**Church of the Nazarene**

**Mesoamerica Region**

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**Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI)**

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**2023**

**GROWTH CAMPAIGN**

Welcome to the Mesoamerica Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI) Ministries! And thanks for seeking out our 2023 Resources Folder, developed especially for our Region!

We have lots of NDI “stuff” to share with you and are really happy that you have taken some time to have a closer look at what is available on this portal.

After more than two years of varying challenges and struggles as the world has gone through the global Covid-19 pandemic, we are all eager to get back to some form of normalcy, some space where we can do things the way we used to. But might I begin this missive by suggesting to you that those good old days are gone forever? Might I suggest that the old ways of reaching, treating and teaching our people are no longer effective and no longer impactful?

It is not that the information we have to share is different; nor has there been an iota of change in the Christ whose image we are attempting to see mirrored in the lives of the students in our discipleship classes! No, not a chance!

What *has* changed due to the pandemic and the restrictions it imposed, is the ways we have been interacting with our Students and this may have impacted the relationships we now have with them. What *has* also seen much adjustment is the methods we now must use to reach, teach and disciple our people.

The global Covid-19 pandemic has been especially hurtful for the Church. It has affected the ways we have sought to reach, the methods we have used to teach and the level of interaction we have been able to do with our Students. Many of our churches are only beginning to re-emerge from under the covid cloud and in several countries, services are not fully back to pre-pandemic settings! For sure, our numbers in almost all areas of ministry are below pre-covid levels!

For those of us involved in any way in this process of disciple-making across the world, we have been forced to quickly upgrade the bag of tools, tips and tricks we have available to us. Even in the toughest of economic and social circumstances, Teachers and Trainers now seem to require several new methods and an array of new tools for achieving their goals. The biggest need seems to be that our Disciple-makers must move to quickly upgrade their skillsets to ensure they can make the best use of the tools now available to them.

Fortunately, in the midst of all the chaos of change around us, our mandate and our mission to disciple “all peoples” remain as steadfast as ever as! Our department still has as its primary goal the reaching, evangelising and sending out of disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is what we have been commissioned to do and what we have ourselves committed to do!

Here then is a five-part plan of action that you and your Discipleship Department may use to maximise your mission this year:

1. Pray
2. Reach out
3. Evangelise
4. Sanctify
5. Send out

Taken together, the first letters of this plan spell the word PRESS. That work embodies the commission that we have been given and the mission that we have undertaken as a Department of this Church. It reflects the urgency of our task and its inherent challenges. Yet the word also embodies the great hope and deep conviction we each have, that on this journey of grace we must take the path shown us by our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

1. **PRAY**

Prayer is a discipline that must be developed within and must accompany any and every ministry effort within the Church. NDI Ministries at the local and district levels must begin their time in Office once elected and approved with a time of prayer.

NDI Councils must commence each administrative year with times of fervent prayer. It would be good for the NDI Council to designate a particular month to prayer for the work of the ministry and the Church across the District. Use this time to promote, engage and encourage prayer. Our ministries are in fact God’s ministries and we can do nothing meaningfully without him; prayer allows us to speak with Him and to hear His heart for His ministries.

Discipleship Ministries engaged in executing our mandate must intentionally and unfailingly pray for:

1. WORKERS to do the job required of our ministry

* Ask the Lord to send labourers who are passionate about the NDI Ministry
* Seek out Labourers who have the time to spend in Ministry
* Find Labourers who are willing to be taught and trained in the things of the Ministry
* Pray against Labourers with sinful agendas and intentions

1. OPEN doors among those we seek to reach

* Ask the Lord to open the hearts and minds of our people
* Ask for an opening of our own hearts and minds to the various things we will find
* Seek out innovative strategies to reach the unreached
* Pray against physical harm and danger to our outreach teams and efforts

1. RESOURCES to execute the projects and programmes of the Ministry

* Ask the Lord to send financial, material and administrative resources
* Seek the Lord for guidance on the programme for your Ministry
* Ask the Lord for grace within the local church to embrace the Ministry’s efforts
* Pray against wastage of resources and talents

**HOW TO DO PRAYER FOCUS**

Whilst fervent, intentional, continuous prayer is a discipline that every Disciple of Christ must train themselves to master, it is something that every successful ministry within the Kingdom must also incorporate into its very fabric. What we do must be a reflection of that which the Lord has called us to do in our particular “neck of the woods”. This is not our Ministry; it is His Ministry!

Here are a few ideas on how to make prayer central across our NDI Ministries:

1. Appoint a Prayer Secretary for the District & Zonal NDI Departments

* This ensures that there is someone at the Council Level who has responsibility for Prayer
* Ensure that a Plan is devised for the area

1. Conduct an ‘NDI Month of Prayer’

* The District NDI Council should select the month in collaboration with the Advisory Board
* Create and circulate weekly “Prayer Points” to encourage focussed prayer efforts
* Execute an ‘all-night’ or ‘half-night’ Prayer event during the Prayer Focus Month
* Prayer Points should be based on the peculiar needs of the District and the NDI Department.

1. Use 5th Sundays in Jan, Apl, July, Oct & Dec for Prayer

* 2020 has 5 months in which there are 5 Sundays
* These could be identified for Prayer-Focus by District and Zonal NDI Departments
* Events should be planned to ensure variety and the inclusion of all age groups

1. **REACH**

If prayer is the preparation for ministry across NDI, then “Reach” refers to the processes and programmes that we employ. Our task is to make contact with as many people as possible in a way that we can invite them to join our discipleship programmes. This is a critically and crucially important part of our process. The growth and survival of our ministries and Churches depend in no small measure on the success we achieve in these outreach processes. There is much riding on us; there is a heavy weight on our shoulders.

In many ways therefore, outreach is one of the most important tasks an NDI Department can undertake. Outreach must be properly planned and supported by much prayer. It is not good enough to simply get up and go out into our communities and knock on doors; we must do our research and we must make plans based on what our research reveals to us.

Here are four keys to executing a successful outreach programme within your communities:

**A). Do some research**

Nothing, absolutely nothing, beats finding facts and figures about our communities. How many seniors are there? How many youths? How many children? How many pregnant mothers or toddlers live in the houses and the streets that comprise our communities?

The research done in our communities will aid in the design or help us tweak the already developed design so it better suits our particular community. This is so important that it is not recommended that we go into our communities, especially new areas, without having done some research!

* Begin with a walk through of the community that you intend to try reaching. If you are able to get a few of your Church’s Prayer “Warriors” to join you it would be great to do a “Prayer Walk” within the community. The greater the challenge you expect in your outreach, the more you must engage in these types of prayer actions.

Breaking down walls has never been easy, just ask Joshua! Sometimes we have to employ methods similar to those employed by Joshua. We have to prayerfully walk around those “walls” whether they are cultural, economic or ethnic!

* If you know persons from the community, you should engage them in one-on-one conversations to find out as much as you can about the things that happen in the community.

What is the community known or renown for? How much do families earn typically? What work do their men and women typically do? Is there a particular religion that is dominant in the community? Are there other churches there? What do the people generally like; what do they not like?

* If you are able and have the manpower, design a simple survey that allows you to knock on doors and execute quick, simple 2-minute surveys in each home:
  + Ask about the number of persons in the home;
  + the ages of the children and;
  + whether or not they attend another church.

**B). Prepare an Outreach Plan**

Sit with your NDI Council and map out a plan to “canvas” the communities which you want to reach. Planning is the only way to successfully achieve one’s goals, time and time again. Of course, we can sometimes get by without a plan but we never attain consistent, satisfying success without proper planning.

* Start your planning by creating a vision of the outcome you want to achieve when your plan is executed.

A good vision is central to good planning so much so that often when planning Teams are struggling with their mandates, it is likely their vision is badly constructed or badly worded. Write down your Team’s vision, ensuring that:

* It expresses a future scenario or circumstance and not what you have to do
* It is simple, easy to understand and does not contain too many words
* All the members of your Team agree with it

Use this vision to develop a list of goals and strategies that your team can pursue as you go after your plan.

* Planning involves developing smart goals and then devising strategies, action plans and timelines that help us achieve those goals.

Allow your Team to help in the formulation of the goals you set for this programme. Goals should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reasonable and Timely). An important aspect of Goal-setting is to ensure you include “action words” in your writing of the Goals. Here are a few examples of well-written Goals:

* To interact with 100 new households each week
* To invite 20 “unchurched” children to join our Children’s Club each month
* To host a Community Fair for Children during the Easter Celebrations this year
* Planning takes us through execution of the actions we have proposed.

The Plan your Team makes may be good, with smart goal and workable strategies but if someone does not take charge of seeing it through, it may well not have been created in the first place. Plans are not developed to be placed on shelves or to be saved in folders on our computers! Plans are made to be executed! Someone or some Group of people has to take charge of the Plan and work the Plan!

Remember also that a Plan is only as good as the Team that drives it! If you want your well-developed Plan for outreach to amount to anything good, you and your Team need to spend time constantly reviewing it. The task of Plan review or operations review as it is called is often repetitive, frustrating, grinding work sometimes involving revision of the same things over and over until they are finally executed. But this is important work. Without this management of a Plan, things can go hopelessly wrong very quickly.

Leaders must take time to motivate your Teams as you work your way through a calendar involving several planned activities. Some things will go well and some things will not go well. Yet all items on the list of items to be executed as part of the plan deserve to be tried in the best way possible. Do not let the fear of failure paralyse your Team into inaction. Keep trying. Keep pressing on.

* Planning ends with a review of the results we have achieved

Finally, remember that the cycle of planning is not complete until a Final Report is done and shared with the Team for their comments and thoughts. This Final Report must give a good insight into the things that were done and the results achieved. I should tell of the persons who did well and those whose sacrificial work kept the programme on track. Importantly, your Final Report must give a synopsis of the expenses involved in executing your programme.

1. **EVANGELISE**

One of the most widely respected and referenced definitions of the word ‘evangelism’ was developed by the Anglican Archbishops’ Committee of Inquiry into the Evangelistic Work of the Church, United Kingdom, 1918. It reads thus: ***To evangelise is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church***.

The important segments of this definition are these: 1. To present Christ Jesus; 2. In the power of the Holy Spirit; 3. That men (women, boys and girls) shall come; 4. To put their trust in God through Him; 5. Accept Him as their Saviour; 6. Serve Him as their king; 7. In the fellowship of His Church.

There are several really important take-aways from this definition, including the following:

* We present Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, not our own power nor that of our Church
* The aim of our Gospel proclamation, in whatever form, is to bring those who hear to trust God
* Christ Jesus is central, essential and pivotal to this process
* Salvation or reconciliation to God through Christ Jesus is the primary goal but not the only one
* The believer’s life as a citizen of the Kingdom of God is another critical goal

PRESENTING CHRIST: The task of reaching our communities with the love of Jesus is an active, practical and intentional process that involves the entire church, from the Pastor and preacher right through the system and congregation to the last person standing at the back of the sanctuary. For the NDI Department, which plays a major role in this process, it starts with prayer, it requires making contact and issuing invitations to those who respond and it then moves to the critically important matter of soul-saving.

Our NDI Ministries must be geared to help those we meet and invite to reach the point of decision for Christ. Our Teachers and Workers must be trained and retrained to help their Students come to a saving knowledge of the Lord. They must be able to recognise when those under their charge get to the place where they are ready to make a decision and they must learn how to make the appeal.

Presenting Christ is likely to look vastly different in our Primary Class from the way it looks in our Youth Class, or our Seniors Class. As a matter of fact, we may not be in a Class setting at all for while the Church Building and Compound present a natural space within which to conduct our Christian Education Classes (or Sunday-School) a Playground where kids could be gathered around a soccer ball or a Baseball is just as effective!

One of the truly important aspects of this process is the training of Teachers and Workers who serve at the various levels of our Discipleship Programme. Opportunities for engagement and or learning must be frequent and conducted by trained individuals with whom our children especially are safe and constantly engaged. Learning experiences must be well planned and must form part of a bigger ministry plan developed by the NDI Department in conjunction with the Pastor and Church Board.

THAT MEN COME TO ACCEPT HIM AS SAVIOUR: Whilst it is a major step, conversion or salvation is not the end of a person’s journey of grace with the Lord. As a matter of fact, it is more like the beginning. The first few days, weeks, months and years after a person accepts Jesus as their Saviour are really important to that person’s longevity as a believer and their enduring walk as a Disciple of Christ.

Our NDI Teachers and Workers become the Coaches, the Trainers and indeed the Great Examples that help to guide and help their Students navigate the many journeys of life that they will face.

Our Mesoamerica NDI Resources Folder has an abundance of aids and support documents to help in this process.

1. **SANCTIFY**

The next step in our process of growth of our NDI Departments is that of getting our converts to the point of entire sanctification or the filling of the Holy Spirit. As Nazarenes, we believe in this second work of grace along our life’s journey of grace.

This position of being entirely sanctified is an important element in the process of evangelism, which commences with our outreach, progresses to conversion, then to sanctification and finally to disciple-making.

Experience suggests that getting our people to this point is much easier said than done! It is not that entire sanctification cannot happen within a very short period of time after one get converted to Christianity; it is that it does not usually. Yet this period of ‘Christian maturing’ where a convert spends time learning and growing in faith before making a full determination and commitment to serve the Kingdom of God is perhaps the most critical of all the “stations” that one will meet along this road to discipleship.

Our NDI Departments must ensure that we take the opportunity and make the best use of resources available to us so that our converts and those we are discipling are prepared properly and fully, regardless of their age or their gender.

Another reason to really take the time and stubbornly make the effort to expose our converts to teachings, principles and practices of the disciplined life, is because this process could well determine the growth of our churches. That is so because it is just around this point in a person’s life with Christ when we Nazarenes begin to consider recommending them for water baptism and then membership in one of our local churches. Not only is sanctification critical to the expansion of the Kingdom of God; it is critical to the growth of the local church!

1. **SEND OUT**

If we consider that sanctification represents the point of growth for our churches then we must see this final stage in the discipleship cycle as representing sustainability. At stage four we grow and at stage five we keep growing because we create the capacity to start the process all over again.

I once met a gentleman at a Nazarene Church on the Hawaiian island of Maui. He had been introduced to our small visiting group by the Pastor as “his church’s best soul-winner”. It seemed a most unfit title for what we saw standing before us. This gentleman was slimly built, dressed in shorts and a Hawaiian shirt with flip flops; his wardrobe was topped with his mostly grey hair pulled into a pony tail which hung loosely on one shoulder. After he enthusiastically shook our hands and left, the Pastor explained: “John (not his real name) was saved on the streets of Maui after one of our outreach teams found him half drunk in the rain and “rescued” him. Since then, he has spent his weekends going back into the bars and pubs he used to frequent and literally pulling his friends and former drinking buddies out of the jaws of the devil. He is persistent and dependable. He introduces us to at least one new convert every week!”

Such is the power of the “sent out one”; and such is the potential of new disciples to reach previously unreached people! Which is why across NDI we must have a systematic, intentional programme of taking our people through the stages that lead them to this point as quickly as the Spirit of God would allow. We want to pray, to plan, to go out and invite people, to move them through salvation and sanctification and to get them to the point where they are not the object of our discipleship efforts but the subject of it!

This process, repeated over and over all across the world, wherever the church of the Nazarene is located is the manifestation of our mission to make Christlike disciples across the nations of the world!