



CHURCH OF THE
NAZARENE

**SOUTHWESTERN
OHIO DISTRICT
ASSEMBLY 2026**

*Thankful for our **past**.
Confident for our **future**.*

67th District Assembly

District Superintendent's Report

**Dr. Robert J. Mahaffey
District Superintendent**

Southwestern Ohio District Superintendent's Report

July 13, 2026

Dr. Sarmiento, Dr. Castleman, and Southwestern Ohio District Family...that is who we are, a family! I would like to repeat a portion of my fourth report from 2020. It is still so relevant.

“With all the challenges and changes facing the church and our world; it is imperative that we have an anchor. Our anchor is Jesus Christ. Jesus, is who we must become, and He will help us navigate the chaos we face today in our culture and in the church! Methods must change, but salvation, holiness, and the church must not be deterred by all the trouble that we face. The church must be relevant and must be the presence of Christ in our world. We are not a political organization. We are not a business. We are the powerful lifestyle of Jesus walking and breathing in current culture! There is pessimism about the future in the church. Let's remember there is no pessimism, nor weakness, in Christ. We are people of radical optimism! Our optimism is in the power of the Holy Spirit... at work within us! I am optimistic regarding the Church of the Nazarene in Southwestern Ohio and in the world!”

The three major tasks of a District Superintendent are:

- The health of churches on the district
- Being a pastor to the pastors
- To foster positive morale on the district

A key challenge of the District Superintendent is to help churches find the right pastor. For the church to become younger, it is best if we can find younger pastors.

Did you know that several of the pastors of our larger churches are in their thirties? Eight of our newest pastors are around thirty years of age and two are about forty years old. Our youngest pastor is Daniel Trimbach of Dayton First Church, 27! The average age of our pastors has moved from 53 to 41.6 years of age. That is within the past two years. The average age of the pastor in our top five churches is 43.8...that's GREAT!

In the past ten years, we have replaced 58 pastors in our 62 organized churches and 17 in our Parent Affiliated Congregations. These churches include some who have had multiple pastors in those 10 years. Twenty-one pastors have been at the same church for ten years. They are: Nelson Escobar- Bethesda, Paul Crisp- Blanchester, Bob Schnecker- Chase Avenue, Daryl Blank- Springdale, Arnoldo Macario- SNC Hispanic, Lester Jones-Countryside, Brian Deaton- Crossroads, Jim High- Eaton, Gary Zornes- Felicity, Dave Hicks- Walden Ponds, Tom Zile- Hillsboro, Tony Watson- Manchester, Bill Bockhorst- New Richmond, Ray Grilliot- Oxford, Desire Ntwayingabo- Penuel, Clark Castle- Ripley, Mark Stevens- Target Dayton, Ryan Riddell- Shelter, Mark Batton- Vandalia, Bryan Heil- West Carrollton, and Tammy Stone- West Union. Three of these have just completed their pastorates this summer; Daryl Blank, Lester Jones, and Jim High.

A list of pastoral tenures is listed on page 75. Notables are Paul Crisp- Blanchester 37 years, Tom Zile- Hillsboro 37 years (34 as lead pastor), Bill Bockhorst- New Richmond 34 years, and Tony Watson- Manchester 31 years.

This year we lost pastors that were dearly loved, Pastor Keith Smith of Brookville, Retired pastors Bob Highley, Ken Copenhaver, and Jim Haynes. Three precious pastors' wives passed, Doloris Jones, Clara Moorman, and Jean Noel.

This afternoon you will meet ten of our ten new pastors this assembly year. We will also celebrate the progress of three of our newest churches and get an update from Target Dayton.

I would like you to meet Leila Smith. Leila, her husband, and their five beautiful children were our pastors of Daytonview Church. There was a very difficult situation this year and the Daytonview Church became inactive...or so I thought. A very generous person in our district provided great help for this family. The Daytonview building has been empty since the start of this year. I was not aware, but Leila and her kids continued to provide worship for an average of thirty-eight young people (ages 3-18) each Sunday. They have provided food sacks daily for twenty to thirty people. Daytonview Church currently meets in their small apartment. We are hoping for a church to assist in this ministry. Maybe your church would be willing to collect school supplies...backpacks, pencils, hand sanitizer, notebooks and other needs for their upcoming Back to School event. Is it possible that you and your people would like to give an offering to help Leila purchase the food that they freely give? We need your help!

At the end of the church year, May 31st, our collection of allocations was running a little behind. A wonderful number of receipts came in, and we finished the year \$24,000 ahead of last year at \$613,051. Praise the Lord for your generosity! Eighty-eight per cent of our churches gave to meet the needs of the district and other budgets.

There are a few praises I would like to share as I conclude ten years as your District Superintendent.

In this decade:

- I have not had to take any credentials from our pastors. That can be very difficult, but our pastors have been faithful people of integrity!
- Our district has not been involved in any lawsuits. Praise the Lord!
- We have only had to close three churches in this time. The Riverside Parent Affiliated Congregation was closed by the parent church. Morrow's building had the roof cave in and would have been too costly to repair. Drexel could no longer survive with only five faithful people. We disassociated with the Covenant/Cincinnati Urban Promise ministry due to differences in accountability and belief. Mount Carmel Church merged with the Fairfax Church and they are doing well!
- I have attended over one thousand three hundred Board Meetings! We have wonderful people who made my time with them a great joy! I have also attended District Advisory Board meetings, Camp Board meetings, Nazarene Youth International Board meetings, Nazarene Discipleship Board meetings, Nazarene

Missions International Board meetings, Credential Board meetings, Pastors' Breakfasts, Mount Vernon Nazarene University Board and Executive Board meetings (concluding thirty-four years of service), District Superintendents' training, Leadership Conferences, and regional DS meetings. The Lord has protected all my travels, only hitting one deer and parking in one cornfield due to an icy turn.

- I have never been privileged to have every church filled with a pastor. On my last day, August 12th, I will have one or two churches needing pastors. All Pastoral/Congregational Reviews will be current when my time is complete.

THANK YOU!!! YOU ARE WONDERFUL!!! There have been plenty of challenges, but all the horrible stories you might have heard that DS's experience have not been my experience. You have cared for my family in every way! You are PRECIOUS PRICELESS FRIENDS!!! THANK YOU!!!

THANK YOU CAROLYN! When I show up at a church without Carolyn, I am asked, "Where's Carolyn?" It is strange to say, but I have been blessed with two GREAT wives! We said farewell to Elaine in February of 2019. Thank you Carolyn for being patient when I've had meetings nearly every night and at times have been later than you expected.

THANK YOU RHONDA! The first challenge I faced was to find someone to be our Office Administrator...and replace Chriss Cox? Rhonda has gone beyond every expectation! She is joyful, confidential, thorough, detailed and has visited our churches 127 times for installations and special occasions. I am confident that Rhonda is THE BEST! She has had a lot of help from her wonderful husband, Don! Thank you to both of you!!! You are GREAT FRIENDS!

THANK YOU TO Kelly Blowers, Brenda Hail, Carol Emerson, Marlene Williamson, and others who have helped us in the District Office.

THANK YOU PASTOR DAVE CROFFORD AND CINDY! It has been a great pleasure to serve with Pastor Dave as our District Secretary and Assistant to the DS. Dave and Cindy are joyful, excellent in all they do, and wonderful friends! Pastor Dave has been selected to lead (NCOS) Nazarene Course of Study as it moves into new days.

THANK YOU TO PASTOR MARK ATHERTON who led Nazarene Ministry Development Center for twenty years. What an impact Mark has made on our ministers. Thank you also to each of the professors who have taught the training courses.

THANK YOU, LEE VAN HOUTEN! Lee is an excellent treasurer for the district and easy to work with. We hope Lee will continue in this role for a long time.

THANK YOU, DISTRICT ADVISORY BOARD! Pastor Terry Blosser has served as our Board Secretary, Jill Peddenpohl is our Recording Secretary, and Paul Lail is our Finance Chairperson. These three are a joy to work with and excellent in their roles. Pastors Daryl Blank, Kyle Lanham, Alex Mahaffey, Adam Profitt, and Sheila Slone are elders who serve. Michael Graves, Karen Helton, Gary Johnson, and Carol Ann Neeld are your elected laypersons on the Board. I

have never felt that any of these leaders have tried to get their way, or advance a personal agenda, and they are extremely encouraging!

THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED, OR NOW SERVE on the Camp Board, Church Properties Board, Board of Ministry, Ministerial Studies Board, and Board of Trustees for Mount Vernon Nazarene University. Each Board serves with commitment and excellence!

THANK YOU, PASTOR KALYN VOGELMANN, PRESIDENT OF NAZARENE DISCIPLESHIP INTERNATIONAL! Pastor Kalyn also serves as the Women's Ministries Director for the United States and Canada. Congratulations to you and your Board who led a wonderful Discipleship Gathering on Saturday.

THANK YOU, DR. KURT JOHNSON, PRESIDENT OF NAZARENE MISSIONS INTERNATIONAL! NMI Convention on Saturday was another sign of the love and commitment to missions on SWO. Thanks to the NMI Council and congratulations to the newly elected president, _____.

THANK YOU, PASTOR TERESA BOWDEN, PRESIDENT OF NAZARENE YOUTH INTERNATIONAL! Celebrating a GREAT Nazarene Youth Congress, we are excited to experience that report in just a little bit. Thanks to all who serve on the NYI Council!

THANK YOU, PASTOR MARK AND DIANE LINGLE WHO LEAD HIGHER GROUND CONFERENCE AND RETREAT CENTER! What a huge task you and your team have. We believe we have one of the top...if not the best...Nazarene campgrounds. You serve us well!

THANK YOU, PASTORS!!! I love each of you and have enjoyed serving with you! Your work is not easy and is changing faster than ever before in history. PLEASE continue to PREACH THE WORD and LEAD WITH LOVE!!!

THANK YOU, CHURCH BOARD MEMBERS! Many do not want the responsibility of leading the church today. Thank you for being willing to commit to such an important task. Please remember, you are spiritual leaders first!

THANK YOU, TO OUR LORD!!! The transitions I have experienced in these ten years have not been easy. The Lord has been faithful and is my closest friend! Without God's presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, all that has been accomplished would not have been! The WONDERFUL spirit and work of this district is totally to your glory! You alone are WORTHY!!!

In closing, this personal challenge;

I love Isaiah! Chapter 6 narrates the calling of the prophet and proclaims, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah's response is great, "Here I am. Send me!" Chapter 7, 9, and 11, introduce us to the Christ child who is to be born 750 years later. "Immanuel, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace! A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit." "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him." "Lions and lambs, wolves and leopards will lie down with the goat...and a child will lead them." Chapter 35 speaks of a highway called the "Way of Holiness." The favorite of many is chapter 40, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth

strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” One of my favorites is 49:15, “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.” Who could miss Isaiah 53 and the ‘suffering servant?’ Chapter 55, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!” Chapter 63, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

The passage that guides us today is from chapter 43, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past, **See, I am doing a new thing!**” Please do not let ‘the way we’ve always done it’ limit our future. You are going to have a new DS today and he or she will probably do things differently...better! Don’t keep going over the ‘good ole days,’ we probably don’t really want to go backward. No air-conditioning, hot choir robes, outhouses...do you really want to go back? See...watch...look...**God is going to do a new thing!** Too many look backward, remembering when church was like this, or that. Do you want to see young people come to Christ? Do you want your family to be the future saints of the church? God is going to do something new! Forget the old DS, check out the new gal or guy! Here we go!

May our Lord bless the Southwestern Ohio District! I love you!!!

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Bob Mahaffey