

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Exploring Nazarene
History and Polity



SESSION 8
Organized for Ministry

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Organized for Ministry

SESSION OVERVIEW

Theoretical Form of Government of Polity

Office of Superintendency

Meaning of Ministry

Expectations and Requirements for Lay Ministry

Opportunities for Lay Ministry

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- understand the principles of government
- understand and explain the meaning, expectations, and responsibilities of ministry for laity

INTRODUCTION

This session considers the theoretical forms of government or polity. It begins with a review of the organizational structures of the Christian church leading to a consideration of how the desire to promote a global message of holiness resulted in a particular organizational style in the Church of the Nazarene. A church organized for holiness needed to have a superintendency if it was to have a global ministry. Next, we will look at the meaning of ministry and consider how ministry is not merely the responsibility of the pastor. All Christians carry responsibilities for service within the church. We will examine the *Manual* positions on the involvement of laypersons in ministry and the qualifications for those who serve in these leadership positions.

THEORETICAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT OF POLITY



NOTES

One of the primary concepts set forth in the early years of the Church of the Nazarene was “organized holiness.” One reason for the mergers in 1907-1908 was to create structures that would allow a global ministry to be developed. Independence and associations had not proven to produce the large-scale ministries desired.

In the history of the Christian Church, there have been at least three philosophical approaches to ministry:

- Episcopal
- Congregational
- Presbyterian

The *episcopal* form of polity is found in such churches as Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox. The basic premise is a strong, centralized authority and top-down management. This form of church government centers power around a bishop-type leadership, whose authority results from ordination that links its bishops to those of the Early Church. These churches also usually maintain a more formal style of worship that would again be focused upon priestly leadership. The power and leadership of the church would reside in the hands of the clergy. In this context, the pastor or priest is normally appointed. A strong emphasis is placed upon the denomination.

An opposite form of polity would be the *congregational* form of government, used by such churches as the Baptists. In this structure, the control resides within the local church, with the pastor and people of that local church. Decentralized authority is the characteristic. The local church may belong to regional and national associations, but these groups do not dictate to the local church. A pastor receives his or her ordination from a particular local church. The highest level of clergy would be a pastor. The pastor might hold absolute power within his or her local church, but that power would be conditional upon support of the local congregation. The primary emphasis is placed upon the local church and its independence. Even the pastor is normally selected by a board of the local church.

Presbyterian or representative polity combines features of the other two kinds of polity. The theme of this structure is shared power between people and clergy as well as between the local church and the denomination. The Church of the Nazarene follows this form of church government.

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In the Church Constitution of the *Manual* (Articles of Organization and Government, paragraphs 22-27), the issue of government is addressed. The church recognizes it follows a representative pattern of government. In joining a local church, a person unites with both the local church and the denomination as well. In selecting a pastor, both the district leadership and the local church have a role. In the local church, a church board led by the pastor provides leadership. On most other boards of service in the district and general church, there exists an equal representation of laity and clergy. The elected representatives to the General Assembly are both laity and clergy. The general superintendents, the General Board, and the General Assembly govern the general church. The general superintendents and the General Board are elected by the General Assembly. The General Assembly is comprised of delegates from districts throughout the world. Local churches send delegates to the District Assembly meetings of the church. The following remarks on the selection of pastors from the 1923 Assembly reveal the church was conscious of its particular pattern of government:

Our people have felt they did not want extreme episcopacy in the appointment of pastors, neither did they want extreme congregationalism. In the past, we have tried to find a middle ground, so as to respect the spirit of democracy and at the same time retain a degree of efficiency (*General Assembly Journal*, 1923, 184-185).

The two reasons for this form of government (democracy or shared power and efficiency) led some to argue for the increased centralized authority of superintendency.

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENCY



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In the latter part of the 19th century in the US, conflict developed within local congregations of the holiness movement, particularly within the Methodist Episcopal Church. The two reasons for tensions and problems were:

- One was a different understanding of the meaning of holiness, particularly entire sanctification.
- A second was that the holiness movement, as it had emerged within Methodism, had gone beyond the boundaries of Methodism to draw its members and leadership.

Conflict was especially difficult in situations where an appointed pastor did not favor holiness, whereas the congregation did. In some cases, holiness advocates were forced out of local churches or even the denomination by the leadership. This resulted in leadership of holiness churches desiring a more congregational form of government than the episcopal form that marked the Methodist Episcopal Church. Holiness congregations wanted the independence to believe and preach as they felt led by the Holy Spirit.

Holiness people started local churches and later formed associations for fellowship and the doing of common tasks. However, these associations did not have authority over the local churches. Again, reacting to the heavy authoritative action within Methodism, the holiness groups wanted to move away from any episcopal framework of government. They did not want their local churches controlled by bishops.

However, the needs changed and the demands of a larger number of local churches required different governmental forms. To meet these needs and demands for a more aggressive form of government, the Church of the Nazarene developed a government based upon superintendency or accountability along with lay authority. The levels of authority move from lay member, up through pastor, church board, district superintendent, district assembly, general board, general superintendent, and finally to general assembly. At each level, there is both ministerial leadership and boards comprised of lay and ministerial participants.

The test of superintendency and the push for organized holiness continued throughout the first 30 years of the denomination and has returned in the last 10 years or so. In his 1907 address in Chicago, Bresee talked about the cooperation necessary to preach the message of holiness referring to it as an “organized work of holiness.”

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Part of the early question concerned the amount of power the superintendent possessed. Two tests of the superintendency came in connection with a situation involving Seth Rees and Orval Neese. Conflict in the early days as the church moved from independency to organization with superintendency. Many early leaders were strong, independent thinkers. One such leader was Seth Rees, who was involved in the ministry at Pasadena College Church in 1915. When a controversy developed between Rees and other members of the district, the district superintendent, acting upon the approval of one general superintendent and a newly approved statement in the *Manual*, disbanded the local church pastored by Seth Rees.

The disbanding of a healthy church created fear in the minds of those who opposed to superintendency. Some felt it might seriously divide the church. In the midst of the crisis, three of the general superintendents met in Kansas City to craft a response. They announced their decision in the *Herald of Holiness*. They interpreted the new *Manual* statement to mean that churches could be disorganized only if they were struggling and too weak to continue or if they had become unorthodox or immoral. Furthermore, they stated that churches as well as individuals had a right to appeal any decision to disband them.

The lingering impact of this controversy is in the 1919 Assembly with a statement in the assembly address calling for continued support of organized holiness. A connection was made between an organized church and the spread of holiness: "Effort through an organized church is the hope of the movement to spread holiness and conserve it" (*General Assembly Journal*, 1919, 69). In 1923, a speaker reminded the audience the purpose for organization had been so the mission of the church could be achieved. Evangelism of the world was one of the reasons for the organizational structures.

Exercising caution concerning institutionalization, the church entered a phase in which it developed more institutional structures. These structures helped to care for the financial concerns of operating an international church. The budgeting process of the general church became a primary focus between 1923 and 1932. Because of the continual strain on funding, the general church had to find a more dependable means of collecting funds. In 1923, the budgeting system of the General Budget was created. The effects of this organizational strategy are seen in both the 1928 and 1933 assembly addresses. In 1933, extensive attention was given to the General Budget.

In the 1940s, another situation resulted in further consideration of the powers of how a general superintendent should function. A controversy developed when Orval Neese chose to respond independently to a situation that involved his son. The general superintendents proposed the following guidelines:

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“Speak and act as a body on matters that concern the church; differences in judgment should be kept from the general public in interest of united leadership; and speak and act as a board, not as individuals.” (W.T. Purkiser, *Called unto Holiness*, Vol. 2, “The Second Twenty-Five Years, 1933-58” (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1983), 169.

The question of organized holiness has returned as an important matter of discussion because of nondenominational and antidenominational feelings expressed by many people. When more desire seems to exist in being part of a local church than a denomination, how are we to create denominational loyalty in any era in which independence is the primary feeling? This situation becomes acute in a global denomination. Most Nazarenes are far away from any centers of a concentration of Nazarenes. How can we have loyalty and what does it mean to have loyalty? Shared power with a central authority is one way in which loyalty can be fostered.

In the *Manual* (Articles of Organization and Government, paragraph 22 - 22.3), we find an explanation for superintendency. The superintendency is to complement and provide support for the mission of the local church. The superintendency is to encourage the organization of new churches. At the same time, superintendency “shall not interfere with the independent action of a fully organized church.” Local churches are given the right to select their own pastor, subject to such approval as the General Assembly shall find wise to institute. Each church shall also elect delegates to various assemblies as well as to manage its own finances, and have charge of all matters pertaining to its local life and work. Shared responsibility and the need for some form of superintendency are affirmed. The Church of the Nazarene has chosen a presbyterian or representative form of shared government. Centralized authority or authorities share power with the local church and the laity. The centralized authority is needed to achieve purposes that go beyond the power of the local church. However, this authority must be held accountable by the wishes of the local church.

MEANING OF MINISTRY

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One reason the Church of the Nazarene organized was to facilitate ministry. The church's understanding of government and authority also recognizes the shared power and responsibilities between clergy and laity. One implication of this theory of government is a responsibility on the part of both clergy and laity for the ministry within the local church.

Clearly, the Church of the Nazarene advocates a strong clergy leadership within the church. The *Manual* reads, "The Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry" (*Manual*, paragraph 500). In commenting on the role of the paid associate or staff minister within the church, the *Manual* warns about allowing paid staff to take over activities of ministry that should be left to the layperson:

"When paid associates in the local church, or any subsidiary and/or affiliated corporations of the local congregation, whether ministerial or lay, become necessary for greater efficiency, it must be such as will not devitalize the spirit of free service by all its members..." (*Manual*, paragraph 159)

Let us focus on the ministry of the layperson. The Greek word for ministry or minister is service. Ministry refers to those services or work to be done within the local congregation. Eventually, the word came to mean those who actually did the work of ministry. In Acts, we see the development of different functions within the church and the church organizing for ministry as seven laymen are chosen to perform certain tasks and service within the church. These laymen did service tasks so the apostles could devote themselves to preaching.

Donald Messer examines the meaning of ministry in his text, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry*. He shows how images of ministry have shifted from evangelism, to spiritual formation, to acts of worship, and to compassionate deeds. (Donald Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989, 33-46; 62-80) First he stresses that ministry is a "gift to the whole people of God." This leads him to consider the ministry of the laity. The service within the church remains the responsibility of all Christians, not just a professional paid staff.

Second, he points out that ministry is a calling more than a career, yet it has significance for the layperson as well as the clergy. Lay involvement in the local church differs from involvement in a soccer club or Kiwanis club, in that all Christians have a spiritual call to involve themselves in the work of ministry.

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Third, he focuses on ministry and its servant nature. One value of Christianity is humility and work for the betterment of others. The servant quality reminds us God is the source of all ministries. God reaches others through our activity.

Fourth, he shows how ministry should be viewed as a covenant ministry of grace. This means ministry involves mutual accountability within the church. The grace of God places us on an equal footing, even if we have different gifts shared within the community, because only through the grace of God flowing through us will ministry take place. This suggests that ministry occurs through the mystery of God's work in the world. Even if someone appears more gifted, it is ultimately the grace of God that makes ministry take place. This also implies that all tasks, even humble ones, are important.

The philosophy of polity employed by the Church of the Nazarene, the doctrine of holiness, and the basic meaning of ministry all carry the expectation of lay involvement in the ministry of the local church. Nazarene polity advocates a shared power and authority between clergy and laity. This assumes responsibility be taken by the layperson. The holiness message calls for full devotement to God and our living centered in God.

Finally, the meaning of ministry as service suggests every Christian needs to express faith through some type of work within the local church. Ministry is not just reserved for a priest, preacher, or pastor but is the task of every Christian.

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR LAY MINISTRY



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The *Manual* affirms that all Christians are to be involved in ministry: "...all believers are called to minister to all people." (*Manual*, paragraph 500) The expectation for ministry is even more clearly stated in the Covenant of Christian Character, which is to be evidence of the member's commitment to God. There is the admonition for evangelism: "Pressing upon the attention of the unsaved the claims of the gospel, inviting them to the house of the Lord, and trying to compass their salvation." (*Manual*, paragraph 21.1 #2)

Additional statements relate to social compassion: "Seeking to do good to the bodies and souls of men: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and ministering to the needy, as opportunity and ability are given." (*Manual*, paragraph 21.1 #5)

The instructions concerning the taking in of new members seem to include lay ministry in at least a general fashion when it calls for the candidate to be informed as to the "privileges and responsibilities of membership in the church." (*Manual*, paragraph 107.1) One of the jobs of the Evangelism and Church Membership committee is to "endeavor to bring new members into total fellowship and service of the church." (*Manual*, paragraph 110.5) The ritual for membership points to the obligation for service by members first by describing the church as being the "cooperation of service" and then asking those candidates to pledge to glorify God through "holy service." (*Manual*, paragraph 704) Perhaps the clearest statement concerning the importance of members being involved in Christian service is found in the Lay Minister section, "All Christians should consider themselves ministers of Christ and seek to know the will of God concerning their appropriate avenues of service." (*Manual*, paragraph 503) This statement calls for involvement of every Christian in the church to help individuals find an area of service.

There are stipulations and certain requirements for those desiring to do service in the church. The requirements for those nominated for church officers are that they "profess the experience of entire sanctification," that they live a holy life and be in agreement with the "doctrines, polity, and practices" of the church. They are also to "support the local church faithfully in attendance and with tithes and offerings." (*Manual*, paragraph 113.11 in conjunction with paragraph 33)

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Additionally, leaders are challenged to “development of Christian character” and “leading the unsaved to Christ.” This covenant also asks those who desire to serve to live at a high standard of Christian living, develop their own Christian experience through devotions, to attend the services of the church, to carry out their responsibilities to meet in any assigned boards or committees, to develop their skills, and to seek to lead people to Christ. (*Manual*, paragraph 707, Installation of Officers and the Worker’s Covenant)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAY MINISTRY



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The *Manual* lays out many opportunities for lay involvement in the church. Some of the major areas of service include the church board, Sunday School, minister of music, Nazarene Youth International (NYI), and Nazarene Missions International (NMI). Also, the church has an official category of ministry designated as lay minister.

Lay participation on the church board reflects the shared authority in the church between clergy and layperson. The church board provides opportunities for laypersons to have oversight of each major dimension of the church. The Sunday School ministries board is to have oversight and conduct the educational ministry of the church. This includes reaching lost people and facilitating spiritual development among all age groups within the church. Different boards and leaders are assigned for the various age groups.

The NYI organization has the responsibility for the youth work within the local church. The *Manual* notes that a youth pastor may take over some of the roles of the NYI president but not all of them. A caution is given: “importance of the lay NYI president remains in providing lay leadership, support, and representation for local youth ministry.” (*Manual*, paragraphs 150 and 810.110 – 810.118)

Further statements address the importance of the dual responsibility of clergy and laypersons in youth work. This again affirms the statements that paid assistants should not replace the volunteer work of the layperson.

NMI works within the local church to inform the local members concerning the global mission program, and to help raise their portion of the World Evangelism Fund along with other special missionary offerings. The local chapter provides information concerning the mission program and brings the members into contact with missionaries. Local churches also have the opportunity to participate in other global mission work through approved mission specials, such as Work and Witness trips to mission areas, either from the local church itself or perhaps through the district. (*Manual*, paragraph 153.1)

The church recognizes what it calls a lay minister. This refers to someone who feels called to some service of ministry but does not feel a call to become an ordained minister. The formal classification of such does require recommendation by the pastor, examination by the local church, and education. The church board issues the certificate and renews it based upon certain criteria.

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The individual is examined at the point of his or her experience of salvation, involvement within the local church ministries, knowledge of the workings of the church, and qualifications for such ministry. The lay minister has certain restrictions; he or she cannot administer the sacraments of baptism or the Eucharist and cannot officiate at marriages. One example of a possible area in which we might serve as a lay minister would be a lay song evangelist. (*Manual*, paragraph 503 - 503.9)

APPLICATION



NOTES

1. Draw up a written statement that lists the service expectations of one who is becoming a lay leader/minister. What general comments would be included? What quotes from the *Manual* would be included? What would be the pros and cons of lay leader/ministers signing such a statement upon accepting a position within the church?

2. Read and write a paper of reflection on *Manual* paragraphs:

- 28-28.2, 33
- 145-145.1
- 146
- 150-151.5, also see 810
- 152-154.3, also see 811
- 400-400.2
- 402-403
- 500-503.9
- 707-708

See: http://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/EN_manual_2013-17.pdf

3. Read one of the following:

- *Basic Lessons of Ministries*. http://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/EN_Basic_lessons_%2520of_Ministries.pdf
- Garlow, James. *Partners in Ministry: Laity and Pastors Working Together*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1981.
- Hurn, Raymond W. *Finding Your Ministry*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1979.
- Messer, Donald. *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Morsch, Gary, and Eddy Hall. *Ministry: It's Not Just for Ministers!* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1993.

EXAM



NOTES

1. Historically, the three philosophical approaches to ministry in the Christian church have been episcopal, congregational, and presbyterian.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. The basic premise of the episcopal form of government is a strong, centralized authority and top-down management.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. The form of church government most like the structure of the Church of the Nazarene is _____.
 - A. episcopal
 - B. congregational
 - C. presbyterian
4. As the number of local churches grew in the early holiness movement, the early Church of the Nazarene began to see the need to develop a government based upon _____.
 - A. superintendency or accountability
 - B. lay authority
 - C. a combination of government based upon superintendency or accountability along with lay authority
 - D. none of the above
5. Which of the following is not intended to be part of the superintendency?
 - A. it is to complement and provide support for the mission of the local church
 - B. it is to encourage the organization of new churches
 - C. it is to interfere with the independent action of a fully organized church
 - D. it is to share power with the local church and the laity
6. The Church of the Nazarene affirms that only gifted and talented Christians are called to be are to be involved in ministry.
 - A. True
 - B. False

**NOTES**

7. Nazarene polity advocates a shared power and authority between clergy and laity. This shared power assumes responsibility be taken by the layperson.
 - A. True
 - B. False

8. The Church of the Nazarene recognizes what it calls a lay minister as one
 - A. who feels called to some service of ministry
 - B. as one who feels called to become an ordained minister
 - C. both of the above
 - D. neither of the above

9. A lay minister in the Church of the Nazarene can administer the sacraments of baptism or the Eucharist and cannot officiate at marriages.
 - A. True
 - B. False

10. The _____ issues the certificate for lay minister and renews it based upon an annual review.
 - A. the church board
 - B. the local pastor
 - C. the district superintendent
 - D. a general superintendent

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT



NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Explain the concept of organized holiness as it applies to the Church of the Nazarene.
2. What type of governing organization do you feel allows the church to accomplish its mission most effectively?
3. How is power shared within the structures of the Church of the Nazarene?
4. How can men and women best be empowered to do ministry within local congregations and throughout the world?
5. Do you understand the reason for the need for centralized authority or superintendency within the Church of the Nazarene? Why? Why not?
6. Do you understand that joining a community entails commitments like the sharing in the support of a global ministry? Why? Why not?
7. With the concern for women in the ministry, how can opportunities be created for women to serve and be represented at leadership levels of authority within the church?
8. How would you persuade a layperson to explore getting involved in the ministry opportunities within the local church?