

PART III

# The Covenant of Christian Conduct

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

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CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

CHURCH OFFICERS

RULES OF ORDER

AMENDING THE COVENANT  
OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

### A. The Christian Life

28. The church joyfully proclaims the good news that new life can be found through Jesus Christ. Scripture begins with God's good work of creating, though the appearance and ever-increasingly devastating effects of sin followed. Yet, because of God's grace and mercy, God constantly acts to restore what has been damaged by sin. The fullness of God's redemptive plan is revealed in the good news of the gospel that in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17-19) God's restorative work calls the people of God to embody and witness to this new life in the present day. The Christian life calls the disciple, the whole person –body, mind, and spirit, to commitments and choices in response to God's transforming grace. Therefore, "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1b-2b).

(Romans 12:1b-2b, Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-11, I Thess. 5:23-24)

28.1. God's people commit themselves to enduring Scriptural truth, found in both the Old and New Testaments. We hold that the Ten Commandments, as reaffirmed in the teachings of Jesus Christ, demonstrated in the Great Commandment and the Sermon on the Mount constitute the basic Christian ethic. We consider it imperative that in every specific cultural context we earnestly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the wisdom of the Christian tradition in living Christlike lives.

(John 14:26; 16:13)

28.2. God invites us to join in His work of restoration through commitment to wholeness. Thus, our shared conviction is that the Christian life will mean continually 'putting on' some things and 'laying down' others. Such practices are often sacrificial, and shape us for a life of witness in the world in which we live. These move believers toward ever-increasing Christlikeness, are intentional, and develop over time as

people discern and respond to God's call to participate in Christ. Therefore:

(Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 25:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

**28.3. We call our people to discipleship in the context of faithful congregations.** Nurture, grace, and accountability are the responsibility of the Christian community. As the family of God, we take seriously the responsibility to raise children into Christlikeness, teaching them from birth that they are recipients of the fullness of Jesus' love. We are called to become the family of God for those who have never experienced the love of Jesus.

(1 Corinthians 12:27-28; Ephesians 2:14-16)

**28.4. We call our people to proclaim and demonstrate God's grace and love to the world.** Equipping believers for reconciling love as ambassadors for Christ in the world is the shared responsibility of every congregation. God calls us to attitudes, practices of hospitality, and relationships that value all persons. We participate as joyful disciples, engaging with others to create a society that mirrors God's purposes. Our faith is to work through love. Therefore, the Church is to give herself to the care, feeding, clothing, and shelter of the poor and marginalized. A life of Christian holiness will entail efforts to create a more just and equitable society and world, especially for the poor, the oppressed, and those who cannot speak for themselves.

(Leviticus 19:18, 34; Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 11; Isaiah 61:1; Zechariah 9:12; Matthew 25:34-44; Romans 5:7-8, 12:1; 2 Corinthians 5:16, 20; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:10, 6:12; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:27; James 2:1-9)

**28.5. We call our people to remember that all time is God's.** The entirety of our lives should serve God's purposes. The way we use time impacts others, so together we commit to using time in ways that proclaim God's love to the world, build each other up, and craft healthy communities of grace. In this way, our leisure time, our active time, our sleep time, our work time, our worship time, and our whole time is offered in stewardship to God.

(Ephesians 5:14-16)

28.6. We call our people to remember the value of learning. Education is of the utmost importance for the social and spiritual well-being of society. We call educational organizations and institutions to teach children, youth, and adults, biblical principles and ethical standards in such a way that our doctrines may be known. Education from public sources should be complemented by Christian teaching in the home. Because all truth is God's truth, Christians should also be encouraged to work in and with public institutions to witness to and influence these institutions for God's kingdom.

(Matthew 5:13-14, Colossians 1:16)

28.7. We call our people to remember that all our work is offered in service to God. As people fully committed to God, and uniquely gifted by Christ, the whole of each of our lives should fulfil God's purposes. All our work, paid or unpaid, should be done generously, ethically, and justly, in ways that promote the well-being of society and mirror Christlikeness.

(Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 24:14-15; Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:22-25)

28.8. We call our people to careful and considered use of media and technologies. We affirm the churches' use of technology in service to the Kingdom, using it in a balanced way, prioritizing interpersonal relationships. Care must be taken to intentionally include those who have limited access. We must practice formation that helps people discern ways in which technologies may draw them away from engagement in actual community and family participation. We encourage disciples to live out the value of personal, face-to-face connection and to resist any form of living that would lead to isolation or create a culture of only virtual relationships, unless medically advised.

(Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 10:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:7)

28.9. We call our people to care for creation. God pronounced the original creation to be good and appointed humanity to steward creation for God's greater purposes. Care for this created world includes such things as avoiding lifestyles of pollution and of unnecessary consumption of goods and resources.

(Genesis 1:26-28; John 1:3; Romans 8:18-25; Colossians 1:15-20)

**28.10. We call our people to be peacemakers.** Because Jesus blessed peacemakers and commanded us to love our enemies, we commit ourselves to being agents of reconciliation in our families, among friends, at the workplace, in our churches, societies, nations, people groups, and tribes.

(Psalm 34:14; Matthew 5:9, 43-48; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:14-16; Hebrews 12:14)

**29.** As we search the Scriptures and develop discernment, we become aware of practices that do not promote the full potential of human beings. Such practices prevent the development of Christlikeness in believers and dishonor creation. Discernment calls us to “lay aside” those things that hinder us. We suggest that the standard given to John Wesley by his mother, Susanna, helps form a basis for the discernment of evil. She taught him, “Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of your body over mind, that thing for you is sin.” Discernment regarding the things we lay aside forms part of our discipleship, accountability, and corporate witness. Growth in discipleship will increase our people’s ability to discern harmful messages that encourage or glorify destruction, impurity, immorality, or violence, and to refuse to participate in them or in what promotes them.

Therefore, we call our people to manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their lives as a witness to God’s transforming and creative power over sin and death. In full awareness that sin takes new forms in each generation, often working in innovative and destructive ways, the above calls are not intended to be exhaustive, but representative of a way of life that is formed by the Spirit enabling us to become Christlike, to the glory of God the Father. These practices form part of our discipleship and pursuit of corporate Christlikeness, as we continue on a journey of grace.

(Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9; Hebrews 12:1)

**29.1.** We call our people to wisdom in their use of time, money and bodies. Entertainment and activities subversive of the Christian ethic that promote consumerism, self-centeredness, violence, sensuality, and treating others as objects rather than persons created in the image of God are to be avoided. Because we are living in a day of moral confusion in which we face the encroachment of evil into our thoughts and lives through the various avenues of print and digital media, it is essential that we observe safeguards to keep us from becoming secularized and worldly. We have an obligation to witness against whatever trivializes or blasphemes God, as well as such social evils as violence, sensuality, pornography, profanity, and the occult, as portrayed by and through the commercial entertainment industry in its many forms and to endeavor to bring about the demise of enterprises known to be the purveyors of this kind of entertainment. This would include the avoidance of all types of entertainment ventures and media productions that produce, promote, or feature the violent, the sensual, the pornographic, the profane, or the occultic, or which feature or glamorize the world's philosophy of secularism, sensualism, and materialism and undermine God's standard of holiness of heart and life. This includes all forms of dancing that detract from spiritual growth and break down proper moral inhibitions and reserve. We encourage the church to teach and respond in keeping with practices of personal holiness, including Sabbath-keeping, and to contribute to the creation of positive modes of entertainment, arts, and sports.

(Philippians 4:8-9; Colossians 3:23; Romans 14:7-13; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Ephesians 5:1-18; Philippians 4:8-9; 1 Peter 1:13-17; 2 Peter 1:3-11)

**29.2.** We call our people to identify, prevent, and resist behaviors that lead to unhealthy habits or compulsive actions. Commitment to excellence and wellness requires us to resist habits of mind and life that could lead to addictions. This endeavor demands corporate and personal wisdom, discernment and truth speaking. Because these behaviors and habits may remain hidden, we encourage the church to develop means of accountability in areas of potential bondage.

As Christians, we are called to resist all forms of compulsive actions, from the most pernicious to those culturally acceptable. Recognizing these vary from nation to nation, they may include food, sporting or fitness life, legal stimulants, cosmetic surgery, internet, or shopping. We also encourage the church community to seek solutions for and understanding of those caught up in addictions.

(Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

**29.3.** We call our people to abstain from drinking alcohol, thereby witnessing to the world. From its earliest days, Nazarenes refrained from drinking alcohol, as a witness to transformed lives. Because of the prevalence of alcohol abuse in our world, we ask our people to refrain from alcohol and other intoxicating substances as an expression of self-giving love and solidarity with individuals, families, and communities who suffer pain and trauma because of alcohol abuse and addiction. We recognize that other Christian traditions may respond to these issues differently. Nazarenes choose to abstain in response to the biblical mandate to love others. We welcome into our congregations those who are struggling with alcohol or other addictions, and in our welcome, we willingly abstain to make our faith community an environment of safety. Our position must be embodied with grace.

(Leviticus 19:18, 34; Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:21; Mark 12:28-34; Romans 13:8-10; Romans 14:13-23; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Ephesians 5:18; Philippians 2:4)

**29.4.** We call our people to abstain from intoxicants, tobacco, stimulants, depressants, and hallucinogens outside proper medical care and guidance, regardless of the legality and availability of such substances. Medical evidence demonstrates that these substances, when used outside of proper medical care and guidance, can be destructive, not just of the body, but of the mind, as well as families, social structures, and communities.

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

**29.5.** We call our people to resist greed in all forms. It is vital that we reject all acts of greed that promote wealth over



wellness or status over humility. We do not support distorted, biblically unsound messages about prosperity. Economic practices that oppress and take advantage of others are to be avoided. Schemes such as lotteries, legal or illegal gambling, payday loan organizations, pyramid schemes, often take needed financial resources from the poor and elderly with false promises of return.

(Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13)

**29.6.** We call our people to reject attitudes and actions that undermine the good of people and devalue individuals. All humans are created in the image of God and Christ died for all, therefore every person we encounter merits our highest regard and love. As a people of God, reflecting Christ's love for the world, we reject all forms of racism, ethnic preferences, tribalism, sexism, religious bigotry, classism, exclusionary nationalism, and any other form of prejudice. All of these are contrary to God's love and the mission of Christ.

**29.7.** We call our people to resist any loyalty that would compete with Christ's Lordship, which is idolatry. We reject joining any oath-bound societies whether political, secret orders, or guilds that would dilute commitment to Christ and prevent open, transparent communication of primary allegiances. The cost of this refusal can be very real; so, the Christian community must offer support to those who resist.

(Exodus 1:17; Daniel 6:10; Acts 5:29; Revelation 7:14)

**29.8.** We call our people to resist corruption in all its forms. All forms of corruption undermine humanity, and create unhealthy divisions in communities and societies. We must resist the temptation to be drawn into corrupt practices such as the use of power to get our own way, manipulate others, engage in bribery, rely on wealth to buy influence, support practices of corruption, and harass or draw others into corruption.

(Leviticus 19:11,13, 15; Luke 3:8, 10-14; Hebrews 13:5)



## **B. Sanctity of Human Life**

30. The Church of the Nazarene believes in the sanctity of human life and strives to protect against abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, and the withholding of reasonable medical care to handicapped or elderly.

30.1. **Induced Abortion.** The Church of the Nazarene affirms the sanctity of human life as established by God the Creator and believes that such sanctity extends to the child not yet born. Life is a gift from God. All human life, including life developing in the womb, is created by God in His image and is, therefore, to be nurtured, supported, and protected. From the moment of conception, a child is a human being with all of the developing characteristics of human life, and this life is dependent on the mother for its continued development. Therefore, we believe that human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception. We oppose induced abortion by any means, when used for either personal convenience or population control. We oppose laws that allow abortion. Realizing that there are rare, but real medical conditions wherein the mother or the unborn child, or both, could not survive the pregnancy, termination of the pregnancy should only be made after sound medical and Christian counseling.

Responsible opposition to abortion requires our commitment to the initiation and support of programs designed to provide care for mothers and children. The crisis of an unwanted pregnancy calls for the community of believers (represented only by those for whom knowledge of the crisis is appropriate) to provide a context of love, prayer, and counsel. In such instances, support can take the form of counseling centers, homes for expectant mothers, and the creation or utilization of Christian adoption services.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes that consideration of abortion as a means of ending an unwanted pregnancy often occurs because Christian standards of sexual responsibility have been ignored. Therefore the church calls for persons

to practice the ethic of the New Testament as it bears upon human sexuality and to deal with the issue of abortion by placing it within the larger framework of biblical principles that provide guidance for moral decision making.

(Genesis 2:7, 9:6; Exodus 20:13; 21:12-16, 22-25; Leviticus 18:21; Job 31:15; Psalms 22:9; 139:3-16; Isaiah 44:2, 24; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15, 23-25, 36-45; Acts 17:25; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:16; 7:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6)

The Church of the Nazarene also recognizes that many have been affected by the tragedy of abortion. Each local congregation and individual believer is urged to offer the message of forgiveness by God for each person who has experienced abortion. Our local congregations are to be communities of redemption and hope to all who suffer physical, emotional, and spiritual pain as a result of the willful termination of a pregnancy.

(Romans 3:22-24; Galatians 6:1)

**30.2. Genetic Engineering and Gene Therapy.** The Church of the Nazarene supports the use of genetic engineering to achieve gene therapy. We recognize that gene therapy can lead to preventing and curing disease, and preventing and curing anatomical and mental disorders. We oppose any use of genetic engineering that promotes social injustice, disregards the dignity of persons, or that attempts to achieve racial, intellectual, or social superiority over others (eugenics). We oppose initiation of DNA studies whose results might encourage or support human abortion as an alternative to term live birth. In all cases, humility, a respect for the inviolable dignity of human life, human equality before God, and a commitment to mercy and justice should govern genetic engineering and gene therapy.

**30.3. Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research and Other Medical/Scientific Endeavors that Destroy Human Life after Conception.** The Church of the Nazarene strongly encourages the scientific community to aggressively pursue advances in stem cell technology obtained from sources such as adult human tissues, placenta, umbilical cord blood, animal sources,

and other non-human embryonic sources. This has the righteous end of attempting to bring healing to many, without violating the sanctity of human life. Our stand on human embryonic stem cell research flows from our affirmation that the human embryo is a person made in the image of God. Therefore, we oppose the use of stem cells produced from human embryos for research, therapeutic interventions, or any other purpose.

As future scientific advances make new technologies available, we strongly support this research when it does not violate the sanctity of human life or other moral, biblical laws. However, we oppose the destruction of human embryos for any purpose and any type of research that takes the life of a human after conception. Consistent with this view, we oppose the use, for any purpose, of tissue derived from aborted human fetuses.

**30.4. Human Cloning.** We oppose the cloning of an individual human being. Humankind is valued by God, who created us in His image, and the cloning of an individual human being treats that being as an object, thus denying the personal dignity and worth bestowed on us by our Creator.

**30.5. Euthanasia (Including Physician Assisted Suicide).** We believe that euthanasia (intentionally ending the life of a terminally ill person, or one who has a debilitating and incurable disease that is not immediately life-threatening, for the purpose of ending suffering) is incompatible with the Christian faith. This applies when euthanasia is requested or consented to by the terminally ill person (voluntary euthanasia) and when the terminally ill person is not mentally competent to give consent (involuntary euthanasia). We believe that the historic rejection of euthanasia by the Christian church is confirmed by Christian convictions that derive from the Bible and that are central to the Church's confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Euthanasia violates Christian confidence in God as the sovereign Lord of life by claiming sovereignty for oneself; it violates our role as stewards before God; it contributes to an erosion of the value the Bible places on

human life and community; it attaches too much importance to the cessation of suffering; and it reflects a human arrogance before a graciously sovereign God. We urge our people to oppose all efforts to legalize euthanasia.

**30.6. Allowing to Die.** When human death is imminent, we believe that either withdrawing or not originating artificial life support systems is permissible within the range of Christian faith and practice. This position applies to persons who are in a persistent vegetative state and to those for whom the application of extraordinary means for prolonging life provide no reasonable hope for a return to health. We believe that when death is imminent, nothing in the Christian faith requires that the process of dying be artificially postponed. As Christians we trust in God's faithfulness and have the hope of eternal life. This makes it possible for Christians to accept death as an expression of faith in Christ who overcame death on our behalf and robbed it of its victory.

### **C. Human Sexuality and Marriage**

**31.** The Church of the Nazarene views human sexuality as one expression of the holiness and beauty that God the Creator intended. Because all humans are beings created in the image of God, they are of inestimable value and worth. As a result we believe that human sexuality is meant to include more than the sensual experience, and is a gift of God designed to reflect the whole of our physical and relational createdness.

As a holiness people, the Church of the Nazarene affirms that the human body matters to God. Christians are both called and enabled by the transforming and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to glorify God in and with our bodies. Our senses, our sexual appetites, our ability to experience pleasure, and our desire for connection to another are shaped out of the very character of God. Our bodies are good, very good.

We affirm belief in a God whose creation is an act of love. Having experienced God as holy love, we understand the Trinity to be a unity of love among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are made with a yearning for connection with

others at the core of our being. That yearning is ultimately fulfilled as we live in covenanted relationship with God, the creation, and loving one's neighbor as one's self. Our creation as social beings is both good and beautiful. We reflect the image of God in our capacity to relate and our desire to do so. The people of God are formed as one in Christ, a rich community of love and grace.

Within this community, believers are called to live as faithful members of the body of Christ. Singleness among the people of God is to be valued and sustained by the rich fellowship of the church and the communion of the saints. To live as a single person is to engage, as Jesus did, in the intimacy of community, surrounded by friends, welcoming and being welcomed to tables, and expressing faithful witness.

Also within this community, we affirm that some believers are called to be married. As defined in Genesis, "a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) The marriage covenant, a reflection of the covenant between God and the people of God, is one of exclusive sexual fidelity, unselfish service, and social witness. A woman and a man publicly devote themselves to one another as a witness to the way God loves. Marital intimacy is intended to reflect the union of Christ and the Church, a mystery of grace. It is also God's intention that in this sacramental union the man and woman may experience the joy and pleasure of sexual intimacy and from this act of intimate love new life may enter the world and into a covenantal community of care. The Christ-centered home ought to serve as a primary location for spiritual formation. The church is to take great care in the formation of marriage through premarital counseling and teaching that denotes the sacredness of marriage.

The Scriptural story, however, also includes the sad chapter of the fracturing of human desire in the Fall, resulting in behaviors that elevate self-sovereignty, damage and objectify the other, and darken the path of human desire. As fallen beings, we have experienced this evil on every level—personal and corporate. The principalities and powers of a fallen

world have saturated us with lies about our sexuality. Our desires have been twisted by sin and we are turned inward on ourselves. We have also contributed to the fracturing of the creation by our willful choice to violate the love of God and live on our own terms apart from God.

Our brokenness in the areas of sexuality takes many forms, some due to our own choosing and some brought into our lives via a broken world. However, God's grace is sufficient in our weaknesses, enough to bring conviction, transformation, and sanctification in our lives. Therefore, in order to resist adding to the brokenness of sin and to be able to witness to the beauty and uniqueness of God's holy purposes for our bodies, we believe members of the body of Christ, enabled by the Spirit, can and should refrain from:

- **Unmarried sexual intercourse and other forms of inappropriate sexual bonding.** Because we believe that it is God's intention for our sexuality to be lived out in the covenantal union between one woman and one man, we believe that these practices often lead to the objectification of the other in a relationship. In all its forms, it also potentially harms our ability to enter into the beauty and holiness of Christian marriage with our whole selves.
- **Sexual activity between people of the same sex.** Because we believe that it is God's intention for our sexuality to be lived out in the covenantal union between one woman and one man, we believe the practice of same-sex sexual intimacy is contrary to God's will for human sexuality. While a person's homosexual or bi-sexual attraction may have complex and differing origins, and the implication of this call to sexual purity is costly, we believe the grace of God is sufficient for such a calling. We recognize the shared responsibility of the body of Christ to be a welcoming, forgiving, and loving community where hospitality, encouragement, transformation, and accountability are available to all.
- **Extra-marital sexual relations.** Because we believe this behavior is a violation of the vows that we made before



God and within the body of Christ, adultery is a selfish act, a family-destroying choice, and an offense to the God who has loved us purely and devotedly.

- **Divorce.** Because marriage is intended to be a life-long commitment, the fracturing of the covenant of marriage, whether initiated personally, or by the choice of a spouse, falls short of God's best intentions. The church must take care in preserving the marriage bond where wise and possible, and offering counsel and grace to those wounded by divorce.
- **Practices such as polygamy or polyandry.** Because we believe that the covenantal faithfulness of God is reflected in the monogamous commitment of husband and wife, these practices take away from the unique and exclusive fidelity intended in marriage.

Sexual sin and brokenness is not only personal but pervades the systems and structures of the world. Therefore, as the church bears witness to the reality of the beauty and uniqueness of God's holy purposes we also believe the church should refrain from and advocate against:

- **Pornography in all its forms, which is desire gone awry.** It is the objectification of people for selfish sexual gratification. This habit destroys our capacity to love unselfishly.
- **Sexual violence in any form, including rape, sexual assault, sexual bullying, hateful speech, marital abuse, incest, sex trafficking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, bestiality, sexual harassment, and the abuse of minors and other vulnerable populations.** All people and systems that perpetrate sexual violence transgress the command to love and to protect our neighbor. The body of Christ should always be a place of justice, protection, and healing for those who are, who have been, and who continue to be affected by sexual violence. A minor is defined as any human being under the age of 18, unless the age of majority is attained later under a state's or country's own domestic legislation.

Therefore we affirm that:



- Where sin abounds grace abounds all the more. Although the effects of sin are universal and holistic, the efficacy of grace is also universal and holistic. In Christ, through the Holy Spirit, we are renewed in the image of God. The old is gone and the new comes. Although the forming of our lives as a new creation may be a gradual process, God's healing is effective in dealing with the brokenness of humanity in the areas of sexuality.
- The human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We affirm the need for our sexuality to be conformed to God's will. Our bodies are not our own but have been bought with a price. Therefore, we are called to glorify God in our bodies through a life of yielded obedience.
- The people of God are marked by holy love. We affirm that, above all the virtues, the people of God are to clothe themselves with love. The people of God have always welcomed broken people into our gathering. Such Christian hospitality is neither an excusing of individual disobedience nor a refusal to participate redemptively in discerning the roots of brokenness. Restoring humans to the likeness of Jesus requires confession, forgiveness, formative practices, sanctification, and godly counsel – but most of all, it includes the welcome of love which invites the broken person into the circle of grace known as the church. If we fail to honestly confront sin and brokenness, we have not loved. If we fail to love, we cannot participate in God's healing of brokenness.

As the global church receives and ministers to the people of our world, the faithful outworking of these statements as congregations is complex and must be navigated with care, humility, courage, and discernment.

(Genesis 1:27; 19:1-25; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 15-20; 1 Timothy 1:8-10)

## D. Christian Stewardship

**32. Meaning of Stewardship.** The Scriptures teach that God is the Owner of all persons and all things. We, therefore, are

His stewards of both life and possessions. God's ownership and our stewardship ought to be acknowledged, for we shall be held personally accountable to God for the exercise of our stewardship. God, as a God of system and order in all of His ways, has established a system of giving that acknowledges His ownership over all human resources and relationships. To this end all His children should faithfully tithe and present offerings for the support of the gospel. (150)

(Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:24-34; 25:31-46; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 12:13-24; 19:11-27; John 15:1-17; Romans 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:6-15; 1 Timothy 6:6-19; Hebrews 7:8; James 1:27; 1 John 3:16-18)

**32.1. Storehouse Tithing.** Storehouse tithing is a scriptural and practical performance of faithfully and regularly placing the tithe into that church to which the member belongs. Therefore, the financing of the church shall be based on the plan of storehouse tithing, and the local Church of the Nazarene shall be regarded by all of its people as the storehouse. All who are a part of the Church of the Nazarene are urged to contribute faithfully one-tenth of all their increase as a minimum financial obligation to the Lord and freewill offerings in addition as God has prospered them for the support of the whole church, local, district, educational, and general. The tithe, provided to the local Church of the Nazarene, shall be considered a priority over all other giving opportunities which God may lay upon the hearts of His faithful stewards, in support of the whole church.

**32.2. Fundraising and Distribution.** In the light of the scriptural teaching concerning the giving of tithes and offerings for the support of the gospel, and for the erection of church buildings, no Nazarene church should engage in any method of fundraising that would detract from these principles, hinder the gospel message, sully the name of the church, discriminate against the poor, or misdirect the people's energies from promoting the gospel.

In disbursing to meet the requirements of the local, district, educational, and general programs of the Church of the Nazarene, local churches are urged to adopt and practice a

financial apportionment plan, and to pay general, educational, and district apportionments monthly. (140, 163, 164-164.2, 125.13)

**32.3. Support of the Ministry.** “In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14). The church is obligated to support its ministers, who have been called of God, and who, under the direction of the church, have given themselves wholly to the work of the ministry. We urge therefore that the members of the church voluntarily commit themselves to the task of supporting the ministry by gathering money weekly for this holy business and that the pastor’s salary be paid regularly every week. (117.4, 117.6, 139.8)

**32.4. Life Income Gifts, Planned and Deferred Giving.** It is essential in the exercise of Christian stewardship that careful thought be given as to what shall be done with one’s income and possessions over which the Lord makes the Christian a steward during this life. The Church of the Nazarene, recognizing the need for faithful stewardship in this life and the God-given vision to leave a legacy for the future, has established the Church of the Nazarene Foundation to enhance Christian stewardship through planned and deferred giving. Civil laws often do not provide for the distribution of an estate in such a way as to glorify God. Each Christian should give attention to the preparation of a last will and testament in a careful and legal manner, and the Church of the Nazarene through its various ministries of missions, evangelism, education, and benevolences—local, district, educational, and general—is recommended for consideration.

**32.5. Shared Responsibility for the Denominational Mission.** The government of the Church of the Nazarene is representative. Each local congregation supports the overall mission of the church as defined by the General Assembly and implemented through the leadership of the Board of General Superintendents in world evangelism, education, ministerial support, and district ministries.

The Board of General Superintendents and the General Board are authorized and empowered to develop, revise, and maintain a system for raising the World Evangelism Fund and to establish funding goals and responsibilities for local churches through the assembly districts.

Subject to paragraph 337.1, national boards and/or regional advisory councils are authorized and empowered to establish ministerial retirement savings plans on their region. Reporting of such plans shall be as provided in paragraph 337.2. The provisions of paragraph 32.5 shall not apply to Nazarene Benefits USA.

National boards and/or regional advisory councils are also authorized and empowered to establish support for International Board of Education institutions on their region.

Each district is authorized and empowered to establish funding goals and responsibilities for local churches for district ministry support through the District Advisory Board. (225.19, 317.10, 345, 346.3, 402)

### **E. Church Officers**

33. We direct our local churches to elect as church officers active members of the local church who profess the experience of entire sanctification and whose lives bear public witness to the grace of God that calls us to a holy life; who are in harmony with the doctrines, polity, and practices of the Church of the Nazarene; and who support the local church faithfully in attendance, active service, and with tithes and offerings. Church officers should be fully engaged in "making Christlike disciples in the nations." (115.11, 137, 155-157)

### **F. Rules of Order**

34. Subject to the applicable law, the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of government in the *Manual*, the meetings and proceedings of the members of the Church of the Nazarene, local, district, and general, and the committees of the corporation shall be regulated and controlled according

to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (latest edition) for parliamentary procedure. (115, 205, 300.3)

### **G. Amending the Covenant of Christian Conduct**

35. The provisions of the Covenant of Christian Conduct may be repealed or amended when concurred in by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting of a given General Assembly.