

**USA/Canada Church of the Nazarene**  
**Magazine Survey**  
**Report of Comments – December 11, 2009**

In October 2009, the USA/Canada Regional Office notified recipients of *GROW Magazine* that the magazine would not longer be produced. Instead, a new magazine was being conceived and recipients of *GROW* were being asked for their input. An open invitation to the survey was also announced in Nazarene News. Between October 29 and December 2, 2009 a total of 810 surveys were completed online.

Responders were asked for comment on the future publication's focus, writers, and topics. A wide variety of comments and suggestions were noted. Every comment recorded in the survey data was read and duly noted. Questions about survey comments may be directed to Bryon McLaughlin, project editor, at [bmclaughlin@nazarene.org](mailto:bmclaughlin@nazarene.org).

Listed below are representative comments that have been listed by topic:

**Budgets:**

I want to hear about how the economy is affecting our churches. When you've cut everything you can in your budget, how do you survive, if finances are still low?

**Community:**

I want to hear from those who are thinking outside the box of new ways to be the church and reach people in their community.

**Church health and church growth:**

Let's hear from pastors who have made growth advances. Not just pumped up numbers for a year or churches that have seen growth because a church next door closed.

Would like to see continual exposure given to those pastors, churches, districts, etc that are growing the fastest, doing innovative ministry, leading change.

Health--church health, pastoral health, district health--we must move from being program based to being people based and that calls for wholeness. What would it take for us to be a healthy organism that becomes vital in the world today?

It is difficult to grow churches in America these days, so I want to hear from and about the churches that are growing. I want to hear about how churches are reaching people through evangelism.

**Church planting:**

I want to hear about pre-church planting strategies e.g. Relationship building, creating community in the planting team, ways to build bridges to non-believers.

I am in a city where the Nazarene church is shrinking quickly and the other pastors and I are teaming up to turn it around and plant churches together. I would love to read about church planting strategy and about any area that the church has turned around a shrinking trend.

**Church size:**

I want to hear from pastors who are down in the trenches, not just those who are at the large churches and doing well.

It is my experience that the smaller church (i.e. under 50) is neglected. In the situation that God has placed me, we are number in that latter designation and while not without resources, it would be a boost to hear from pastor's who have an impact in their communities with churches in this category. It IS possible for a small church to be healthy, thriving, but because of the community, not able to grow into a more comfortable size.

**Compassion and Social Ministry:**

I want to hear about Wesleyan Nazarene churches that are carrying out the mission of holiness in their communities and Nazarenes who care about social holiness.

Why is the Nazarene church so quiet about social issues and why do we seem to ignore responding to charges/accusations about our stand on issues? Is there any connection between being politically active and church growth?

I would love to see the magazine be more conscious of the real cultural, social, and justice issues that are facing the church today. So articles on social justice, immigration, multiculturalism, interaction between faiths, grace-filled and balanced look at the issues presented by homosexuality, postmodernism and the rise of the emerging church movement, urbanization, a glocal look at our communities (a view that balances the globalization going on all around us, with the breakdown in community and the sub-grouping of peoples along ethnic and cultural lines), continued effects of racism in our communities, child abuse in the church and in the communities around us, trafficking of women for the global sex trade, etc...

**Conflict:**

I want to hear about pastors who are in the middle of struggles/conflict. Churches who are doing what God directs and have not yet come thru, still in the middle of the work.

As far as conflict management though, I would take it broader to make it all hard to handle situations that come up in ministry - more of a problem solving and peace making and keeping things centered on the main things approach (whatever that is called).

**Culture and Post-Modernity:**

I want to hear about cultural shifts and how they relate to church.

I want to hear about how the church can become more involved in the culture of today and bring the holiness message to today's generation.

I want to hear about current trends, a publication not afraid to face the facts and be honest, and not covering things up with the politically correct "Nazarene" answer.

**Church and Theology:**

I would like to hear from theologians who can speak to working through an ecclesiology in our current and diverse cultural contexts.

I want to hear from theologians who can help us clearly remember who we are as Nazarenes/Wesleyans.

We also like to see articles from other perspectives within our Wesleyan/Anglican tradition. Perhaps articles by other pastors and theologians from the United Methodist Church, Free Methodist Church and the Episcopal/Anglican Church would be helpful.

I want to read about the Missional Church, emergent/ing church, positively engaging postmodernism, narrative theology, What it means to live into the kingdom of God, ways to help our congregations take on social justice (There is no holiness but social holiness), Wesleyan theology particularly in recovering a more rooted Wesleyan framework which embraces higher ecclesiology and the sacraments, Trinitarian theology (which is our theological core that gives establishes the framework for mission, engagement, holiness, social justice).

I would like to read on topics that would remind Nazarene clergy and laity of our distinction from fundamentalism.

I would love to see a re-education of our theology as Nazarenes, but handled in a way that is not "confrontational". So many of our churches are finding turmoil within the ranks because there is not a unifying sense of what we believe. Articles or issues that point toward "unity over uniformity" would also be great. We are a diverse people with a theological perspective that allows for that diversity. Yet many believe diversity is equal to heresy. I would love to see articles written about the positives present within our denomination in the U.S.

Articles that help us ask serious theological questions without offering trite, proof-texted answers... then offer online discussions based on the questions.

**Denomination:**

It would be great to see the magazine have freedom to rethink what our beloved Church of the Nazarene is to look like.

**Discipleship:**

I feel the main focus should be on "intentionally" making disciples outside the walls of the church. It is my belief that the church in general (evangelical denominations) here in North America is mostly interested in a marketing approach to grow their church, rather than making disciples out in the fields.

**District Superintendents and General Superintendents:**

More district superintendents, in fact I would make that a main thing of this magazine - they have incredible knowledge and insight and few or no "platforms" for sharing it on a denominational level.

Let's here from all GSs, new, present, and retired.

If our GSs had a vision for the church, this would be a good place for them to share it.

This is not a good idea for general superintendents or district superintendents to write articles.

I want to read about what district superintendents see as far as trends on their districts and how they wished their pastoral leaders would respond. How the DSs are strategizing the mission and new starts.

**Diversity:**

I'd like to see a broad range of writers that represent the cultural diversity of our church.

I will like to see articles in different languages, like Spanish, knowing this can be a tool for those that don't speak English, but still wants to read.

**Leadership:**

I would like to read from emerging leaders, those who are seen as young (not necessarily age, but in terms of years in the ministry) and who are individuals who will more than likely be leading the church of the Nazarene in the next 10-15 years.

Working with strong Lay Leadership. Not being intimidated by strong lay leadership.

**Holiness:**

*Grow magazine* seemed to focus on the styles and methods more than the message. "Holiness" became an abstract idea rather than a life lived out in the Spirit. Why are we afraid to talk about what holiness "looks like" now days? Let's focus on the message! What if we really believed the message could change lives regardless of the style like we once did!

Holiness and holy living in a messed up world. All these feel good articles does not equip the convert for holy living, nor does it challenge them to seek holiness after conversion.

Simplify rather than complicate the biblical theology of holiness so laity can understand it and know we as a church do practice it.

**Missional Church:**

I am interested in hearing from pastors who are creatively developing a missional/transformational church.

Stories of missional districts - how districts/churches are organizing themselves around missional interests. Small - medium sized missional churches that focus on ministry outcomes not necessarily numerical outcomes. In other words, stories of churches that are missionally engaged in their communities regardless of 'church growth' measurements.

**Multiple Staff Ministries:**

It would also be nice to see more articles by church staff other than the head pastor all the time and to cover the wide range of ministries from children's to youth to administration to outreach to missions, etc.

**Networking and resource-sharing:**

I see this new magazine as being more a networking type of tool. Rather than highlighting churches and pastors, the greater need is for networking and resourcing.

I'd like more articles encouraging churches to work together sharing resources (people included) in the tasks of making disciples for our Lord Jesus our in the "fields" all around

us. It appears to me many times we "reinvent the wheel" just so we can have ownership. Who cares who gets the credit? It all belongs to our Lord anyway.

**Non-traditional ministry:**

Non-traditional ministries: house churches, co-pastoring, intentionally bi-vocational pastors... community development, creation care/eco-justice, ecumenical efforts

**Pastoral Ministry:**

Focus on writers that have life experience and can provide practical application to ministry. As well as, writers who address the questions of society through sound biblical principles.

I would want to read very practical articles, not necessarily written by experts. For example, as a new pastor, it would be very cool to read each month about what it is like to be a new pastor and some of the challenges that are faced.

I would love to see a magazine that focused more on the art of pastoral theology and a biblical perspective on pastoring/ministry.

Pastors who have been effective for many years, not as many by those who have only been effective for a short period of time.

I'd like to see articles that deal with the spiritual and personal lives of those in ministry- such as spiritual formation, self-care, success/failure, stress, depression, sabbath-keeping.

Some preaching helps and ideas that are not attached to the Lectionary. I get so tired of all the emphasis on the Lectionary.

**Rural Church:**

I feel one of the biggest needs in church growth is practical resources for rural and small town churches.

**Spiritual Formation:**

Stories of how many of our clergy are embracing the use of the Revised Common Lectionary, using the Christian Church Calendar as a way of spiritual formation for the people, and the appropriate use of vestments (i.e. clerical collars, robes, and stoles).

Worship and spiritual formation are issues that should preoccupy much of our time in reading and study as pastors. Billy Graham once said that the most important thing a pastor can do for his congregation is to BE Holy.

**Worship:**

More issues dealing with our need as a denomination to begin to develop a cohesive theology of worship. For us as a denomination to begin to listen to the voices of both clergy & laity that seek to incorporate more of our Wesleyan/Anglican traditions into the church. We have for too long called ourselves Wesleyan's (which we are), but we have the tendency to disregard most of what Wesley had to say as far as worship and focus primarily on just his work on sanctification.