

STARTING  
STRONG  
NEW  
NEW  
CHURCHES

*Discover the Most  
Effective Strategy to  
Reach People for Christ*

*Bill M. Sullivan*



NewStart  
Kansas City, Missouri

**Starting Strong New Churches:  
The Most Effective Strategy to Reach People for Christ  
by Bill M. Sullivan**

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The NewStart E-mail address is:

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ALSO AVAILABLE through the toll-free product number is the *Starter Kit for Starting Strong New Churches: Ideas for Church Start Leaders*, by Jim Dorsey.

FOR INFORMATION on attending a NewStart-sponsored College of New Church Knowledge or a Regional Assessment Center located on the region of each Nazarene college or university, call the NewStart administrative office at 1-800-306-8294.

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Jim Dorsey, Southwest coordinator and pastor of a highly effective new church start in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, has written the excellent handbook, *Starter Kit for Starting Strong New Churches: Ideas for Church Start Leaders*, and has contributed other resource materials for NewStart. Thanks to Jim for all his hard work and for allowing me to borrow from the materials he has developed for this book.

There are a number of excellent resources that provide keen insights and additional detail on starting a

strong new church. I am indebted to the authors of many of these works. I've listed a bibliography at the end of this book that cites a number of these resources. I hope that you will order many of them for further study and preparation.

If you want to grow something to last a season  
—plant flowers.

If you want to grow something to last a lifetime  
—plant trees.

If you want to grow something to last through eternity  
—plant churches.

—Anonymous

## WHY START NEW CHURCHES?

*God is calling His body, the church, to come off the mountain of our own comfort zone and enter the valley where the battle is hot. He wants us to declare His kingdom to the world. There is no more effective way to do so than to start new churches.*

—Kevin W. Mannoia  
from *Church Planting: The Next Generation*  
Light and Life Press

**“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).**

*“I feel guilty saying this, Pastor, but sometimes it seems like our church is . . . well, I don’t know how else to say it—dead!”*

*“That’s an awfully strong statement. There are a lot of good people who love God who are part of this fellowship. What are you talking about?”*

*“Oh, I know we’ve got good people. Hey, this is where I met the Lord. People from this church started bringing me to youth group meetings when I was 17. I was a real mess back then. I knew I shouldn’t have said anything. I don’t mean to be negative.”*

*“No. Really. I want to hear what you’re thinking.”*

*“Well, saying the church is dead is definitely too strong a way of putting it. It’s just that we haven’t really grown for years. Oh, we get a new family who moves to town from time to time, but then we lose about the same number of families from time to time too. When you really think about it, Pastor, I’ve been a Christian for 10 years now, and I think I’m the newest Christian in the church.”*

*“We have a number of our teens who are young Christians.”*

*“I guess I mean I’m the youngest Christian who didn’t grow up in the church.”*

*“I’ve been here less than two years, Don, so I don’t know for sure. But you might be right on that.”*

*“You said you want to know what I’m feeling, Pastor. What I’m feeling is that we’ve lost our passion for the lost. We don’t know how to reach out anymore.”*

*“I’m afraid I have to agree with you, Don. We’ve had witnessing classes, but there just hasn’t been a real enthusiasm.”*

*“Pastor, how do we recapture a capacity to reach out to the world? Like someone reached out to me.”*



**T**HE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF WINNING people to Christ is something we too seldom attempt—starting new churches.

The Great Commission directed the early Christians to go into all the world. Yet, it is a curious fact that the Early Church was slow in leaving Jerusalem. In fact, they didn’t appear to leave willingly. It took a wave of persecution to drive them out!

Isn’t that strange? The Great Commission instructed them to take the Good News to the ends of the earth. Why were they so slow to obey?

There is no question of their vibrancy and enthusi-

asm for the gospel. These people who were reluctant to leave Jerusalem were quite willing to share their material possessions and even lay their lives on the line for their faith.

It was undoubtedly a matter of understanding—yet not really comprehending—the full extent of their assignment.

Perhaps we can understand their response better when we consider that the action of the church today is much like that of the Early Church. We know that there are millions, even billions, of people who have never heard the Good News. We recognize that many of these people are all about us. Yet we do not move out in aggressive evangelism to win them to Christ.

We understand, and yet we don't really comprehend. We know the biblical injunctions. We've taken evangelism training. We've tried method after method seeking to reach people for Christ.

Could it be that we, like the early Christian church, have found a comfort zone we are reluctant to leave? Creating new churches may be the most effective way to reach people for Christ, but it definitely demands that we leave the comfort zone of cherished friends in what we like to call our “home church.”

What will it take for us to make such a decision?

### **Start with Passion**

Let's be honest. Starting new churches is not a popular program among the majority of Nazarenes.

We are aware of our many very small churches (nearly 2,000 under 50 members, or 40 percent of U.S.A. churches). We have observed previous unsuccessful attempts to start viable new churches, and our general attitude appears to be, “Why put a pastor and small group of people through such a difficult and discouraging process just to multiply small, anemic churches?” But this does not mean that Nazarenes are unconcerned about mission.

#### **BIBLICAL PREMISES FOR STARTING NEW CHURCHES**

- ◆ God wants the lost found (Luke 19:10)!
- ◆ The theme of the Bible is the redemption of humanity.
- ◆ During Jesus' earthly ministry He was eager to take the Good News to all the towns and communities of Palestine (Mark 1:38).
- ◆ The Great Commission, given by Jesus to His followers, is to make disciples throughout the whole world (Matt. 28:19).
- ◆ The New Testament occurrences of “all the nations” can also be translated “all the peoples,” indicating not just geography but also ethnicity.
- ◆ Paul's interpretation of “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2) was obviously starting new churches.

**Nazarenes are both mission minded and mission hearted. *Passionately.* We are incredibly responsive to mission causes. If our motivation for starting strong new churches truly is to win people to Christ, then Nazarenes—lay and ministerial alike—must and, I believe, *will* respond with a passion.**

That's what this book is about. That's what drives the NewStart strategy of starting new churches: the singular purpose of winning people to Jesus Christ. Beyond denominational expansion or even the growth of the local church, this strategy, first and foremost, is an effort to utilize the most effective method of winning people to Christ. Secondary motivations, however reasonable and justifiable, must not supersede an all-consuming passion to win lost people to Jesus Christ.

What will it take to move us from the comfort zone of a warm and caring church? Nothing less than a passion for the lost.

### **Why Start New Churches?**

Why should we start new churches? What makes this *the* strategy for reaching the lost? If there have been previous attempts to start new churches that have been less than successful, what makes us think we can do better this time?

Our only hope for any type of effective strategy to build God's kingdom begins and ends with a total dependence upon Him. This is, of course, a hallmark of our Holiness theology. When we totally surrender ourselves to God, we are finally in a place where He himself sanctifies us "through and through" (1 Thess. 5:23-24). Our own efforts can never achieve what the gracious activity of God does to transform us as individuals.

Likewise, bigger and better plans and programs

are not sufficient to build God’s Church as a body—that’s His work. We are His servants and seek only to please Him. Since He has given us specific instructions to take the Good News to the entire world—beginning where we are—we can trust He will empower us to be effective when we place ourselves in the center of His will.

Dependence on God is an important reminder of what really counts, but it still doesn’t answer the question: “Why start new churches?” Why not a new evangelism notebook instead? Or a state-of-the-art media campaign?

Scattered throughout this book are “proofs” that starting new churches is the most effective strategy for evangelism. Nevertheless, because there seems to be a built-in resistance to such an approach—call it the comfort of the comfort zone, a fear of failure, or any other number of reasons—it’s imperative that we focus on this theme of passion for the lost.

The most obvious reason for starting new churches is to take the gospel wherever people live. This is a geographical task. It is easy to understand. If there is a cultural group of people in a place who have never heard the gospel, then we can all understand the rationale for sending someone to preach the Good News to them. Likewise, if there is a town several miles away that does not have a church, we can understand the need to start a congregation in that community.

It just makes sense to place a church close enough to people so they can attend. Yet we have a difficult

time understanding why there should be multiple churches in the same community.

Multiple churches serve as multiple points of entry into the kingdom of God. A growing number of *newer* churches makes it possible to reach the maximum number of people.

No single church can reach everyone. No two churches can reach an entire population. Sizable numbers and types of churches are required in order to evangelize most towns and cities.

Having a multiplicity of churches provides a congregation for various group preferences. This is the cultural task. Immigrants, cultural groups, and other persons having unique interests in common are able to find a church that meets their particular needs.

More important, however, newer churches more often demonstrate the dynamics necessary for effective evangelism to occur. (More will be said about this throughout the book.)

### **What's Wrong with the Churches We Already Have?**

The focus of this book is on pushing us from the comfort zone of our home church in order to reach more people with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Hopefully this doesn't leave you with the impression that I believe our existing churches are miserable failures, with one foot already in the grave.

All our churches must do all they can to win to Christ as many people as possible—and they are doing just that in a variety of traditional and creative ways.

**This is no time to drop personal evangelism classes. If you presently take a pie to the home of everyone who visits your church, keep up the great work. I hope you won't disband your Sunday School and tell teachers they don't need to call on their students or plan class activities anymore.**

**“DOZENS WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN REACHED”**

Art Magnuson, pastor of the Plymouth, Michigan, Church of the Nazarene believes in the evangelism potential of starting new churches.

His congregation sponsored a new church in neighboring Chelsea. His associate pastor, Jeff Crowder, became the founding pastor. The Plymouth church raised a large sum of money for the new church's building program, paid Jeff's salary the first year, and released 20 members from their congregation to be core group members.

What was lost? Nothing. The Plymouth church has grown beyond where it was before the new church started, and the Chelsea church has tripled in size. Magnuson reports: “The greatest joy in all of this is to see the Chelsea church reach out to people. There are dozens of people who would not have been reached for Jesus Christ if we hadn't started a new church.”

**Please don't sell the church van and stop picking up those senior adults from a neighborhood retirement village. If your NYI president has the teen group interacting in ways that are contagious to people both in and out of the church, keep encouraging him or her. Now isn't the time to remove the sign with service times from your front lawn!**

**Every church can identify superb reasons to feel optimistic about what God is doing in their midst.**

What we all must be aware of is that we can extend the boundaries of our evangelistic effectiveness by starting new churches. A church can come much closer to the evangelization of an entire city by starting multiplied churches than by growing one large congregation (though the place and the *importance* of the large church can't be denied).

### **Are We Sure Starting New Churches Works?**

Still, in light of previous unsuccessful attempts to start new churches, what makes us think we can do better at this time? Obviously, the Church of the Nazarene has been very successful at starting new churches, or we wouldn't have more than 5,000 local congregations in North America and more than 10,000 worldwide. But perhaps we've lost some of our historical genius for successful new starts through the years.

So rather than devise a completely new strategy, why not rediscover and revive a strategy that was used in earlier years of the denomination—with tremendous success?

Before we outline this renewed strategy, however, let's make sure we have honestly faced our objections to starting new churches!

## OBJECTIONS TO STARTING NEW CHURCHES

*Our prayers were often with desperation. We sent away over one hundred families in starting churches. Many times we were on our faces before God to replenish our own force of workers. One Sunday evening we bid good-bye to nineteen people leaving to start [another] church; the next Sunday we had nineteen new faces in our morning service.*

—W. Thomas Younger  
from *Church Growth: State of the Art*  
Tyndale House Publishers

**“One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty” (Prov. 11:24).**

*“Pastor, you seem different lately. Like a lot is on your mind. Is everything OK?”*

*“Frankly, Don, a lot is on my mind. That little conversation we had a couple of weeks ago has had me thinking nonstop. I haven’t slept well.”*

*“I’m sorry, Pastor. I hope you didn’t think I was criticizing you.”*

*“No, I didn’t take it that way, Don. But honestly, it still hurt. I’ve asked myself the same questions you raised: have I lost my passion for the lost? Have I forgotten how to reach out to the world?”*

*“I don’t think so, Pastor. You’re super. Everyone knows you have a great heart.”*

*“Thanks for the vote of confidence, Don, but you said it yourself: you are the youngest Christian in our church who didn’t grow up in the church. And your conversion happened 10 years ago. Something needs to change.”*

*“What do you have in mind?”*

*“Since you asked, I guess I’ll make you the guinea pig, Don. I haven’t said this to anyone else yet, but what I’m really thinking we need to do is sponsor a new church.”*

*“A new church? But Pastor, I think we need to get our church growing first. How can we start a new church without killing our own chances of really making a difference in the community?”*

*“I think our own church would take off and regain a sense of passion for the lost if we would make the commitment to start a new work for God.”*

*“I just don’t know, Pastor. I’m going to have to think on this one.”*



**N**OT EVERYONE IS CONVINCED THAT STARTING new churches works.

Perhaps such people have witnessed or been part of a new start that was not successful.

The truth is, as will be pointed out in the next chapter, our denomination does not have a sterling record in starting strong new churches over the past few decades. So undoubtedly there are stories of new starts that have failed. That still doesn’t support the prevalent objections and myths floating around.

Maybe you've heard—and embraced—a few of the following:

### **Myths About Starting New Churches**

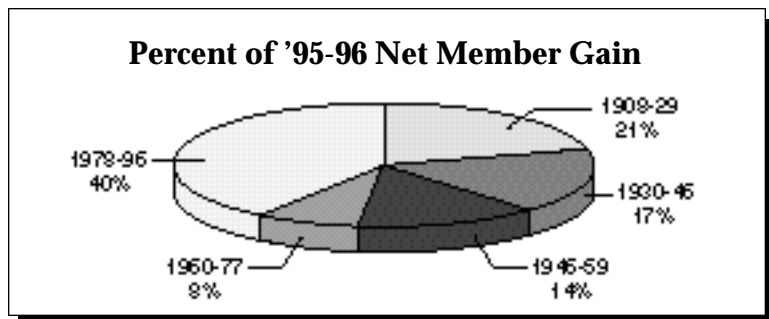
***“We should strengthen our existing churches first.”***

First, we must be careful about how we judge the spiritual vitality of any church. There are churches that are small numerically, for example, but large in other ways—like giving to mission endeavors, cultivating an atmosphere where young people are called to ministry, and contributing to compassionate ministries, to name a few.

We mustn't get caught up in the worldly point of view that assumes bigger is necessarily better.

But no one would argue that some churches do not exhibit the kind of vital signs that characterize a healthy church. For this reason, many lay and ministerial church leaders have suggested that we must invest in improving the quality of our weaker churches before we extend our reach.

The reality is that there's already a wide variety of programs committed to strengthening existing churches. Yet newer churches are already accounting for about half the conversion and membership growth in the Church of the Nazarene *right now*. Nearly one-half of our new members each year enter through churches that are less than 15 years old (see chart). If our motivation is reaching people for Christ, we can't afford to wait for every church to become more effective.



Most Membership Gains Come from Newer Churches

Of course, we want all our churches to grow, but it doesn't make sense to pass up the tremendous opportunities to build God's kingdom all around us while we wait for that to happen. If we did wait for our existing roster of churches to improve the quality of their ministries, there's a good chance we would never start a new church.

That's not a cynical or pessimistic view of our existing churches and the powerful ministries they are undertaking now—and will undertake in the future. History suggests, however, that many local churches have a life span and someday may pass the torch to other local entities.

***“A new church will damage our established churches.”***

One of the most heated arguments against starting new churches is “It will hurt other churches in the general proximity.”

Some changes may occur in starting a new congregation, including a temporary dip in membership and attendance to a sponsoring church, but those changes

do not need to hurt the existing church long term—nor the building of God’s kingdom at any time. When everything is taken into consideration, an existing church will probably be helped far more than it is hindered by helping to sponsor a new church. Involvement in mission often brings new life to an existing congregation.

In case after case, established churches that help start new churches experience the miracle of replenishment—“the next Sunday we had nineteen new faces in our morning service.”

When congregations are willing to share their most valuable resources—people—they almost always grow to where they started, and even beyond.

Further proof of this is that when there are multiple Nazarene churches in an area, all of the churches average higher than churches in stand-alone settings. All but one Nazarene church with over 400 people in attendance is located within a cluster of Nazarene churches. Defending exclusive territorial rights is almost always counterproductive.

***“But we already have enough churches.”***

Turn to the religion section of your local newspaper on a Saturday morning over a cup of coffee, and it will appear that there are more than enough churches to meet the needs in your community. Unfortunately, this is not so. Most areas do not have enough churches to hold half the general population. And sadly, most of the existing churches are not effectively reaching out to the unchurched.

No, the number of churches in America is not keeping up with population growth. That means there aren't enough entry points for the unsaved to find—or be found by—a community of believers.

**FORGET THE NUMBERS!**

Numbers are measures of evangelism, but they are not, in and of themselves, evangelism. Critics of "the numbers game" assert that winning people to Christ, not numerical growth, is the church's true mission.

Antagonism toward an emphasis on numerical growth is so strong that it may be wise to declare, "Forget the numbers! Just win people to Jesus Christ!"

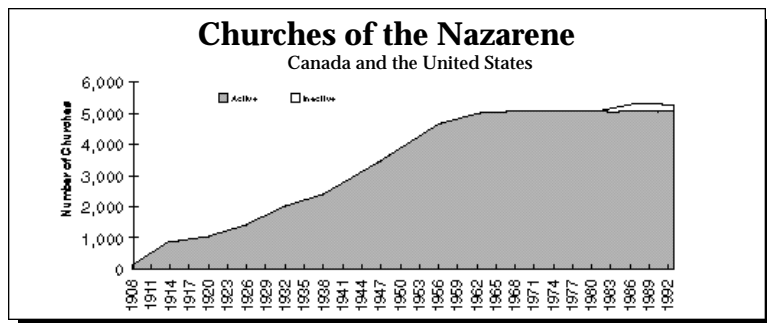
Millions of unchurched people live within walking or short driving distance of existing churches but attend nowhere. Also, there are groups of people with similar characteristics in the community that will not be reached by existing churches.

***"But most new churches don't survive."***

Most new churches do survive, and in many cases thrive. Almost 90 percent of all new churches started in the '80s by the Church of the Nazarene are active. But no church is guaranteed perpetuity. Less than 30 percent of Nazarene churches started over 75 years ago are still alive today. In fact, we have officially closed more churches in our denominational history than are currently active.

If we start no new churches today, the Church of the Nazarene will cease to exist through attrition. This

can be observed in the following chart that shows how our number of active churches has plateaued.



The Number of Active Churches Has Plateaued

***“We have more than enough little churches.”***

We don’t need to start any more small churches, the argument goes. Smaller churches just don’t have the resources—people-wise or money-wise—to support the kind of programming people expect and demand today. We would be much better off if we merged several of the small ones together to create larger churches.

Good intention, bad plan. Churches seldom grow through merger. In fact they often decline. Small churches are a fact of life. Remember, small in size does not mean small in ministry. But even if you prefer what a larger church has to offer, don’t forget that every large church was once a small church.

***“We need evangelism, but that doesn’t necessarily mean starting new churches.”***

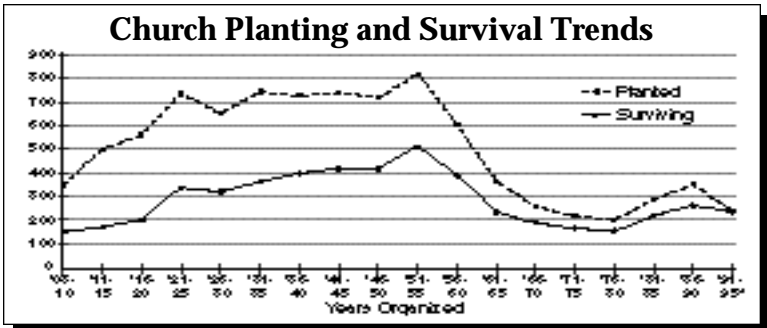
Along with Paul, we should attempt to save the lost “by all possible means” (1 Cor. 9:22). However, the New Testament model of evangelism makes no distinction

between personal evangelism and starting new churches. The Church of the Nazarene aggressively started new churches from before its official inception through the late '50s, followed by a dramatic 20-year decline in new starts, with only a modest resurgence of new church starts in the late '70s and '80s.

Our denomination's growth rate with attendance and conversion membership is directly tied to our efforts at starting new churches as is seen on the chart below. This phenomenon is not isolated to the Church of the Nazarene either. A multid denominational study covering four decades demonstrated that a downturn in new church development occurred at the same time as a loss in membership (Marler and Hadaway, *Church and Denominational Growth*, Abingdon Press).

Even so, it cannot be said with certainty that starting fewer churches *caused* the drop in denominational membership.

Starting fewer churches might be a *symptom* of an overall loss of evangelistic zeal. In either case, however, we can conclude that when a denomination is actively involved in starting new churches, it is growing in membership as well!



Nazarene Church Planting Trends Changed in the Mid-'50s

**“We can’t afford to start new churches.”**

Actually, we cannot afford *not* to start new churches. If we do not start new churches from year to year, the day will come when there will be very few churches at all. And churches that are started the right way become self-supporting churches very quickly. That means new churches produce income rather than deplete it.

Postponing starting a new church until there is sufficient money for the project is similar to postponing a marriage indefinitely until the couple can afford it.

*The bride bent with age leaned over her cane;  
Her steps uncertain need guiding,  
While down the church aisle with a wan, tooth-  
less smile,  
The groom in a wheelchair came gliding.  
And who is this elderly couple thus wed?  
You’ll find when you’ve closely explored it  
That this is that rare, most conservative pair  
Who waited ’til they could afford it.*

—Anonymous

**“The time isn’t right for my church to start a new church now.”**

When will the time to start a new church be right? When there are no financial problems? When everything is clicking just right in your church?

The factors that cause you to think the time isn’t right now will probably always be present.

Let’s take time to do the job right, but let’s also be careful that fears associated with starting a new church don’t put us in a pattern of stalling.

**“NewStart doesn’t sound very new.”**

It’s true NewStart isn’t entirely new. The past offers exceptional models for starting strong new churches. NewStart is a new strategy because it focuses on the singular feature present in new church starts that thrive. That will be discussed in the next chapter.

**Pastors Have a Unique Set of Fears**

In addition to the previous objections, let’s face it, pastors have a unique set of fears about starting new churches. This shouldn’t be surprising. Even a totally committed, God-called pastor will naturally have questions that arise in an area that impacts his or her ministry.

Most of the fears will revolve around the issue of effective ministry. What will be lost through starting a new church? Here are a few losses that pastors fear most.

**LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP**—Pastors fear helping to start a new church will hurt their church when friendships are parted and, perhaps, broken. The exodus of key persons will be demoralizing to the people who remain. They fear it will take years to recover from the disruption of the fellowship.

**LOSS OF SIZE**—Pastors fear starting a new church will decrease the size of their church. The American culture values size, so their church’s and their own community standing will be diminished. Even their district standing might be affected. They may get reclassified to a smaller church size category.

**Will denominational leaders think that their church declined because of personal inability?**

Even more worrisome than any potential loss of status is the thought that existing ministries that are already stretched to the breaking point will now be impossible to staff.

**LOSS OF FINANCES**—No pastor claims to suffer from collecting too much money in the offering plate! Pastors fear a new church will lessen the financial strength of their church. Payment of budgets will be more difficult. Funding for local ministries will be restricted. The possibility of hiring additional staff will be delayed, possibly indefinitely. A new building program will be out of the question.

**LOSS OF GROWTH POTENTIAL**—Pastors fear

**A NOTE TO LARGER CHURCHES—  
AND SMALL CHURCHES THAT WANT TO BE LARGE**

Sponsoring new churches is in no way intended to keep smaller churches small or larger churches from growing. The reality is that, if you want to remain or become part of a larger church, you need to be surrounded by a cluster of like-minded churches.

Large churches have an essential role in the overall strategy to reach people for Christ. One of the hallmarks of large churches is that despite their reputation for being cold and impersonal due to their imposing size, they have found ways to care for people on an individual basis. Plus the kind of cutting-edge ministry that takes place in larger churches often becomes a model for other churches to emulate.

Care should be exercised not to discourage congregations that have the desire to become exceptionally large churches. Even those churches should be shown that sponsoring new congregations may very well increase their own growth rate.

that if a new church start they sponsor experiences only limited growth, it will become a millstone around the necks of both pastor and people for years to come, limiting their own ability to grow.

### **Acknowledging Fears and Objections— a Reality Check**

**Fact.** Only 7 percent of all the new Nazarene churches started during the decade of the '80s grew to the point of economic viability—in other words, self-sustaining.

If this success rate held throughout the '90s, 9 out of 10 new church starts would seldom, if ever, be able to afford a full-time pastor or an adequate building. More important, the hope of someday becoming a

The reason for this incredible phenomenon is that churches have an uncanny ability to replace a loss of members or attendees: *the miracle of replenishment*. I have reviewed the growth pattern of enough churches that have sponsored new starts to confidently conclude: in almost all cases, the sponsoring church grows back to at least where it started, and in many cases, beyond.

Why do 19 new people replace the 19 who left to start a new church? I don't know, and I'm not sure anyone else does for sure either. Nevertheless, once they do, we know that these new people have their own family, friendship, and associate networks, which represent increased evangelistic potential. Churches that sponsor several new churches over a period of years may vastly expand their evangelistic "fishing pools" with the networks of new people who come in to replace those who formed a new church core group.

“full-service” church would be out of the question.

These results from the past decade are obviously unsatisfactory to all of us. So we wonder what went wrong. Were these new congregations initiated for the wrong reasons? At the wrong time? In the wrong place? With inadequate leadership? With the wrong plan? Why should we expect things to be different now?

Honest questions—even the tough ones—are legitimate. However, **the one thing we can’t afford to question is the central mission of our church—evangelism.** Reaching people for Christ is the reason the church exists. As has already been depicted in chart form, that is happening best *right now* in our newer churches.

How do we overcome the objections to starting new churches? A new approach is necessary but still isn’t adequate. I am convinced that Nazarene laypeople and ministers must respond first to the call of evangelism—not a new program. That means we have to convince—and be convinced—that starting new churches is the most effective means of winning people to Christ. Any sacrifices will be amply rewarded with spiritual victories.

I am certain you are at least open to what I believe is the most urgent need in the Church of the Nazarene today, or you wouldn’t have read thus far in the book. There are plenty of other reading materials you could be digesting right now that would better help you prepare for Sunday’s sermon, an upcoming Sunday

School lesson, or as a resource for your devotions.

If you're still not convinced of the need to start new churches, I hope you'll give me at least another chapter to convince you that there is a right way to successfully start new churches.

### **Starting Strong New Churches—the Right Way**

If any plan for starting new Churches of the Nazarene in the U.S.A. is to be effective, it must be designed to start new churches ***the right way***. This means that new congregations must have a core group comprised of willing and able people. There must be enough financial support to secure and maintain quality pastoral leadership and ministry. A support network must be present to help a fledgling church in its first few years of operation.

How does that happen? Why hasn't that happened in the past few decades in the Church of the Nazarene?