

NORTHEASTERN INDIANA DISTRICT CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

STATE OF THE DISTRICT REPORT 2017

DAVID G. ROLAND, DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom” (Psalms 145:2).

This is the 75th Anniversary, the Diamond Jubilee, of the Northeastern Indiana District Church of the Nazarene. However, tonight we are going to consider a diamond of a different sort, a baseball diamond. Let's PLAY BALL!

It was a nail-biting game as the Chicago Cubs and Cleveland Indians battled it out in the seventh game of the 2016 World Series Championship.

The fans were exploding with anticipation. It was the bottom of the 8th inning. The score was 6 to 6. After a rain delay, Ben Zobrist, a former ONU Tiger, hit a tiebreaking double, resulting in two runs. Now the score was 8 to 6, Cubs favor. In the early morning hours, the bottom of the 10th inning, the Cleveland Indians squeaked out one more run but the final score was 8 to 7, Cubs!

This impressive win was the first time the Cubs have won the World Series in 108 years. They were competitive, talented, hard working athletes, but year after year they failed to bring home the trophy. Their motto, “We never quit,” reflected incredible tenacity and courage. That motto is now inscribed on the back of the Chicago Cub's 2016 World Championship Rings.

NEI District, our goal is not to win the World Series, but our goal is to Win the World, in Jesus' name and for His glory. The Scripture says, “As for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded” (2 Chronicles 15:7). So tonight, let's look up, and ask God to help us pray up, suit up and step up to the plate!

I AM ROOTING FOR THE HOME TEAM!

As a boy, I spent lots of time on the dusty mounds of a little league ball field. My first team was the Chandler Bombers, known as the Little Stinkers because we displayed a skunk on the back of our uniforms. From the Bombers, I played for the Irving Texas Tigers, the Yankees, and later a variety of church softball teams. One of the highlights of my year since coming to Indiana has been to play in our annual District Camp Meeting softball game. I love to play ball and to be a part of the team.

Fourteen years ago, Cheryl and I were humbled to join the NEI team. It was a marvelous move of God and the call of this assembly that we became your District Superintendent. From that day to this, the Holy Spirit has continued to humble us and mature us in our faith. We are profoundly grateful for His call and the deep privilege of serving Him with you, our NEI family.

Most of you know, March 9th, I suffered a brain bleed and spent 5 days in the Intensive Care Unit. There are no words to adequately express our thanks for your fervent, effectual prayers and God's glorious healing touch. I am recovering well and soon will be back to full strength.

This year, more than any other, we are keenly aware and appreciative of your faithful efforts in the local Church as part of the team, partnering with the district and the denomination. NEI churches are passionately engaged in strengthening the believers and reaching the lost. Thank you for your investment and obedience to God's call. You are the best, the brightest and most capable leaders ever.

We have an all-star line-up of district leaders who have invested countless hours and personal resources to serve the NEI District. Thanks seems like such an empty word sometimes, and this is one of those times, as we attempt to express our deepest feelings of recognition and appreciation for the great blessing individuals have been to the district and me personally. Our inexpressible thanks if offered to District Secretary, Jim Ballenger, and the District Advisory Board. We also appreciate Jeff Kardatzke, our District Treasurer. Consulting with our local churches, Marc and Marceil Royer have been a tremendous resource in strategizing for growth. Many thanks also for the careful instruction of our District Ministries Board members in the crucial preparation of God-called men and women for the credentialed ministry.

Our gratitude to Missions President, Laura High; NYI President, Dillan Ketcham; Sunday School and Discipleship Chairman, Danny Hines, and their councils, who have just completed another inspiring TEAM convention.

My great appreciation to our office administrative team that has worked diligently throughout the year and especially in preparation for this District Assembly; Ashlyn Luttrell, Tiffany Ball, and Jeanette Benbow. I am personally indebted and profoundly grateful to you girls, and to all who have stepped up to help cover the bases throughout the year, and especially for this Assembly.

A very important part of the district effort, often working in the background but none the less a critical player in the work is my wife Cheryl. In August, we will have labored in active ministry for forty-three years. She has run every mile of the way with me and been my faithful cheerleader, partner in prayer, sounding board, critique, and my sweetheart. I cannot express how much I appreciate her and salute her this evening.

We are deeply indebted to Camp Managers, Dan and Karen Heincker who have personally and sacrificially invested to make Shiloh Park the very best. What team players! Thank you Dan and Karen, and thank you to Camp Board Chairman, Tom Hartman, and camp board members for leading us into new and exciting days at Shiloh Park.

The campground is the hub of our district. It serves as the spiritual and social connector where children, teens, adults, and churches come together as one. I appreciate pastors who intentionally engage with their youth and support summer camps like Pastor Phil Rogers. He brings a whole dorm room of boys to camp each summer and is their counselor for a week. I

thank all of you who have served as counselors or helped in any way to encourage camp ministries.

I want to introduce you to Pastor Brenda Haddix and a young man named Cade who is 10 years old from our Geneva Church. Cade a short time ago accepted Jesus as his Savior and is learning all he can about the Christian walk because God has called him to preach. It is leaders like Pastor Brenda who supports our children and our camps, and young men like Cade responding to God's call that will continue to tell the holiness story to the next generations. Shiloh Park is the main place more of our kids accept calls to ministry than anywhere else.

LET'S LISTEN UP!

Jesus said, *"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what He is saying to the churches."* In this text, Revelation 2:11, Jesus appeared to the apostle John who was exiled on the Greek Island of Patmos. It was a rugged, mountainous terrain, which made survival extremely difficult. The Roman emperor, Domitian, had declared that people worship him and perceived John's unwavering devotion to Christ as a threat to his political power.

John, now an old man, was being persecuted for preaching Christ. Historians believe he was most likely forced to do hard labor in the primitive quarries and mines.

It was the Lord's Day and John was worshipping in the Spirit when he heard a loud voice, like a trumpet blast. John turned and before him, stood Jesus. JESUS, THE JUDGE, in all His indescribable majesty, power and glory. John fell at Jesus' feet as though he were dead. Jesus reached down placing His right hand on him and said, *"Don't be afraid... I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One. I was dead but look—I am alive forever and ever and I hold the keys of death and Hades"* (v. 17-18). Jesus instructed John to record His words and went on to examine the seven churches of Asia, which are prototypes of every church then and now, including your church. He revealed their shortcomings, and then commended their endeavors. Standing before us tonight, is Jesus with His righteous right hand on each shoulder, anxious to reward us with His holy presence. Remember, 2 Chronicles 15:7, says, *"As for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded."*

In His omnipotence, He has been in every church service and engaged in our most intimate lives. He has observed our shortcomings and yet commends our faithfulness.

Consider Jesus, our Coach, Confidant, and Counselor:

What is He saying about the NEI District?

What is He saying about your local church?

What is He saying about you?

Today, we stand accountable to Almighty God whose greatest desire is to purify us and empower us to minister more effectively. To each of the seven churches and to us, Jesus is saying, listen to the Spirit.

LET'S ALWAYS STAND UP!

On this our 75th District Assembly, we remember our founding fathers who did not give up but instead, they stood up to the challenges of their day, to win the world in Jesus' name. Because of their faith and passion for the lost, the NEI District exists today.

Over 100 years ago, in 1914, Phineas F. Bresee, founder of the Church of the Nazarene, separated the state of Indiana from the Chicago Central District to form the Indiana District, encompassing the entire state.

In 1926, Indiana Nazarenes were multiplying. This growth gave opportunity for further expansion and the state was divided into two districts. We were organized as the Northern Indiana District with 32 churches and 2,071 members.

Seventy-five years ago, the 1942 Assembly voted to divide northern Indiana into two districts and we became the Ft. Wayne District. One year later the assembly made two major decisions. Our name was changed to Northeastern Indiana District and moments later the delegation voted to accept an offer by the Methodists, the NEI District would purchase Shiloh campground.

It was like a grand slam home run! We were organized with 61 churches and 5,846 members. That year alone we reported 761 new conversions. And listen to this, forty-four of those original churches still exist on the NEI District today.

We give God glory for every precious soul and every hero of the faith. Paul tells us in Hebrews 13:7 *"Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."*

We pay tribute to the bold, efficient and visionary District Superintendents who led in these years of holiness revival. They stood strong for their faith in God and led in accomplishing

immeasurable deeds for the cause of Christ: J. W. Montgomery, Paul Updike, Fletcher C. Spruce, Bruce T. Taylor, Oval L. Stone, and F. Thomas Bailey. I am humbled to stand in the shadow of these great men.

Bases, Hits, and Runs!

Although our statistical records are not the only measure of ministry success it is essential that we check the scoreboard with regularity and tally up our progress. So how did we do as a district in 2016?

- We celebrate 970 conversions to Christ.
- We celebrate 319 water baptisms.
- We celebrate 56 young men and women accepting a call to ministry and were presented a local preacher's license.
- We celebrate receiving 373 (+54) New Nazarenes by Profession of Faith, increasing our membership by 72 (13,236) over the previous year.
- SDMI reported an increase of 1,315 in new prospects but a falling off in average attendance to 8,422. We also regret a disheartening decline in worship attendance of - 561 (8,750).

Pastors, monthly reporting is essential. That data is an indicator of spiritual victories, church attendance, financial goals, and membership. Why not consider addressing those stats in your regular monthly board meetings in-order-to maintain a positive momentum? A frequent check of the scoreboard allows time to detect and correct areas of decline.

- We celebrate the missional efforts to reach more people with 18 (PACS) Parent Affiliated Congregations and New Starts. You will be hearing more from these exciting developments from our churches tomorrow morning.
- It has been a more difficult year financially for our churches receiving only \$13,428,078., a decrease of \$1.4 million from the previous year. This placed a hardship on the operation of the local church and had an impact on the local church's financial support of the district ministry.

FUND PAYMENT RECORD

WEF	\$692,966	5.62%	+\$16,599.58	PAID IN FULL
PENSIONS	\$266,707	2.16%	-\$10,500.19	UNPAID
ONU	\$277,207	2.25%	\$0.	PAID IN FULL
DISTRICT FUND	\$558,053	4.53%	-\$30,130.12	UNPAID

GENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD:

The Generational Leadership Award is presented in honor of those who have invested a life of service to the Lord, extending beyond retirement. Marked by faith in God, a sterling character, a pure heart, and an eagerness to invest in the next generation, these qualities and so many more are exemplified by Merlin and Luanne Frank, the recipients of the NEI 2017 Generational Leadership Award.

LUANNE AND MERLIN FRANK

The following churches and their leaders have hit it out of the ballpark and are inducted into the 2017 Hall of Fame!

The awards are as follows:

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT GROWTH AWARD

- Significant Involvement In Sponsoring A New Churches
- New Nazarenes 10% of attendance current year
- Fund Allocations Paid In Full

Ft. Wayne Trinity

Rev. Terry Habegger [MVP]

MISSIONAL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

One Baptism / One New Nazarene / Increase in Worship Attendance / Funds Paid in Full

Angola Gateway – Tony Baker

Auburn -- Doug Thomas

Collett – Billy Stanton

Crossroads Community – Tim Fisher

Ft. Wayne Many Nations – Javier Mondragon

Ft. Wayne Trinity – Terry Habegger

Kendallville Cross Pointe Family Church – Rich Secor

Union Chapel – Fred Stevens

Warsaw New Harvest – Bill Keen

EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP AWARD

Increase in Responsibility List / One Conversion / One Baptism / One New Nazarene

Anderson Parkview	Angola Gateway	Auburn
Blue River Valley	Collett	Columbia City
Decatur Common Ground	Ft. Wayne Grace Point	Huntington First
Kendallville Cross Pointe Family Church	Ligonier	Lynn
Middletown	Muncie First	Muncie New Hope
Muncie New Horizon	Muncie Northside	Muncie Riverview
New Paris	Olive Branch	Ossian
Warsaw New Harvest	Winchester	

STEWARDSHIP AWARD

[ALL FUNDS PAID IN FULL]

Alexandria, Anderson Eastview, Anderson First, Anderson Parkview, Angola Gateway, Auburn, Berne, Blue River Valley, Bluffton, Bristol, Churubusco, Collett, Columbia City, Crossroads Community, Elwood, Fort Wayne Elmhurst, Fort Wayne Many Nations, Fort Wayne First, Fort Wayne Grace Point, Fort Wayne Liberty Mills, Fort Wayne Trinity, Fort Wayne West Main, Geneva, Harris Chapel, Hartford City, Huntington First, Jimtown Family, Kendallville Cross Pointe Family, Ligonier, Lynn, Marion First, Monroeville, Montpelier Cornerstone Community, Mount Hope, Muncie First, Muncie Forest Park, Muncie New Horizon, Muncie Northside, Muncie Riverview, Muncie South Side, New Paris, North Manchester, Olive Branch, Ossian, Parker City, Portland First, Redkey, Shipshewana, Swayzee, Union Chapel, Van Buren, Wabash, Warsaw New Harvest, and Winchester

WE NEVER GIVE UP!

As with each new generation, the church faces seemingly insurmountable challenges. The competition for souls is fierce but we never give up. Let's be sure we are prayed up so we can stand up to the enemy and claim new lives for the kingdom of Christ.

Do you remember in the assembly of 2015, how we prayed and God gave us a vision for the future? As we listened to the Holy Spirit we were convicted that our District goals for 2020 should be a membership of 17,000, a worship attendance of 18,000, and 71 new church starts. Do you still believe this is God's plan? Have you stopped to think what that might look like?

I heard one leader recently say that we have to shift our weight from one foot to the other to be effective in the future. I heard it again as I listened to James Emery White say that we have moved from an Acts 2 cultural context to an Acts 17. He noted that in Acts 2, "Peter was before God-fearing Jews of Jerusalem. Basically, Peter's message said, you know all about the creation and the fall of man; Abraham and the chosen people of Israel; the prophets and the coming Messiah. What you missed is that Jesus was the Messiah and you rejected and killed Him, and He rose from the grave and unleashed His church, which means you need to repent." Three thousand responded! That is the church, as most of us have known it.

In Acts 17, Paul is on Mars Hill preaching to an entirely different cultural context. He is speaking to philosophers and religious seekers of Athens. In this setting, worldviews and gods littered the landscape and the average person did not know the difference between an idol and a popular decorative piece of furniture. He was not in Jerusalem anymore and had to find a new way to connect with a culture that had not been exposed as those in Jerusalem. He noticed they had an altar to the unknown God. He asked, "What if I could tell you that God's name?" He started with the creation and worked his way forward, laying the foundation for understanding and acceptance of the gospel. That is where we find ourselves today.

As we strain to reach our goals, in the strength of the Lord, it is necessary that we are alert to some of the challenges we face. Our district covers 19 counties and 160 cities, with a combined population of 2.4 million people that need to know Jesus. According to the Indiana Business Research Center, within the next 15 years, the multiracial population in Indiana is projected to expand by 135%. The predominate growth of our communities is of the Hispanic, African-American, and Asian descent. I am so pleased with our beginning progress in reaching the multiethnic communities, but we must become even more intentional.

James Emery White, in his book, *Meet Generation Z*, shares valuable insights into the present age marked by functional atheism. Traditionally, atheism has meant rejecting the idea of God but this generation simply ignores Him. The Pew Research Center found that the "religiously unaffiliated," known as "nones" make up 23% of adults in the USA. If you were to ask them their religion the response would not be Nazarene, Catholic, or Baptist, but "I'm NOTHING."

By 2020, over 40% of all consumers will be Generation Z, age defined as those born in 1995 or later. They are growing up in a post-9/11 world and are marked by the following defining characteristics:

- They are the “internet-in-your-pocket” generation and cannot remember a world without constant, immediate access to the web. They multitask across five screens; spend more money online than any generation before them, and 91% of them sleep with their internet devices.
- Their attention spans are getting shorter and they communicate in symbols, speed, and images.
- They are multiracial. The various cultural groups are rapidly reproducing, and multiracial marriages are occurring at a high rate. Multiracial children are the fastest growing youth group in America.
- They are eager to start working.
- They intend to change their world.
- They have learned that traditional choices do not guarantee success.
- They are sexually tolerant. Gen Z believes that sexuality should be set free from any and all restrictions. Both labels heterosexual and homosexual are repressive to them.
- They are self-directed and unprotected. They are given more space and independence than any other generation. Their parents are failing to protect them. Today the highest paid models in America are 12 & 13-year-old girls.
- They are Post-Christian. Generation Z is the first generation in the west to be raised in a post-Christian context. Some of your children or grandchildren may be embracing these world theories.

We must never give up! Let us cry out in prayer and fasting and ask God for a soul-winning season. In these changing, challenging times our faith must increase. We cannot afford to take a seventh inning stretch break nor let the fear of striking out prevent us from boldly proclaiming God’s ability to save, heal, and deliver. A baseball coach leads out of a playbook of instructions. Listen up! We have the Word of God and the voice of our Savior coaching us, *“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what He is saying to the churches”* (Revelation 2:11).

What is the Holy Spirit saying to your church? Here are a few essentials from the playbook:

1. **A Revival of Prayer.** Everything we do must be saturated in prayer. Seek God’s wisdom, direction, and power. Dwight L. Moody said, “Those who have left the deepest impression on this sin cursed earth have been men and women of prayer.”
2. **Remember, Holiness Works.** “The Holy Spirit cannot conquer the world with unbelief, nor can He save the world with a worldly Church ... He wants a separated, sanctified and sacrificial people.” Samuel Chadwick

3. **Focus on Jesus and the Bible.** In our post-Christian culture, biblical illiteracy is alarming. Children and adults alike need to learn the basic Bible passages and miraculous stories of Jesus.
4. **Make children and youth a priority.** These are two of the most important outreach ministries in the life of your church. Moms and dads will respond to the church if they see the value it has on their children. One parent, who witnessed her teenagers' remarkable testimony and baptism, called the pastor and said she wanted to accept Jesus in her heart and be baptized as well.

Recently, I attended an "Intergenerational Dinner" at the Shiphewana Church. Their teens were encouraged to sit among the adults and engage in conversation. They had prepared questions, such as, "What activities did you enjoy when you were a teenager?" "How have fashions changed?" and, "Why do you attend church?" At the close of the evening, they shared their insights with the entire group. It was a tremendous blessing to visit with those young people and to hear their stories as well. Let's intentionally build bridges to the next generation.

Our 2016 challenge was to break out of the bubble and to double the number of children and youth in every church. Although we fell short of that goal, we increased our youth contact list by nearly 500 and had a weekly average of 1,137 teens. In addition, we had the opportunity to minister to an average of 2,319 children each Sunday and increased our list of prospective children by 114. We are also reaching children outside the Sunday format in a variety of ways such as after-school ministry, day care ministry, sports teams, and Bible quizzing.

Have you heard about our Brazilian Connection? I am so excited to announce that Dillan Ketchum, Laura High, and our Youth and Missions councils are partnering with a group of Nazarene Youth from Brazil. For the past two years, the Lynn Church and Pastor Tom Govin, have sponsored a group of Brazilian young people for a six-week visit to the U.S. to learn English and to share their testimonies.

We have been so impressed with their vibrant faith and zeal for Christ that we asked them to teach us their evangelism and discipleship methods. I am thrilled that they have invited us to Brazil to observe their Nazarene youth training. So, in just a few weeks a group of our young people and adult leaders are heading to Brazil. They will attend their annual youth conference and bring back information to better equip our young people. I am convinced that every local church will benefit from this international connection and bold new adventure.

5. **Target Men.** Author David Murrow notes, “The church of the first century was a magnet to males. Jesus’ strong leadership, blunt honesty, and bold action mesmerized men. A five-minute sermon by Peter resulted in the conversions of three thousand men.”

We cannot neglect our men. In fact, when a man comes to the Lord, statistics tell us that there is an 85% chance that his whole family will follow. Men must be a major consideration in planning worship, in church decor, and in the social and connectional options of the church.

LET’S STEP UP TO THE PLATE!

I can tell you most men, especially this man hates to be sick, but my hospital experience was life changing. Listen up! It was Jesus who said, *“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what He is saying ...”*

Although hospital visitors were limited, a fine layman stopped in to see me for just a few minutes. Cheryl and I were surprised when she kindly, but firmly asked, “Dr. Roland, are you ready?” I immediately responded, “Sure!” In fact, I cannot think of a time since I was 5 years old that I did not believe I was ready for heaven. However, in the darkness of that hour, I questioned. Like a baseball player, I went directly to first base. Lord, am I ready? Second base, is there any unconfessed sin? Third base, Lord have I disobeyed You in any way? Am I going to make it home safe? Then Jesus reminded me again of His amazing grace and like John, I wanted to fall face down before Him.

It is not by right, or birth, or works or occupation, but the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Tonight, I affirm my allegiance to Jesus my Savior and Sanctifier, and I know without a doubt that I am ready because His Holiness works!

May I be bold like my friend and ask, how about you? Are you ready?

Standing before us tonight, is Jesus with His righteous right hand on your shoulder, anxious to reward you with His holy presence. Pastor, leader, you may be discouraged. Remember that 2 Chronicles 15:7, says. *“As for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.”*

Let’s pray up, let’s suit up, and let’s step up to the plate. **BATTER UP!**

Respectfully submitted,



David G. Roland