

Report of the Kansas City District Superintendent: “Take Heart!” July 20, 2021

Welcome, friends, to this 97th annual assembly of the Kansas City District. I especially want to welcome General Superintendent Eugénio and Maria Duarte, NTS President Jeren and Starla Rowell, MNU President David and Donna Spittal, NBC President Scott and Sherri Sherwood, and the pastors, delegates, and friends of this assembly. It is a privilege to bring you my fourth report as superintendent of the Kansas City District.

Tonight, we thank God for our wonderful District Ministry Team. Our pastors are called, competent, and committed. This report reflects God’s blessing on their good work this year. It is a joy to work alongside a great District Office Staff: Wayne Nelson, Tabita González, Whitney Means, Chris Nelson, Carlos and Noemi Fernández, and Diane Estep. We are grateful for the service of our district ministry leaders: David Goodwin (NYI), Kelly Robinson (SDMI), and Katie Casey (NMI). We appreciate the work of our District Advisory Board, Mission Strategy Team, and Board of Ministry.

John 16:33 provides the theme for this assembly and the framework for this report: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

“In this world you will have trouble.”

We have found these words of Jesus to be painfully relevant. What a troubling, challenging journey we have been on since we last met two years ago: the isolation of a global pandemic, the polarization of a political election, the complication of racial tensions. Lament has been prominent in our prayers and our conversations. It would have been easy to lose heart.

Our losses have been significant. We lost opportunities for congregational worship and fellowship. We lost opportunities for district gatherings and connections. We lost loved ones to Covid. We lost two valued members of our District Ministry Team to cancer - Janice Kneisley (spouse of Holton Pastor, Kevin Kneisley) and Dan Copp (spouse of Cameron Pastor, Vicki Copp). This has been a troubled season.

The importance of faithful shepherds in troubling times has never been more obvious. Pastors, we are so thankful for you and so very proud of you. You have been faithful, flexible, and fruitful. We are grateful for the way you have

responded during a season of significant disruption. You have showed us your hearts! You have done a fantastic job of leading the church, of loving people, and of proclaiming the Gospel. In the midst of limitations and unprecedented challenges, you have continued to minister well.

Pastors—all pastors—please stand as we acknowledge you. You have probably already heard this from your family, your congregation, and your community, but we want you to hear it again, this time from your district: Thank you! You are great shepherds. Please know you are loved and appreciated. You are our heroes, and we are grateful for you. We want you to know how much we appreciate you.

I'd also like for us to express our appreciation to folks whose behind-the-scenes ministry in our churches – the folks who serve in tech ministry – has been especially important this past year.

One thing that has sustained us in this troubled season has been prayer. We're going to pause now as Diane comes to thank God for being with us, and to ask God to continue to sustain us in our journey.

“But take heart!”

In this world we will have trouble. Then Jesus says, “But take heart!”

While there have been opportunities to lose heart, we have many more reasons to take heart. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, God enabled us to make significant progress in our three district priorities: starting churches, strengthening churches, and developing leaders.

Starting Churches

Tabita González, District Missionary, gives leadership to the priority of starting churches and to multicultural ministry.

This past year, four new church plants have been registered:

- *Christ Agape Collective* (Pastor Mike and Dawn Wheeler) is our first online-only church.
- *Ministerio Hispano Oakland* (Co-Pastors Alfonso and Ana Reyes) was launched in August as a Parent Affiliated Congregation (PAC) of Topeka Oakland (Pastor Rachel Shald).

- *Grandview Kirkside* (Co-Pastors Dalton & Sierra Dunn) has begun as a neighborhood ministry based in the home of the pastors.
- *Lawrence Jesus Community* (Co-Pastors Tom Craig, Nathan Dutton, Rachel Best) has been registered, and the pastors have moved to Lawrence, found employment, and anticipate an official launch this Fall.

Today, the Kansas City District is a strong Multicultural District with a total of 29 multicultural congregations (6 organized churches, 2 Church Type Missions, 1 Parent Affiliated Congregation, 17 established multi-congregational ministries and 3 NewStarts). Every Sunday on the Kansas City District, worship takes place in 8 languages: English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Samoan, Swahili, Congolese, and Portuguese. 460 individuals gathered for Fiesta Multicultural on Saturday and celebrated the diversity in the Kingdom of God.

Strengthening Churches

District Administrator, Wayne Nelson, gives leadership to this priority. Three significant initiatives were undertaken this year:

- The **Small Church Summit** provided encouragement and resources for our churches that average less than 50 in worship attendance.
- **KCD Mission Area Revivals** with Dr. Chic Shaver were held at Harrisonville, Bonner Springs, and St. Joseph First.
- A “**District Tour**” provided worship, training, and fellowship as district ministry leaders went “on the road” to Topeka, St. Joseph, Liberty, and Olathe.

Let’s look at the fruit produced by our congregations this last year:

Conversions:	500
Baptisms:	172
New Nazarenes:	292
Membership:	16,564

This has all happened, to the glory of God, in a year marked by a global pandemic. In addition, 4 new churches have been registered and no churches have been closed.

Total Church Income: \$20,382,312

Giving for Others:

WEF: \$1,051,299 (102% of our goal)

	(Total giving to Global Mission: \$1,824,411)	
P&B:	\$419,860	(99.7% of our goal)
MNU:	\$412,571	(98.2% of our goal)
District:	\$549,318	(100.2% of our goal)

Kansas City District Nazarenes have been incredibly generous this year, responding to global needs, local needs, and district needs.

Developing Leaders

Investing in leaders is our third priority. At the beginning of the global pandemic, we instituted weekly Zoom meetings for pastors to provide resources and strengthen our connections. In addition, we have offered monthly Leadership Development Initiative presentations, either by Zoom or in person.

Development of our Spanish-speaking leaders is progressing well under the direction of Dr. Carlos Fernández, Director of the KCD Spanish School of Ministry. Our first-ever **BTP Graduation** recognized 12 graduates with Bachelor’s Degrees in partnership with SENDAS - Seminario Nazareno de las Américas, Costa Rica. Last August, also in cooperation with SENDAS, a Master in Religion degree with a focus on Developing the Church was launched on our district with 11 students enrolled. In total, there are 62 Spanish-speaking students in the Course of Study on the Kansas City District.

- In the last year, we have welcomed nine lead pastors to new assignments on the Kansas City District:
 - **KC Grace:** Pastor Joel Kadomo
 - **KC Victory Hills:** Co-Pastors Jerrica and Jared Govin
 - **Kingston:** Pastor Kent Wamsley
 - **Countryside:** Pastor Tony Purvis
 - **Parkville Family:** Pastor Scott Henry
 - **Liberty:** Pastor Michael Holl
 - **Kansas City Southwood:** Pastor Michael Beck
 - **Warrensburg Life:** Pastor Don Smith
 - **Olathe College:** Pastor Kevin Donoho will be installed July 25

You will see these pastors in person on Thursday morning when they are introduced to the district assembly, but I wanted to mention them this evening, because of how God has used each of them to encourage me to “Take Heart!”

Jesus has overcome the world

“In this world you will have trouble, but take heart...”. And then Jesus makes the most important proclamation: “I have overcome the world.” The Risen Lamb is Lord of His creation!

So, let me tell you where I think we might be missing it. Sometimes we forget that Jesus has already overcome the world, and we think we are called to overcome the world. We mistakenly believe that overcoming the world is our responsibility. So, we try to overcome – by means of power, or politics, or social movements, or social media, or influence, or sheer numbers. We aren’t called to overcome, and we are at our worst when we try.

Jesus has already overcome! Our mission is to spread that news, live into that truth, and love people. Because he has overcome, we can take heart and move forward in victory and newness of life.

We are going to pause here for a few moments to let that truth sink in. Jesus has overcome the world! We need to celebrate that before we move on.

SONG: Victor’s Crown

MAPS

Jesus has overcome! So, let’s talk about how we can help people find out about that. You have noticed nine maps have been placed on the floor around the sanctuary. These maps represent people and places in our world – in our mission field – that need to hear the Good News - *Take Heart! Jesus has overcome the world!*

Our hope is that one of these places or people groups will “grab your heart.” In a moment, I’ll introduce each map, and a person who will be standing at that map to help you locate it. You will then be invited to make your way to one of the maps for a time of prayer.

- Chillicothe (Clark Armstrong, Mission Area Leader)
- Lawrence Jesus Community (Tom Craig, Nathan Dutton, Rachel Best)
- Topeka Project (Spanish) (Alfonso and Ana Reyes)
- Lawrence Project (Spanish) (Mario Zani)

- Sedalia The Way Community Fellowship (Don & Sandy Smith)
- Grandview Kirkside (Dalton & Sierra Dunn)
- Foreign-Born Population (Tabita González)
- New Ministry Possibilities (Wayne Nelson)
- Waldo (Eric Forgrave, Mission Area Leader)

So, where's your heart being drawn this evening? Take what's in your heart and move now to a map, or to a couple maps. Stand on the map as you pray. Let's "claim that territory" for Jesus. Take one of the "Post-It" hearts and write a prayer on your heart and stick it on the map. Or, write the location on your heart and take it with you. Give your heart to one of these places. Please stand and move to one of the maps.

SONG: Jireh

Please receive this blessing, given to the hundreds who are gathered in this room, and to the hundreds of thousands that are represented by the maps:

*In this world you will have trouble,
but take heart.
Jesus has overcome the world.*

EDWARD L. ESTEP
District Superintendent
Kansas City District Church of the Nazarene