

Northeastern Indiana District Church of the Nazarene

State of the District Address

Dr. David G. Roland

May 12, 2020

Dr. Graves, Dr. Bowling, Delegates, and Guests,

Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes" Mark 9:23 (NASB).

I believe in a God of miracles! Eighteen years ago, Cheryl and I stood before this Assembly, weak kneed and trembling under the sheer magnitude of God's call to this great district. We were serving the North Arkansas District when Dr. Diehl called with the news that NEI had elected us. Shocked with the possibility, I asked for time to pray. But after a sleepless night seeking God's will, I still felt uncertain. Although blessed by the opportunity, my response to Dr. Diehl was, "God didn't say, 'No' but He didn't say, 'Go and I cannot go anywhere without His clear call.'" However, God was extremely patient with me, and you were so gracious to extend a second invitation. I shudder to think how close I came to missing the most valuable experience of my ministry. Cheryl and I will be forever grateful for the deep joy and incredible privilege it has been to serve the Lord with you.

And now as we move into the next chapter of our journey, many of you have asked, "What next?" We plan to invest in our family. Our daughter, Kari and her husband Nathan Burns, 14-year-old Bryce, and 10-year-old Addie live in Mustang, Oklahoma where Nathan is the pastor of the Church of the Nazarene. Just two hours northeast, lives our daughter, Cassie and her husband Ryan Sory, who attend the Tulsa Regency Park Church of the Nazarene, along with 12-year-old Joshua, two-year-old Jacob, and soon to arrive, Jonah. We'll be "rockin' and a rollin'!"

In this, my final report, it is essential that you hear our words of gratitude. We are so indebted to you, our NEI District family. Each local church pastor, board and congregation, thank you for all you are doing to advance the Kingdom. Both present and past, I want to thank all who have served on the District Advisory Board, SDMI Board, NMI Council, NYI Council and Shiloh Park Camp Board. You have blessed our journey in ways too numerous to count. Our office manager, Cassie James, Shiloh Park Directors, Brandy and Kraig Hannah, and our children's consultant, Cortney Coombs are all part of what makes this a great and strong district. You, our district family has infused the energy and the vision necessary to accomplish God's mission. Thank you for your prayers, friendship, and partnership in the gospel.

I believe there is a glorious era ahead. With the fresh vision and inspiration of your next leader it is our prayer that the district will continue with a passion to advance God's Kingdom and that NEI would experience a mighty movement of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts 1-4. My prayer is, "Do it again Lord! Do it again!"

## 2019-2020 STATISTICS

To fulfill that longing we must understand the dynamics of our mission. Did you know that on an average Sunday over 1.5 million people around the world worship in a Church of the Nazarene in over 190 different languages? One third of those people speak English and one sixth of them speak Spanish. The median attendance church size is 35 but half of Nazarene worshippers are attending churches running 100 or more in attendance. Twenty-five percent of worshippers are in churches averaging at least 250. In a *Christianity Today* interview (March 2002), Dr. Phillip Jenkins said, "It is not numerical success but strength of witness that makes the difference."

As God has moved and with the combined efforts of the NEI District family, we have maintained a strong 12,304 in membership and a weekly worship average of 8,478. There were 998 people who responded to the invitation to know Christ and sought God's forgiveness of sins. We baptized 387 and received 381 by Profession of Faith in membership. It was our privilege to minister to 2,114 children, 1,096 youth, and 4,986 adults in SDMI attendance. Sunday School, with 3,837 in attendance and weekly discipleship with 4,129 in attendance both increased during the year.

Local church income was slightly decreased to \$13,426,899 and we paid \$857,973 in property debt service leaving us with \$5,373,666 total debt held by 25 churches.

Our church property values increased to \$97,538,823.

## GENEROUS PEOPLE FUNDING THE MISSION

I want to extend appreciation to every local church and the generous people in those churches who have sacrificially given to provide for the mission globally, regionally, and within the district. Every dollar is carefully scrutinized to be invested in ways to accomplish His great mission. Here is how we funded the mission this year:

	<u>GOAL</u>	<u>PAID</u>	<u>% PD</u>
WEF	\$685,279	\$691,795	5.53%
PENSION & BENEFITS	\$280,990	\$273,720	2.19%
OLIVET	\$280,990	\$265,360	2.12%
DISTRICT	\$605,894	\$573,679	4.59%

## **AWARDS**

### **2020 GENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD**

#### **REV. JOHN & JOHNETTA LUTTON**

Rev. John V. Lutton is a man of many talents and interests. To drive through Ligonier in the fall of the year, you might notice scare crows lining Main Street with one of them looking very much like Pastor John Lutton.

A well-known figure in the community, John is noted for his 24 years of service on the City Council, 18 years on the Board of Public Works and Safety, and over 30 years as chaplain of the American Legion. For many years John has written weekly articles for the local newspaper and has been a frequent radio voice of faith, inspiration, and encouragement.

John and Johnetta Lutton are presently pastoring the Ligonier Church of the Nazarene where they have faithfully served for the past 48 years. Prior to their ministry in Ligonier, John was a bi-vocational pastor at Anderson Indian Meadows and at Cowan Nazarene Churches. His secular work propelled him into the community where he was employed at Delco Battery, worked as a furniture store salesman, a bus driver, a substitute teacher, a plumber, and an employee at Royal Imprints, a stationary company. Among a multitude of other acts of service, Johnetta has wholeheartedly devoted herself to the District Missions Council, zone missions leadership, and served as Missionary President for the Ligonier Church.

A fierce and loyal American, John joined the Navy in 1957 and served on the USS St. Paul as a communication specialist from 1960-1963. John met Johnetta at a Wednesday night prayer meeting and on August 6, 1962, they were married at sea.

Just a few years later John was called by God to preach the Good News. Dedicated and determined to fulfill that call, John received his first District License in 1966 and was ordained in 1974, serving his entire ministry on the Northeastern Indiana District.

The Luttons are the proud parents of two married children, four grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. They have also selflessly invested in a host of others, prayerfully urging all to seek God's Kingdom first and, "tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done" (Psalm 78:1).

### **MISSIONAL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**

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

Alexandria – Rev. Mark Diemer & Rev. Aaron Chester      Columbia City -- Rev. Tom Beers  
Crossroads Community – Rev. Tim Fisher                      Ft. Wayne Grace Point – Rev. Brady Wisheart  
Ft. Wayne Liberty Mills – Rev. Wes Ball                      Harris Chapel – Rev. Jim Ballenger  
Kendallville Cross Pointe Family – Rev. Rich Secor              Ligonier – Rev. John Lutton  
Marion First – Rev. Cory Clark                                      Middlebury – Rev. Gary Sheets  
Muncie Forest Park – Rev. David Delk                      Muncie Broken Church (Northside) -- Rev. Melodie Eisenhofer  
Ossian -- Rev. Travis Tackett

### **EVANGELISM & DISCIPLESHIP AWARD**

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

Alexandria -- Rev. Mark Diemer & Rev. Aaron Chester      Angola Gateway -- Rev. Tony Baker  
Bristol -- Rev. Chad Finney    Columbia City – Rev. Tom Beers  
Crossroad Community – Rev. Tim Fisher                      Decatur Common Ground – Rev. Kevin Stirratt  
Ft. Wayne Grace Point – Rev. Brady Wisheart              Ft. Wayne Liberty Mills – Rev. Wes Ball  
Ft. Wayne Trinity – Rev. Terry Habegger                      Harris Chapel – Rev. Jim Ballenger  
Huntington First – Rev. Robert Kemp                              Jimtown Family – Rev. Mike Sommer  
Kendallville Cross Pointe Family – Rev. Rich Secor              Ligonier – Rev. John Lutton  
Middletown – Rev. Dillan Ketcham                              Mount Hope – Rev. David Cox  
Muncie Broken Church (Northside) – Rev. Melodie Eisenhofer      Muncie Riverview – Rev. David Shipman  
Portland First – Rev. Stephen Hundley

### **STEWARDSHIP AWARD**

[ALL FUNDS PAID IN FULL]

Alexandria, Anderson Eastview, Anderson First, Anderson Parkview, Auburn, Berne, Blue River Valley, Bluffton, Butler, Churubusco, Collett, Columbia City, Crossroads Community, Decatur Common Ground, Elkhart Northside, Elwood, Ft. Wayne Elmhurst, Ft. Wayne First, Ft. Wayne Grace Pointe, Ft. Wayne Liberty Mills, Ft. Wayne Many Nations, Ft. Wayne Trinity, Ft. Wayne West Main, Geneva, Harris Chapel, Jimtown Family, Kendallville Cross Pointe Family, Ligonier, Lynn, Marion First, Middlebury Community, Montpelier Cornerstone Community, Mount Hope, Muncie First, Muncie Forest Park, Muncie New Hope, Muncie New Horizon, Muncie Broken Church (Northside), Muncie Riverview, Muncie South Side, New Paris, North Manchester, Ossian, Parker City, Peru, Portland First, Redkey, Shipshewana, Swayzee, Tunker Sugar Creek Fellowship, Union Chapel, Van Buren, Wabash, Warren Hillcrest, Yorktown.

## I BELIEVE

Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes" Mark 9:23 (NASB).

Even in the face of an invisible enemy, our God is faithful. The COVID-19 virus has nearly paralyzed the world, damaged our economy, and created distress for all of us. Our hearts go out to those who are suffering illness and the loss of loved ones. Yet it appears God is using this time to reset our full dependence on Him. For some, the stay at home orders have provided a time to reestablish priorities. Our once rapid pace has been replaced with meals around the kitchen table, honey-do-lists, and home schooling.

In a matter of ten days every church was forced to find alternate ways to communicate the gospel outside its walls. NEI pastors and leaders, you have done a remarkable job. Streaming, zooming, Facebook-live, drive by prayer and communion, and drive in services along with a multitude of online ministry methods that have now become the norm. Churches are being compelled to reconsider their financial priorities and in doing so are discovering their needs have shifted. For some it has created a crisis. But I believe it is refining fire!

I Peter 1:7-9 gives insight. *"These [trials] have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, ... may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. And even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

I believe God is renewing and refining His Church. Remember in Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, "I will build My Church and the gates of hell will not overcome it."

- Jesus is the Lord of His Church. He is the head.
- Jesus loved the Church and gave Himself for it.
- We are to be a community of believers that reflect God's glory in His Church.
- As His Church we have all things in common through the fellowship of believers, the breaking of bread, and passionate prayer.
- As His Church, we are to dwell on God's Word, teach, preach, sing and give thanks.
- It is a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle where His majesty and splendor are adored.
- It is to be a pure place to worship Him without rival.
- We are never to forsake gathering as His Church. Regardless of the ministry method, we must consistently extend the call for a decision to accept God's saving, sanctifying power and to build His Church.

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" Even in these turbulent times, never doubt that the Church is rising up, assuming the position of Authority in Christ – Triumphant and Victorious!

Do you believe that “All things are possible” with Christ? Jim Cymbala said, “The battle of our spiritual lives is ‘Will you believe?’” We live in a strange time when the very concept of belief in God is under fire. Sadly, many have no belief at all.

One 20-something backpacker in Boston, when asked what he believed in said, “I don’t know what I believe in. And if I believe-I believe there’s some Higher Power, I think. But I don’t know. Like right now I’m at a point where I don’t know what to believe, but I’m open to everything. So, I like to believe in everything, because I don’t know what it is I truly believe in.”

Hollywood actor, George Clooney expressed the philosophy of our modern pop culture. He said, “I think that whatever anybody believes, as long as it doesn’t hurt anybody else, it’s fair enough and works.” Christians, we must combat that philosophy with the truth of God’s Word.

What do we believe?

The Apostles’ Creed as one biblical scholar explains, “instructs, guides, defends, and enshrines the most important question of all.” This powerful declaration of faith has been embraced for centuries as a public testimony of belief.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Perhaps the most difficult words of that declaration are the words, “I BELIEVE.” We often live with the beliefs of others, but until we personally surrender our will to God and internalize this statement of faith as our belief, it has no eternal impact. More than 100 times in the book of John he uses the word *pisteuw* which means TO BELIEVE. Jesus said, “...he that BELIEVES in me though he were dead yet shall he live” (KJV John 11:25).

I’m not by any means intending to be political, but in 1982, Mario Cuomo was in a heated race for the governor of New York. He was facing overwhelming odds and feared losing his campaign. Weary and depressed he pulled his diary from his desk only to discover one of his father’s old business cards. It read, “*Andrea Cuomo—Italian American Groceries. Fine imported products.*” Mario began reflecting on his family’s journey and his determined father who was as an Italian immigrant. Although he spoke no English, he arrived in America with a dream of having his own home nestled under a shade tree. At first, he worked digging sewer trenches. Over time they were able to acquire a little grocery store with an apartment in the back but eventually his dream was fulfilled. They were able to buy a home with a beautiful forty-foot blue spruce tree in the yard.

Cuomo, looking at the business card in discouragement, could not help but wonder what his Papa would have said if he told him he was ready to give up. Then he recalled a scene of his Papa proudly standing beside that tall blue spruce. His memory was vivid. One day a heavy rain came and saturated the soil around that tree. Strong winds blew, and the tall tree swayed under the force. *Crack, pop!* Before their very eyes that forty-foot tree plunged to the ground with its roots sticking straight up in the air, fully exposed. There it was, that tall blue spruce with its nose in the asphalt of the street. When they saw its cheeks on the canvas lying there in defeat, their hearts sank.

But not Papa. The 5'6" man weighing 150 pounds, but stout as an ox, along with his bewildered family stood in the pouring rain, speechless. Then Papa said, "OK, we gonna push 'em up!" Mario wanted to question but Papa cried out, "Quiet! We gonna push 'em up! He gonna grow again!"

So, they gathered ropes and tied them to the top of the tree, and then Papa said, "Push!" In the drenching rain, they pushed and pulled with all their might. It seemed impossible, but the tree began to rise. And suddenly it dropped back into its place. Proud Papa dug around the roots, shoveled mud on them, and rolled boulders around the base of the tree. He drove stakes and tied ropes to hold it in place. Then Papa said, "Don' worry, it gonna grow again!"

With renewed courage, Cuomo put the business card back in his desk drawer knowing that the blue spruce, now stood 65 feet tall with its branches pointing heavenward. It never had its nose in the asphalt again. With that memory, Cuomo could not wait to get back to the campaign and won that election by over 180,000 votes.

Many times, throughout my ministry I have encountered storms that threatened to break or destroy me. With my nose in the asphalt, there seemed to be no way to overcome. But, just about that time, my Heavenly Father comes along beside me and says, "What's this? Why do you have your nose in the asphalt?" My response, "Well there is this great storm." He says, "No, no, that is not my plan for you." Then He reaches down with that strong right arm, the same arm He used to pull His Son Jesus up from the tomb. And with resurrection power, He lifts me up and points me heavenward again and says, "There now, your job is to keep pointing people toward heaven. The storms are going to come but I will strengthen you and you will grow again just like that tall blue spruce."

**"WE GONNA PUSH 'EM UP... AND HE GONNA GROW AGAIN!"**

Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23 NASB).

In these last moments we have together, I want to leave you with 10 things I BELIEVE:

1. I BELIEVE fear can stand in the way of God's miracles. Remember, "For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7).
2. I BELIEVE Holiness Works. Every relationship is affected by a holy heart.

3. I BELIEVE in the Divine Call and the power of an anointed pastor. I will never forget God's call on my life to preach.
4. I still BELIEVE in Sunday School. Ministry to the Family, children, and youth must be Christ centered.
5. I BELIEVE in the Altar. It continues to be a sacred place of confession and consecration.
6. I BELIEVE in the Church. May it be triumphant and victorious.
7. I BELIEVE the birthing of new churches is the key to evangelism and discipleship.
8. I BELIEVE Shiloh Park is the essential gathering place for the district family and a center for spiritual growth for all ages.
9. I BELIEVE that education with a Christian purpose is paramount. The future of our denomination is dependent on our youth. Olivet Nazarene University provides a marketable education with a focus on faith and that seeks to develop both lay and clergy leaders for the next generation.
10. I BELIEVE there is a great future for NEI – Strong leadership is in place, churches are poised to evangelize and disciple their community, and the Lord is bringing the family back together again.

Jesus said, "I will build my church." And I BELIEVE IT!

Respectfully submitted,

David G. Roland