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MEMBERSHIP/BAPTISM  
Southwest Indiana District Assembly Resolutions Committee  
*Manual 23, 107, 801*

RESOLVED that *Manual* paragraph 23 be amended as follows:

Article II. Local Churches

23. The membership of a local church shall consist of all who have been organized as a church by those authorized so to do and who have been publicly received by those having proper authority, after having experienced Christian baptism, and having declared their experience of salvation, their belief in our doctrines, and their willingness to submit to our government. (100-107)

FURTHER RESOLVED that *Manual* paragraph 107 be amended as follows:

B. Local Church Membership

107. Full Membership. The full membership of the local church shall be composed of all persons who have been organized into a local church by those authorized so to do, and all who have been publicly received by the pastor, the district superintendent, or the general superintendent, after having experienced Christian baptism, and having declared their experience of salvation, and their belief in the doctrines of the Church of the Nazarene, and their willingness to submit to its government. The local church leadership shall seek to place every member into a ministry of service and a circle of care and support. (23, 30.4, 107.2 111, 113.1, 515.1, 519, 530.8, 536.8-536.9)

FURTHER RESOLVED that *Manual* paragraph 801 be amended as follows:

801. The Reception of Church Members

The prospective members having come forward to stand before the altar of the church, the pastor shall address them as follows:

Dearly Beloved: The privileges and blessings that we have in association together in the Church of Jesus Christ are very sacred and precious. There is in it such hallowed fellowship as cannot otherwise be known.

There is such helpfulness with brotherly watch are and counsel as can be found only in the Church.

There is the godly care of pastors, with the teachings of the Word; and the helpful inspiration of social worship. And there is cooperation in service, accomplishing that which cannot otherwise be done. The doctrines upon which the church rests as essential to Christian experience are brief.

Note: The minister may choose one of the following credal options.

Option 1:

We believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We especially emphasize the deity of Jesus Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that human beings are born in sin; that they need the work of forgiveness through Christ and the new birth by the Holy Spirit; that subsequent to

1 this there is the deeper work of heart cleansing or entire sanctification through the  
2 infilling of the Holy Spirit, and that to each of these works of grace the Holy Spirit  
3 gives witness.

4 We believe that our Lord will return, the dead shall be raised, and that all  
5 shall come to final judgment with its rewards and punishments.

6 Do you heartily believe these truths? If so, answer, "I do."

7 Having experienced Christian baptism do [Do] you acknowledge Jesus  
8 Christ as your personal Savior, and do you realize that He saves you now?

9 Response: I do.

10 Desiring to unite with the Church of the Nazarene, do you covenant to give  
11 yourself to the fellowship and work of God in connection with it, as set forth in the  
12 General Rules and the Covenant of Christian Conduct of the Church of the  
13 Nazarene? Will you endeavor in every way to glorify God, by a humble walk,  
14 godly conversation, and holy service; by devotedly giving of your means of grace;  
15 and, abstaining from all evil, will you seek earnestly to perfect holiness of heart  
16 and life in the fear of the Lord?

17 Response: I will.

18 The minister shall then say to the person or persons:

19 I welcome you into this church, to its sacred fellowship, responsibilities,  
20 and privileges. May the great Head of the Church bless and keep you, and enable  
21 you to be faithful in all good works, that your life and witness may be effective in  
22 leading others to Christ.

23 The minister shall then take each one by the hand, and with appropriate  
24 words of personal greeting welcome each into the church.

25 (Alternate form for members joining by letter of transfer:)

26 \_\_\_\_\_, formerly a member (members) of the Church of the  
27 Nazarene at \_\_\_\_\_, comes (come) to join the fellowship of this local  
28 congregation.

29 Taking each by the hand, or speaking to the group, the minister shall say:

30 It gives me pleasure on behalf of this church to welcome you into our  
31 membership. We trust that we will be a sourced of encouragement and strength to  
32 you and that you, in turn, will be a source of blessing and help to us. May the Lord  
33 richly bless you in the salvation of souls and in the advancement of His kingdom.

34 Option 2:

35 We believe:

36 In one God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

37 That the Old and New Testament Scriptures, given by plenary inspiration,  
38 contain all truth necessary to faith and Christian living.

39 That all humanity is born with a fallen nature, and is, therefore, inclined to  
40 evil, and that continually.

41 That the finally impenitent are hopelessly and eternally lost.

42 That the atonement through Jesus Christ is for the whole human race; and  
43 that whosoever repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is justified and  
44 regenerated and saved from the dominion of sin.

45 That believers are to be sanctified wholly, subsequent to regeneration,  
46 through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

47 That the Holy Spirit bears witness to the new birth, and also to the entire  
48 sanctification of believers.

49 That our Lord will return, the dead will be raised, and the final judgment  
50 will take place, (paragraphs 20.1–20.8)

51 Do you heartily believe these truths? If so, answer, "I do."

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2           Having experienced Christian baptism do [Do] you acknowledge Jesus  
3 Christ as your personal Savior, and do you realize that He saves you now?

4           Response: I do.

5           Desiring to unite with the Church of the Nazarene, do you covenant to give  
6 yourself to the fellowship and work of God in connection with it, as set forth in the  
7 Covenant of Christian Character and the Covenant of Christian Conduct of the  
8 Church of the Nazarene? Will you endeavor in every way to glorify God, by a  
9 humble walk, godly conversation, and holy service; by devotedly giving of your  
10 means; by faithful attendance upon the means of grace; and, abstaining from all  
11 evil, will you seek earnestly to perfect holiness of heart and life in the fear of the  
12 Lord?

13           Response: I will.

14           The minister shall then say to the person or persons:

15           I welcome you into this church, to its sacred fellowship, responsibilities,  
16 and privileges. May the great Head of the Church bless and keep you, and enable  
17 you to be faithful in all good works, that your life and witness may be effective in  
18 leading others to Christ.

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20 words of personal greeting welcome each into the church.

21           (Alternate form for members joining by letter of transfer:)

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23 Nazarene at \_\_\_\_\_, comes (come) to join the fellowship of this  
24 local congregation.

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26           It gives me pleasure on behalf of this church to welcome you into our  
27 membership. We trust that we will be a source of encouragement and strength to  
28 you and that you, in turn, will be a source of blessing and help to us. May the Lord  
29 richly bless you in the salvation of souls and in the advancement of His kingdom.

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32 REASONS:

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- 34 1. It is generally accepted that, as General Superintendent Emeritus, the  
35 Rev'd. Dr. William Greathouse, has said, "In the New Testament  
36 church there simply were no unbaptized Christians . . ." (Staples 11)  
37 Staples, Rob L. *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of*  
38 *Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press  
39 1991.
  - 40
  - 41 2. The Church, generally, for over 2,000 years has understood baptism as  
42 the sign of initiation into the new covenant and the community of faith,  
43 the Church.
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  - 45 3. Jesus and the apostles command baptism (e.g., Matthew. 28:19; Acts  
46 2:38; 10:48).
  - 47
  - 48 4. The Scriptures consistently declare the importance of baptism (e.g., Jesus  
49 declares that "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of  
50 water and Spirit," John 3:5; We are "baptized into Christ Jesus," Romans  
51 6:3; ". . . we were all baptized into one body," the Church, 1 Corinthians

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12:13; and Peter even declares that “baptism . . . now saves you,” 1 Peter 3:21).

5. Article of Faith XII. Baptism, *Manual* paragraph 12, states the following: “. . . Christian baptism, *commanded by our Lord*, is a sacrament signifying acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ, to be administered to believers . . .,” and “Baptism being a symbol of the new covenant . . .” (*italics mine*). Thus, those who refuse baptism are acting inconsistently with the membership requirements in *Manual* paragraph 23, which states that they must declare “. . . their belief in our doctrines . . .”
6. The “first” item in V. The Covenant of Christian Character (*Manual* paragraph 21.1) calls us to do “. . . that which is enjoined in the Word of God, which is our rule of both faith and practice. . .”
7. Most denominations require baptism prior to membership. In fact, allowing members who are not baptized places us at odds with orthodox Christianity.
8. Not only has it been the case that we have had church board members serving who have never been baptized, but it has even been the case that ministers have been ordained in the Church of the Nazarene, having been charged to “administer the sacraments,” who had not yet been baptized.
9. Our acceptance of any of the three modes of baptism as being valid should make baptism as readily available as membership, itself, even in areas where water is not abundant (i.e., one need only to sprinkle, in such cases).