



Written History of
Waverly Church of the Nazarene
Waverly, TN

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The Church of the Nazarene is in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Dr. Joseph P. Widney suggested the name *Nazarene* because in Scripture the question is asked “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” The Savior of the world came through Nazareth and spent his life with the marginalized. Jesus saw and gave voice to the unseen and unheard. Therefore, Dr. Widney and church leaders believed that the Church of the Nazarene’s mission should be focused on the marginalized. Although we are an infant compared to most denominations, the church has grown to 164 world areas because we authentically live out our core beliefs. We are called to be a Christian people, a Holiness people, and a Missional people. The church has not grown weary in discerning and practicing faithful living that responds to the activity of the Lord who goes before us.

The Church of the Nazarene started organically in Waverly. Rev. A.L. Hudnal, an evangelist from Clarksville, began commuting in 1946 to hold seasonal tent revival meetings. Mr. Bob Collier donated a parcel of land from his sawmill property. The land where the first gatherings took place is now known as Joe Street.

The attendees were faithful. As colder weather set in, services were discontinued until the next spring. Each spring, summer, and fall, the church gathered until 1950. In 1950, the congregation rented the space beside Mr. Allen Potter’s shoe shop. Waverly Church of the Nazarene had a building, and the church was officially chartered as a Church of the Nazarene!

Waverly Church of the Nazarene’s history is one that embraces pastors early in their ministry. The church shapes and sends pastors to continue the work of the Lord in other locations. The legacy of pastors radiates healthy, godly leadership.

Dr. Harold Graves and his wife Betty were students at Trevecca Nazarene College. Rev Graves was appointed the first pastor in 1950. The Graves and their sons grew up to be influential in the Church of the Nazarene. Dr. David Graves is currently serving as General Superintendent. Dr. Harold Graves served as President of Nazarene Bible College.

The church began to grow under Graves' leadership and purchased the property at 619 East Main Street. While construction of the new facility began, the church rented the Primitive Baptist Church.

Brother Layfield was called to pastor Waverly Church of the Nazarene in 1952. The construction of the basement portion of the building was completed in 1952.

Bruce Crosby was called to be Pastor of the church from 1953 – 1954.

After Crosby, Rev. Larry Smith pastored the church from 1954 – 1957. During this time, the church met at the Jr. High School while more work was completed on the church building.

In 1957, under the leadership of Reverends Moody & Nina Gunter the present building at 619 E. Main Street was completed. The Gunters were young, faithful, and devoted to the church. Dr. Moody Gunter later became District Superintendent of South Carolina and North Florida. Dr. Nina Gunter also became the first woman elected as General Superintendent.

Bro. Bea Atkisson continued improvements on the church between the years of 1958 -1959.

In 1959, Bro. John Adams was assigned to the pastorate giving leadership to the church for 15 years. Rev. Adams was a carpenter by trade with a second-grade education. His wife, Edith, taught him to read with children's books so he could sufficiently study and preach. In addition to pastoring, Rev. Adams himself built and worked on much of the facilities. During his tenure, the church board stepped out on faith, voting to pay Rev. Adams \$15/week. He wept and told them the church could have the money back if needed. Because of his impact, Waverly Church of the Nazarene was known in town as "Bro. Adams church." He loved and served well.

Between the years of 1967 and 1973, the church splintered into two congregations. Bea Atkisson, Edward Matlock, James H. Hedge, and Raymond Clark pastored the West Meade congregation. Waverly Church of the Nazarene became known as Waverly First Church of the Nazarene.

In 1974, the two congregations joined together again. Waverly First Church of the Nazarene then hired its first full time pastor, Reverend Gerald Wilson. A parsonage was bought on Cullum Lane. Rev. Wilson served as pastor through 1976.

Phillip Marklin served as pastor from 1976 – 1978. Rev. Marklin was pastor during the tragic train explosion in 1978. He tended well to James and Terry Ham as well as their family. James died 2 days after the disaster and Terry died 15 days afterward. Rev. Marklin has been remembered as the pastor who steered the church and the Ham family through the crisis with love and grace.

Richard Wagoner served as pastor from 1978 – 1984. During his tenure, a quizzing program began for the teens and later for the children. The church began to outgrow their space. The properties that housed Junior Brown's Warehouse at 213 Fairground Drive and Jr. Brown's home at 215 Fairground Drive were being auctioned in 1983. The church was on a tight frame and acted quickly to purchase the properties with the financial help of Mrs. Laura Ham. District Superintendent Talmadge Johnson's assistance became necessary to help calm the District Advisory Board down because the purchase was made so quickly our church board forgot to request permission from district leadership. Rev. Wagoner said that he learned sometimes it is better to ask forgiveness than permission. Prior to Junior Brown's ownership, the building at 213 Fairground Drive was a soft drink warehouse and distribution center.

The church called Larry McGranahan as pastor in May of 1984. The church went through another remodel under Bro. McGranahan's leadership. In 1985, the warehouse was completely renovated into a Fellowship Hall and classroom space.

The additional building provided more than just the blessing of classrooms. Larry McGranahan was a "community-minded" pastor. He encouraged the church to be involved in the community outside of the four walls of the church and to bring those from the outside into their space to show them the love of Christ. In 1989, the first Group Home Christmas Party was held in the Fellowship Hall. The Christmas Party welcomes individuals with disabilities from community group homes. to provide a special Christmas party in their honor. For some, it is the only Christmas event they attend, and it is something to which they look forward all year. The Group Home Christmas Party continues to be an annual event. It is currently the longest running ministry event at WCN. It is a blessing for those with

special needs and it is a blessing to our church as we experience the grace and love of Christ from our special friends.

In the early 1990s, the church began an *Old-Fashioned Christmas* celebration. The intentions of the celebration were to be mindful of the way Christmas used to be. The church would gather for homemade cookies and gifts. Carols would be shared. A faux fireplace used on the church's Christmas float became the centerpiece of the celebration.

In 1993, the church removed the parsonage from the property and purchased a new parsonage at 115 Hart Street. This transition created green space on the church property that is loved and appreciated to this day.

A steeple was added to the main building of the church in 1995, and a piano and organ were added to worship in 1997. The church had a choir and worshipped the Lord faithfully during these days.

Don Ballard was called to be Pastor of Waverly First Church of the Nazarene from 1998 – 2000. During his time with the church, continued improvements were made to the facilities. The platform space was increased. Carpeting was changed. A coffee area was added. Church attendance increased by 15% during these 2 years. Don Ballard transitioned to pastor his home church in McComb, Mississippi in 2000.

Daron and Katie Brown were called to Waverly Church of the Nazarene in 2001. As of this date, Pastor Daron has been the Lead Pastor of Waverly First Church of the Nazarene for 21 years. From the beginning of their ministry, he and Katie discerned that the Lord was leading them to a long-term pastorate. The Browns are not only a fit for the church but a fit for the community. Through Pastor Daron's leadership and a godly church board, the church has grown by 430%, and 162 individuals have been baptized in the past 21 years! In 2007, the church was officially debt free!

In 2002, the church's bi-monthly newsletter launched as *The Waverly Well*. The inaugural issue described wells in the Bible as gathering places for information and community-building. While the logo and name later transitioned, the newsletter has been a longstanding source of information and community-building for our church family.

During Pastor Daron's pastorate, many changes have been made to facilities. One of the most important changes made was the addition of a handicap accessible ramp in 2002 so that no one would be excluded from worship. Prior to the building of the ramp, the board had discussed how such a ramp might work, given the proximity to Main Street. Pastor Daron mentioned the discussions in a Sunday morning service. After the service, Mike Turner was on the front lawn, studying. He told Pastor Daron that he figured it out. In the next few weeks, Mike Turner completed the building of the ramp.

As the church continued to experience growth, several key decisions were made. The church transitioned to a Praise Team in 2003. A church administrator was hired in 2004. A new church sign was purchased in 2004, replacing the sign out front, given in memory of the James and Terry Ham. Ms. Laura Ham supported the decision to replace the sign, which displayed the church's logo of the well. In 2005, due to a full sanctuary, the church added an additional worship service with Sunday School offered in between; and a wall was removed downstairs which separated two small classrooms to create one large classroom space, known as the New Life Classroom.

With increased growth, in 2006, the church called its first pastoral staff member. A children's pastor was brought on to minister to the children and families of WCN.

In 2007, the church sent Pastor Daron on a mission trip with other pastors from the Tennessee District. God used this trip to San Jose, Costa Rica to plant the seeds for what would later become WCN's expansive vision.

In 2008, a fire on the church property required the space to be remodeled. The fire was contained within a small room in the southwest corner of the lower level. Smoke and ash, however, spread through the ductwork into the rest of the building, causing damage. Instead of replacing the pews, chairs were purchased to allow greater flexibility for special services and gatherings. Wednesday night gatherings transitioned from one larger group of adults to several small groups throughout the campus.

To allow the Browns the opportunity to have equity by owning their own home, the parsonage on Hart Street was sold in 2009. This money was used to help purchase land on 693 Airport Rd for a future facility, in the same year.

In 2009, the primary function of our fellowship hall changed when it was renamed The Children's Worship Center. Instead of allowing kids to worship in fellowship hall space, WCN's children shared *their* space for the church to have meals. The ownership of the space mattered. Murals were painted on the walls, and the space came alive!

Attendance continued to grow, and the church found itself without enough Sunday School classroom space. In 2010, the church began leasing space from Waverly Elementary School to meet the need. The use of these spaces was delayed when the first devastating flood hit Waverly, TN on May 1, 2010. The floodwaters impacted the church, school, and many residences in our community. The water was waist-high on the outside of the main building. About nine inches of water made its way inside both buildings. The church was resilient and repaired both facilities.

After significant growth and challenge, leadership began to re-envision church. In 2010, the church's discipleship process was clearly articulated: *Belong, Believe, Become*.

An intentional vision of the church was shared, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Words spoken by Jesus in Acts 1:8 became words the church lived by in 2011. A challenge to become active in each sphere was shared by Pastor Daron and received by the church. This challenge led to the following mission trips: Mission: Panama (2012), One Heart, Many Hands in Indianapolis, IN (2013). Mission: Costa Rica (2014), Mission: Joelton (Youth Group, 2014), Mission: Chester (Youth Group, 2015), Mission: Gulfport (2015), Mission: Local (2016), and Mission: Mexico (2018).

In 2012, The Old-Fashioned Christmas celebration, which was for our church family, transitioned to an outward-focused event called *The Festival of Carols*, which continues to this day. Carols are still shared, and the stories behind the carols are now shared. The community is invited, and many from the community look forward to this annual event!

Acts 1:8 Impact and Expansion was visually displayed by the WCN ripple logo developed in 2013. With this change, Waverly Church of the Nazarene began to be known as WCN. In the lower level, colored pushpins on a map of the globe reflected WCN's impact through mission trips, missionary support, and child sponsorships. The church continued to embrace the water imagery and renamed Wednesday night small groups 'Immerse Groups' in 2014.



As the church continued to grow, spaces were crowded. Some Sunday School classes began meeting outdoors to have enough space. Leadership discerned that it was time to have a capital building campaign. Mission Forward launched in 2015 at Camp Garner Creek's tabernacle. Dr. Mark Lindstrom and Rev. Marvin Jones were our guests for the special occasion. In 2018, the 1 million dollar giving fund target for the Building Fund was reached on schedule. Although we received favorable board, congregational, and District Advisory Board approval, several delays kept us from moving forward with our building project. But God is faithful, and His timing is perfect!

In 2018, the board appointed a team to revisit the written mission of the church. The team crafted the following statement to be the mission of Waverly Church of the Nazarene:

WCN is a sent community embodying Christ-like transformation
through Humphreys County and beyond by calling people to
Belong to the Body of Christ
Believe in the Person of Christ
Become the Mission of Christ

Another flood impacted WCN in February of 2019. The flood waters took playground equipment and ruined everything within 2 feet of the floor in both buildings. Buildings were, once again, remodeled.

When Pastor Daron became the pastor of WCN, there were no additional staff. With the growth the church experienced, this quickly changed:

Church Administrators:

Annetta Sykes (2004 - 2006)

Donna Hodge (2006 - 2010)

Kathryn McGuire (2010 - present)

Additional Team Members:

Delilah King - Nursery Director (2008 - present)

Pastoral Staff:

Tracy Cavness Children's Pastor (2006 - 2010)

Daniel Hawks Children's Pastor (2010 - 2014)

Children's Pastor/Connections (2013 - 2015)

Youth Pastor/Connections (2015 - 2017)

Matt Alexander Youth Pastor/Connections (2012 - 2013)

Youth Pastor/Media (2013 - 2015)

Dani Hawks Co-Children's Pastor (2014 - 2017)

Small Groups & Counseling (2017 - 2017)

Mary Forester Early Childhood & Connections (2016 - 2017)

Children's Pastor & Connections (2017 - 2018)

Children's Pastor & Media (2018 - 2020)

NextGen & Media (2020 - 2020)

Executive Pastor (2020)

Janice Rudolph Pastor of Local Missions & Pastoral Care (2016 - present)

Annetta Sykes Pastor of Recovery & Jail Ministries (2017 - 2022)

Kelsey Elliott Children's Pastor (2021 - present)

The difference between Waverly Church of the Nazarene and many churches is that leadership does not hold on to leadership. Leaders equip and empower the church to lead. The congregation of WCN believes that they have been gathered up to then be sent out.

WCN Ministries/Missional Opportunities:

Prayer and Care Ministry led by Lanelle Coleman (2008)

FUEL Ministry began with Tracy Cavness (2008)

Jail Ministry began with Tish Ladd (2008)

WCN began greeting at WES (2008)
Waverly Elementary School Partnership (2009)
Soup Kitchen with Dianne Howard (2010)
Community Garden established by WCN Youth Group (2014)
RISE Student Mentoring Program with Mary Forester (2014)
WCN remodels WES playgrounds (2016)
Valentine's Cookies to Jail Ministry began with Annetta Sykes (2016)
After School Care Ministry began with Pastor Mary, Luanne Riley, Rebekah
Scribner, and Sheila Bishop (2017)
Celebrate Recovery began with Pastor Annetta (2018)
Blue Christmas Service (2019)
In October of 2019, The Great Storm impacted Waverly. Thousands of trees were
down. Many homes damaged. Many lost electricity for a week or more. The
church sent teams to people whose homes were damaged and fed the
community by candlelight in our facilities.

As this history is written, the church is still thriving amid two significant
challenges:

In January of 2020, the news began talking about the novel coronavirus. Pastor
Daron gathered the staff and made a "what if" plan. A few months later, we were
in unimaginable territory. The Lord is leading us through the most challenging
time for the global church in recent history. The church building closed for a
season to protect the vulnerable, but the church did not close. On March 22,
2020, the church gathered for online worship only. On June 7, 2020, the church
regathered for in-person worship with recommended protocols. Prior to this,
Pastor Daron had often shared, "The church is not the building. It is the people."
We have seen the church grab hold of this vision during difficult days. The
faithfulness of our people is unwavering. We are currently in year 2 of the
pandemic. The church has become more resilient and healthier through this time
of transition.

Both the Discovery Zone and the basement took on 7.5 feet of water in a tragic
flood that claimed the lives of 20 Waverly people on August 21, 2021. The
Discovery Zone was a total loss, and the basement of the main building was
repaired to make the space functional. The church is not investing additional
funds into a space where we are not staying. We are currently exploring options
to move forward in building our new facilities on 693 Airport Road. The 75th

Homecoming scheduled for October 2021 (among many other events) was rescheduled to May 2022 due to damage sustained by our buildings. Many of our documents, pictures, and mementos were lost in the flood.

Gift in the middle of disaster: After the flood, WCN received state-wide attention because we were sending as we were repairing. Due to this attention, the church was gifted a parcel of residential land in Three Rivers Estates subdivision to sell for profit and put towards the mission of the church in March 2022. We sold the land for a profit of \$27,000 in May 2022. Dana Moore selflessly gave because “She watched from Nashville, as lives and livelihoods washed away, looking for a way to help. It was the individual people stepping up, from your church, to help the community that caught my eye. Followed a few groups on Facebook, yours was the most genuine and selfless.” And we respond by saying “Thanks be to God!”

The church had over 25 families who were displaced after the flood. Many lost their homes and all of their belongings. More than 500 homes were damaged or destroyed in our community. The church showed up for months. Over a hundred people gave their time. We worked on our property and were sent out to gut and repair homes for our congregants and neighbors whose names we did not know. We gathered for meals at tables and chairs that still had flood mud caked on the bottom. People who personally experienced great loss joined the efforts to serve others. Everyone in our community was exhausted but resolved to do the work of the Lord in the community.

The church continues to show up! Our parking lots are heavily damaged. We lost our overflow parking spaces at the elementary school. The only space left intact was the sanctuary. We lost a whole building where children’s worship occurred, Sunday School classes gathered, Celebrate Recovery met for accountability, and 3 offices were held. We have painted plywood on the basement interior walls. Staff share a combined workroom. What was once located in 2 buildings has now been condensed into one downstairs facility...reminiscent of a church, in 1950, who had been meeting at a sawmill and whose people were thankful to have a basement to gather and worship with one another. As we look around our space, we are a church, in 2022, thankful to still have a basement to gather and worship with one another.

Through the many building renovations and expansions, the church has always met our allocation budgets. Always. We have stepped out on faith repeatedly throughout the history of the church.

The church gathered and broke ground at 693 Airport Road for our future facility on May 21, 2022. Jimmy Hamm is the last living charter member's child left. He was the first to put a shovel in the ground during the groundbreaking ceremony.

There are obstacles moving forward, but we do so in faith. We know that our God is leading us forward.

God is good, and as Bertha Matlock wrote in the original church history, "The future of the church looks bright."

-Reverend Mary Forester

May 2022