did that. You know I was an EEO officer for a college, and it was my job to make sure that anytime we had a pool of applicants that we made sure we had a diverse pool of individuals. These were people who are qualified for the job but may not have ever gotten a shot. So, I made sure that in every search and screening committee I would look at the list of resumes to make sure that there were people of color in the pool, that they had a shot. And guess what happened. We started hiring people of color.

David Solomon:

Right. It has to be intentional. It has to be intentional. It's not going to happen unless someone says we are going to do this. This is our mandate in the Church of the Nazarene, and so, if it's not intentional, it's not going to happen.

Michael Stipp:

So, you guys put together on the Black Strategic Readiness Team, that kind of proposal. And you come back again next year -- the next 2 years, and no change. So, do you hit it again? Do you [ask] Well, how do you stir leadership to action?

Charles Tillman:

You stay at it. There you go. I believe that the Board of General Superintendents has changed -- several times since I've been a Nazarene, and I get a better feel from the folks that we've brought on now versus what we have 15 years ago. So, you just stay at it.

Michael Stipp:

Stay in.

David Solomon:

You don't give up. Yeah.

Jerry Porter, Jamie Gates and Belinda Robinson discuss the 5th paragraph of *Manual* ¶915

(¶915, par 5) Therefore, we renounce any form of racial and ethnic indifference, exclusion, subjugation, or oppression as a grave sin against God and our fellow human beings. We lament the legacy of every form of racism throughout the world, and we seek to confront that legacy through repentance, reconciliation, and biblical justice. We seek to repent of every behavior in which we have been overtly or covertly complicit with the sin of racism, both past and present; and in confession and lament we seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

Overview

The meeting featured Belinda, Jamie, and Jerry discussing the impact of Dr. Jerry Porter's apology for racism within the Church of the Nazarene in 1998. Belinda shared her experience of joining a predominantly white church in Detroit and the significance of Porter's apology. Jamie highlighted the need for lament and practical actions to address racial injustices, citing his personal loss and the church's role in supporting grieving families. Dr. Porter reflected on the church's historical struggles with racism and the importance of confession and reconciliation. The discussion emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach, including practical steps and cultural sensitivity, to foster true racial unity.

Action Items

- [] Identify specific, tangible steps that multi-congregational Nazarene churches can implement to promote greater unity and fellowship across racial and cultural lines (e.g., quarterly communion services, shared meals, pulpit swaps).
- [] Explore creating a curriculum or resource document that the Church of the Nazarene can use to study and discuss the issue of racism.
- [] Consider ways to incorporate the language and principles of the *Manual's* paragraph 915 on renouncing racism into the broader life and practices of local Nazarene churches.

Outline

Introduction and Participant Backgrounds

- Belinda Robinson is a doctoral student and pioneer pastor in Plymouth, Michigan, who is working on a housing project for the underserved.
- Jamie Gates introduces himself highlighting his work at Point Loma Nazarene University and his expertise in human trafficking and racial justice.
- Mike Stipp provides a detailed bio of Dr. Jerry Porter, including his educational background, his work in church planting, theological education and leadership as a General Superintendent.

Belinda's Experience with the Church of the Nazarene

- Belinda shares her journey of joining the Church of the Nazarene in 1998 and her initial skepticism due to the predominantly white demographic.
- She describes her first encounter with the church and her initial reluctance to serve in ministry.
- Belinda recounts her experience witnessing Dr. Porter's apology, which deeply impacted her.
- She emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and confronting racism to move forward.

Jamie's Perspective on Racial Reconciliation

- Jamie reflects on his experiences in South Africa during the transition from apartheid and his subsequent work in the Church of the Nazarene in the U.S.
- He discusses the parallels between racial issues in South Africa and the U.S., and his awakening to the persistent racism within the church.
- Jamie shares his personal loss and how it influenced his understanding of the need for confession and lament within the church.
- He highlights the importance of the church being present with those who are suffering and the role of lament in addressing injustices.

Dr. Porter's Apology and Its Impact

- Dr. Porter reflects on the personal and professional challenges he faced, including the loss of his daughter and the election as General Superintendent.
- He describes the racial reconciliation service he organized and the importance of addressing racial issues within the church.
- Dr. Porter shares the story of Oliver Phillips, who assisted him as an advisor when he was a district superintendent, and the challenges faced by African American leaders within the church.
- He emphasizes the need for the church to confront its past and present sins of racism and to work towards reconciliation and justice.

The Role of Lament in Addressing Racism

- Mike Stipp introduces a paragraph from the Church of the Nazarene *Manual* that addresses racial and ethnic indifference and exclusion.
- The participants discuss the importance of lament in acknowledging and confronting racism and the challenges of implementing this practice within the church.

- Belinda and Jamie emphasize the need for truth-telling and acknowledging the pain caused by racism.
- Dr. Porter and Jamie highlight the importance of practical actions and presence in addressing racial injustices.

Challenges and Practical Steps for Racial Reconciliation

- The participants discuss the various responses to racial issues within the Church of the Nazarene, including omission, color blindness, and interpersonal friendships.
- Dr. Porter and Jamie emphasize the need for multi-congregational churches and practical actions to break down racial barriers.
- Belinda shares her experiences of racism within the church and the importance of addressing these issues publicly.
- The participants discuss the need for a document or curriculum to guide the church in addressing racial issues and the importance of practical actions in addition to lament.

Conclusion and Future Steps

- Mike Stipp expresses a desire for a printed document or curriculum to guide the church in addressing racial issues.
- The participants discuss the importance of practical actions and the need for the church to confront its past and present sins of racism.
- Dr. Porter and Jamie emphasize the importance of presence and practical actions in addressing racial injustices.
- The meeting concludes with a call for continued conversation and action towards racial reconciliation within the Church of the Nazarene.

Recorded interview with Jerry Porter, Jamie Gates, and Belinda Robinson January 28, 2025

Mike Stipp 0:41

I got acquainted with Jamie through some writings from Point Loma. I thought, man, I gotta reach out to this guy. And so, thank you, Jamie, for spending some time with us today.

Jamie Gates 0:54

There's an important conversation you have going on. Mike

Jerry Porter 0:57

So this is your doctoral project, is that, right?

Mike Stipp 1:02

It's been well received from everyone, I've asked about getting involved with it. And I thought, well, who knows? Maybe this could be an ongoing conversation that we could have through like a podcast, you know, just to have people talk and share.

Jerry Porter 1:27

We need to listen more and have a lot of respects. And it's very timely with all this happening with immigration right now that we're, talking about this today. It's heartbreaking. Can you share the screen with me?

Mike Stipp 2:08

Very good. Alright. Well, since this is being recorded, let me give some introductions. It's possible some folks out there have never heard of Belinda and Jamie and Jerry. So let me give a little bit of bio here. Jerry Porter was elected general superintendent in 1997 and he's originally from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and his parents were missionaries, William and Juanita Porter. So, he grew up on the mission field, and then later in his training, he went to Southern Nazarene University. He went to Nazarene Theological Seminary, and he holds a Doctor of Divinity degree, he and his wife Tony have served and lived and dreamed of missions in the United States and Central America, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica. Dr Porter has excelled as a mentor and leader, particularly in church planting, church growth and development theological education and believing in people and allowing them to flourish and reach their God given potential. So, it's an honor to have you with us, Dr Porter. And so glad you've taken some time to join us today. Jamie Gates, I want to know more about you, but this is what I have on my paper. He's a cultural anthropologist and former director at Point Loma Nazarene University's Center for Justice and Reconciliation [that] pursues the connection between faith, scholarship and activism. While he's a national reputation as an expert in human trafficking, Jamie's passion [for] scholarly activism includes immigration, border relations as well as racial and economic justice. If you -- are listening, perhaps you can look up Jamie's activity, because he has some links to some resources that would be important for you to understand his work, groundbreaking research and human trafficking and gang activity. For seven years, he's co-chaired the Research and Data Committee at San Diego County Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. He founded the Human Trafficking Research and Data Advisory Roundtable for San Diego County. He co-led the university in establishing a Beauty for Ashes Scholarship Fund for survivors of human trafficking. So anyway, Doctor gates, it's an honor to have you with us today, and I know that

you have your plate full right now as well. So, one more person on our phone call today, and that's Belinda Robinson. Now Belinda is in a first cohort of the Black Leadership and Ministry graduation class that we're going to be having [in May 2025]. So, she's, she is a doctoral student, and she's a pioneer [pastor] up in Plymouth, Michigan in the Detroit area. She has gifts and preaching, teaching, discernment, prayer and encouragement. She's a delight, and she enjoys spending time with her husband, her family, traveling, reading, and crafting. Belinda is pioneering a study and seeking a housing project for the underserved in Plymouth, Michigan. So again, thank you for your pioneering work, and I'm anxious to read how your doctoral dissertation is going to help us in the Church of the Nazarene. All right.

The two things that Belinda and Jamie have in common is that they both heard Dr Porter's apology years ago, and I'm going to start with you. Belinda, tell me and tell us -- tell us all how that how that speech basically impacted you.

Belinda Robinson 6:55

Good morning, everyone. I am actually honored to be here in the presence of Jerry and Jamie, both of you have done phenomenal work. And so first of all, I want to recognize the work that you've done and thank Mike for inviting me here into this conversation. Just so that you all know I'm the first generation African American Church of the Nazarene in my family. So, no one else in my family has ever been a Nazarene that I know of. And I came to the Church of the Nazarene around 1998 and when I came to the Church of the Nazarene, I happened to move into the East Side neighborhood. Part of my testimony is I moved into the East Side neighborhood, on the east side, and I was looking for a church, and I was praying and asking God, where do where do I go? And even though I hadn't answered the call to ministry, I had already done a lot of studies on our religious organizations and that sort of thing like that. So, I was somewhat familiar with the Church of the Nazarene. But what I knew about the Church of the Nazarene was that it was Caucasian for all intents and purposes. Because in my community, the churches that dominated my community, are mostly Apostolic Church of God in Christ, Baptist, we have some Lutheran and the Catholics. But I had never attended a church in the Nazarene. -- So as I prayed and they were having a concert or something. And they left a flyer on my doorstep. -- I saw the flyer, and I said, Oh Lord, what am I going to do in the Church of the Nazarene, there aren't any black folks. And so, I saw, I was like, oh goodness Lord, what am I going to do? And so, I prayed. But then the Lord led me to come. And so, I knew enough to ask for the doctrine. I went in at that time, when I came to the Church of Nazareth, I really didn't want to do anything in ministry. I just wanted to sit in the back and just minister to because I was in a place where I was feeling. When I, [met with] the pastor Hunter, he's very outgoing, and he made sure I knew him. He introduced himself to me. So the first thing I asked him for was the *Manual*. Like -- let me see your *Manual*. Let me see what are you all actually about? So, he probably thought what kind of person comes in and asks for a *Manual*? Well, I had learned enough to know you want [to be connected] before you connect, because I was looking for a church home. But before you connect to a church, -- it's like a marriage. You have to be serious about this thing. You gotta know what you're getting into. And I didn't know anything about the church. -- The ironic thing was, is that Grace Church is the is in Detroit. And there are, at that time, there were only two

black Nazarene churches in Detroit. One on the east side, which was around the corner from where I moved. The other one is on the west side. Well, I have never attended either one of them, and I didn't know anyone who ever attended either of them. And so when I came into the service, and it was it was -- just like every other African American church. I was like, okay, maybe I could stay here a little while. And so, I asked for a *Manual*. And so, because I just wanted to be there; I didn't want to serve. I knew I had gifts. I knew I had talents, but I never had considered a call to pastoral ministry at that time. So, I just acted like I didn't have any gifts. I didn't want -- I didn't want -- a job or any money. I just wanted to be just there and be a member and just be ministered to. And as time fast forward, he sends me to, at that time, Doctor [Oliver] Phillips. They were running the Warren Rogers Institute in Kansas City. And so that was like the first thing pastor Herman started sending us to. -- Then he invited me to the General Assembly. And I do believe that was in 2001 -- that was my very first general assembly. And so it was. It was very impressive. Just the General Assembly in itself, just to see all the people come together. But when you presented your apology, to the to the whole congregation at that time, I really didn't understand the significance of what that meant. It moved us, even those African American pastors that I knew. It moved us and just being there and witnessing that you -- being in that position, taking that stance for righteousness and for justice it. I will never forget that moment in my life. I will never forget it. It impacted me like never before, and even now, I mentioned that even in my writing and in my speaking and in my testimonies about the vision that you began to lay out for us as Nazarenes to work together. -- And there was, there was a lot of hope, a lot of anticipation of what will come out of that, that apology. We have seen some progress moving forward, but even today, we still face struggles. And even as you know what we're dealing with right now. Um, with the change of administration, I work for the federal government, it is devastating, and how our communities are going to address it. How will we be able to stand? Who will stand with us?

Mike Stipp 13:07

Thank you. Thank you so much for joining us. Belinda and Jamie, did I understand that you heard Dr Porter's apology in South Africa?

Jamie Gates 13:26

I got word of, I didn't hear it live, but I got word of it happening because, of course, let's see, at that particular point I was finishing up. Let's say it was in 98 and I was at the University of Florida working on my PhD in cultural anthropology. After I'd been at seminary -- Linda my church journey -- I grew up in South Africa as a missionary kid during the hardest years of apartheid. The ending up until 1988 I went to college in 88 through 92 so this whole transition of South Africa beyond apartheid begins to happen while I'm at college. And of course, Mandela becomes president for first black president South Africa in 94. I'm in graduate school now I was at seminary first NTS, and my journey back to the States was helped along by at seminary, Michelle and I joined the Blue Hills Church, the Nazarene Reverend Larry Lott [was the pastor] and now it's Reverend Winston Lot. And for four years at seminary, I was now able to

experience the black church in the United States, in a way that what I thought had so many parallels to what had been happening in South Africa. You know, I thought, okay, back in the States, they must be well beyond [what] they had the civil rights movement. We're well beyond, you know, racism in the United States, well beyond all of those difficult things that I had grown up with in South Africa. But then I landed at Blue Hills Church of the Nazarene, and I'm like. Oh, this is here in the US. Well, it's kind of gone underground, or people don't talk about it often enough, or there's all kinds of structural ways that we have problems now and it was an awakening for four years, walking with the members of that church as the only white family for a while in that church. It became part of Michelle and I's discipleship as a couple, as a young couple, and into the Church of the Nazarene in the US -- which was eye opening, to say the least. So, in '98 I'm in graduate school down in University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida, and I'm wrestling. I went into a PhD in anthropology, because my seminary days were good, but, but they weren't asking bigger questions, the biggest of questions about injustice that God had pierced my heart with while I was at seminary. And I think I'm studying South Africa again. I'm studying the church in South Africa, and I'm studying, you know, race relations in South Africa, and the church and have all these questions. And in the midst of all those questions, you know, South Africa is still struggling with the church moving beyond apartheid. -- The country moving beyond apartheid, and the Church of the Nazarene, frankly, was a little slower, maybe a lot slower, than the nation, to make some real important changes. -- and was not really talking out loud about its own racism and then its own, its own sins of the past. It wasn't very confessional at that time. And here comes one of our general superintendents, and in Oklahoma, one of the, one of the parts of the south, you know, one of the parts where it's difficult to talk about these things, and he's on his knees. And I was, I was so hungry for something like that in the Church of the Nazarene and while I've since learned that it was more personal than it was on behalf of the denomination, we can talk more about that. But here's, here's somebody who's got a very loud microphone and of status and is modeling what I think needed to happen well before then. But also just I was I was floored, frankly, Dr Porter, that in your in your space, -- you took you took that role and made it public.

Mike Stipp 17:31

Very good. Thank you guys for sharing. Now my goal is that I can find a clip of this apology, I think it exists somewhere. But for today, let me just read out of a book that I have, and then I'll turn it over to Jerry to respond. I think Jerry wrote this chapter, and he says, After hearing several black Nazarene ministers speak of the pain and frustrations they experience serving as minority leaders in our fellowship, I felt compelled to ask them to forgive the white race and forgive their church for these offenses. On my knees, I asked Native American Johnny Nels to please forgive the race for all the broken promises and treaties, for the Trail of Tears and for the present insensitivity to the plight of the nations. I bowed at Roger Bowman's feet, asking him to forgive me on behalf of my ancestors who participated in the African slave trade in order to create an economic system that would benefit the white race while denying that the African Americans even had souls. I wept as I asked Roland Edouard from Haiti to forgive my generation for its prejudice that treats recent immigrants with disdain, even as these workers have been exploited to provide inexpensive and an abundant food for our tables. And I asked

these Nazarene church leaders to forgive our church for insensitivity that forced them to act, talk and even think White in order to survive and minister in the ranks of the Church of the Nazarene. So that moves me just to read it. But Dr Porter, thank you. Thank you. Add anything you'd like to share. I will give you the floor here.

Jerry Porter 20:13

Thank you, Mike, and it is a great honor to be with you, Mike and I, thank God for your service to the church over the many years. And Belinda, what a delight to meet you and celebrate your ministry as a pastor there in Detroit. And Jamie and I do have a little bit of history, and so good to be with you today. Jamie, love, love and appreciate you. You've all had experiences where the Lord put you in a certain place at a certain time for a certain purpose, and it's, it's amazing what, what happens when, when you're available, and God chooses to orchestrate in his sovereign will, that kind of a moment, and that's what it was. It was, I think it's fair to say that two years before, three years before, my daughter died of cancer when she was 20, she died a couple of weeks before her wedding. So, I had my family, my wife and I my son. We'd been through the darkest night of the soul, and then to be elected in 1997 a General Superintendent and but let me say that April, before my June election, I was district superintendent in Washington, DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and we had a racial reconciliation service at that assembly. So, this was kind of the tone of my experience, and I have a copy of the document where we asked Gerald Johnson to talk a little bit about racial reconciliation. Then Tom Nees was there, and he shared. Tom Umbel church historian shared. Oliver Phillips talked about what it's like to play the piano, with the white keys, and how boring it is and how, how much better it is, if you can use the white and the black keys. Roland Edouard was there, a Haitian representative. Roberto Hodgson was there. All of them -- all of them spoke. That was the incubator for me. I confessed when I arrived after being a missionary 17 years in Latin America, I just started spending a lot of time with Tom Nees and Oliver Phillips, and I said, you have to help me understand what is going on in America, with the with the African Americans. Oliver became my black DS, he was in charge of all ministries among the African American people on the district. And one day he announced to me, when we had quarterly lunches together, and we'd had a lot of fellowship, he said, Well, Jerry, I got all the African Americans together from all the churches, some of them were black churches, and some of them were African Americans and the integrated churches. And it was wonderful. We had a great time, had great fellowship. Then we asked the question, why are we Nazarenes? And I held my breath, because it's not easy to be a minority anywhere and in the church. And he said, and we couldn't find any answer there. There's really no reason for us to be Nazarene. He said, There's no opportunities for us. We're often marginalized. We're sometimes token -- marked tokenism. He said, the more we talked, you know, we realized that we really there's no reason we should just join a strong, vibrant black denomination and just find a lot of places to serve and leadership development and all the rest. And as my heart was shattered, he said, so then we decided we're Nazarene because God told us to. It's the only reason. There's no benefit, there's no rational reason why we would be part of this white denomination. You know, this church is great in its missionary passion, sending missionaries all over the world and evangelizing and sharing and giving leadership development in all these races and nationalities around the world. But in America, the racial prejudice was such that there was no space, really.

And so, Oliver, he laughed as loud as he could. He was having so much fun with me because he knew -- he just dropped me over the edge of hell there when he said, we're all going to leave your lousy white church.

Our denomination didn't have the struggle of the Southern Baptists, who, before the Civil War, were using scripture to justify slavery, and had to come to a point of genuine confession as a denomination and repentance and brokenness and admit we were really, really wrong. But our denomination was born after the Civil War and in Pilot Point, Texas, the big news there was a Southerner embracing a Yankee. I mean, that was huge. There were no African Americans. There were no blacks. There were no minorities present. And then that incipient Nazarene holiness group was very passionate about missionary work, but blind to its racism in its own in its own backyard. So, it was just a moment my heart was already being touched deeply by the racial reconciliation ceremony that we actually had Ellen Decker -- Dr [Charles] Gailey's daughter, helped me to write that, and I have a copy of it, I can send you, but it was just a really powerful time that we all clustered in small groups and made sure that every small group was a variety of cultures, a variety of different people coming together to pray for each other and talk about racial reconciliation at the district level. You know, what is it like to love each other and work together and serve together and be part of the same family and respect each other? So that moment in Oklahoma was just a great privilege for me to speak right from my heart and ask forgiveness for my ancestors and what they had done, and also for our denominations and sensitivity. And Belinda, you're right. I think we've taken maybe one step forward and two steps back sometimes as this denomination. We're going to have to answer to the Lord for our inability to really make the church a church for all people -- which is what Acts chapter two was all about. When they had all those languages [poured out?] upon Jews, those Jews didn't ever want -- they weren't supposed to ever use those languages to worship God. And here they were using Arabic and using the language with the Medes and the Persians worshipping Jehovah, God of the Jews in those dirty dog languages. And that, that was God's way of saying, this is for all cultures, all languages, all people. So that's what that moment was.

Mike Stipp 27:25

Good. Well, one of the reasons we want to come together is to clarify and celebrate what has been written and agreed upon in our *Manual*. Paragraph 915 is in the appendix. It's the part no one reads, but it is well written and I've asked you guys to kind of guide us through one of the paragraphs. It's actually the fifth paragraph, one of my favorite. It says, Therefore, we renounce any form of racial and ethnic indifference, exclusion, subjugation or oppression as a grave sin against God and our fellow human beings. We lament the legacy of every form of racism throughout the world, and we seek to confront that legacy through repentance, reconciliation and biblical justice. We seek to repent of every behavior in which we have been overtly or covertly complicit with the sin of racism, both past and present; and in confession and lament we seek forgiveness and reconciliation. Could we just talk a moment about lament? I have found it to be difficult when I lead congregations about lament, because some of the folks in my tribe, feel like Original Sin was taken care of. How you how can you lament as a group when they understand personal salvation to trumps every other kind of experience? How do you lament as a as a group?

So, we don't have a lot written for our Nazarene folks about lament. So maybe you guys [can help] how do you understand lament to be practiced, and how do we lament racism in the USA, Canada region? How do we do that?

Jerry Porter 30:02

Go ahead, Jamie,

Jamie Gates 30:05

I'd love to hear from Belinda first, if that's okay.

Belinda Robinson 30:10

I think one of the most important things is to come to acknowledge it and to confront it, because as long as we don't confront it, or don't recognize it, then we can't lament over it. Um, in fact, Doctor Phillips had a book talking about the elephant in the room. And that book, -- a lot of people have not even considered reading that book. But when you think about what's in the room, if there's an elephant, and it's really taking up a lot of space, that's one of the parts of that analogy. [It] is taking up a lot of our space, is taking up a lot of our energy. And as we know what racism and segregation does -- it hinders us from becoming all that God had intended us to be. Because if he wanted all-white, Jesus, Dr. Oliver would put it, it would be a very boring life if everything was all white. We like color, we like variations, and God created us like that. So, I think the first part is to acknowledge that it is there. And not one of the things that was significant about Dr Porter's position was that he was in a position to acknowledge it from the head, and that was significant. I don't know how the other people under you -- how they responded. But from my view, it was very significant. And that's important, because if the head ignores it, then the rest of the people, it's easy for them to ignore it. So I think it's acknowledgement.

Mike Stipp 31:57

Thank you very good,

Jamie Gates 32:00

Dr. Porter mentioned losing his daughter, and how instrumental that was in many ways, of getting to this particular moment the year after this confession -- publicly. I lost my sister to cancer, and I was in South Africa, doing my dissertation research. And she's my younger sister. She died at 24 and I had to fly back from South Africa doing this work, this research, on race and the church. And I was pretty mad at the church at the time for its sins and the ones that it wasn't

confessing. But at my sister's funeral, 1100 people showed up to that funeral from around the world, and most of them were Nazarenes or from the church -- pouring out their love to my family and in the years to come. You know that willingness to be present, that willingness to mourn with my family at the loss of my sister was tangible hands and feet of Jesus. And that got me on this path. Longer story there -- but that got me on this path of saying, Okay, if the church is the church, where is it the Confessing Church? Where is it the lamenting church? Where is it the mourning the church that mourns as well. Because the beautiful thing about lament and mourning is that it pushes us into the ugly [part] of the past, and it has us look at directly in the eye, but it also is profoundly comforting for both those currently in the midst of injustice and those of us who are not (so I guess I'm fumbling around for some words), but maybe let me say it like this. I started to look all over scripture and like, Where does the morning happen in the life of Jesus, right, in the very birth narrative of Jesus?

You know, there is infanticide. Babies are killed, right? And Herod kills the babies. What is, what is the author, Matthew saying? Matthew turns to the prophet Jeremiah, and he quotes Jeremiah, 31 and says, you know, Rachel weeping for her children because they are no more. She refuses to be consoled. There's this way in which, right the beginning of the Bible, lament comes in right at the beginning of Jesus stories. And there's this function. There's this purpose to say, you know, the God of the universe steps down into history and comes alongside Rachel says, I'm with you. There's no comfort for you. I understand. I feel you. You know, you start looking all over. You know the book of Lamentations, is a great place to go right? But most people go to Lamentations, and they go right to Lamentations 3:21, where that there's like just a tiny, tiny speck of hope in Lamentations. There's five books, five different authors, like you read Lamentations, and it hurts, right? Like it's ugly. It's the ugliest of human actions on other human beings. And it's the deepest, heartfelt cries. And there's a tiny ray of hope everybody focus on, but there's droning on five chapters of, hey, this hurts. This is not right. Truth telling, like Belinda was saying, right? This like, yelling at God, mad at God, like, Are you kidding me? And there's this tiny grain of hope we always focus on. And I think, Whoa, church. Like, what is the role of lament in the church, there's a really, really important role for walking in the ugly with people are in it, walking the depths of people's suffering.

Mike Stipp 35:52

Good, good words,

Jerry Porter 35:54

The best, the best consoling that we received when our daughter died, it was not somebody quoting a scripture, because the Bible at that time was kind of useless to us. All the promises, all the healings, all the miracles, the Lord had chosen in his sovereign will to allow our daughter to not be healed and not have that miracle and not hear the cry and the prayer of a lot of people. So quoting scripture didn't really help us. It made us angrier at God, or quoting a poem, or quoting a hymn, or trying to show us how the pain that we were going through was wonderful because it

had some good outcomes, all of that. -- You know, someone said, I'm so grateful for your daughter and the way she endured her cancer and her death, because, you know, God used her. And my gut was, well, I wish God would have chosen your daughter and used her and left me alone, because this is really terrible. I miss my daughter. There's a sense in which Jamie is right. Just say, just presence, just being with people that are suffering the injustice and suffering the terrible abuse of bullies, whether they be personal, family, government, whoever the bully is, and to just, allow people to know that we're there. We care, and we listen, and we we're trying -- we won't be able to, but we're trying to understand what it's like for them, because it's so that would be "presence laments." And then, being able to express our genuine emotions. People who would reprimand my wife when she would say she was angry at God. You can't be angry at God, especially if you're a spirit-filled, sanctified believer. You can't be angry at God. But that's nonsense. And I've urged people that are grieving and angry and lamenting to just tell God off and tell God what they feel. God already knows. So, it doesn't do any good to pretend God already knows what we feel. God knows what we think. So, our feelings are not sin. Our feelings are feelings, and so we just need to talk about it and let God know. So, I think a lot of presence, and then I think just expression of anger -- which is just a normal process of grief, disappointment, guilt. What could I have done to solve this problem, and the fact that the Nazarene tribe didn't go through the excruciating pain the Southern Baptist went through to ask forgiveness, because we came up after the Civil War. So we, quote, unquote, we weren't guilty of having our pulpits filled with preachers using scripture to justify slavery. So, we, unfortunately, we missed out on what would have been a really important confessional process that we needed. My wife is always insisting that the Nazarene tribe needs a lot more confession, personal, corporate, we need a lot. We were in the Bahamas for district assembly. Someone had to go -- so I went for district assembly. The young pastor there started the assembly said, Okay, everybody on your faces, let's pray and confess all our sins -- and all of our secret stuff and get it all out before God. God can't bless the assembly if we're here playing critical games with God. So let's and he was just so honest. So confessional? I wrote a confessional prayer after that of confessing our willful sins, which Wesleyans understand is, you know, a willful transgression against a known law of God by a responsible person. But then confessing with equal passion, our involuntary or our sins of neglect or our sins of omission, which are just as important in Scripture. And the danger for us within our tribe is that because we do believe that we don't have to sin everyday, word, thought and deed by willful violation of God's known laws. We know that. Okay, so I write to you little children that you sin not, but if you do sin, we need to have that confession and that honest.

Mike Stipp 40:26

Thank you. Thank you, all three of you. Thank you. One of the things that this paragraph came into existence in 2017 so it's kind of the new kid on the block and this longer treatise of discrimination, paragraph of how we are about behaviors of Nazarenes. We do not have a curriculum. We don't have some kind of a video showing us how to implement this language. Personally, I think it's good language. Practically, we don't have the tools to unpack that. So I, you know, I, I'm not going to share my ideas at this point

Jerry Porter 41:18

Just to say that appendix section of the *Manual* is, sadly, where some things are sent that don't last very long. And then it's quite easy to drop sections from our appendix. So, one important step would be for, 100 districts to help move that into the main body of the of the *Manual*, that it's a lot harder to delete it later. One quick political Nazarene, political comment, I like it when you get when you get 100 districts, even the identical resolution, it can't be ignored, and it doesn't die in committee. It has to end up on the discussion floor of the General Assembly, which was where it needs to be. This is the kind of conversation we should be having.

Jamie Gates 42:10

Good I'd be interested in hearing Belinda's perspective on how race is treated in the Church of the Nazarene as an issue. I'd be interested in, when this says we lament every form of racism throughout the world, oh, my heart sings. And then I think about my experiences in the Church of the Nazarene, and I'm not sure I that language like is even in the mouths of most Nazarenes. Belinda, what's been your experience?

Belinda Robinson 42:38

I have not, I have not heard it spoken in the mouths of my Caucasian brothers and sisters and out in the open now. I've had some come to me one on one, but not in in a public forum where others could hear. So, I've had some come to me directly, and I've only been in as a lead pastor five years, even though I've been in the ministry like over 30 years. So, prior to me becoming an elder that they met, they probably would never come to me. I don't think, but maybe they we should. We should make sure that the people that's under us understand that we have addressed it, or that we're addressing it, that we're aware of it, that we're recognizing it, and that we're not ignoring it as something that needs to be addressed. And so now, as a pastor for five years, I'm surprised to see more of it. More racism than I had actually anticipated, especially as I get out. And I've always -- I've never been just one to stay within my circle. I get out the circle. So I would like to see more of it, -- I didn't know, and I'm still learning some of the logistics and some of the structures that we have to take. And I believe that the Lord has put me in this position so that I can understand some of the things that we need to do to make it happen, and it's critical, it's really critical to understand that. And a lot of the pastors, they don't know what to do. They are there, but they know that they're called, but they don't know what to do. And that's common in our in our denomination, and it's commonly in our culture.

Jamie Gates 44:43

Belinda, did I hear you say that you haven't heard much of the conversation, but you also experienced racism in the church directly.

Belinda Robinson 44:53

Yes, I can say, I have. I have walked into some churches and they will not speak to me. They act as if I'm not there, and you can't miss me. I'm not a short person, and I have a big smile, so you can't say I'm not looking at you and I'm not smiling I even have said hi like they don't hear anyone saying hello. I'm like and we say we want to win souls, but how can you let somebody walk in and you won't even speak to them?

Jamie Gates

It doesn't it doesn't line up. I'm sorry about that, by the way. I in my experience at the Church of the Nazarene, I think there's sort of four main ways I hear Nazarenes responding to the conversation about race, probably the first one is not at all, none that there's either that's sort of an omitted conversation, or, I would say even a more hostile pushback. Those are social issues, you know. Let's stick to the Gospel, you know, or I see it in, like, our racially segregated churches, you know, if King wasn't the only one to say that the 11 o'clock hour on a Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in American social life, but that's kind of true, and it's always been true with my life, at least in most Nazarene churches, although with some exceptions. So, there's this none that's sort of like no conversation, or even like we shouldn't talk about this kind of response. I think there's another response that's seems to be well intended, where they say, you know, I don't think. I don't see race. I only see you as a person, what we might call color blindness, right? This notion of color blindness that that, if I were to, if I since we're all equal at the foot of the cross, we shouldn't talk about race, and when I do, that's actually, you know, racist in and of itself. That's so dangerous. That's such a dangerous inversion of trying to see what social divisions we have and how they're making a difference in our world and how to overcome them, because we're not truthful, it makes us no longer truthful about the racial divisions. But okay, I don't want to jump on the so much. I just name the fourth thing, the four response, I think none color blindness, or I don't see race, or those who see this as important, like I have, I have a friend. I make friendships across racial lines. And that's really, really important, I don't want to diminish that at all. But that third response is, you know, very, very interpersonal way of dealing with race, Promise Keepers became and I think when Jerry, when Dr Porter was doing his inspection, Promise Keepers was a thing, and there was this big call for racial reconciling across, across, in particular, male lines at that point, and male friendships. And there were a lot of friendships, and the churches started to do some things across those in terms of friendships. So that was beautiful. But I'd say, if there's a fourth level churches like we have a number of churches that do multi congregational churches, and they, they try and figure out how to how to do multi congregation churches across cultural lines and racial lines, and so that's another level. We can talk about how well we do with that or not, and how much we involve the conversation of confession and race in that or not. But for the Church of the Nazarene, I rarely ever see a space in the Church of the Nazarene where we can talk about

race as a as a social sin, and us being caught up in the social sin of race, and us not being blind to those ways in which that plays itself out in our in our communities.

Jerry Porter 48:33

The problem is deep within all cultures. In the Dominican Republic, we were missionaries, and one young Dominican said, Did I understand that there are going to be some Haitians that are next assembly? She says, because if they are, I'm not, I'm not coming. And I can't bring my baby, because Haitians eat babies. And they're going to eat my baby. So as a Dominican Republic, 19 year-old, 20 year-old mother with a brand new baby -- she literally had that racial perspective that Haitians in her own country, (cutting sugar cane for her, for her, big cane companies) were cannibals and that they were always watching for little white babies from the Dominican people to eat. Racism is, I believe that one of the deepest sins. E. Stanley Jones talked about it as the last stronghold of Satan in the heart of the Spirit filled believer that [the New] Testament church had spiritual power to witness. Which was the wind. They had cleansing. It says [they were pure in heart], their hearts are purified by faith. But the Lord had to repeat the miracle of languages three times because they resisted it and resisted it and resisted it. They wanted to be Christian Jews, Jewish Christians that you know. Then they finally allowed some Samaritans in, but they were just cousins. And then, you know, -- how God had to try. Tried in the New Testament Church to help overcome racism. It's rampant in every culture. I mean, it's not a white problem. It's a black problem. It's a Latino problem. It's the Italians hating the Albanians. It's, you know, it's Puerto Ricans mistreating the Dominicans. It's just so (God help us) Is God's grace and His work not adequate the racism that Satan has planted in our world and in our, in our, in our sinful nature? The church needs to deal with that and confront that. And I, really appreciate Jamie's calling and his life quality, and he's gotten abused and bruised. And sometimes when you're speaking truth and prophetic truth, it's easy to get hurt and then, and then, actually, I've told innovators, you have to have a humble heart and a sweetheart, or you're not going to be able to help the church you say you love. So, thanks Jamie, for continuing to get back in there over and over and over again after getting abused and kicked around. Thank you. And Belinda, we do ask that would forgive us for the times when you've been treated somehow as you know, whatever, not as good or second class, on the edge, marginalized, not right, not because you're a woman and a black woman! Why'd you do that? The stuff that I have that I can send you from Ellen Gayle Decker, she has also some sections on women in ministry and how that glass ceiling in the Nazarene church, even though we stand with the group that you know, we're not part of the reform doctrine and we talk about, but in the practical ways in which women have been marginalized in the church.

Mike Stipp 52:13

Well, this has been a good conversation today. Thank you so much. One of the things that I'd like to see, maybe it won't happen in my lifetime, but I'd like for us to agree upon some kind of document, some kind of printed coaching document that that we could all read together, that we could study together. I think it was Salvation Army produced a 60-page document in 2021.

Others [groups] have just picked up other writings, and they've read it together and had zoom calls where their General Superintendents of holiness groups have shared what insights they gained from reading the same book that outlines this. Right now we have no book, no nothing like that, in place, but I think we have to be creative in turning the page starting a new day, especially for some of our younger ministers. So yes. Well, I have a series of questions that you guys have covered. I feel like you've covered [them] quite well. And there's a scripture found in Psalm 88 I'd like to read just a little bit of it, and I hope that you took time to read it a bit as well.

This is Psalm 88 beginning at verse six. You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest steps. Your wrath lies heavily upon me. You've overwhelmed me with your waves. You've taken me to my closest friends, and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape. My eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, oh Lord, every day I spread out my hands to you.

It's a Psalm of lament. And do we have the liberty to take a passage like that and apply it to lamenting some of our racial sins, in our movement, in the Church of the Nazarene? What do you think? How do we do that? How do we take Scripture about someone's grief and apply it to racism? Or should we?

Belinda Robinson 55:14

I think, yes, I think that is actually a good start, starting with that Psalm in applying it to racism, in addressing and dealing with the pain, and using that Psalm as the foundation to address the racism. We can begin to display some of the areas that racism hurts and hinders the church and that in order for the church to move forward, we need to address those areas so that we can heal. It reminds me of that scripture where Jesus was saying that he's the vine and we're the branches, and sometimes he has to prune, and that pruning hurts. Sometimes that's sort of what the lamenting would be an experience where we have to remove some of those old habits, some of those old traditions that hinder us from addressing the injustices, those things that hinder us from acknowledging the pain and the suffering that has, and is currently being experienced because of racism and injustices. So, I think that is a very good foundation to start. I think that that will give us a good place to open it up and begin, alright, to address it.

Jerry Porter 56:53

I think, well, let me just jump in. Alright. Here's the brilliant final word -- I would have to say, the danger of lament is that we lament and don't take practical action. So, the lament needs to be the preamble to something that we do. So, you're talking about a document. Talking about a group that practices reconciliation. Talking about anything that that we do to tear down the walls so that lament doesn't become our goal, or somehow, because we lament; therefore, we've accomplished what we needed to do. I think we've got to find some practical ways. And we are in, you know, in a real sense, we're caught in the debate between Oliver Phillips and Tom Nees. I loved it because I would get the two of them together and just let them go at it. And Tom was always insisting, (and they're both in the Lord's presence now we miss them both.) Tom insisted, of course, that it's not the church if it's separated at all. And Oliver said, Yeah, but that's a white

man's abuse of my culture. You want me to sit in your church, in a white church, and do church white? I can't, I can't survive there, and I can't even feel God's presence in your white church. So, make it all black, so that Oliver is happy. So they, I'd love to hear these guys. They had an incredible debate with each other, and they were closest -- they were soul buddies. So Tom Nees and I actually spent some time, and we developed a checklist of things that multi-congregational churches could do. Once a quarter being very practical. Okay, once a quarter have communion together. Everybody, everybody. Once a quarter have a joint meal together. Everybody bring their cultural food. Once a quarter, have a joint service together. Once a quarter swap pulpits. Let the black pastor preach to the white folks. Let the Haitian guy preach to the Filipinos, whatever. Once a quarter, get the two boards together, if there's two separate boards. Once you know, just trying to find ways so that even though we're under -- this whether, whether we think we're really integrated because we're just one church with several congregations, or we're actually separate organization -- you know, whatever, it doesn't make any difference when we hit the parking lot, are we talking to people? Are we fellowshiping? Are we loving each other? Are we praying together? Because it doesn't matter what, quote, unquote, little church structure we think is the most holy at the end of the day, are we communing with people that are different than me? And one of the dangers for white pastors who want to increase their numbers and have everybody come to their service with a little headphone listening to them preach through a translator into their ears. Of all these other people who can't speak their language, it's, oppressive. I mean, it's cultural oppression forcing people to worship white or become white, right? So, I love the conversation of Oliver and Tom and I miss it. The very, very important, because all good truth is usually two things in tension. God is three. God is one. God is sovereign. We're responsible. You know, it's the reality of Jesus is God and Jesus is man. Well, guess what? We are cultural, identifiable people. We have culture. We love our food, we love our culture, we love our music, we love our identities and we but at the same time, we have got to find ways to break down the walls and have racial unity. We are one. How do we do it? Good? Well, Jamie, you can correct me.

Jamie Gates 1:00:40

Oh, goodness, goodness. I don't know where to go with that. I think that's a mic drop moment right there. Let that hang out there. Yeah. I mean, what does it mean that there are laments all over scripture 65+ Psalms are pure, almost like the one that you just read in like, Psalm 44, Psalm 88, there's 65 of those. And I read some of the New Testament passages, but lament is all over the place. And I think you know, -- these are the people of God, trying to figure out, trying to understand the God who is present with us when we suffer. And so, we should be the church that is present with those who suffer wherever. That's why we have a compassionate ministries arm and Tom Nees. Thank God for Tom Nees for actually building it into the infrastructure of the church, and creating a space where, but sometimes compassion ministries can just be a good way to keep us distant from those who are suffering. -- I pay for a child around the world and but I'm not involved in the lives of those who are suffering in my neighborhood. You know, I pray for missionaries around the world, but I'm not, -- I don't have any friendships of across the town, of people who are homeless, right, or unhoused. So, I think lament, lament is like, I guess, the Ugandan theologian. I think of Emmanuel Katongole, who taught me so much about lament.

He's from, from Uganda, and Rwanda was his parish. And to think about what happened to Rwanda, the genocide of Rwanda, you want to learn anything about lament. Hang out with the Rwandans for a while. You want to learn about lament hang out with people who've been through a genocide and had to figure out how to forgive one another after that. And there's a moment he says, you know, the prophetic work of the church necessarily includes lament. And you know it's not the whole church doesn't always pay attention, but the prophets have come to the church to say, here's why lament is really important. First of all, with lament, you gotta point out the injustice. Like Belinda said, The truth telling is the first moment of confession. You have to look at where that injustice is, look at why people are suffering, and name how we are all caught up in that cause, causing that suffering. And then, of course, you want to do something about it, like Jerry's talking about, like Dr Porter says, Lament can't be an end of itself, something you got to move towards the kingdom of God. That is not where we should not have to lament anymore, right? But lament sits in between -- the sort of naming of the injustice and the more beautiful, hopeful space, because it makes us pause. It calls us into presence, deep, deep presence with those that are suffering. But if all we have is surface level presence, we come up with really shallow solutions. If we have no presence, we come up with solutions that actually do more harm than good. So lament is all over scripture in part because it's discipling us into being present in a deeply incarnational way, in my in my thinking,

Mike Stipp 1:03:46

Really good. Thank you guys for sharing today. This has been so rich. I just wish I could turn a switch and everyone would be able to hear what you have poured out and spoken today.

Anthony “Tone” Marshall and Althea Taylor discuss the 6th paragraph of *Manual* ¶915

(¶915, par 6) Further, we acknowledge that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and to overcome all personal, institutional and structural prejudice responsible for racial and ethnic humiliation and oppression. We call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized.

Overview

Mike Stipp, Althea Taylor and Anthony “Tone” Marshall discussed Stipp’s dissertation on racism in the Church of the Nazarene, focusing on *Manual* paragraph 915. Tone shared his background, including his role as a chaplain and founder of Man on Fire, a basketball-based ministry. Althea highlighted her extensive roles in various church and community initiatives. They emphasized the importance of holiness of heart and life (paragraph 3) as a foundation for reconciliation (paragraph 6). They stressed the need for acknowledging past offenses, fostering relationships, and addressing systemic prejudices. They also critiqued the role of news and social media in perpetuating fear and division, advocating for open dialogue and Kingdom culture.

Action Items

- [] Develop resources and training materials on addressing racism for use by congregations and pastors.
- [] Facilitate reconciliation circles and peace-building initiatives within the church to create safe spaces for dialogue and healing.
- [] Encourage Nazarenes to identify and remove acts and structures of prejudice within their local contexts, and to actively work towards empowering marginalized groups.

How can we encourage Nazarenes to identify and remove acts and structures of prejudice within their local contexts, and actively work towards empowering marginalized groups?

To encourage Nazarenes to address prejudice and empower marginalized groups, focus on these key strategies:

1. Foster open, honest conversations about race and systemic inequalities within church settings
2. Create safe spaces for dialogue across different cultural groups
3. Provide conflict resolution training that emphasizes Kingdom culture over worldly divisions

4. Develop multicultural church practices that make all people feel seen, heard, and valued
5. Encourage church leaders to model vulnerability and acknowledge past and present prejudices
6. Use personal testimonies and stories that highlight transformative relationships across racial lines
7. Ground reconciliation efforts in spiritual transformation, emphasizing holiness of heart and life
8. Offer resources and training that help congregations understand systemic racism
9. Promote leadership opportunities for marginalized groups within church structures
10. Teach that reconciliation is an ongoing process rooted in love, not a one-time event

The key is moving from awareness to action, always centering the work in genuine relationships and Christ-like love.

Transcript with Althea Taylor and Tone Marshall recorded February 24, 2025

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

racism, Church of the Nazarene, dissertation, reconciliation, prejudice, holiness of heart, relationship, multicultural practices, apology, news impact, social media, conflict resolution, Kingdom culture, marginalization, transformation

Tone Marshall 06:17

I had a pastor that was very, very gracious to my family and I, and he's still our pastor today. And so, oh, wow, yeah, just grateful for longevity and relationship. It sounds very Nazarene, just what he did in the lives of our family, in the ongoing discipleship.

Mike Stipp 06:56

Oh, that's awesome. Well, I'm down in Bloomington, Illinois, okay, and so not too far away.

Mike Stipp 07:59

Hello, Althea,

Althea Taylor 08:03

good morning, Good to see you again, after over a week of seeing you, yeah, good to see you and Tony, did you Good afternoon?

Mike Stipp 08:17

Have you guys met before we

Tone Marshall 08:20

have, I don't know that we have

Mike Stipp 08:52

All right. Well, listen, guys, I just want to say thanks for giving me some time for this project I'm working on. My dissertation is on racism in the Church of the Nazarene, and I have learned a lot. I took this class basically to do a deep dive after the death of George Floyd, I just felt like I needed to do more to help more of persons like me, to have more resources available to congregations and the pastors. So, one of the things that I thought we could agree on throughout the church is the *Manual*. So, what I'd like to talk about today is the *Manual*, paragraph 915, and I'll read the sixth paragraph of that statement. But first of all, this is going to be recorded and hopefully go into a podcast. And so, it could be used for students, it could be used for pastors. And so what you say is this going to help guide the church. That is, my goal. But Tone, I have this little bio I found on the internet that says you started in 2021 at Olivet as a chaplain. And you kind of grew up on the region, the Olivet region, playing basketball. But you also had some good influences in Indiana. You had a pastor come along and kind of help you and your family. And I've heard your testimony, and I think it's just amazing how God has had his hand upon your life. And then I'd like to hear more about this man on fire ministry. You started a non-profit called man on fire for some places in Michigan and also Kankakee County, and maybe just tell us a little bit more about yourself before we go to Althea.

Tone Marshall 11:21

Yeah. So, yeah. I didn't grow up in the church, and it was a landlord, or at least that's what we knew of him, landlord, slash pastor. Larry Latham invited us into a trailer that he had for very cheap. And then that was our introduction. He started inviting me and my family to church. We rode with him and his wife, Alba to church, and then he sat us in the pews, I mean, in the he sat us in the pews, and then walked up to the pulpit, and he's been pastoring our family ever since then. And the Church of the Nazarene. It was because I went to the Church of the Nazarene and I had a friend named Jake Purcell, Bill and Lillian Purcell that that I was able to attend Nazarene events. Came to celebrate life and got recruited for the men's basketball team. And the Lord just

blessed my time here. Not only did I have a . . . have an amazing career at Olivet as a basketball player, but I met my wife here. And most importantly, I was going into my fifth year here [Olivet] that I acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord. . . . It was during that time that the Lord showed me basketball was god in my life, and it was during that time that the Lord showed me that the skills that I had gained in basketball could be used to disciple young men and women and to build relationships. I like to call men on fire a prevenient grace ministry, because we get to have relationships with young men and young women through the game of basketball that would never, ever step foot in the church. Or maybe they do -- and they just don't have that relationship [with God]. But we use the game of basketball for the purpose of relationship, and through that, then we get to have, it's amazing on what level you get to talk to people about spiritual matters when they think you're talking about just a sport. And so just kind of build, build up the next generation of young people through the game of basketball. And it's man. It has been a blessing to see God use just the game of basketball to see young men and young women come to know Him as Savior and Lord get baptized in the further discipleship journey. I'm married to my wife, O'Malley. We have four boys. Dexon, Barrow, Haynes, and Parks. In this year the ages of the kids will be "odds", 7, 5, 3, and 1. Pray for me! Sleep is not something I get often. And I was blessed and fortunate to step into the chaplain role in 2022

Tone Marshall 14:11

I was the associate chaplain. And news -- we just some very, very recent news. I stepped down as the chaplain in December, and gliding over still at Olivet. And we'll be an athletics chaplain and do some other persistence work for athletes and maybe teaching a class or two.

Mike Stipp 14:34

Well, good for you. Well, it's a pleasure to meet you. Pleasure to meet you. And Althea, I met you at Nazarene headquarters a number of years ago, but I'm gonna just read what I have down for you, and you can fill me in if I'm wrong. You worked as an Executive Director at the Tom Nees Center of Compassion, Justice, and Immigration. You're currently the district superintendent of the Hawaii District, which sounds like a lot of fun. And you were at Bronx Bethany in New York for a number of years, providing leadership there. And then, of course, when you're at the headquarters, time you help out (and probably still do) the USA/Canada Urban Strategic Readiness Task Force, Global Social Justice Committee and also Connecting a New Generation Committee of Church of the Nazarene. You're involved with the Clergy Women's Council, the Black Strategic Readiness Team, and the founder of Breathe Hope, which is a nonprofit. I tell you what -- you've been busy. I've always admired you, but now, when I see all this in writing . . .

Althea Taylor 16:07

Oh my, you can't believe what you read in print. Alright, thank you. It's a pleasure to be here with you. A lot has changed since many of those things have been written. But before [I begin], I just want to say Antonio. It's really great. Or Tony. I'm not sure

Tone Marshall 16:24

Which one you prefer? Antonio or Tone whatever, whatever you want

Althea Taylor 16:27

Alright. Well, it's a pleasure to meet you. I became acquainted with you digitally or virtually from the M 25 conference when the video was featured about your story and just where God has brought you from and brought you to and it's just a pleasure to share space with you and to get to meet you and have a conversation with you in person. So just wanted to say, Nice meeting you. Oh, thank you. Hope. Hope we get to meet you in person and shake your hand and just encourage you as you continue to do what God has called you to do in your section of the vineyard.

Tone Marshall 17:02

Yes, ma'am, I appreciate you. Thank you. It is nice to meet you as well.

Althea Taylor 17:06

Thank you and Mike. Good to see you again as an old colleague working together at the Global Women's Center. A lot's happened since then, and I guess good things for both of us on different sides. I like to tell people when people get all excited to say, Oh, you live in Hawaii now. Oh, you know -- you know that's such a hardship, you know? When people say, How's Hawaii? I always say to them, which Hawaii would you like to know about? Because there's a Hawaii that everybody sees on the postcard and in the advertisements. And while that Hawaii is here, that's not the Hawaii that I have the privilege of working in for the Lord. Okay, he's brought me here, but there are a lot of margins here, and I have discovered in the very short time that I have been here, God's given me some window into why he has led me here. He definitely has led me to a place where my heart and my passion for ministry is, is, is alert, very aware of what's going on around me. I'm not on the Black Strategic Readiness Task Force anymore. Enjoyed my time that I was there and discussing issues within the church. I do still serve on the Women's Clergy Council, although I tried to divest myself of that and give someone else my seat. They saw fit to say, well, we'll just create a seat for a superintendent, and since you're now one, we'll just give you that seat. So, I'm still there, you're still there. I'm still there, talking about and dealing with issues of women in ministry. But just here in Hawaii, things are different. I'm a Bronx girl. You cut me; I still bleed New York. I'm a Die-Hard New Yorker, although I no longer live there, but I am drawn to the margins, where I believe God works, God's heart is, and God is at work, and

he's really waiting for his church to pay attention. (To be about the places where God feels most for those who are often forgotten and left without advocates) So as God lends me breath and the opportunity to give voice, and not just voice, but action, to helping not only people, but hook in the church. I recently preached about we're called to be in right relationships, right relationship with our self, right relationship with other, and right relationship with systems. And I believe God works in all of those spaces. And so, our conversation here today will be extremely, invigorating for me, because we're going to one of the big places we're going to talk about is not just self ... but also systems. The church has a system. The church is an institutional structure. How do we, how do we deal with the things that push people to the margin? So, I'm going to stop talking, because I came out the womb speaking. Shut me up. I'll just talk all day long.

Mike Stipp 20:20

I always worry when I say, I hope I have enough questions to last an hour,

Althea Taylor 20:34

Okay, alright, for both of you, cut me off. Just cut you off. Alright, let me jump in here. I'll graciously bow out the way. Here we go

Mike Stipp 20:42

Well, this is how we want to start, it says in the sixth paragraph. Further, we acknowledge that there is no reconciliation apart from human struggle to stand against and to overcome all personal, institutional and structural prejudice responsible for social for racial and ethnic humiliation and oppression. We call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized. So, I guess the first question would just be, what is your reaction to that paragraph and what maybe what have been some of your experiences? We're called to do something that really, we don't have a playbook for, (like, this is what you do). But maybe you could help speak to those kinds of things because it's kind of an all-encompassing paragraph for sure. .

Tone Marshall 22:04

Miss Taylor, you want to go first?

Althea Taylor 22:05

Well, I'll jump in. I think it's important to recognize that. Let me speak first. So I think sometimes how we compartmentalize things in our minds, the church and Christians often are

about doing. We do a lot of things. We're busy, and we don't necessarily feel as though we're being productive or we're being Christians if we're not busy doing. But I think there's a line that we need to draw from this paragraph that really goes back to a paragraph that precedes it because we're not called to be about doing. We're called to be about being. And so the paragraph that I want to join draw back to is actually the third paragraph, where it talks about the fact that Christians are, let me find it. We emphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We can only do these things that we're talking about in the sixth paragraph out of a place of being, out of a place of right living. You can't, I mean, we can legislate behavior, but the legislation of behavior does not stick. I'm not saying that we don't need to have legislation. I think we do to help us, but it will only begin to stick when it becomes out of being, out of what has happened, [which is] the transformation that has happened in the heart. I can remember a time when I was taken to task by some members of my home congregation, or first persons, who attended worship there. I had to preach the Sunday after Eric Garner had been killed in New York City over some, you know, fake cigarettes. He's a precursor to a George Floyd and many others and I said to them. I said, you know, racism and all the other isms are symptoms of a deeper problem. The problem is sin and it's a heart condition. And until the heart is dealt with, these issues are not going to change because of doing things. We can only do something for so long, but when we operate out of our being, it sticks, and this is what we call transformation. And so, I would agree with paragraph six that there are definitely -- I agree that there can't be reconciliation unless we're going to go into this struggle. But the struggle first begins out of your relationship with God and whether or not you believe who Jesus was and what he did and how he came to transform our lives. If we don't embrace that fully with our heart, then we're really fighting a losing battle, because you are only going to do the things that you feel should be done based on merit. Based on whether or not you deserve it, and the truth of the matter is the only thing that we deserve. I don't even know what it is that we deserve, because we're all sinners, saved by grace. I would pause there for a moment just to say that you can't have paragraph six without a paragraph three without a full understanding and experience of what does it mean to, -- to have a holiness of heart and life as the basis for your right living, and that Christian charity between racial groups or genders will come when the heart of people have been changed by the complete submission to Jesus Christ, and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one's heart, soul, mind and strength, and, of course, one's neighbor as one. So

Tone Marshall 25:55

Yeah, and I, I think, to further communicate that I think whenever we get wrapped up in the work of paragraph six, without it actually being in the paragraph three, I think it could be merit based. But I think also, even with a good heart, we can be, I think Ruth Haley Barton from the Transforming Center explains it this way, we can be in the world for God and not actually in God for the world. And at first glance, you might think that that is just semantics. But the reality is, we can be in the world for God as a change agent, but really we haven't been changed ourselves. So, we're doing a lot of trying to transform others out of a place of UN transformation. We're doing a lot of work for God out of our flesh and out of ourselves, rather than actually being in God. First paragraph three, being in God, being transformed by God, and then doing the work out of the overflow being in the world, handling issues of reconciliation, from a place of

having abided with God have from a place of actually like dying to myself, because this work is not easy. It will take a person who has died to themselves, who has been transformed in our untransformed selves. This work, I would say, is impossible, but in our transformed selves, in ourselves that has been transformed into the image of Christ, in that place, then we can actually step into the work of really reconciliation and do it in the ways that Jesus did it. And so I think that's really, really good. And I think that paragraph three does need to be the -- does need to be the precursor for a paragraph six. And when we look at paragraph six, I think, man, like, I think it is excellently worded. It is the reality of what this world really, really needs, and yet I read it and I totally agree with it. And then there's the place where I think there is the standard of it. And then our lives, my lived experience, in my lived experience sometimes is that there's conversation around this. There are steps to move towards this, but we're still in the middle, middle of trying to figure out how to really live this out and really step into this. And obviously, I think this is part of the conversation today, is, how do we take those steps to really, fully live this out. And I think the first thing that I would say before I stop is, man, we gotta check ourselves first paragraph three, and see, have we entered into that transformation, transformative work that God calls us to? Because if that isn't the place where this is starting, then we're not going to get this fully Good.

Mike Stipp 29:05

Well, great. Thank you for responding. Thank you.

Althea Taylor 29:09

Can I add one of the things, Mike and Tone. I think the question, one of the existential questions, is with as it relates to this, then, is this really possible? Is this doable? And I give an emphatic (and I don't want to over spiritualize this) but I give an emphatic yes, because our model, our example, is Jesus. When you think about the fact that even Jesus wrestled with what it meant to reconcile all of humanity back to the Father. He begged the Father. He says, you know, is there another way for this to be done? Can you do this by any other means? You know, take this cup from me. I think there are people all throughout history who have been begging from the margins, to take away this cup from me and those who have fought the good fight, to change systems and structures, to say, Lord, I don't want. I don't want to have to do this. But Jesus's example says this is not going to be done in and of my strength, nevertheless, not my will, but Your will be done. And I think that's the place that we have to remind ourselves that this is not something of human possibilities in terms of moving out of our own strength but is the work that only can be done when we are rooted and grounded in a relationship.

(Technical difficulty) That is, we lost Mike. We lost Mike. We lost Mike right in the middle of that. Wow, we're going to wait for him to come back.

Tone Marshall 30:44

Go ahead and fix your thought

Althea Taylor 30:47

There he is. He's back right in the middle of it.

Mike Stipp 30:53

I had a little sign that came up says your internet is unstable. I thought what is going on? I thought this only happened at church.

Althea Taylor 31:09

Well, you're at church. The people, the people of God, are gathered. But I'll just finish my last sentence and saying that, you know, Jesus is our model and our example, that this is actually doable, but it's not doable in our strength. It has to be fueled by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is our guide to help in the work that has to be done. ,

Mike Stipp 31:33

thank you. I'm glad you came back with that response at the end just underscoring -- I've been, I've been a pastor of congregations for 40 years, and it's I've seen a lot of expressions within the church of how to care for different people. But when it comes to race, it seems like the people that I am acquainted with, basically struggle still over race relations and that's kind of what my dissertation is about. So and the *Manual* paragraph 915, is in the appendix, and not too many people are aware of the appendix of the *Manual* . But I want to ask you a question, if are you aware of any resources or recommendations, how we might help a predominantly white organization like the church in the States? What resources could be developed to bring awareness for a better understanding of race relations?

Althea Taylor 32:53

There are a few different things that are out there. Some of the stuff that I'm familiar with comes out of peace work, peace activism, things like peace circles, reconciliation circles. We've done some of that here on the Hawaii Pacific district in terms of dealing with conflict, and we'll probably do more as there are many cultural conflicts here that run below the surface of what we see in the church that are deeply rooted. And until we want to acknowledge it, you can't do anything about it. You know, if I've got a headache, and someone keeps denying that I have a headache, well, they're really not interested in my best, in my wellbeing. Rather than saying, Oh, your head is hurting you, what can I do about how can I help you? How can I assist you with the headache? So, so reconciliation circles -- working for peace, I think are examples. You know, it's

unfortunate that matters like this are so politicized that it gets at odds with each other. And I tell you know, I said it at the recent PALCON in 2024, in Mount Vernon. When I spoke there, I said, “You know, unfortunately, we have come to the place within the church where we see our lives through political lenses, whether blue or red, donkey or elephant. But the truth of the matter is, we need to see our lives through the lens of the Lamb. Jesus is neither one or the other. He is the Lamb of God slain from the earth”. And so therefore the lens that we need to be looking through, and how we deal with stuff is through the lens of Christ. Again, not trying to over spiritualize it. But the truth of the matter is, how well you deal with conflict depends on how close what your proximity is to Jesus. And if your proximity to Jesus is, there's a chasm between you and what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus and you don't want to have a reality check on that conversation, then there's not much that I can do in in my dialog with you. And I'm not saying that I'm the example of what does it means to be close. But if we're both, if you and the other you're talking about congregations that are adverse to having this conversation, I think we need to begin to unravel why. And many people don't want to have the conversation. Barna did this. Barna did a whole study on diversity in the church and unity in the church and it's the one conversation everyone runs away from. And I think it has to do with harder people don't want to feel guilty because they say, well, it wasn't me or that's not what I did or that's what the people before me did. But there's a role in a place for dealing with that. I'm going to pause and let Tone jump in. But I got a lot of opinions as it as it relates to why we're unable to deal with that in the church.

Mike Stipp 35:43

thank you. That's very good. Thank you.

Tone Marshall 35:45

Mine is, again, there are resources that can help. I think it's more of a heart check. And I think I would include, like, some of your ability to actually navigate the conversation is how close you are with Jesus. But I also think about how close you are with people that are different than you. And so, I know that it changes the dynamic for me. I really struggled through the season that we were in with COVID and the racial unrest and all of those things, because my experience is, like [the one] I grew up in an all-white town. And not that I want to go there, but like for me, the Black Lives Matters -- like I didn't hear it as our lives matter more than you. But it really, for me, was a question of, do we belong here or not? Do we have a seat at the table or not? Because my experience was as an African American in an all-white town. I was told that I did not belong because of the color of my skin. I had firsthand awareness that there was racism, but also my story is so beautiful because it was people who were different than me. It was white people who helped me and showed me the Lord in the church -- like brought me to where I am. So I am a living embodiment of who I am today is because racism exists. And who I am today is because people who are different than me cared enough to get involved in my life and love me and care for me. And so, I hold those tensions very well. And I think our ability to actually be in proximity and to hear and to have relationships with people, I think, is the greatest thing that we

have. And I think what we are missing in our inability to have conversation at all is the foundational thing that God tells us is relationship. And so we're missing relationship by not having the conversation. And I think that is the greatest resource that we have. [Relationship] is real, genuine connection to actually hear how people have navigated their life, their walk, the color of their skin, what it means to what it means to walk in this day and age a certain way or a certain color.

Mike Stipp 38:13

First of all, these are great responses to the open ended question. As an Anglo, I have not experienced racism. I've experienced a lot of privileges. And I realize that more the older I get, the more I realize how privileged I have been across my life. But in your story, Tone, you mentioned what it was like to overcome living in an all-white town. You've experienced prejudice there, but somewhere along the line, you pulled it together and you wouldn't allow prejudice to hold you down. What have you learned through your activities that helped you overcome prejudicial remarks or actions or even the stink eye. How do you overcome?

Tone Marshall 39:30

Well, what I would tell you is it is an ongoing work that is not done yet. I'm still in the middle of learning and being comfortable in my skin in spaces where I am different -- where I am other -- and it is something that the Lord is constantly -- It's a part of what the Lord is like producing in my identity in these days. And so, one thing that has particularly been important for me. In this season in my growth has been something that, just like I tell myself often, is how people come to Christ will be the relationship in which they actually navigate relationship with Him. And that may or may not be the reality of how God, the Father, Jesus, Christ, the Holy Spirit works. And so the attachment theory has been something that's really, really been important to me in these days, and thinking through even for my kids, (like how they see, feel seen, soothe, care for and safe) will be the way in which they relate to God. And I often think that the church is an attachment figure for us. That's how people relate to the people of God -- will directly tie into how they think God views them. Does that make sense? So, from that standpoint, I think there's been a lot of undoing for me. Because without knowing it, a lot of times, in in circles, what we do is we have monocultural-led churches or monocultural-churches that have monocultural-practices and people of color don't necessarily feel as seen, soothed, cared for and safe in those spaces. And that then in that space ... saying that God may not see me, God may not fully understand, or I might not be as safe with God. And so, for me, what has happened is I have found circles where there are multicultural-practices, there is a multicultural-expression, and it allows me to be more free and more safe. I feel more seen, I feel more known, and that has allowed me to feel more seen and known, to feel and be more seen and known by God. So, it's an ongoing work. It's not something I have overcome, but it's something that I am still overcoming. But I think the Lord has been gracious to me in being able to navigate the tension right, the tension that I feel, and then also giving me some places that are multicultural in expression that

really, really make me feel seen, known, heard, loved in those spaces, which then helped me to feel that same sense from God,

Mike Stipp 42:28

Excellent, good. I'm going to read a scripture here, found in Acts, chapter 16, and it's about Paul and Silas have this wonderful experience where they're thrown in jail and then they are released. It's like then so we started verse 35 and let me read a few verses here.

35But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." **36**And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." **37**But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." **38**The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. **39**So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. **40**So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

So I read that because this passage of Scripture is so fascinating to me that the apostle Paul had this form of protest. And a part of this protest, of saying no to power, was that he expected an apology in racial understandings. Do we sometimes long for or need in this conversation, apologies, over the past -- or what our experiences have been? To what degree is that important to this conversation today?

Althea Taylor 45:05

I'm going to jump in on the apologies in a second, but I want to back you up just a little bit in that story -- highlights the fact of why we need legislation to bring about justice. They would not have done anything to correct the situation, if it had not been for the fact that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. And because they knew they violated the law now they became fearful. They wanted to just, [to shrug and say] oh, they're Roman citizens, let them out and just let them go and tell them to go on their way. Go on their way, and we'll just sweep under the rug, and nobody ever has to know about it. And so, I just highlight that as a reason for why. Because there's a day and age in which we're living in and -- where we're trying to erase the things that help us be better towards one another. There is a need for there to be legislation that helps us to be better, because if left her our own devices, we will not be better. They wanted to be less than the best that they could have been. They wanted to act like it did not happen and just go away. Go away and don't say anything, but the minute Paul pushes back and says absolutely not, you need to acknowledge what you have done, because I am a citizen, and you have mistreated me, and the law says you should not have mistreated me. Yes, there must always be an apology. I don't think you can have reconciliation without acknowledgement. That's how we get saved. You know, if it's good enough for salvation, it's good enough for saving our systems and our public policy. You cannot have things rectified until you acknowledge that there has been an offense. If

you have offended me, you should come back and say sorry. I mean, even in the Old Testament law, they had to give amends. They had to give restitution for whatever it was that they had done wrong. And yet we fast forward and we come to the 21st century, where we are today and -- not just now, but for times that preceded this. We want to just act like things have not happened, that everything has been you know, wonderful between all of the people groups and just sweep it under the rug and say, Let's just move along. Get over it, right? Can't get over an offense. If you have not acknowledged the offense, you have a responsibility to say, I have done something wrong to you. If I have to say to Jesus, I have offended my Father in heaven. I am a sinner in need of repentance, and I ask you to forgive me of my sins. Acknowledgement is the first step in salvation, and you're not acknowledging to inform me because I you know we're not informing the Lord; the Lord already knows. We're actually just getting an agreement with what the Lord already knows. Well, the same is true in our relationships with each other. We're talking about the fact that relationships are what makes the difference. Our relationship can't be better until I acknowledge to you that I realize that I have done something to offend you. I have done something against you. Maybe it was not the intention of my heart, but I have to acknowledge that if I didn't do it -- there's been a people group we have to take responsibility for poor behavior and poor actions that have put us at odds with each other. And once we do that and say, You know something, I need forgiveness or I need your help to be better. This is going to happen out of the relationships that Tone was talking about a while ago. Relationships are founded and forgiveness is founded on acknowledging what's been done wrong and then having an agreement to walk together in unity.

Mike Stipp 48:48

Yeah, that was good. I think, I think I got a couple chill bumps!

Tone Marshall 48:54

She was about to preach,

Tone Marshall 49:02

The one thing that I want people, that I would want people to understand, is whenever you have offended someone by treating them less than God's image on their life, and you don't acknowledge that and but still try to move on in relationship again, you are still treating them as less than God's image bearer. You don't get to just move on without acknowledging and apologizing. That person still has to sit in the offense of -- you treated me as less than God's best, and oftentimes we don't realize the shame that people have to feel or the bitterness that can get welled up. Now it's that person's job to make sure that they are in right relationship with God and not letting bitterness and frustration be at the root of what is happening in their walk. But it still doesn't mean that we can walk together -- which is that we journey together. And so if the goal is for us to be a to be a reflection of revelations, all of God's people, every nation and every tongue

and every tribe, and being together, singing Holy, holy, holy, if that is the end goal, then we need to be able to walk together in this lifetime. And what often happens is when we move on without apologizing, we're not adequately doing the job of creating an atmosphere where we can walk together and we can glorify God, and we can worship in unison and in sync with one another.

Mike Stipp 50:38

Really good, really good.

Althea Taylor 50:40

Mike, I have to jump in one more time because I hear a question in my head going off and saying, okay, alright, you guys keep talking about this from a spiritual standpoint. And everybody's not saved, and I know that your work is towards what's happening in the church, right? How we are, -- the relationships that happen in the church, but this is not just about the church. And I know I'm going to take you just slightly outside of your scope, but we exist in the world. And if I can give you a sixty second analogy of a situation that happened my own experience in a non-religious context, but having to navigate, how do I respond to this as someone whose life is governed under a different authority than what legislation says. This is not an uncommon story. If you give me 60 seconds, I went somewhere to get my nails done, and this is going to highlight a bunch of things. There are issues in within the races, in terms of discrimination between people groups. And this is not just a black, white issue, but it's just discrimination together. And I love what Tone said, you know, he said something a while ago that reminded me of the golden rule that even people not in church, know, you know, treat people as you want to be treated. I mean, the Bible says that, but, a lot of people will teach their children that, you know, treat people the way you want to be. We know it as the golden rule. I went to get my nails done, and I was sitting in a shop and waiting, and they were about to take me and do what needed to be done. And there was a black woman sitting across from me, who was waiting and getting her nails dried, and I was sitting in the chair, A white woman came in who was in a rush, and they had just started me. The white woman came in and she says, How long? [The manager] tells her 30 minutes. Her wait is going to be 30 minutes. And she says, Okay. And she picks her color, and she sits down. And the woman who was doing my [nails] the woman who owned the establishment, went over to the woman who was tending to me, said something to her -- in their shared tongue. And she stopped what she was doing, left me to soak for forever, not forever, but to soak. And she then called the white woman, and she tended to her. I was upset. The Black woman across from me has given me looks that I understand what she's saying without saying, without a word, but the word in my head was, guard your witness. Guard your witness. So I sat there, and I prayed, not knowing what to do. And the woman was sitting right beside me, and she's talking and she's going on, and slowly but surely, she asked me a question, just out of being friendly. And my response to her was only she could hear. I said, if what was done to me was done to you, how would you feel? And I knew she knew exactly what I was talking about and what had happened, because she dropped her head and she says, Well, I don't know why they did that. Which was -- you just outed yourself, because now you were

aware of what was done. I didn't tell you what was done. I simply asked, if what was done to me was done to you, how would you feel? And she began to explain. I said, that was not the question I asked you. I said, if what was done to me was done to you, how would you feel? And she said, I'd be upset. I said exactly. I said you had control of the situation. You could have denied being pushed in front of me, but you willingly stepped into that place because you had things you needed to do, as if I didn't have something I needed to do. I point that out because sometimes we don't (you talked a little bit about before, about privilege) exercise our privilege because it's going to work to our advantage, but your privilege works to the disadvantage of someone else. [when it was] Said and done, the woman finished getting she didn't have much to say to me after that. She just, you know, got her stuff done. I waited till they were finished. I didn't make a fuss about it. They finally attended to me, and when it was said and done, and I went to pay my bill, I then went to the owner of the establishment, and I said, I want you to know that I don't appreciate how you treated me. And she said, What? And I explained to her the scenario, and her eyes dropped as well, because the dropping of her eyes was an acknowledgement that you knew what you were doing, and yet you still did it at my expense. And I said to her, I have options, and I have choices, and I can assure you, I get to choose where I spend my money, and it will not be here any longer. And not only did I not share my money there, but family members all stopped and others stopped when we acknowledge this is rooted in relationships and how we mistreat one another. No, while we're talking about this from a spiritual matter, it's just common decency also on how we should treat each other based on relationships.

Tone Marshall 55:32

But Miss Althea, the thing that I think is so important is that what the story that you just shared, unfortunately, can feel pretty normal. Is that true or false? That's true, and I think, and I think where it saddens my heart is when people of color, whatever race, whenever they experience that out in the world, and then they come into establishments that are Christian, particularly in cases, in the case we're talking about, into the Nazarene church, whatever it might be. And then our experience is that of the same as the world, where there's preferential treatment, or there's not the acknowledgement of the reality of those things. That is what saddens me. And I'm blessed on many levels, that my experience is one where I've been a part of institutions, a church, Grand Rapids, international fellowship that has done amazing work in trying to shift and navigate to be able to meet the needs of the different races and ethnicities. I'm blessed to be a part of Olivet Nazarene University, where we have a priority to make this a more Kingdom community, and we're not there. Grand Rapids, international fellowship. Olivet is not there. There's still so much work to do. But I get really, really sad in institutions and in places where the treatment in that institution is the same experience as that of the work, because that is the thing that then is teaching people. It's not just out in the world, but it's also within the realm of the church. It's also within the realm of the institution, if you will. And that can be very, very disheartening to people, and it's creating not only out in the world, but maybe even you're not excellent being treated at the level of the image bearer of Christ, that you are even in that those places,

Mike Stipp 57:48

very good guys. Thank you for sharing that. I think it's important to be an image bearer and I think what you said in paragraph three, that we bear Christ. I haven't found the silver bullet [to say] Oh, this is the one way to reconcile white privilege. That is -- if we just do these little things and everyone will see it. -- Jerry, Porter said, that people can only see what they see. But it's, it's my understanding, that when, when Christ is Lord, they should have eyes to see what's going on around them. (You know) They should have eyes to see it because the Lord is seeing through their eyes. The Lord is working through their heart. Then the Lord makes them give them the sensitivity. -- Alright, we're almost out of time. I got five minutes left, so let me say this has been wonderful. Thank you so much. But let me, let me just ask you. And this has to do with news, alright? This my personal gripe. I just feel like the news and social media -- kind of separates us. It puts us in camps; it puts people down. And how can this message of reconciliation in the church -- how can it become short circuited by news or social media? It seems like even if you go to church, those folks will put you in a camp. So have you experienced that? Maybe, maybe I'm the only one. But how can news rob us of our joy and short circuit reconciliation?

Althea Taylor 59:56

It's, it's happening every day, all across Christendom [and] within our own denomination. Sadly, one of the first questions I was asked upon being having this new assignment here in Hawaii was from a brother in Christ who said, Do you support black lives matter? First question -- and I said, Well, I'm black and my life matters. And they got upset with me, and they said, You know what I mean? I said, No, what do you mean? Because you're asking me a political question based on what's happening in the world, and I'm answering a question based on who I am as a image bearer of God. I am black, and my life matters, and they were furious with me. I said, Welcome to Hawaii. Unfortunately, we have taken our marching orders from sound bites that happen on news streams that now don't just run three times a day, but 24 hours a day, right? I am a self-professed news junkie. I watch extreme amounts of news, and I don't just watch news from here. I watch news from around the world, sometimes even in other languages I don't speak. But you can tell from body language and from images what they're talking about, because they put up pictures and you get a sense of what message is being pushed around the world as we move the news is problematic. I think it is. It is designed to get us all wound up and get us attacking one another. I've heard this saying, and I'm sure you've heard it too. If it bleeds it leads. -- The good news segment is about the last 30 seconds of a news podcast. Everything before that is who's been shot, what controversies happening, what disasters going on, how the world is blowing up. And we wonder why people are having anxiety and why mental illness is at an all-time high. I'm not sure if it's all mental illness, cuz we're trying to drive the news story. We're trying to drive what the narrative is. And unfortunately, I think as Christians, we're not always wise to know when we've gotta step out of that space and recognize when it's impacting even how we feel about ourselves and how we feel about our neighbor. Um, it's not just you. It's everywhere, And unfortunately, I've heard pastors preach and tell people how they should vote, what their position should be on certain issues, , not from a biblical [view] or try to tie it to biblical standpoints, like cherry picking scripture. It's unfortunate and it's sad. I think there has to be (again I go back to it) This will not be fixed. We will not move forward until we acknowledge what we have done

wrong, acknowledge our offense, and unfortunately, there is not a willingness. I think it's growing in pockets, but the overwhelming majority do not want to acknowledge what the issues are, and that people have migraines and headaches and are suffering from the ills that have been done to them and by their own brothers and sisters in Christ. And then refusal to acknowledge that means that we will be saved, sanctified -- but yes, my God, still sick because we refuse to acknowledge our illnesses that are deeply rooted in how we see one another or don't see.

Mike Stipp 1:03:48

Good. Thank you for sharing that's good stuff.

Tone Marshall 1:03:53

I just feel like a lot of the news is being shared with us for the point of provoking fear and getting us to choose sides based on whatever fear level you have about certain things. And for me, it is perfect love draws out fear. And so, if we're focused on the right things, then we won't be motivated, and we won't make decisions based on fear. But I think a lot of the news is trying to get you to live into fear, to make choices and decisions based on that. And there's a certain culture that comes with both -- with all the news, and they're trying to get you to live into that culture. But as Kingdom people, there's a kingdom culture that we're supposed to live into, and that has to be what drives us more than fear, more than whatever other cultures of the world are trying to tell us. And I think oftentimes we lose sight of that, not just based on who our news sources are, but the reality at which we live, into the culture of that rather than Kingdom culture.

Mike Stipp 1:05:03

Very good you guys. Thank you Tone and thank you Althea, for the last hour we've had together. I wish I could just put you on speed dial and call you up every time I have a question. But you guys answered so profoundly! Any last thoughts or any last words before we sign off? ,

Tone Marshall 1:05:25

Can I just want to share one thing, paragraph six, to me, what we started off with. It's so important that we call upon Nazarenes everywhere to identify and seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice, to facilitate occasions for seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, and to take action toward empowering those who have been marginalized. It is our call. It is a part of our heritage. It is a part of our tradition. It is who we are. And I think for the Church of the Nazarene, I don't want this to be said of us at the end, and this is what Martin Luther King said in the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends. And for those who buy in, who truly are Nazarene to the core, this is who we are. Seek to remove acts and structures of prejudice to facilitate occasions. It's not the ones who are enemies we want to

change and be a faithful witness, but it's those who are friends, living into this call and doing this well.

Mike Stipp 1:06:33

Well, good job. Amen. Amen.

Althea Taylor 1:06:38

My final words, Mike and Tone, would be that I agree in what you just highlighted in paragraph six, I think this work is going to get accomplished when we do more of what we just did here, we're afraid to have conversations. And it is the fear of having a conversation that causes us to remain stuck, not moving. One of the questions you asked before was, how do we do this? What resources are there? You know, the biggest resource we have is the one that has been given to us since the beginning of time. Communication, right? We need to learn to speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. We need to stop throwing verbal grenades at each other and verbal daggers to hurt and to harm one another, and realize that conflict might I dare say and agree with our brother, Wesley, John Wesley. Conflict is a means of grace. Conflict allows us to come into a space that we can take a look at ourselves and look at one another, and we don't have to be afraid of spaces of conflict. It is in the wrestling. It is in the tension, if we do it well, not trying to annihilate one another, right? Try to come to a place of Kingdom culture, as my brother just said, where we come out of that space, we are reflecting more of the attributes of the kingdom than the world in which we are living in, and that is only facilitated by having conversation. Conversation; means of grace; talking; dialoguing; having folks who were trained in conflict resolution to help us guide the conversations and to be honest with ourselves. Having conversations first in people groups, because it has to be safe for you to have the conversation. And if you put black folks, Spanish folks, Asian folks, all in the same space, mixed up, folks are going to be quiet. But when they're amongst their own, we can highlight and bring some things out. White folks do the same thing. And then you begin to bring us together in blended groups, where we begin to talk about -- what were the discoveries that we had in the monocultural groups about one another, and now let's bring it into this group, because we've determined that -- we can cultivate spaces where we can have conversations in a safe manner that's guided and gets rooted in relationship people having relationships. One of the things that I think people are going to say is, well, where I live, you know, -- I don't have a lot of diversity. I don't, I don't have a lot of people, -- my community is all white people, my community is all black people, my community is all Spanish people, or whatever the case may be, that might be your community, but it doesn't get you off the hook. Because you're going to move. God is going to cause your life to move in the intersectionality with others. And if we don't understand that, the mindsets that we have developed, and we didn't even get to talking about this, there is a mindset that we have been conditioned to embrace and hold -- that is holding us back, and it is not the mindset of. Kingdom. So it shapes and guards our actions and our behaviors and how we intersect with one another. And we have to dismantle this little by little, like peeling an onion, it's going to cause some tears, it's going to cause our eyes to water, it's going to cause some people being uncomfortable, but if

we are not afraid of the journey, I believe we can get to the other side, but we have to be diligent in how we do it. Good,

Mike Stipp 1:10:24

Thank you. Well, let me offer a short prayer for you today before I say goodbye. I appreciate you so much, Heavenly Father. I thank you for Tone and I thank you for Althea. I thank you for how you have already worked in their lives. You've given them a testimony. You've given them a place, a position and place where they can be used of the Lord. And so Lord, would you protect them as they speak up and speak out for the kingdom. May you be in their hearts and lives? Would you, Lord, give them success? Would you grant them freedom to be honest? And Lord may the kingdom grow because of their work. May people come to know Jesus and the power of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. May love be a part of their mission and the result of their action, and so bless them, Lord, and use them for your glory. And thank you for these moments we've had to share today in Jesus name, Amen,