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ABSTRACT

A Study of the Use of the Altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA

by

Edward Lee Estep

This study seeks to identify and describe the current practices of altar use in congregations of the Church of the Nazarene, USA, to evaluate those findings in light of the biblical uses of the altar and the historical use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, and to determine if a transition has taken place in the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

The Church of the Nazarene, organized in 1908, is the largest denomination in the Wesleyan-Arminian (Holiness) theological tradition. This evangelical denomination has grown throughout its history. Of 11,857 churches world-wide reported in 1996, the 5,132 Nazarene churches found in the United States formed the context of the study.

The altar in the Church of the Nazarene is a “kneeling altar,” closely identified with the “altar call,” or public invitation. Historically, the altar call has been an effective means of evangelism in leading repentant sinners to Jesus Christ and has served as a place of commitment and consecration for believers called to experience entire sanctification.

The population of this study consisted of senior/sole pastors of Churches of the Nazarene in the United States. The study is descriptive in design and utilizes a researcher-designed survey. Data collection was achieved by a self-administered questionnaire mailed to a computer-generated, random sampling of 400 senior/sole pastors in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. The variables considered in this study included church size, geographical location, additions by Profession of Faith to church membership, respondent’s years of pastoral ministry experience, church age, and rate of church growth.

Three research questions guided the investigation:

RQ #1: How is the altar currently used in the Church of the Nazarene?

RQ #2: Are there variables which influence the way the altar is used in the Church of the Nazarene, and can certain characteristics be associated with the observed findings?

RQ #3: In what ways are contemporary Nazarene practices, with respect to the altar, congruent and/or incongruent with biblical uses and historical practices in the Church of the Nazarene?

Three hundred and five pastors responded to the researcher-designed instrument consisting of nineteen open and closed-ended questions. The findings revealed a widespread, frequent, and varied use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. The most frequent use of the altar--open altar invitations during pastoral prayer--was followed in order of frequency of use by general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, specific altar calls for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, and communion served at the altar. Respondents identified twenty additional uses of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene.

The findings also revealed that the variables of geographical location, average attendance, additions by Profession of Faith to church membership, and the respondent's years of pastoral ministry experience relate significantly to the frequency of certain types of altar use.

The findings indicate a transition in altar use has taken place in the Church of the Nazarene. The altar is no longer identified primarily with evangelism, but is used in varied ways and is strongly identified with the church's worship. Current use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene resembles biblical examples of altar use.

This study contributes to the ongoing literature about the altar and will provide understanding of both the historical and current uses of the altar in the evangelism and worship of the Church of the Nazarene.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
A STUDY OF THE USE OF THE ALTAR
IN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE, USA

presented by

Edward Lee Estep

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

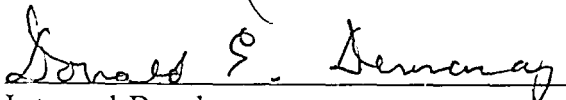
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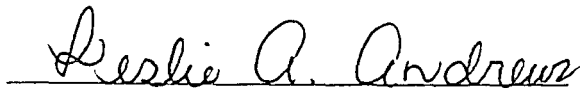
Date



Internal Reader

March 25, 1998

Date



Dean, Doctor of Ministry Program

March 25, 1998

Date

**A STUDY OF THE USE OF THE ALTAR
IN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE, USA**

A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Doctor of Ministry Department

Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

Edward Lee Estep

May 1998

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Edward Lee Estep

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my deepest gratitude to all of the following who provided assistance and encouragement during the process of preparing this study.

- The Lord Jesus Christ, who by His grace gave me the desire and strength to accomplish this task.
- Chuck Killian, faculty mentor, Donald Demaray, internal reader, and Leslie Andrews, Dean of the Doctor of Ministry program, each of whom encouraged and challenged me to careful thinking.
- Rich Houseal, Church Growth Division, Church of the Nazarene, who provided data on the population and subjects of the study.
- Dana Calland, for her generous help with statistical analysis, and Tim Swanson, for his gracious assistance with graphics and data entry programming.
- Carroll Hunt, who provided valuable advice on form and style.
- Stacy Downing, for clerical aid, and Chuck McKinney, for procedural assistance.
- Special thanks to the church board and congregation of the Maysville Church of the Nazarene for their support, understanding, patience, and encouragement.
- Joshua and Jeffrey, for being understanding about the time needed to complete this project. I could not ask for two better children!
- My deepest appreciation extends to Diane, whose love, support, and confidence made this study possible. At the altar we each said "Yes" to God and to one another. You make the journey wonderful.

DEDICATION

This study is gratefully dedicated
to the pastors and evangelists
who have faithfully invited me
to experience the presence of God
at the altar.

FOREWARD

Just as Abraham could trace his spiritual journey by recounting the altars he built and visited, so I can trace my spiritual journey by recounting the altars I have visited.

At an altar my Christian parents dedicated me to the Lord and at an altar Diane and I dedicated our two children, Joshua and Jeffrey.

At an altar I knelt in repentance and received Jesus Christ as my Savior.

At an altar I joined the Church of the Nazarene.

At an altar I experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

At an altar Diane and I expressed our love and commitment to one another and exchanged vows and rings.

At an altar God called me to preach, and at that same altar General Superintendent Raymond Hurn ordained me an elder in the Church of the Nazarene.

At altars in Paden City, Summersville, Parkersburg, and Ripley, WV, in Mount Vernon, OH, in Kansas City, MO, and in Maysville, KY, I have sought and found God's grace and guidance.

May seekers always be able to find an altar in the Church of the Nazarene.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Monique, a thirty-year-old with very little church background, was a self-professed atheist whose recent involvement in a twelve-step recovery program had given her pause to consider the reality of God. One Sunday morning she visited church for the first time. She came with her husband, Brad, a regular attendee for several months. That morning I invited worshippers who wanted to pray about special needs or burdens to kneel at the altar during the “Open Altar” pastoral prayer. Brad went to the altar to pray for the salvation of his wife. Two newlyweds, Jim and Janice, also went forward, joining several others who knelt at the altar for various reasons. Jim and Janice had prayed at home for Christ to come into their lives a few days before and came to the open altar to thank God for their salvation.

In that same service, at the conclusion of the sermon I invited the congregation to stand. As music played softly, I invited those who wished to find forgiveness and new life in Jesus Christ to come to the altar and pray. Monique considered walking forward, but she did not. Nor did anyone else come. Monique would sit through several more Sunday morning worship services and a few more public invitations before she would kneel in repentance during an altar call.

The Problem

This account, or one like it, occurs in scores of Nazarene churches on any given Sunday. From the beginning of the Church of the Nazarene, Nazarenes have valued the old fashioned mourner's bench, or kneeling altar, as one of the most important pieces of

furniture in the sanctuary. The Church of the Nazarene's use of and appreciation for a kneeling altar is rooted in its evangelistic preaching for decision. Traditionally perceived as the place where people respond to God's grace, the altar in the Church of the Nazarene has been historically identified with the "altar call," or public invitation. At the conclusion of many sermons, Nazarene preachers invite seekers to "come to the altar" for specific reasons: to be saved, to be entirely sanctified, to be reclaimed if backslidden, or to rededicate their lives.

The problem this study seeks to address concerns a possible transition in the utilization of the Nazarene altar. Historically, Nazarene altar use has been specifically evangelistic. Contemporary use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene may reflect a broader, more general use of the altar as a place where for varied reasons a worshipper can experience the presence and grace of God. The "Open Altar" invitation may provide evidence of this transition. The open altar differs from the traditional altar call in two ways. First, the invitation to the open altar occurs most often during the time of pastoral prayer rather than at the conclusion of the sermon. Second, the invitation to the open altar is usually a non-specific invitation to come forward and pray about an issue of personal importance, whereas the altar call has typically been a specific invitation related to the need for salvation or entire sanctification in the seeker's life.

Statement of Purpose

This study seeks to identify and describe the current practices of altar use in congregations of the Church of the Nazarene, USA, to evaluate those findings in light of the biblical use of the altar and the historical use of the altar in the Church of the

Nazarene, and to determine if a transition has indeed taken place in the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

My intention is to identify and describe Nazarene altar use, not to provide an "apology" for the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, although I do have strong feelings regarding the usefulness and value of the altar.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

Research Question 1

How is the altar currently used in the Church of the Nazarene?

Research Question 2

Are there variables which influence the way the altar is used in the Church of the Nazarene, and can certain characteristics be associated with the observed findings?

Research Question 3

In what ways are contemporary Nazarene practices, with respect to the altar, congruent and/or incongruent with biblical uses and historical practices in the Church of the Nazarene?

Context of the Study

Organized October 8, 1908, in Pilot Point, Texas, the Church of the Nazarene is the largest denomination in the Wesleyan-Arminian (Holiness) theological tradition, and is considered a denomination in the mainline evangelical tradition.

The doctrine that distinguishes the Church of the Nazarene and other Wesleyan denominations from most other Christian denominations is entire sanctification. Nazarenes believe God calls Christians to holy living marked by an act of God, subsequent to regeneration, which cleanses the heart from original sin and fills the individual with the Holy Spirit and love for God and fellow humans. Like regeneration, entire sanctification is an act of God's grace, not of human works.

The Church of the Nazarene, International

In 1997, the Church of the Nazarene reported 1.2 million members worshipping in 11,857 churches in the United States, Canada, and 114 other world areas (Quadrennial Reports 5).

The Church of the Nazarene has 665 missionaries serving in 114 countries outside the United States and Canada in 1996 (Quadrennial Reports 492). Nazarenes support eight liberal arts institutions in the United States as well as four seminaries and thirty-five Bible colleges around the world. The church operates three hospitals, thirty-five medical clinics, three nurses training colleges, one teacher training college, and more than 370 primary and secondary schools outside the United States and Canada.

The government of the Church of the Nazarene is a combination of episcopacy and congregationalism. Six elected representatives serve on the Board of General Superintendents, charged with the responsibility of administering the worldwide work of the Church of the Nazarene. The General Assembly of the church serves as the supreme doctrine-formulating, lawmaking, and elective authority of the Church of the Nazarene. Composed of elected representatives from all the denomination's regular districts, the

General Assembly meets quadrennially.

The denomination enjoys modest growth. Membership in the Church of the Nazarene increased by 13.41 percent between 1992 and 1996. There were 12,354 ordained elders in the Church of the Nazarene in 1996, a quadrennial gain of 736 (Quadrennial Reports 5).

The Church of the Nazarene, USA

Administratively, six worldwide regions constitute the Church of the Nazarene, International. The 5,132 Nazarene congregations found in the United States region formed the context of the study.

The Church of the Nazarene, USA, is divided geographically into eight educational regions, each with its own Nazarene college or university.

Membership gain in the U.S. in 1996 was .68 percent. Per capita giving by Nazarenes in the United States region in 1996 was \$842.56.

Definition of Terms

Several terms need clarification. These include:

Altar

Strictly defined, an altar is a place of sacrifice. Almost every church of any denomination would claim to have an altar. In the Church of the Nazarene, the altar--a kneeling altar--is viewed and used differently from the altar used by some other Christian denominations, where it is known primarily as the Lord's Table--the center for the observance of the Lord's Supper. In the Church of the Nazarene a communion table

serves as the Lord's Table. An additional piece of furniture in Nazarene churches is a kneeling altar--a place where the seeker or worshipper can encounter God in prayer.

Unless otherwise indicated, the use of the term "altar" will refer to the piece of furniture found across the front of the sanctuary in almost every Church of the Nazarene, at which individuals are invited to kneel for prayer.

Altar Call

The altar call refers to the public invitation extended to members of the congregation to come forward and kneel at the altar for prayer. This invitation usually takes place at the conclusion of a sermon.

Entire Sanctification

Entire sanctification is the cardinal doctrine of the Church of the Nazarene and distinguishes the Church of the Nazarene and other Wesleyan denominations from most other Christian denominations. Nazarenes believe God calls Christians to holy living marked by an act of God, subsequent to regeneration, which cleanses the heart from original sin and fills the individual with the Holy Spirit and love for God and fellow humans. Like regeneration, entire sanctification is an act of God's grace, not of human works. The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene defines entire sanctification as

that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.

It is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.

Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness. (Manual 30-31)

Open Altar

This term refers to a method of invitation and does not imply that there are times when the altar is closed. The term emphasizes the accessibility and availability of the altar as a place of prayer for all persons for any reason and at any time. The open altar invitation usually takes place in conjunction with the pastoral prayer in a Sunday morning worship service.

P.O.F.

Professions of Faith (P.O.F.) are reported each year in every pastor's Annual Report to the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene, and indicate the number of new believers who join a church by confession of faith in Jesus Christ rather than by letter of commendation from another denomination or by transfer from another Nazarene church.

Salvation

Salvation is “the gracious and judicial act of God by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believe on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior” (Manual 30). Salvation occurs when we confess our sins, repent, and by faith believe in Jesus Christ. The concomitants of salvation are justification, regeneration, and adoption (Manual, 30).

Methodology of the Study

A review of the related literature identified the biblical and historical roots of the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. To ascertain and describe the current use

of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, a researcher-designed, self-administered questionnaire was mailed to a random sample of 400 Nazarene pastors.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of senior/sole pastors who are pastoring congregations of the Church of the Nazarene in the United States with an average Sunday morning worship attendance of ten or more individuals. Pastors comprised the chosen population because "ultimately, each pastor and congregation decides on the importance of the altar and how it is to be used in their local church" (Parrott 185).

The total number of congregations of the Church of the Nazarene in the United States in 1996 was 5,132. When inactive churches and churches with an average worship attendance of less than ten were deleted, the population consisted of 4,719 churches. A random sample of 400 pastors of Nazarene congregations was computer generated by the Church Growth Division of the Church of the Nazarene International, Kansas City, MO. The results of the sample were then compared to the actual percentages of the population spread in regard to church size (see Table 3-1, Chapter 3), geographical location (see Table 3-2, Chapter 3), and church age (see Table 3-3, Chapter 3) to ascertain that the randomized sampling provided an appropriate representation of churches.

Variables

Several variables were identified, including size of congregation as measured by attendance, geographical region as measured by location within the eight educational regions of the Church of the Nazarene, USA, number of new converts as measured by P.O.F. additions to membership, pastor's length of ministry, growth rate of the church, and the age of the church.

Variables also included the various uses and frequency of use of the altar. Uses of the altar included specific altar invitations for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual help, open altar prayer times, and communion. Frequency of use included weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually or semi-annually, and never. Also identified as a variable was the primary use of the altar, as perceived by the pastor.

Instrumentation

The instrument used was a researcher-designed, self-administered questionnaire containing nineteen items. Questionnaires were mailed to subjects, and subsequent follow-up procedures followed to increase the response rate.

Data Collection

Standard survey procedures were followed in administering the survey instrument over a time period of eight weeks. Several steps were taken to help improve the response rate. Subjects were first informed by postcard of their selection and that the questionnaire would be arriving in a matter of days. The instrument was then mailed to each member of the sample along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and a numbered post card that respondents were to place in the mail when they returned the questionnaire. The numbered post card allowed the researcher to know which members of the sample were respondents. Follow-up procedures included sending another copy of the questionnaire to non-respondents.

Delimitations and Generalizability

The definition of "altar" delimits the study to those churches in the evangelical/holiness tradition which make use of a kneeling altar as opposed to those churches which make no use of a kneeling altar. The findings from this study may be

applicable to other Wesleyan-Armenian denominations in the holiness tradition and to the Church of the Nazarene worldwide.

Theological Presuppositions

God has created persons with the capacity and responsibility to respond to His grace. Throughout its history, the altar has been seen as a place where people respond to God's revelation. The altar is both a place to receive grace and a place to acknowledge grace. There is good reason to believe that the need for altars was revealed to man very early as basic in approaching God.

Biblical Origins of the Altar

A survey of the Old Testament reveals that the earliest altars were built and used for a variety of reasons. Long before the Mosaic instructions relating to worship, the altar had become an established meeting place between God and humanity. The first altar mentioned in the Old Testament, built by Noah, was a place of sacrifice where Noah heard God's promise and expressed gratitude to God for the salvation and deliverance he and his family experienced (Genesis 8:20-22).

In Abraham's life, the altar served as a sacred reminder of the times and places of special encounters with God. Abraham's first altar, built at Shechem (Genesis 12:7), was an altar of gratitude for God's guidance. Abraham's last altar was built to signify his total obedience to the will of God (Genesis 22:9).

The Old Testament also records the use of altars by Joshua (Joshua 8:30-31), most of the Judges and Prophets, including Balaam (Numbers 23:1,14,29), Gideon (Judges 6:24-27; 21:4), Samuel (1 Samuel 7:15-17), Saul (1 Samuel 14:35), David (1 Chronicles 21:22-26; 2 Samuel 24:18,19) and Elijah (1 Kings 18:31,32). These altars

were built and used as places of gratitude, obedience, sanctuary and refuge, worship, praise, prayer, repentance, surrender, consecration, and spiritual renewal. Most of all, Old Testament altars were places and symbols of humanity's personal encounter with God and memorials of past encounters with God.

In the New Testament, encounter with God is linked much less to a place and much more to a Person, Jesus Christ. The emphasis is upon the person of Jesus, rather than the place of the altar. Although New Testament references to the altar are few and no detailed instructions are given as to its use, Jesus recognized the altar as an essential element in church life (Matthew 5:23). Paul makes passing reference to the altar in 1 Corinthians 9:13.

The Altar and the Church of the Nazarene

The use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene reveals much about the church's theology. The church's use of the altar relates to its understanding of **Grace** and **Free Will**. Foundational to a proper understanding of grace is the realization that God takes the initiative in inviting us to experience His grace. **Free Will** refers to the fact that God has also created us with the personal capacity and responsibility to respond to His grace. The Gospel is invitational in nature and the altar in the Church of the Nazarene has historically been seen as a place where a seeker can respond to and receive God's grace. The church's historical use of the altar is linked to its **Theology of Evangelism**. In strong evangelical fashion, Nazarene sermons have consistently called for response on the part of the hearer, reflecting the church's understanding that both salvation and entire sanctification are crisis events, precipitated by God's grace and appropriated by

individual faith and obedience.

Finally, contemporary Nazarene use of the altar may say more about the church's **Theology of Worship** than it does about its **Theology of Evangelism**. A broader use of the altar may indicate that the altar is now used both in the church's liturgy of worship and in the church's evangelism.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for four reasons:

1. The study describes the biblical and historical roots of altar use in the Church of the Nazarene.
2. The study identifies and describes contemporary altar use in the Church of the Nazarene, contributing to the body of knowledge on the subject.
3. The study shows relationships between altar use and such variables as geographical location, church size, pastor's length of ministry, P.O.F. additions to membership, church growth, and church age.
4. The study reveals ways in which future studies can add to the body of knowledge pertaining to the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene.

Overview of Remainder of the Study

Four additional chapters, Appendices, and a list of Works Cited comprise the remainder of this dissertation. Chapter 2, a review of the related literature, contains a biblical and historical survey of the use of the altar which traces its use from the Old Testament to the traditional use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. Chapter 3 deals with the design of the study and describes the instrumentation used in the study. Chapter 4 identifies the significant findings of the study as they relate to the research questions. Chapter 5 interprets the data offering possible conclusions, implications, improvements, and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a survey of the related research and literature to furnish a context for the present study. A historical approach to exploring the use of the altar has been chosen as the most advantageous way to deal with the subject. This survey traces the use of the altar from Old Testament times to the historic use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene.

Old Testament Origins

The Old Testament is filled with altars--built by a variety of persons, in a variety of places, and for a variety of reasons. Almost every Old Testament leader built an altar at which they experienced special encounters with God. In the midst of the variety, one constant remained: the altar was always a place of sacrifice.

The first altar mentioned in the Bible is the one built by Noah after bringing his family out of the ark. This altar was the first structure constructed after the flood. Noah's use of the altar symbolized it as a place to acknowledge promise and to express gratitude to God for the salvation and deliverance he and his family experienced (Genesis 8:20-22). That first altar was also a place of sacrifice. Noah brought an offering of "some of every kind of clean animal." It appears that Noah wanted to do more than *tell* God how thankful he was. He wanted to *show* God how thankful he was. Noah's altar was also a place of promise, for it was there that God promised never again would the earth be destroyed by water.

The next mention of an altar comes during the time of Abraham. In Abraham's life, the altar served as a sacred reminder of the times and places of special encounters

with God. In chapters twelve and thirteen of Genesis, Abraham's altar is mentioned four times (12:7,8; 13:4,18). Leslie Parrott writes, "With the exception of his moral compromise in Egypt, Abraham's entire spiritual sojourn can be traced by the altars he built" (Genesis 12:7; 8-9; 13:4,18; 22:2, 9,13-14; 26:23-25) (Parrott 36).

Abraham's first altar, built at Shechem (Genesis 12:7), was an altar of gratitude for God's guidance. Near Bethel, Abraham constructed a second altar (12:8-9) that he visits again in 13:4, after the fiasco in Egypt. At least two more altars are significant in Abraham's life (13:8; 22:9), the last being an altar of total obedience. Isaac (Genesis 26:25) and Jacob (Genesis 33:20; 35:1-7) also used altars.

Good reason exists to believe that the need for altars was revealed to man very early as basic in approaching God. Long before the Mosaic instructions relating to worship, the altar had become an established meeting place between God and humanity. These altars were built at places where the patriarchs encountered God. "The altars became memorials of those encounters and also served as places of sacrifice and recommitment" (Lint 10).

The Exodus marks an important development in the use of the altar. At Mt. Sinai Moses received specific instructions about the construction of altars. Materials for building altars included earth (Exodus 20:24), stone (20:25), and wood (27:1-8). God commanded Moses to make the altar of burnt offering for the tabernacle exactly as dictated (Exodus 25:9). In addition to the altar for sacrifice, God directed Moses to make "an altar of incense" (Exodus 30:1), also called a "golden altar" (Exodus 39:38, Num. 4:11). Exodus 17:15 and 24:4 record specific instances of Moses' use of an altar.

Following the Exodus, God instructed the Hebrews to build a central place of worship. With the building of the tabernacle, an altar served two purposes: the place where sacrifices were offered and the place where incense was burned. The altar stood as the most prominent feature of the wilderness Tabernacle and later of the Temple in Jerusalem. The original altar was the central point in all Old Testament service (Carradine 72).

Of particular relevance is the strong exhortation found in Leviticus 6:12, “The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out.” The command appears again in 6:13, “The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.” God’s intention for His people obviously included the continuous use of the altar.

The Old Testament also records the use of altars by Joshua (Joshua 8:30-31), most of the Judges and Prophets, including Balaam (Numbers 23:1,14,29), Gideon (Judges 6:24-27; 21:4), Samuel (1 Samuel 7:15-17), Saul (1 Samuel 14:35), David (1 Chronicles 21:22-26; 2 Samuel 24:18,19) and Elijah (1 Kings 18:31,32).

This brief survey of the Old Testament reveals that the earliest altars were many and varied. They were built and used as places of gratitude, obedience, sanctuary and refuge (Exodus 21:14; 1 Kings 1:50, 2:28), worship, praise, prayer, repentance, surrender, consecration, and spiritual renewal. Old Testament altars were places of sacrifice. Around those altars worshippers made atonement for sins, sought forgiveness, made commitments, and renewed and reaffirmed previously made commitments (Exodus 17:15-16; Joshua 22:26-27). Most of all, Old Testament altars were places and symbols of humanity’s personal encounter with God, and memorials of past encounters with God.

New Testament Emphasis on the Person of Jesus

In the New Testament, encounter with God is linked much less to a place and much more to a Person, Jesus Christ. The emphasis is upon the person of Jesus, rather than the place of the altar. Although New Testament references to the altar are few and no detailed instructions are given as to its use, Jesus recognized the altar as an essential element in church life (Matthew 5:23). Paul makes passing reference to the altar in 1 Corinthians 9:13.

The evangelistic nature of the New Testament furnishes the Biblical support for the origin of the kneeling altar. Although no recorded instances of altar calls exist in the New Testament, the spirit and principle of the evangelistic invitation is as old as the Bible itself (Thompson 4). A reading of the New Testament reveals that response was called for, and often demanded. Early Christians expected response. They challenged unbelievers to do something with the message they had heard. Green explains, "The apostles were not shy about asking men to decide for or against the God who had decided for them. They expected results. They challenged men to do something about the message they had heard. 'What shall we do?' was the response of the crowd on the Day of Pentecost. The answer is clear enough in the pages of the New Testament" (Green 151).

Early Church to the Great Awakening: Altar as Symbol of the Presence of Christ

Accurately tracing the development of the altar in the Christian Church is difficult. The altar of the early church was certainly not the kneeling altar of modern evangelistic flavor. In the early church, the altar began to be viewed less in Old Testament terms as a place of personal encounter with God, and more as the symbol of

Christ's presence. Cyril Pocknee writes that "the starting point for any consideration of the Christian Altar is the Holy Eucharist in the Upper Room on the first Maundy Thursday" (33). Writing primarily for an Anglican audience, Pocknee presents a full-scale study of the historical development of the Christian altar as the Lord's Table, "the chief ornament of Christian worship," showing that the altar's development was a long and complicated process, but that it served a primarily sacramental function as the Lord's Table. "The altar symbolizes Christ in the midst of His Church" (Pocknee 14).

The use of the altar in conjunction with a public invitation is not seen in the early church, primarily because the public invitation fell into disuse during the early history of the Church. R. Alan Streett reminds us that the "first-century preachers of the gospel called on sinners to present themselves publicly as candidates for repentance, faith, and baptism" (81). However, when the Roman Empire became Christianized during the reign of Constantine in the fourth century, the need to evangelize and appeal for people to be saved was no longer felt. "The public invitation, for the most part, fell by the wayside" (Streett 81).

With the rise of Roman Catholicism, history entered the period known as the Dark Ages.

Under Roman Catholicism, sinners were saved by the church, not by the atoning death of Christ. Salvation was obtained by the observance of seven sacraments, and not through a relationship with the living God. For the next several centuries, evangelism was relegated to a place of obscurity until the light of the Reformation shone through in the sixteenth century. (Streett 82)

The Reformation, with Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin as its leaders, rekindled the spirit of evangelism. "Though history does not record any of the reformers issuing the

kind of public invitation practiced today, they did conclude their messages by calling sinners to Christ through personal repentance and faith. Those who heeded the appeal were dealt with privately, and later were presented before the congregation to receive communion" (Streett 82). Streett says this "was the first step in restoring the public invitation to its New Testament place of prominence" (83).

The Great Awakening: Precursor of the Public Invitation

With the exception of Thompson's work, which traces the historical, biblical, and theological bases for the public invitation, few definitive works exist regarding the historical aspects of the public invitation. Thompson provides a good survey of the historical development of the public invitation in which he asserts that "the Great Awakening produced a milieu out of which the public invitation emerged" (51). Among the factors that contributed to the rise of the public invitation was a movement from the institutional church toward individualism and an emphasis upon personal salvation. Preaching was urgent and called hearers to register their decision for Christ. As troubled souls sought out the evangelist and the pastor for counsel, new procedures were needed to handle the seekers.

In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the Great Awakening took place. This unprecedented religious phenomenon wrought a tremendous impact in America and laid the foundation for the emergence of the public invitation. Thompson asserts that the public invitation is a uniquely American phenomenon (25). During the Great Awakening, bold preachers used new measures to win converts.

To comprehend how the public invitation emerged, understanding of the theological and cultural changes that evolved as a result of the Great Awakening is necessary. The origins of the public invitation are rooted in the Great Awakening and in personalities such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley, and later with Dwight L. Moody, and Charles Finney. The Great Awakening, which produced some of history's greatest preachers, marked a "turning from institutional Christianity to an individualism which called forth a verdict for personal faith" (Thompson 29). Prior to the Great Awakening most preachers expected little overt response from the congregation. The preaching which characterized the Great Awakening emphasized individual responsibility and called for response. "It is estimated that forty thousand colonists, or twenty-five percent of the population of America, were won to Christ through the preaching of such men as Edwards . . . and other leaders of the Great Awakening" (Streett 90).

The preaching of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) perhaps did more to bring the Great Awakening to America than any other human factor. Edwards called sinners to repent and place their faith in Jesus Christ. He did not call people to the front of the church, but requested they meet with him privately for spiritual counsel. "Edwards brought new believers forward to confess Christ for the first time at the communion service" (Streett 89).

Thompson theorizes that Jonathan Edwards' contribution to the rise of the public invitation was that his preaching offered "a theology which moved from institutionalism to personal faith . . . which majored on biblical doctrines [such] as the sovereignty of God and the sinfulness of man . . . that expected a person to respond emotionally as well as

volitionally, and finally . . . that compelled the hearer to seek spiritual aid from the preacher" (44).

As a result of his powerful preaching, Edwards was compelled to counsel distressed penitents during, as well as after, the worship services. In the growth and development of the public invitation and the altar service, Jonathan Edwards' personalized Calvinism led the way toward the method that called people forward to an inquiry room or prayer room for spiritual counseling. This combination of emotionalized revival preaching and pastoral care produced a milieu out of which the public invitation emerged (Thompson 44).

George Whitefield (1714-1770), perhaps the most popular speaker of his day, traveled to America from his native England to preach on several occasions. Whitefield's method of invitation was similar to Edwards' and was the standard procedure during the early eighteenth century. Whitefield moved thousands to repentance, "but left them where they were to find solace for their souls" (Coleman 20). After preaching the gospel and exhorting people to repent and receive Christ, he urged them to make an appointment to see him in private (Streett 90), an invitation which many took opportunity to accept. Whitefield and Edwards never gave public invitations for sinners to come forward for prayer (Parrott 91), but their evangelistic methods were the forerunner of the altar call.

At the time of America's Great Awakening, Great Britain was also experiencing revival. What God was accomplishing in America through Jonathan Edwards, He was accomplishing in England through John Wesley (1703-1791), who carried the gospel to the heart of the common people of England. Streett offers that John Wesley was an

innovator when it came to the use of the public invitation. "All of his sermons ended with an appeal for listeners to come to Christ" (Streett 91).

Parrott contends that John Wesley's Arminian emphasis on free will and personal responsibility tended to lead the way toward an open altar where seekers gathered in the company of friends and spiritual leaders who prayed for them to receive a personal experience of salvation (93).

Streett credits Wesley with the innovation of the mourners' bench or anxious seat. "In each meeting house there was reserved a pew where those convicted of their sins and anxious about their soul's salvation could come to receive prayer and spiritual counsel. As the mourner's bench was located at the front of the house, those desiring help needed to make their way forward" (Streett 92).

The Great Awakening marked a change, not only in the theology of evangelism, but also in its methodology. As sinners sought help and deliverance, preachers devised methods for counseling with the seekers. Some penitents followed the preachers to their homes. These meetings became inquiry meetings. If the convicted penitent cried out for mercy in a service, the people gathered around and prayed for their salvation. The gathering of persons in a designated place represented a significant development in the emergence of the public invitation. Soon new measures were devised and employed to allow for immediate response. At about the same time that the use of the altar call was gaining popularity, two other measures arose concurrently and were being employed by Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) and Charles G. Finney (1792-1875).

Moody's Inquiry Room and Finney's Anxious Seat

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, D. L. Moody was making use of "a two-step progressive invitation. He first urged all who wanted to be saved to stand . . . Those standing were then invited into the inquiry room for counsel" (Streett 98).

After a sermon Mr. Moody "drew the net," expecting immediate decisions for Christ. He would ask those who decided there and then to receive Jesus Christ as personal Saviour to say out loud "will," or to raise a hand or rise to their feet, actions that publicly clinched and confessed their inner decision of heart and will. (Fitt 60)

Moody's inquiry room would then be introduced by an announcement at the close of the sermon inviting anyone present who wanted to discuss religion to remain after the benediction. The inquiry room was a place where those whose concern had been aroused by the message could come for further information and receive counseling in a quiet setting. Moody did not make final pleas for converts in the mass meeting. Rather than subject his hearers to high pressure during the meeting, those interested would be invited to come to the inquiry room.

Charles G. Finney's contribution to the public invitation was the "Anxious Seat." Finney experimented with many types of public invitations. He originally preferred the raising of hands as an indication of need. Then he began to ask those anxious about their souls to stand at their seats as a sign of a repentant heart, a practice he continued until 1822 (Streett 95). Finney found the greatest obstacle for many people to overcome was their fear of being known as an "anxious inquirer". He knew by intuition that the best way to overcome this fear was to compel people to make an open and public stand for Christ, and compared coming to the anxious seat to baptism in the early church. It was a public commitment of being on the Lord's side (Parrott 125).

During his highly acclaimed Rochester, New York Crusade in 1830, Finney began to make exclusive use of the anxious seat. Though not the first to employ this method, Finney certainly popularized its use. Many pastors cooperating in the evangelistic campaign began using the anxious seat during their regular Sunday and midweek services (Streett 96). The anxious seat swiftly became the invitational method of choice among the Baptists (Thompson 118).

Although the anxious seat was identified with the altar, the terms are not synonymous, for the anxious seat was more closely linked to the inquiry room. Streett explains,

(it) was not an end in itself. After the close of a meeting, Finney would gather the penitents together in a separate room where he and fellow pastors could answer their questions, correct their erroneous doctrines, and lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This room was called the 'inquiry room'. (96)

Later in his ministry Finney would abandon the use of the anxious seat and simply invite seekers to come forward into the aisles and kneel down at the front of the auditorium (Streett 96).

This "new method" of evangelism was not accepted in all quarters. In 1843, John W. Nevin published a scathing attack on the anxious bench. The Anxious Bench claimed that this "new measure" was a "heresy" which obstructed the progress of true godliness and was "unworthy of confidence" (3). Although admitting that the anxious bench was popular and seemingly successful, Nevin argued that it required "no spiritual power to use the Anxious Bench with effect" (16), and that the bench created "a false issue for the conscience" (29), unsettled true seriousness (31), usurps the place of the Cross, and

results in widespread, lasting spiritual mischief. Nevin also termed any public invitation of this sort as "quackery" (32).

Finney was without question a leading contributor to the use of the public invitation as a method of evangelism and particularly the development and widespread use of the anxious seat. "The altar," writes Parrott, "was just one small step away" (127).

Genesis of the American Innovation of the Public Altar

Evangelistic invitations fall into two major categories: those which call for a delayed response, including special appointments, special classes and the inquiry room; and those which call upon sinners to make an immediate decision for Christ (Streett 169). Some time in the nineteenth century the altar call and use of the public altar became a popular evangelistic method of calling upon sinners to make an immediate decision for Christ.

Although broad consensus exists for declaring the kneeling altar a unique American phenomenon (Coleman, Parrott, *et. el.*), no such consensus exists on the origin of the use of the altar as an evangelistic tool associated with a public invitation. Some say the altar was used for the first time in America in 1807 or 1808 in a crowded New York chapel (N. Bangs). Others say the first altar call was made in Virginia or Maryland (Coleman 22), or at a camp meeting towards the close of the eighteenth century (Johnson 17, McLendon 16).

In his book History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Bangs writes of the use of the altar in Early Methodism and credits Aaron Hunt with the first use of the public altar:

In 1806 and 1807 he (Seth Crowell) was stationed in the city of New York, under the charge of Rev. Aaron Hunt. Here a revival of religion

commenced such, I believe, as had never before been seen in that city, and Brother Crowell was one of the most active instruments by which it was promoted. It was during this powerful revival that the practice of inviting penitent sinners to come to the altar for prayer was first introduced. The honor of doing this, if I am rightly informed, belongs to Brother Aaron Hunt, who resorted to it to prevent the confusion arising from praying for them in different parts of the church at the same time.

Robert Coleman suggests that the use of the altar call originated in Maryland.

"What might have been the first public invitation of this type was given at a little Methodist church in Maryland in 1798" (Coleman 22). Coleman also suggests that the altar call "became distinguishable as a pattern of worship near the close of the eighteenth century" (20). Z. T. Johnson credits the innovation and institution of the altar to the brush arbor meetings of the great revival periods in America (17). According to McLendon, the first recorded use of the altar in connection with a public invitation occurred in 1799, when at a Methodist camp meeting at Red River, Kentucky, an altar was erected in front of the pulpit "designed as a place for penitents, where they might be collected together for prayer and instruction" (McLendon 16).

Wherever it originated, the altar's value was that it allowed an opportunity for those needing spiritual help to indicate their desire for prayer by going forward, where they could receive immediate help. Taylor writes, "It symbolized that one must be willing to take a stand for Christ, by stepping out to go to the altar. It proved that the seeker was ready to take decisive action in order to become a follower of Christ" (429). According the Streett, the altar's value was threefold. "It gave those needing spiritual help an opportunity to indicate their need by going forward. The altar was also a symbol that one must be willing to take a public stand for Christ. Finally, it was tangible proof of the seeker's willingness to take decisive action in order to be saved" (95).

Streett claims, "On both sides of the Atlantic, the public invitation gained gradual acceptance and use" (93). It would be up to the camp meetings and the Methodists to perfect the use of the altar call.

Camp Meetings and the Mourner's Bench

The camp meetings of the nineteenth century defined the development of the use of the kneeling altar. Thompson believes that "the altar call and the rise of the camp meeting came almost simultaneously" (84).

Parrott cites the mourner's bench used in the camp meetings that followed the spiritual explosion at Cane Ridge, KY, in 1801 (30). It was called the mourner's bench both because it was often a crude plank too rough to be given the name of altar and because the seeking was so rugged and the conviction so violent that wails of remorse filled the air.

The mourner's bench soon became the center of interest in camp meetings. By 1810, diagrams of equipment in a typical camp meeting floor plan showed a mourner's bench in front of the pulpit (Taylor 419). This area was known by the pious as the "altar". To the scoffers, on the other hand, it was called the "pen" (Thompson 91).

The altar service formed the core of the camp meeting revival and an altar call was given at the close of each major service, at which time seekers for spiritual help came forward (Taylor 419). Thompson explains the typical procedure at the close of the camp meeting sermon:

In inviting people to come forward, a pattern was soon set. A bench at the front, or that altar to which some came to partake of communion came to be the logical term, hence the terminology 'mourner's bench', 'anxious seat' or 'altar call'. There were times that sinners were invited to come forward

as the first few rows were vacated so that there would be a place to pray.
(85-86)

The term "altar" undoubtedly reflected the early use of the communion rail for a mourner's bench. "At times sinners would be invited to come to the communion rail for prayer from which was derived the association of 'the altar call'" (Thompson 90). Parrott asserts that the practice in some churches of inviting communicants forward to receive the Lord's Supper at a communion rail was but one small step from a new evangelism procedure of asking seekers to come forward and kneel at the rail.

It was this association of the altar and the coming forward of the people for Communion that gave birth to the "altar call." In most churches, a rail was built to separate the people from the sacred altar, or the sacred table on which the Communion elements were placed. This rail was a natural focus for coming to Christ or seeking a spiritual experience. (Parrott 100)

Coleman provides an understanding of the early relationship between the altar and the communion rail:

Instead of the "mourner's bench," sometimes distressed persons would be invited to come to the communion rail for prayer from which was derived the association of "the altar call". This was particularly applicable to those churches which had an altar constructed at the front of the sanctuary where communicants could receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. (24)

Regardless of where the use of the altar call originated, it was the camp meetings that made its use popular and widespread.

The Early Methodists and the Altar

The camp meetings the Presbyterians had initiated and later abandoned due to emotional excesses, the Methodists embraced and were more than happy to use as a most formidable weapon to win the frontier (Thompson 89). In the years between 1800 and 1810, the altar call or mourner's bench as well as the camp meeting became standard for

Methodism. If early camp meetings popularized the altar call, Methodists legitimized it as a denominational emphasis and "brought the altar into common acceptance for many thousands of people" (Parrott 30). Among the Methodists, the altar call soon became virtually a universal practice (Coleman 25).

As Wesley's Methodists modified their methodology to meet the needs of their congregations, the altar call became the method of choice for dealing most effectively with those who needed spiritual help (Thompson 76). Regardless of its origin, the public altar was so effective a means of bringing sinners into a saving knowledge of Christ that many Methodist churches installed one as a permanent fixture (Taylor 419). "They had an altar in every church. Thousands were saved and great hosts were sanctified at these Methodist altars, especially during the half century before the Civil War" (Parrott 31). The itinerant Methodist clergy preached for decision. Taylor writes, "At first the altar was placed in local churches during revival seasons. However it soon became a permanent part of the sanctuary furnishings because it was associated with the perennial mission of the church to win souls" (419).

Parrott reveals how the mourner's bench soon began to be identified with the altar:

The mourner's bench, a crude, backless bench placed forward for the convenience of the seekers, became an important new piece of church furniture. The mourner's bench was the natural result of an appeal at the end of the sermon for sinners to be saved and for believers to be sanctified. Sinners and believers knelt at the mourner's bench for special encounters with God. (Parrott 99)

Carradine addresses the connection between the communion rail and the altar:

As the Methodists began to succeed, they began to organize. From their simple services in barns and schoolhouses, they went into their newly-built chapels and churches. Following the example of the Church of England, from which they had originated, they built the communion rail, with its

step for kneeling, just before the pulpit, and called the intervening space the altar. In times of revival this was a most convenient rallying place to invite the penitent and to gather around and pray for him. (90)

Bangs shows the relationship between the communion rail, the mourner's bench, and the kneeling altar in nineteenth century Methodism:

Kneeling for prayer was especially important at the Communion service, for Methodist churches were equipped with a Communion or altar rail, even though the central altar table in Anglicanism gave way in Methodist churches to a central pulpit, Puritan style. In the patterned evangelism developed by Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) and others, the scheduled "protracted meeting," or revival, had an "anxious seat." This was for "seekers"—sinners "under conviction" who went to the "mourner's bench" to pray their confession of sin and, hopefully, profess new faith. In Methodism, the Anglican altar rail became simply "the altar." Then the Methodist "mourner's bench" (a front pew) and "altar rail" merged. In the revival meeting . . . the goal was the conversion of sinners as they "went to the altar." (C. Bangs 31)

Coleman also attributes the altar call as Methodist's own unique contribution to invitational methods and addresses the connection between the altar and the Lord's Supper.

As a distinctive technique [the altar call] originated during the Second Great Awakening in America, when distressed persons were invited to come to the Communion rail for prayer. Since the altar had long been used to administer the Lord's Supper, it seemed an ideal place for sinners also to make their supplications known to the Lord. In time it became an indispensable part of most Methodist preaching services and through them has now become an accepted pattern in other evangelical groups. (Coleman, "Preaching" 49)

Carradine affirms the value and effectiveness of the altar call in nineteenth century Methodism:

When we consider the fact that more souls in modern days have been saved at the altar than by any other method, we believe in it with our whole heart, and shall use this method on every fitting opportunity, until we can find some other method by which more souls can be led into the light. We shall say to those who criticize this method, what J. S. Inskip

said to those who said, "We do not believe in your methods of doing it." He replied, "I do not like your methods of not doing it." (90-91)

Early Use of the Altar in the Church of the Nazarene

By 1900 the altar call was established procedure for issuing a public invitation.

As the twentieth century began, the public invitation was practiced in one form or another in most evangelical churches throughout America, with the exception of those churches which were thoroughly Calvinistic in doctrine and Episcopal and Lutheran churches (Thompson 188).

The altar was an integral evangelistic tool as well as a prominent piece of furniture in the Church of the Nazarene at the organization of the denomination in 1908. The public altar was well suited to the strong evangelical beginnings of the Church of the Nazarene with the camp-meeting-like atmosphere of Nazarene services. Originally a Methodist pastor, Phineas Bresee, founder of the Church of the Nazarene, was familiar and comfortable with the use of the altar in a public invitation, having been converted at a Methodist altar at the age of seventeen (C. Bangs 30).

The public invitation was widely accepted and fully systematized in most evangelical churches by the time Bresee was born. And the Methodist mourner's bench had become the Methodist altar, universally accepted in the Methodist church by the time Bresee became a circuit rider in Iowa. Among Methodists the invitation was warmly referred to as the altar call; and the sequence of invitation--seekers coming forward, united prayer, victory, testimonies, and shouting--was referred to as the altar service. The pulpit, Communion table, and altar rail had become integral parts of Methodist evangelism, each sustaining the other in a symbiotic relationship." (Parrott 129)

The altar played an important role in early Nazarene religious experience (C. Bangs 236). Bangs implies that early Nazarene use of the altar reflected the early

Methodist evangelical use. "It was the rail at which seekers knelt to pray for pardon and purity" (C. Bangs 236).

For Catholics, Anglicans, and early Methodists, the altar was the table on which the eucharistic bread and wine were placed, and the railing was an "altar rail." For Bresee, the rail itself was the altar. He expressed his views in an editorial. "In the Prelatical sense," he wrote, "we have no altar . . . What we sometimes call an altar is simply a 'mourner's bench' or a 'penitent form,' a place where those who are seekers after God can have special opportunity to pray, and be prayed with and for." (C. Bangs 236)

The Nazarene Altar Comes of Age

The importance of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene was often reflected in the literature produced by the denomination's publishing house. Over the years several Nazarene writers addressed the importance and use of the altar. Oke offers that "there is one distinctive architectural identity in Nazarene churches; not the seating, not the lighting, not the design of the sanctuary - but the altar" (i). Parrott concurs: "The fact is, there would be no Church of the Nazarene without the altar and the altar call" (141).

J. B. Chapman, in his address "All Out For Souls," said of the early days of the church, "The mourners' bench was the only indispensable piece of furniture in our meeting houses" (108). Chapman would refer to the altar as "the birthplace of spiritual life in our church" (108).

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, editorials and articles in the Herald of Holiness, the official publication of the Church of the Nazarene, consistently referred to the use of the altar in the Church. Seldom did a single issue go to print without containing some article or editorial referring to the church's use of the altar.

The following quotations, all taken from articles found in the Herald of Holiness in the 1920's, illustrate that the altar was almost exclusively seen as a place for sinners to be converted and believers to be entirely sanctified:

I am a great believer in the old-fashioned altar or mourner's bench, and think the church which has discarded it has committed a very grave error. But I am wondering if we have not allowed our altar services to degenerate, and perhaps have lost sight, in a small degree, of the real purpose of the altar service. Now the altar is a place where the seeker is to kneel and seek God in prayer until he knows he has really received pardon or purity, as the case may be. (The Degeneration of the Altar Service 2)

It has been my privilege to attend several revival meetings during the past few months, where some of the greatest evangelists in the Nazarene movement, and whom I sincerely believe to be the greatest expounders of the gospel in the world today, have had charge of the services. I have heard some of the greatest sermons that God could send through lips of clay. At these times I have seen the congregation melt under the power of the Holy Spirit. The altars have been lined with seekers. (Baxter 6)

Giving altar calls and attempting to hold altar services when the revival spirit is not on, and the fire of God is not falling, is like trying to weld iron without heat. (Fanning)

Since the night when I knelt at a Methodist Protestant mourner's bench, on the eastern shore of Maryland, as a seeker of salvation, more than fifty years ago, I have been a believer in the altar as a means of approach to God for inquiring and convicted souls. . . . the problems of the present confront us, and how to make the altar service today the power it ought to be to get sinners genuinely saved and believers truly sanctified is a burning question. (Cowan)

First, what is the purpose of having an altar service? I would suggest the following reasons: First, that those desiring to be saved from their sins should come forward and kneel, thus confessing publicly their need and their desire for a Savior. Such public manifestations are an insult to Satan, and a great uplift to the seeking soul. Secondly, when one comes and kneels at the altar, he manifests publicly a desire for all true Christians present to pray for him that he may be blessed at that very hour. Such a humble request must surely appeal to every child of God. Thirdly, it affords an opportunity for instruction. While thus kneeling the penitent

can express to his instructor his difficulties, and get the advice he needs. Then he can be taught how to repent, and how to consecrate, and how to believe. (Watson 10)

Some addressed not only the primary purpose of the altar, but also the danger of popularizing the altar:

We are perfectly in harmony with, and favorable to the convenience of the altar or the "old-fashioned mourners bench" on clean, clear cut, definite Scriptural lines when convicted, hungry penitents can find eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . We have always entertained the idea that the altar was the place for folks truly awakened by the power of the Holy Ghost in answer to the preaching of the word and mighty prevailing prayer. . . . If we are consciously or unconsciously leaving the impression that a well beaten path to and from the altar is the type and ideal of Christian experience and the final analysis of obedience to God we are fooling the public, displeasing the divine, [and] misleading souls. (Lienard)

Win Them, published in 1933, was a manual on personal evangelism. In it Jarrette Aycock targets the altar as a convenient place to pray and "come to Jesus". Aycock also includes a section on "Working at the Altar", in which he gave practical advice to personal evangelists. These individuals were encouraged to work around the altar with those who came forward to pray. The use of the altar as an evangelistic tool is taken for granted in this volume.

The Conference on Evangelism, held in Kansas City in 1947, resulted in the publication of All Out for Souls, a compilation of the addresses delivered at the conference. Two addresses were included in a chapter titled "The Altar Service" (103-110). The addresses, delivered by Fred Thomas and H. N. Dickerson, both dealt with practical aspects of giving effective altar calls. Dickerson went so far as to claim that the use of the altar spells the "difference between a spiritual church and a worldly church" (107).

In the 1950's Jarrett Aycock, an evangelist for twenty-seven years and district superintendent for ten years, wrote two brief books published by the Nazarene Publishing House which addressed the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. Drawing the Net, published in 1953, contained suggestions on how to give an effective invitation. It was taken for granted that the invitation would be in the form of an altar call. In Invite Them, published in 1956, Aycock gave suggestions and instructions for personal work during the invitation. The book, which sought to develop altar workers, addressed the idea of a few Christian people going out into the audience during the altar call, approaching people about their souls, and inviting individuals to come and seek the Lord at the altar. This was to be done during the invitation.

At about the same time, other authors from the holiness tradition were publishing works addressing altar work (Strong). These volumes usually began with a defense of the public altar invitation. They viewed the altar as a place of immediate opportunity for conversion and entire sanctification, as well as a convenient place to pray and an opportunity for public testimony. Each volume included practical helps. Most often they described the altar as a place of crisis: salvation, sanctification, acute problems, etc.

In 1954, Nazarene Publishing House released We Have an Altar, a manual on altar work written by Norman Oke. Written for clergy and laity alike, We Have an Altar informed and educated the church at large of the function and use of the altar. In it Oke challenges the church to "keep the altar central."

An article titled "The Altar" in the Herald of Holiness, reveals that by 1956 the altar was still seen primarily, though not exclusively, as a place for sinners to be converted and believers sanctified:

A real holiness church and an altar are inseparable. They must go together or the loss will be tragic. Without question, every Church of the Nazarene, or every real orthodox church, should have a specially made altar, situated in the front part of the church where all can gather together around and lift their voices to God. . . . It is the proper place for the sinner's penitent cry, the backslider's returning plea, the groans of the believing child of God as he deplores the carnal mind, casting his all upon the altar and beseeching God, the Holy Spirit, to burn out the dross. It is the proper place for the saints to pray for renewal of strength and for blessings to perform the work of the Lord. It is the place for sweet communion with God and a closer fellowship with the household of faith. (W. T. Johnson 3-4)

The Altar in Changing Times

In 1960, V. H. Lewis, executive secretary of the Department of Evangelism for the Church of the Nazarene, authored The Church Winning Souls, written as a textbook for the laity. Lewis addressed the importance of the altar by stressing the importance of altar workers and encouraging the laity to "assist the evangelist during the altar call" (34). One important development of this book was that in it Lewis showed that evangelism in the local church can take place in many ways, not just by an altar service.

The accentuation on the involvement of the laity during the altar service marked a emphasis on the "priesthood of believers." The 1970's and 1980's would see the emphasis evolve from a focus on the laity 's involvement with seekers around the altar to a focus on personal evangelism outside the walls of the church. The most conspicuous Nazarene proponent of this personal evangelism strategy has been Charles Shaver of Nazarene Theological Seminary.

The desire on the part of some Nazarenes to broaden the use of the altar became evident in the 1970's and 1980's. One Nazarene wrote in The Preacher's Magazine, "Our church altar should be frequented by both sinner and saint. We must remove the stigma or 'invisible shield' surrounding our altars if we want them to complement our services.

Maybe we have cultivated the idea that only liars, murders, or thieves should ever pray at the altar” (Yoesel 19).

Jarrett Aycock, quoted in a book on evangelism produced by Nazarene Publishing House in the 1970’s, also advocated a broader use of the altar.

God has helped me to help thousands find help at the altar on what I call “The Fourth Proposition.” We invite people forward to be saved, reclaimed, and filled with the Spirit; and I sometimes wonder if we should not have a fourth proposition inviting Christians to the altar to get help. (Wiseman 43)

Aycock went on to say that he would invite Christians to the altar with these words:

How many Christians are there here who would say: “Preacher, I am not backslidden. I love God and I am trying to hold on to Him, but I will admit I have lost ground. I have seen better days spiritually.” You definitely admit you are not where you once were, and where you ought to be and want to be. Would you be willing to come and kneel and let us gather around and pray for you? (Wiseman 43)

Softly and Tenderly

In 1989, Leslie Parrott authored Softly and Tenderly, the most comprehensive work on the altar to date in the Church of the Nazarene. Parrott traces the idea of the altar through the Old and New Testaments and church history, including the English and American reformers who brought back the use of the altar. Parrott also brought together six kinds of focus groups to identify the issues and concerns about the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. The groups consisted of denominational headquarters executives, pastors, Christian university faculty and administrators, laypersons, district superintendents, and full-time evangelists.

Parrott's informal research among the six response groups identified issues related to the use and perception of the altar and indicated a difference of concept and opinion regarding the altar between pastors of faster-growing churches and pastors of slower-growing churches, each with over 200 members (159f). The basic difference between faster and slower-growing churches was in attitude and concept, not function.

The basic difference between the way the altar is used in the faster-growing churches and the slower-growing churches is an attitude, a way of thinking about the altar. Some churches see the altar as a place of last desperation, while others see it as a convenient place to talk with God, in His house, surrounded by His people. (Parrott 163)

Parrott also found that pastors of slow-growing churches had little altar anticipation, while pastors in fast-growing churches were able to articulate their concept of the altar and evangelism, had a mental picture of the entire altar service, were enthusiastic about their outreach programs, and had made the altar a friendly place. "Fast growing churches have found ways to eliminate any stigma in going to the altar" (162).

Parrott summarizes a list of issues and concerns regarding the altar in the Church of the Nazarene (157-158) and concludes his book with a survey of "four different approaches pastors have actually used successfully in making their altars centers of spiritual activity" (Parrott 186). Parrott titled the four approaches "A Cycle of Evangelism," "From Reaction to Response," "A Bold Response," and "Tradition is Beautiful." One common characteristic in each of the four approaches is the use of the "Open Altar," which cultivates "a new attitude toward the altar as a place of love and victory instead of an unfriendly place where people publicly admitted their failures" (Parrott 187).

Development of the Open Altar

Perhaps the most important issue raised by Parrott concerns the development and use of the open altar in the Church of the Nazarene. Public invitations, or altar calls, in the Church of the Nazarene have traditionally been issued for a variety of reasons. Most commonly these invitations were associated with opportunities to repent of sin and pray for salvation or entire sanctification, and took place at the end of the sermon. Invitations at the end of a sermon also went out to come to the altar to pray for healing, to rededicate lives to Christ, to experience deeper consecration or higher levels of commitment to Jesus Christ, to consider full-time Christian service or ministry, and to commit to Christian stewardship--an appeal to pledge to tithe, for example.

Use of the open altar in the Church of the Nazarene developed in the early 1970's. Bill Burch, pastor of Long Beach First Church of the Nazarene, Long Beach, CA, and Ponder Gilliland, pastor of Bethany First Church of the Nazarene, Bethany, OK, were among the pioneers of the concept of the open altar, inviting their respective congregations to make use of the altar during the time of pastoral prayer on Sunday morning. The open altar was an innovation in the use of the altar and may have had its genesis in Ponder Gilliland's use of "directed prayer" at Long Beach First Church of the Nazarene in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Directed prayer involved the pastor leading or directing the congregation in prayer during the pastoral prayer in the Sunday morning worship service. Bill Burch, who followed Gilliland as pastor at Long Beach and continued the directed prayer on Sunday mornings, found taking the next step easy. Prior to the directed prayer one Sunday morning in the early 1970s, Burch said from the pulpit, "I've had a feeling that you'd like to be at the altar during prayer." He then invited those

who would like to pray at the altar to come forward and was amazed at the response to the invitation. Burch referred to the new invitation as “moments of the open heart and open altar.” That afternoon he called Gilliland to share the development (Burch).

Ponder Gilliland invited his Bethany First Church congregation to the open altar the very next Sunday during the pastoral prayer and he, too, was amazed at how many people responded. The invitation to come to the open altar was a low-key, warm, and general invitation for people to come and pray. “We have allowed the altar to be stolen from us who are Christians,” says Gilliland. “It is our place with God.” Gilliland calls the open altar the most successful evangelistic method used in his entire ministry and believes the acceptance of the open altar by the laity was due to the fact that such an invitation made it easy and simple for people to pray. “Jesus made it so easy for people to make a decision to follow Him. He made it so simple” (Gilliland). The spread of the use of the open altar in the Church of the Nazarene was probably initially due to the fact that many ministerial students at Bethany Nazarene College also worshipped at Bethany First and were seeing and experiencing the impact of the open altar.

Burch says that during the 1970s there was an attitude that the altar was a place of judgment and condemnation. “That attitude needed to change so that the altar was seen as a place for everyone: those hurting and those needing forgiven. Those with heavy loads needed someplace to go to bring concerns” (Burch).

In the early 1970’s Earl Lee, pastor of Pasadena First Church of the Nazarene from 1966 to 1985, sensed that his congregation needed a place to bring their burdens to God. He felt Nazarenes in general had become “suspicious” of the altar. One Sunday morning he was impressed to invite people to what he began to call “family altar.” Lee’s

family altar invitation did not occur in conjunction with the pastoral prayer or with the sermon. Although only eight or ten individuals responded that first Sunday morning, the congregation quickly warmed to the idea and family altar at Pasadena First became a regular part of most Sunday morning services. Special attention was given to laying on of hands and prayers for physical healing during family altar prayer (Lee).

During the early 1970's Don Wellman, pastor of Denver First Church of the Nazarene, also began inviting his congregation to use the open altar during pastoral prayer, though not in every Sunday morning service. Wellman, concerned that such a general altar invitation could become a substitute for crisis, was careful to invite worshippers to deal with specific spiritual issues (Wellman).

Far from having an adverse effect on their altar calls, all four pastors—Gilliland, Burch, Lee, and Wellman—feel this new, expanded use of the altar complemented and strengthened their traditional altar call invitations. The open altar invitation differs from the traditional altar call in two ways. First, the invitation to the open altar is primarily given during the time of pastoral prayer rather than at the conclusion of the sermon. Second, the invitation to the open altar is usually non-specific, an invitation to come and pray about whatever issue is of personal importance, whereas the altar call has traditionally been specific, i.e. for salvation, entire sanctification, etc.

A widespread use of the open altar may indicate a willingness on behalf of some to emphasize that the altar is more than a place for confession, repentance, and forgiveness. The popularity of the open altar may also indicate an acknowledgment that the altar does not exist only or even primarily for confession and repentance. This use of the altar may be a reaction against a view of the altar that "tends to perpetuate the view

that the altar is for sinners only." Such a view would hold that "the altar is not an appropriate place for professing Christians with a problem; it is where sinners and backsliders go to make things right with God" (Lint 10).

Theoretical Framework

At some time in the history of the Methodist Church the use of the altar underwent a transition. Parrott writes, "Thousands were saved and great hosts were sanctified at these Methodist altars, especially during the half century before the Civil War. Then, in the decades following the war, something happened. First the doctrine of holiness as understood by Asbury was subdued, then ignored, opposed, and ultimately rejected. And along with this trend went the altar" (Parrott 31).

In 1951, the first edition of Methodist Altars was printed. Especially prepared for Methodist use, the dust cover referred to it as "a most helpful and rewarding contribution in the area of understanding the heritage which is ours, the meaning of our liturgy in corporate worship, and as a manual of instructions." In this book, the altar is known primarily as the Lord's Table. It describes the altar as a liturgical symbol symbolizing the presence of God, in no sense is the altar referred to as an evangelistic tool. A scant paragraph in the introduction of Methodist Altars pertains to the historical use of the altar as a "mourners' bench". The book was written to address the liturgical, symbolical use and features of the altar as communion table.

Hickman's United Methodist Altars, published in 1984, defines the altar as the place "where the feast of the Lord's Supper is held" (91), providing further evidence that

the altar, at least in the United Methodist Church, is now generally viewed as the communion table.

Charles Cook's 1980 D. Min. dissertation dealt with an experiment in the use of the altar call in a traditional, urban United Methodist Church, and was a call for the church to reconsider the value of the altar call in a fresh context.

In Giving a Good Invitation, published in 1974, Roy J. Fish lists five types of evangelistic invitations (37-43). The altar call is conspicuous by its absence. Nor does Sweazey's Effective Evangelism mention an altar call. The closest he comes to such is his section on "Ways of Expressing a Decision", where Sweazey lists "Come to the front" among eight other methods of invitation (175-177). Sweazey, former secretary for evangelism for the Presbyterian Church, USA, of course views the altar as the Lord's Table.

Modern-day evangelism, it seems, has become more process oriented and less crisis oriented. George Hunter observes that most people in the United States need repeated exposures to the Gospel before they are able to make a commitment, or to respond to conviction with confession (Hunter). Lyle Pointer, in a brief article published in the Nazarene church-growth newsletter Partners, shares that

a study of how people come to know God indicates that there are multiple exposures to the Gospel before a person accepts Christ. Win Arn has noted that people who accept Christ and stay in the church have heard the Gospel an average of 5.7 times before they recorded a decision to serve God. . . . After numerous people, several influences, and a half-dozen hearings of the Gospel, a person chooses to become a disciple. Evangelism must be done with sensitivity and intentionally (Pointer).

Evangelism has become increasingly viewed as a process.

Parrott also notes that social and cultural changes may impact the effectiveness of the altar call:

We live in a culture that has extolled personal rights, privacy, and the equal value of all persons, while shifting to an intense resistance to appeals wrapped in emotion. Our adaptation to these cultural changes includes a strong promotion of friendship evangelism, a concern not to make people uncomfortable with a sermon that hammers away on ideas and words like repentance, contrition, restitution, hell, and judgment but focuses more on forgiveness, love, and acceptance. . . . In our culture, people are not supposed to be put on the spot or made self-conscious, and no one is supposed to impose their value system on someone else, not even their children. (Parrott 149-150)

William Thompson's survey of sixty-five major evangelical denominations, designed to reveal the frequency of use of the public invitation, revealed that 100 percent of Nazarene churches practice the public invitation (214). The survey revealed that with "usual" frequency nearly 100 percent of all Nazarene churches issue a public invitation as a part of major worship services. Thompson's survey failed to indicate the perceived effectiveness of the invitation, or if the invitation was an altar call.

The Church of the Nazarene's need for an altar has been rooted in its evangelistic preaching for decision. The altar call is arguably the most popular and effective method of giving an evangelistic invitation in the Church of the Nazarene. However, has its effectiveness and use as an evangelistic tool diminished in this day? As early as 1904, a work showing the value of altar calls from different personal perspectives is addressed to those "suggesting the altar has become antiquated and not up-to-date" (Carradine 31). Perhaps even more would today make the same claim.

Charles Millhuff's 1994 study of the role of the itinerant evangelist in the Church of the Nazarene in the United States addressed the use of the altar in a cursory manner.

Millhuff distributed a questionnaire to 352 Nazarene pastors in an effort to document his hypothesis that “the congregations of the Church of the Nazarene in the United States are located in more than one of the major cultural sub-groups which results in different theological emphases regarding sin and redemption which results in different preferences for revivals and itinerant evangelists” (60). Item #15 on Millhuff’s questionnaire related to the altar: “How often do you open your public altar for the *specific, express purpose* of one or both of these crisis events [initial and entire sanctification]?” (118). While unfortunately Millhuff does not interpret the data drawn by this particular item on the survey, the responses gleaned were as follows: Every Sunday - 55.6 percent; Once a Month - 37.5 percent; Seldom - 6.6 percent; Cannot Remember - .3 percent (Millhuff 139). These findings, indicating frequent use of the altar for specific invitations for salvation and entire sanctification, were verified by the results of the instrument used in this study.

In spite of these findings, Millhuff laments what in his perception is the apparent denominational disregard for the altar call:

General Assemblies have long sense (sic) forsaken the altar calls for the unsaved and unsanctified. T. M. Anderson held the last true evangelistic services in the evenings of the General Assembly in St. Louis in 1948. This trend, modeled by the general assemblies, has spread throughout the land in district assemblies and has had its devastating effect on the work of the evangelist. Though this is but one factor in the entire matrix of the Nazarene evangelist’s history, it is one that cannot be ignored. (57)

Millhuff’s findings on the frequency of the use of a specific altar call for initial or entire sanctification were tabled according to the variables of cultural subgroup (139), geographical region (156), and congregational size (173).

Problem and Purpose

Certain indications, most notably a potential shift in evangelism methodology and the possible widespread use of the open altar, may indicate a change in altar use in the Church of the Nazarene. Current Nazarene altar use may not mirror historical Nazarene altar use. The Church of the Nazarene may either find itself in the process of, or may have already experienced, a transition in the use of the altar. The purpose of this study is to identify current practices of altar use in congregations of the Church of the Nazarene, USA, and to evaluate those findings in light of the biblical and historical uses of the altar.

Summary

The use of an altar dates back to Genesis and can be traced through the Old and New Testaments, ancient and modern church history, and the history of the Church of the Nazarene. An historical survey of the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene reveals that throughout Nazarene history the altar has been used primarily, if not exclusively, as a place where sinners sought forgiveness and new life, and believers sought entire sanctification and holy life. Indications suggest that the use of the altar may be changing. This study seeks to identify and describe the current practices of altar use in congregations of the Church of the Nazarene, USA, to evaluate those findings in light of the biblical uses of the altar and the historical uses of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, and to determine if a paradigm shift has indeed taken place in the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal in detail how the study was conducted. First, the perimeters of the investigation are explained, including research questions, operational questions, and the nature of the population and sample. Second, the instrumentation for the study is explained. The study was designed using modern research techniques intended to make the project as reliable as possible. Third, procedures for data collection are summarized. Finally, procedures used in analysis of research data are identified, followed by a summary.

The research conducted in this study is descriptive. Isaac and Michael define the purpose of descriptive research as follows:

- a. To collect detailed factual information that describes existing phenomena.
- b. To identify problems or justify current conditions and practices.
- c. To make comparisons and evaluations.
- d. To determine what others are doing with similar problems or situations and benefit from their experience in making future plans and decisions. (Isaac and Michael)

The purpose of this study corresponds to some degree to all four purposes of descriptive research as identified by Isaac and Michael.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the proposed study is to identify and describe the current practices of altar use in American congregations of the Church of the Nazarene, determining the types and frequency of use of the altar in Churches of the Nazarene, USA, to evaluate those findings in light of the biblical uses of the altar and the historical use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, and to determine if a transition has indeed taken place in the

use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

Research and Operational Questions

The questions this study seeks to answer pertain to present uses and frequency of uses of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, and whether the altar is currently being used in the way it was used historically. Answers to these questions may signify a transition in the use and perception of the purpose of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene.

The following three research questions were formulated to assist in achieving the purpose of the dissertation. The operational questions related to each research question amplify the respective research questions and provided the specific items which appeared on the questionnaire (Appendix C).

Research Question 1

How is the altar currently being used in the Church of the Nazarene?

Historically the altar was used in Nazarene churches primarily for altar calls at the conclusion of sermons. The introduction of the open altar invitation during pastoral prayer is a rather recent development in Nazarene churches. In view of this apparent shift away from the traditional use of the altar, "How is the altar currently used in the Church of the Nazarene?" is a primary research question.

The operational questions posed by Research Question 1 included:

Operational Question 1: With what frequency is the altar used for a specific invitation for salvation given after a sermon?

Operational Question 2: With what frequency is the altar used for a specific invitation for entire sanctification given after a sermon?

Operational Question 3: With what frequency is the altar used for a non-specific, general invitation for spiritual help given after a sermon?

Operational Question 4: With what frequency is the altar used for an open altar invitation during pastoral prayer?

Operational Question 5: With what frequency is the altar used as a place to serve communion?

Operational Question 6: Is the altar used in any additional ways?

Operational Question 7: What do pastors perceive to be the primary use of the altar?

Research Question 2

Are there variables which influence the way the altar is used in the Church of the Nazarene, and can certain characteristics be associated with the observed findings?

The operational questions posed by Research Question #2 included:

Operational Question 1: Does the size of a church's attendance relate to the way the altar is used?

Operational Question 2: Does the church's geographical location relate to the way the altar is used?

Operational Question 3: Does the church's rate of growth, as revealed in Professions of Faith (P.O.F.), relate to the way the altar is used?

Operational Question 4: Do the pastor's years in the ministry relate to the way the altar is used?

Operational Question 5: Does the age of the church relate to the way the altar is used?

Operational Question 6: Does the growth rate of the church relate to the way the altar is used?

Research Question 3

In what ways are contemporary Nazarene practices, with respect to the altar, congruent and/or incongruent with biblical uses and historical practices in the Church of the Nazarene?

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of the senior or sole pastors of congregations of the Church of the Nazarene in the United States. The total number of churches of the Church of the Nazarene in the United States in 1996 was 5,132. After deleting inactive churches and churches which averaged fewer than ten in attendance, the population totaled 4,719 churches. Pastors were the chosen respondents because "ultimately, each pastor . . . decides on the importance of the altar and how it is to be used in their local church" (Parrott 185). Although pastors' perceptions may not be entirely

accurate, they are usually best prepared to evaluate the current use and perception of the altar in the local church.

A computerized selection process achieved a simple random sampling. A list of random numbers generated by a computer were matched to corresponding numbers from the General Secretary's list of Nazarene churches in the USA. The random sample of 400 churches (8.48 percent of population) was generated by computer from the General Secretary's list of churches. Factors which insured the sufficiency of the sample included the methodology of random sampling, the sample size of 400 churches, and the homogeneity of the population (Leedy 205).

I took steps to ensure the sample represented and described the population. Results of the random sample were compared with the actual percentages of the population in regards to geographical location, church size, and church age.

Table 3-1 indicates the distribution of congregations by size in the population and random sample:

TABLE 3-1: COMPARISON OF SAMPLE AND POPULATION BY CHURCH SIZE

Church Size Comparison				
Worship Size	Population	Sample	% of Population	% of Sample
010-099	3,259	281	69.1	70.3
100-249	1,125	93	23.8	23.3
250+	335	26	7.1	6.5
Totals	4,719	400	100%	100%

As Table 3-1 indicates, the distribution of congregations by size in the sample corresponds to the distribution of all U.S. Nazarene churches by size. The random sampling process resulted in no discrepancy in distribution in regards to the variable of church size.

Table 3-2 indicates the geographical distribution of churches in the population and random sample:

TABLE 3-2: COMPARISON OF SAMPLE AND POPULATION BY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Region Comparison				
Region	Population	Sample	% of Population	% of Sample
ENU	595	61	12.6	15.3
MNU	452	37	9.6	9.3
MVNC	559	38	11.8	9.5
NNC	423	43	9	10.8
ONU	734	54	15.6	13.5
PLNC	538	42	11.4	10.5
SNU	606	52	12.8	13.0
TNU	812	73	17.2	18.3
Totals	4,719	400	100%	100%

As Table 3-2 indicates, the distribution of congregations by geographical region in the sample corresponds to the distribution of all U.S. Nazarene churches by geographical region. The random sampling process resulted in no discrepancy in distribution in regards to the variable of location.

Table 3-3 indicates the age comparison of churches in the population and random sample:

TABLE 3-3: COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE BY CHURCH AGE

Church Age Comparison				
Organized Between	Population	Sample	% of Population	% of Sample
1980-1997	665	60	14.1	15.0
1960-1979	686	56	14.5	14.0
1940-1959	1,630	147	34.5	36.8
before 1940	1,738	137	36.8	34.3
Totals	4,719	400	100%	100%

As Table 3-3 indicates, the distribution of congregations by church age in the sample corresponds to the distribution of all U.S. Nazarene churches by church age. The random sampling process resulted in no discrepancy in distribution in regard to the variable of church age.

The church's officially assigned denominational number identified respondents to permit analysis of non-response and the addition of data from the General Secretary's computer files regarding congregational size, geographical region, and church age. Average Sunday morning worship attendance reported to the General Secretary for 1996 measured congregational size. The General Secretary's records of the year a church was organized determined the age of the church. Educational region as recorded by the General Secretary determined geographical region.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was a researcher-designed questionnaire intended to examine the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. A survey of Nazarene pastors generated the research data. A self-administered mail questionnaire (Appendix 3) was mailed to each member of the sample. Factors in the choice of a self-administered mail questionnaire included the ability to cover a wider geographical area, the relatively low expense compared to other instruments, built-in anonymity, the facts that the questionnaire can be answered at the convenience of the respondents and that it will be easier to reach the sample population by mail than by other methods (Parten 94).

I considered and took into account the drawbacks of a mail questionnaire. Serious drawbacks include the fact that the respondents may not be representative of the

population. Also, the cooperation rate can be low for self-administered questionnaires (Bradburn 12). Since the respondent fills in the data without the assistance of an investigator, the questions must be simple and self-explanatory (Parten 95). The questionnaire must be brief if high returns are to be obtained. Contact between respondents and interviewer is limited, so the honesty and reliability of the returns cannot be easily judged and incomplete questionnaires cannot be corrected. Also, a mail questionnaire requires an up-to-date address list.

Multiple-choice questions were most desirable (Fink 16). The questionnaires were sent to the sample group's church addresses rather than their home addresses.

Validity and Reliability of Instrumentation

"Validity is concerned with the soundness, the effectiveness of the measuring instrument. . . . The principal question that validity asks is: Are we really measuring what we think we are measuring?" (Leedy 40-41). The validity and reliability of the instrument were based on face validity, confirmation from a pre-test, and consultation with a statistical advisor. The validity of the instrument was insured by intentional design to include questions which most appropriately address and respond to the research questions set forth.

Face validity "relies basically upon the subjective judgment of the researcher" (Leedy 41). The face validity of the instrument was based on my experience as a lifelong Nazarene and twelve years' experience as a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene.

I gave more attention to validity than to reliability because "a valid test is always reliable but a reliable test is not necessarily valid" (Gay 136). Reliability, according to

Fink and Kosecoff, considers the consistency with which an instrument produces measurement. When applied to the survey instrument of this study, reliability refers to the instrument's ability to produce data that can be consistently replicated.

Design of the Questionnaire

I designed the instrument (Appendix 3) giving careful attention to the physical appearance of the questionnaire. Yellow paper was used for the questionnaire, chosen for its ability to attract the recipient's attention (Parten 161).

The questionnaire included identifying information, census-type factual data, and questions on the subject of the survey. Parten says the most important questions should appear near the beginning of mail surveys (216), so the survey questions came first.

The instrument had five questions relating to the frequency of ways the altar is used in the church pastored by the respondent. Bradburn has cited problems in using imprecise quantifying words (152-162). The selection of the terms used as quantifiers in relation to frequency received careful attention. The questions relating to frequency, or "oftenness", were designed to be time-oriented: usually weekly, at least monthly, at least quarterly, annually or semi-annually, never. I determined identifying frequency in this manner to be most appropriate because respondents often have difficulty with exact estimates (Bradburn 162). Two open-ended questions were included, which allowed respondents to list additional ways the altar is used in their church and to share additional comments or concerns.

Pre-Testing

I determined that the best way to pretest the self-administered questionnaire was in person with a group of potential respondents (Fowler 105). The instrument was pre-tested by a group of seven Nazarene pastors from the Eastern Kentucky and Central Ohio Districts of the Church of the Nazarene. The group was invited to meet at McDonald's to pretest the instrument. They averaged seven minutes to complete the questionnaire. An additional hour was spent together discussing the questions over lunch. The pre-test group was requested to analyze the survey instrument in terms of its readability, clarity of instructions and questions, appearance, length, wording of questions, and whether or not the most appropriate questions for the desired data were included. Those in the pre-test group were not selected for any particular or unique qualifications. Based upon their feedback, I made a few minor changes to the instrument.

Data Collection

Since simply mailing questionnaires to a general population sample without appropriate follow-up procedures will result in a likely rate of return of less than 30 percent (Fowler 67), I made several efforts to secure a high percentage of returns. Measures taken to help ensure response included promising respondents that answers would be treated confidentially, obtaining accurate mailing addresses from the Office of the General Secretary, and printing the questionnaire on colored paper.

In addition to these efforts, respondents knew of their selection and the purpose of the survey questionnaire prior to receiving it (Fink 46). A postcard informed the sample that the survey was coming, explained why they should answer the questions, and told

them who was being surveyed (Fink 46).

I estimated the mail survey would take eight weeks to complete (Fowler 69). I heeded the advice that "the most important difference between good mail surveys and poor mail surveys is the extent to which researchers make repeated contact with nonrespondents" (Fowler 54), in developing the following timeline:

11/14/97 A postcard (Appendix 1), stamped rather than postage-paid, informed each member of the sample of their selection and that a questionnaire was being sent to them.

11/21/97 All questionnaires were sent on the same day. The instrument (Appendix 3), stamped rather than postage-paid, was mailed to each member of the sample along with a cover letter (Appendix 2) and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of the questionnaire. The cover letter explained the purpose and importance of the study. The questionnaires were mailed to the church address on Friday so they would be received early in the week.

I employed a strategy that reassured respondents that they would not be identified, but that still permitted follow-up. Enclosed with the questionnaire, which had no identifier on it, was a separate postcard (Appendix 4) that had a respondent identifying number on the lower, left-hand corner.

12/05/97 Fourteen days after I mailed the instrument a letter went to nonrespondents (Appendix 5), emphasizing the importance of a high rate of return and including another questionnaire for those who misplaced the first one (Fowler 54). A self-addressed, stamped envelope was enclosed to encourage subjects to complete and return the questionnaire.

1/16/98 This date marked the conclusion of the collection of data.

Questionnaires were returned to my home address where they were numbered sequentially as received. The envelopes were destroyed to preserve anonymity.

Variables

I identified variables I thought might be significantly related to certain types and frequency of use of the altar. The variables considered included church size, geographical location, P.O.F. additions to membership, years of pastoral experience, church growth rate, and church age.

Dependent variables included the various uses and frequency of use of the altar. Uses of the altar included specific altar invitations for salvation, specific altar invitations for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, open altar invitations during pastoral prayer, and serving communion at the altar. Frequency of use included weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually or semi-annually, and never.

Statistical Analysis

The data contained in the returned questionnaires was entered into a computer and tabulated by use of the computer program Excel.

The sample was described through the use of mean, median, mode values reported for the variables of church size, church age, and respondent's years of pastoral experience. Frequencies were reported for the non-numeric variables--church growth rate, P.O.F. additions to church membership, and geographical location.

The standard deviation for each was reported in an attempt to describe the representative sample. The standard error of the mean was calculated to tell by how

much the sample mean is expected to differ if another sample was drawn from the population and used to determine confidence intervals for each variable.

Survey data was tabulated and graphed with the following analysis done to answer the formulated research questions. For Research Question 1, the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation, of specific altar calls for entire sanctification, of general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, of open altar invitations, and of the use of the altar for communion was reported and the percentage each represents. The primary use of the altar was reported as a total number for each category.

In order to answer Research Question 2 the findings from the study were analyzed by controlling for the variables of church size, geographical location, P.O.F. additions, pastor's years in the ministry, church age and church growth rate. Chi-square contingency tests of relationship between variables and the survey questions pertaining to the frequency of use of the altar are included in this study. While correlations and relationship cannot state causes, they may indicate certain preferences as to how the altar is used in Nazarene churches.

The relationship between variables for this study is measured by the Pearson Chi-Square. The 0.05 level of significance was set as the cut off for significance.

Tabulations of the results are reflected in table, graph, and narrative form in Chapter 4.

Delimitations & Generalizability

This study does not attempt to gauge the effectiveness or value of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. It is limited to active pastors, and does not include Nazarene ministers serving as evangelists, district superintendents, missionaries, educators, or

headquarters personnel. The results of the study, therefore, are generalizable primarily to pastors and congregations in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. Findings may be applicable to comparable evangelical denominations, especially those of Wesleyan-Armenian theological understanding.

Summary

A self-administered, researcher-designed questionnaire was sent to a computer generated, randomly selected sample of Nazarene pastors in order to identify and describe current practices of altar use in American congregations of the Church of the Nazarene by determining the types and frequency of use of the altar in local Churches of the Nazarene, USA. Accepted procedures were followed in designing the instrument to assure reliability and validity. The survey instrument was administered over a time period of eight weeks following standard procedures. Several measures helped ensure response, including repeated contact with the sample. Data processing and statistical analysis was achieved through various computer generated programs and methods. Results of the study are summarized and displayed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the current practices of altar use in American congregations of the Church of the Nazarene, to evaluate those findings in light of the biblical uses of the altar and the historical uses of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, and to determine if a transition in altar use has indeed taken place in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

The findings of the survey instrument pertaining to the current practices of altar use in USA congregations of the Church of the Nazarene are presented in this chapter.

Response Rate

Of the 400 surveys mailed, two were discarded due to incorrect addresses. Of the remaining questionnaires, 305 surveys were returned, for a 76.25 percent return rate (304 surveys were usable). Seven surveys were returned after 1/16/98 and were not included in the study. The random sample and high response rate provide confidence that the findings reported here are to be found generally in Churches of the Nazarene, USA. Table 4-1 indicates the response rate of the survey instrument.

TABLE 4-1: RESPONSE RATE

Sample Size:	400
Discarded Questionnaires:	2
Returned Questionnaires:	305
Rate of Return:	76.25%

Demographic Representation

Chapter Three established that the sample was representative of the population (see Tables 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, pp. 50-51). At the conclusion of the survey collection process it was established that the respondents were representative of the population and sample.

Table 4-2 compares the population, sample and respondents by church size. Church size was defined as the church's average morning worship attendance as reported in the Pastor's 1996 Annual Report to the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene. Table 4-2 reveals the respondents to be representative of the population and sample when compared by church size, although pastors with an average worship attendance of 100 or more were more likely to respond than were pastors with an average worship attendance of less than 100. Columns in Table 4-2 giving information pertaining to respondents are shaded to help with identification.

TABLE 4-2: CHURCH SIZE COMPARISON: POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND RESPONDENTS

Comparison of Population, Sample, and Respondents by Church Size						
Worship Size	Population	Sample	Respondents	% of Population	% of Sample	% of Respondents
010-099	3,259	281	191	69.1	70.3	62.6
100-249	1,125	93	83	23.8	23.3	27.2
250+	335	26	25	7.1	6.5	8.2
unknown	0	0	6	0	0	2.0
Totals	4,719	400	305	100%	100%	100%

Table 4-3 compares the population, sample, and respondents by church age. Church age was determined by the year the church was organized. Table 4-3 reveals the respondents to be representative of the population and sample when compared by church

age. Columns in Table 4-3 giving information pertaining to respondents are shaded to help with identification.

TABLE 4-3: CHURCH AGE COMPARISON: POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND RESPONDENTS

Comparison of Population, Sample, and Respondents by Church Age						
Organized Between	Population	Sample	Respondents	% of Population	% of Sample	% of Respondents
1980-1997	665	60	40	14.1	15.0	13.1
1960-1979	686	56	44	14.5	14.0	14.4
1940-1959	1,630	147	106	34.5	36.8	34.8
before 1940	1,738	137	105	36.8	34.3	34.4
unknown	0	0	10	0	0	3.3
Totals	4,719	400	305	100%	100%	100%

Table 4-4 compares the population, sample and respondents by geographical location, as determined by the eight educational regions in the United States, each with a regional Nazarene college or university. Eastern Nazarene College (ENC) is located in the Eastern USA Region. MidAmerica Nazarene University (MNU) is located in the North Central USA Region. Mount Vernon Nazarene College (MVNC) is located in the East Central USA Region. Northwest Nazarene College (NNC) is located in the Northwest USA Region. Olivet Nazarene University (ONU) is located in the Central USA Region. Point Loma Nazarene College (PLNC) is located in the Southwest USA Region. Southern Nazarene University (SNU) is located in the South Central USA Region. Trevecca Nazarene University (TNU) is located in the Southeast USA Region. Table 4-4 reveals the respondents to be representative of the population and sample when compared by geographical location. Columns in Table 4-4 giving information pertaining to respondents are shaded to help with identification.

**TABLE 4-4: GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION COMPARISON: POPULATION,
SAMPLE, RESPONDENTS**

Comparison of Population, Sample, and Respondents by Geographical Location						
Region	Population	Sample	Respondents	% of Population	% of Sample	% of Respondents
ENC	595	61	44	12.6	15.3	14.4
MNU	452	37	29	9.6	9.3	9.5
MVNC	559	38	32	11.8	9.5	10.5
NNC	423	43	34	9	10.8	11.2
ONU	734	54	41	15.6	13.5	13.4
PLNC	538	42	35	11.4	10.5	11.5
SNU	606	52	36	12.8	13.0	11.8
TNU	812	73	49	17.2	18.3	16.1
unknown	0	0	5	0.0	0.0	1.6
Totals	4,719	400	305	100%	100%	100%

General Characteristics of Respondents

The Nazarene pastors participating in the study have a mean of 15.7 years pastoral experience (with a standard error of 0.6 years). The sample has a median value of fourteen years with a mode of twenty years. The standard deviation for the variable of pastoral experience is 10.3 years. We are 95 percent confident the years of pastoral experience population mean lie between fifteen and seventeen years.

The average church in the sample was organized in 1948 (with a standard error of 1.3 years). The sample has a median church organization year of 1947 and a mode of 1945. The standard deviation for the variable church age is 22.8 years. We are 95 percent confident that the typical Nazarene church was organized between 1946 and 1951.

The average Sunday morning attendance of respondent churches is 118 (with a standard error of 9.1). The sample has a median of seventy-five and a mode of fifty. The

standard deviation for the variable church size is 157. We are 95 percent confident the church size population mean lies between 100 and 136 people.

Table 4-5 indicates the profile of respondents by average worship attendance and reveals that approximately one-third of respondents pastor churches with an average worship attendance between ten and fifty, approximately one-third of respondents pastor churches with an average worship attendance between fifty-one and ninety-nine, and approximately one-third pastor churches with an average worship attendance of 100 or more.

TABLE 4-5: RESPONDENT PROFILE BY AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

Attendance	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
10-50	93	30.5
51-99	98	32.1
100-149	46	15.1
150-199	24	7.9
200-249	13	4.3
250-299	4	1.3
300-399	7	2.3
400-499	5	1.6
500-599	2	0.7
600-699	4	1.3
700	1	0.3
1020	1	0.3
1760	1	0.3
unknown	6	2.0
TOTAL	305	100%

Table 4-6 indicates the profile of respondents by annual average of Profession of Faith additions to church membership over the last three years, and shows that over half of the sample reported an average of one to five Profession of Faith additions to

membership annually over the last three years. Less than 4 percent reported an average of zero Profession of Faith additions to membership annually over the last three years.

TABLE 4-6: RESPONDENT PROFILE BY PROFESSION OF FAITH ADDITIONS

Annual P.O.F. Additions	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
0	12	3.9
1-5	164	53.8
6-15	86	28.2
16-25	15	4.9
26-45	10	3.3
more than 45	6	2.0
unknown	12	3.9
TOTAL	305	100%

Table 4-7 indicates the profile of respondents by cumulative worship attendance growth rate over the last five years.

TABLE 4-7: RESPONDENT PROFILE BY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE GROWTH RATE

Worship Attendance Growth Rate Last 5 Years	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Decrease in attendance	69	22.6
Remained the same	50	16.4
Increase of 1-10%	91	29.8
Increase of 11-20%	33	10.8
Increase of more than 20%	45	14.8
unknown	17	5.6
TOTAL	305	100%

Table 4-8 indicates the profile of respondents according to respondent's years of pastoral experience. Thirty-four percent (34.0%) of the respondents have been pastoring ten years or less. Thirty-six percent (36.4%) have been pastoring between eleven and

twenty years. Twenty-seven percent (26.9%) have been pastoring between twenty-one and forty-five years.

TABLE 4-8: RESPONDENT PROFILE BY YEARS OF PASTORAL EXPERIENCE

Pastoral Experience	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
0-5 years	55	18.0
6-10 years	49	16.0
11-15 years	57	18.7
16-20 years	54	17.7
21-25 years	30	9.8
26-30 years	24	7.9
31-35 years	15	4.9
36-40 years	10	3.3
41-45 years	3	1.0
unknown	8	2.6
TOTAL	305	99.9% *

* due to rounding

Table 4-9 indicates the profile of respondents by the age of the church they are currently pastoring as determined by the year the church was organized.

TABLE 4-9: RESPONDENT PROFILE BY CHURCH AGE

Year Church Organized	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
1900-1909	8	2.6
1910-1919	25	8.2
1920-1929	36	11.8
1930-1939	36	11.8
1940-1949	62	20.3
1950-1959	44	14.4
1960-1969	27	8.9
1970-1979	17	5.6
1980-1989	27	8.8
1990-1997	13	4.3
unknown	10	3.3
TOTAL	305	100%

Frequency and Types of Altar Use

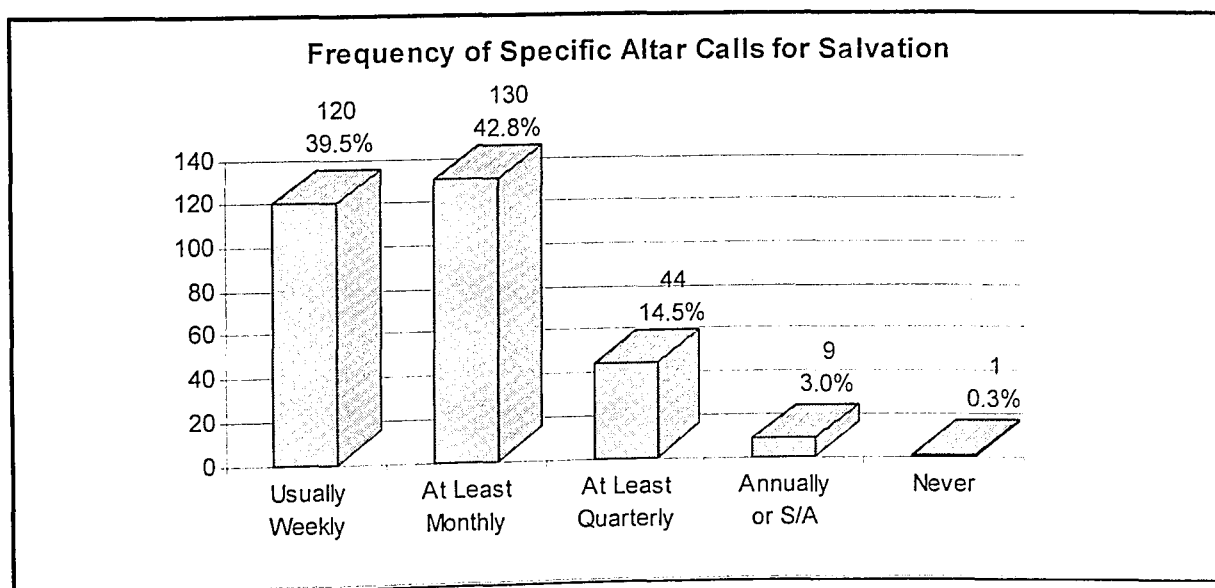
The research questions provide the most logical manner to organize and present the data. For purposes of clarity and logical progression, Research Question #1 is restated.

RQ #1: How is the altar currently being used in the Church of the Nazarene?

The first operational question which amplified Research Question 1 pertained to the frequency of altar use for a specific invitation for salvation given after a sermon.

Graph 4-1 (and Table A-1, p. 135) reveals the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation. Forty percent (39.5%) of the respondents indicated that specific altar calls for salvation occurred usually weekly in the church they pastor, and 43 percent (42.8%) indicated they occur at least monthly. A combined total of 82 percent (82.3%) of the respondents indicated they gave specific altar calls for salvation either weekly or monthly, providing evidence that the altar is used frequently and evangelistically in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

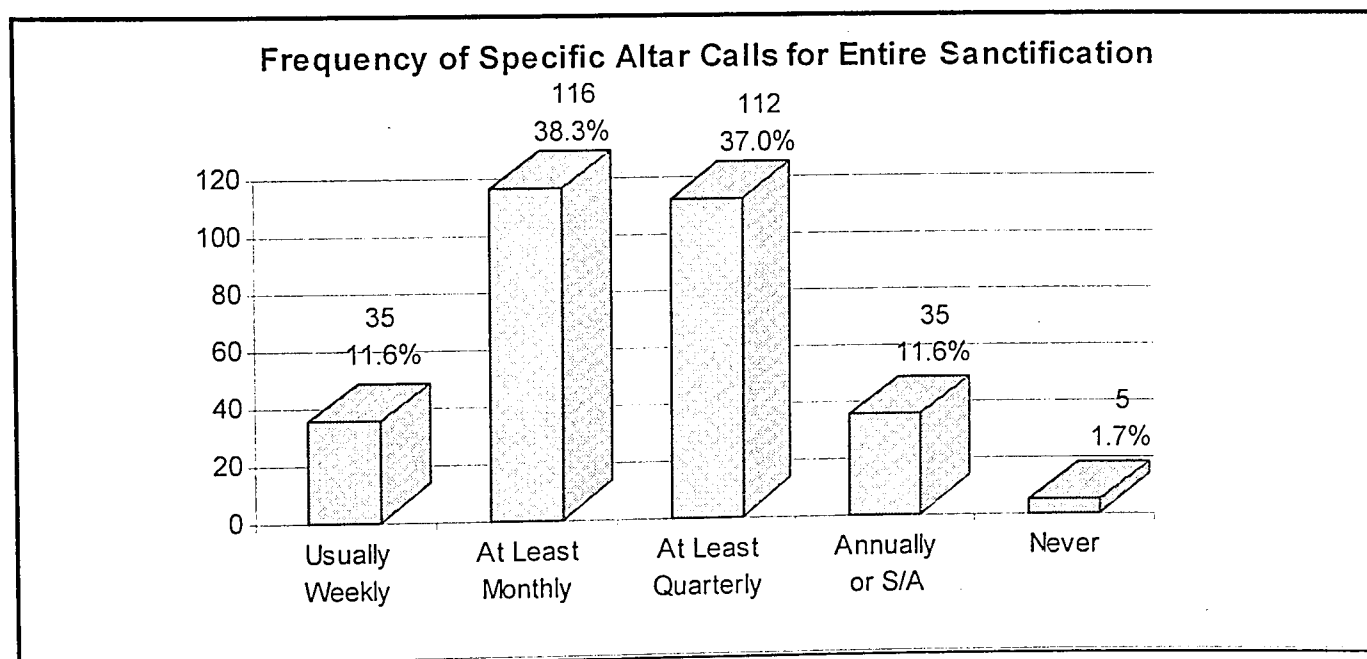
GRAPH 4-1: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR SALVATION



The second operational question which amplified Research Question 1 pertained to the frequency of altar use for a specific invitation for entire sanctification given after a sermon.

Graph 4-2 (and Table A-2, p. 135) reveals the frequency of specific altar calls for entire sanctification. Thirty-eight percent (38.3%) of the respondents give a specific altar call for entire sanctification at least monthly, and 37 percent (37.0%) give a specific altar call for entire sanctification at least quarterly. Fifty percent (49.9%) of the respondents indicated either a weekly or monthly use of the altar for specific altar calls for entire sanctification, suggesting a frequent use of the altar for this purpose in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

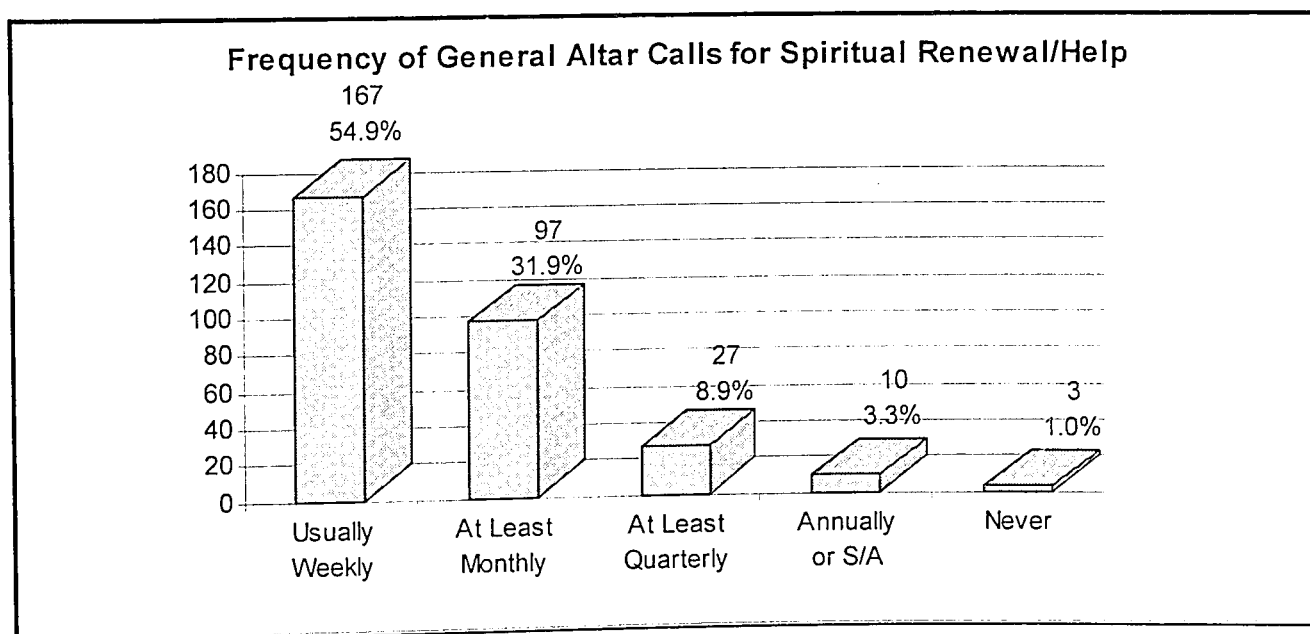
GRAPH 4-2: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION



The third operational question which amplified Research Question 1 pertained to the frequency of altar use for a non-specific, general invitation for spiritual renewal or help given after a sermon.

Graph 4-3 (and Table A-3, p. 135) reveals the frequency of non-specific, general invitations for spiritual renewal or help given after a sermon. Fifty-five percent (54.9%) of the respondents indicated a weekly use of the altar for general altar calls for spiritual help or renewal, and 32 percent (31.9%) indicated the altar was used for this purpose at least monthly in their church. A combined 87 percent (86.8%) of the respondents indicated either a weekly or monthly use of the altar for general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, suggesting that the altar is being used even more frequently for this purpose in the Church of the Nazarene, USA, than it is being used for specific altar calls for salvation or for specific altar calls for entire sanctification.

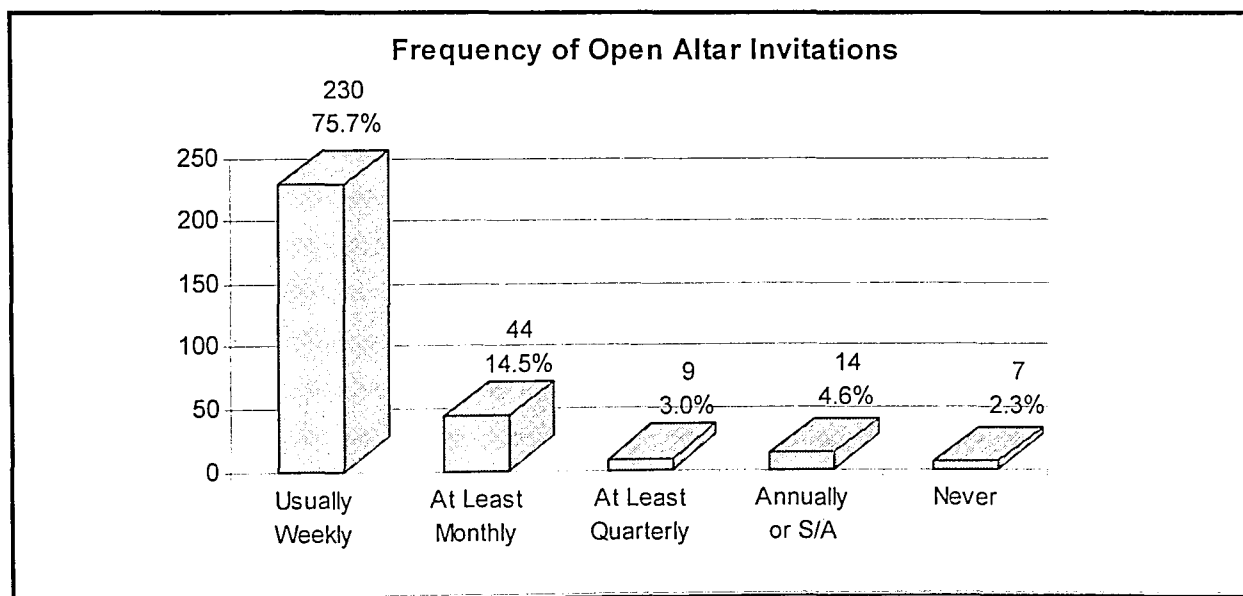
GRAPH 4-3: FREQUENCY OF GENERAL ALTAR CALLS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OR HELP



The fourth operational question which amplified Research Question 1 pertained to the frequency of altar use for an open altar invitation during pastoral prayer.

Graph 4-4 (and Table A-4, p. 136) reveals the frequency of an open altar invitation during pastoral prayer. Seventy-six percent (75.7%) of the respondents indicated a weekly use of the altar for open altar invitations during pastoral prayer. A combined 90 percent (90.2%) of the respondents indicated either a weekly or monthly use of the altar for open altar invitations during the pastoral prayer, suggesting the most widespread and frequent use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene is the open altar invitation during the pastoral prayer.

GRAPH 4-4: FREQUENCY OF OPEN ALTAR INVITATIONS

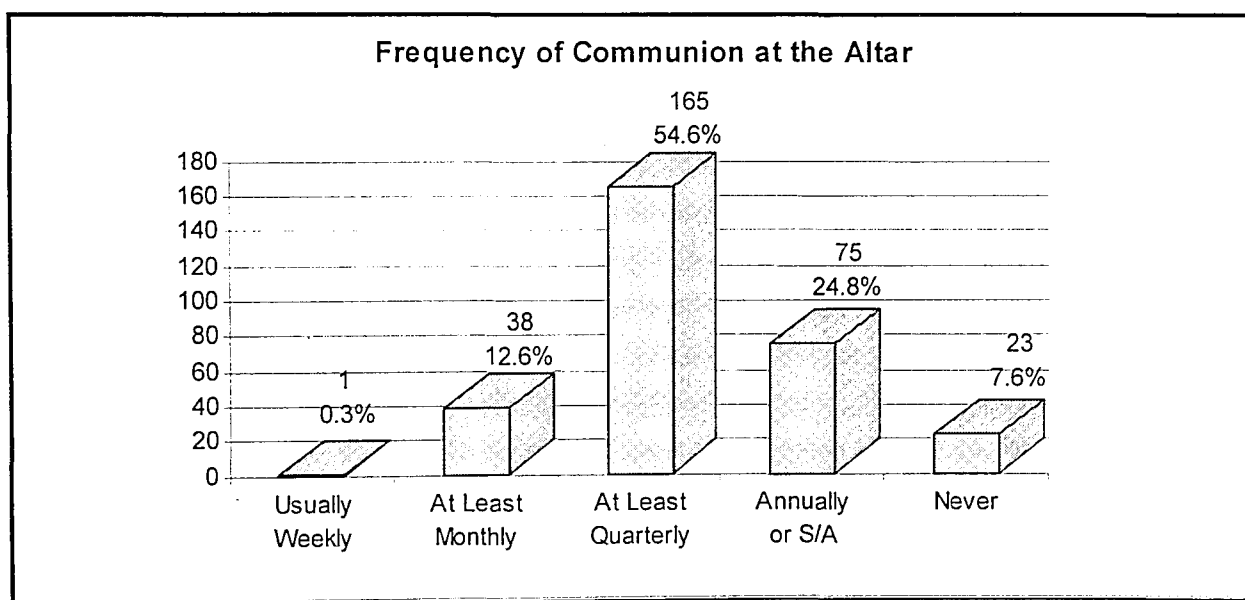


The fifth operational question which amplified Research Question 1 pertained to the frequency of altar use as a place to serve communion.

Graph 4-5 (and Table A-5, p. 136) reveals the frequency of the use of the altar as a place to serve communion. The altar is rarely used weekly as a place to observe the

Lord's Supper, most likely due to the fact that the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene calls for pastors to "administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at least once each quarter" (171). Fifty-five percent (54.6%) of the respondents indicated the altar was used for communion at least quarterly. It should be noted that these results do not necessarily reflect the frequency in which communion is served in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. The results only reflect the frequency in which communion is served *at the altar* in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

GRAPH 4-5: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION AT THE ALTAR



The findings reveal a frequent and varied use of the altar. Specific altar calls for salvation are given either weekly or monthly in 82 percent of Nazarene churches and specific altar calls for entire sanctification are given either weekly or monthly in 50 percent of Nazarene churches. General altar calls for spiritual renewal or help are given either weekly or monthly in 87 percent of Nazarene churches. Open altar invitations are given either weekly or monthly in 90 percent of Nazarene churches. Communion at the

altar occurs quarterly in 55 percent of Nazarene churches.

Additional Uses of the Altar

The sixth operational question which amplified Research Question 1 addressed additional ways the altar is being used. Item #12 on the survey instrument (Appendix 3) was an open-ended question allowing respondents to describe ways—in addition to specific altar calls for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual help or renewal, open altar invitations during pastoral prayer and using the altar for communion—that the altar is being used. One hundred twenty-five (125) pastors, or 41 percent (40.9%) of the respondents, listed additional uses of the altar (Appendix 6).

The additional uses of the altar most often listed included healing/anointing services (43), pastor's personal use (11), prayer meetings (11), installation of officers/dedication of workers (9), sending services (9), corporate prayer (8), intercessory prayer (7), pre-service prayer (7), special offerings (6), and the reception of new members (5).

Other uses of the altar listed included dedication of children (4), prayer in conjunction with church board meetings (4), baptisms (3), all night prayer meetings (2), revival (2), private prayer during week (1), installation of pastor (1), place to leave stewardship commitments (1), prayer as a family (1), and covenant renewals (1).

Perception of Primary Use of the Altar

The seventh and final operational question which amplified Research Question 1 addressed the pastor's perception of the primary use of the altar.

Table 4-10 presents the findings of Item #6 on the survey instrument (Appendix 3), pertaining to the perception of the primary use of the altar. Respondents were asked to rank the five listed uses of the altar in order of importance from one to five, using all five numbers, with one being most important and five being least important.

The use of the altar most respondents ranked as number one was "The altar as a place to experience God's presence in prayer." The use of the altar most respondents ranked as number two was "The altar as a place to be saved." The use of the altar most respondents ranked as number three was "The altar as a place to be entirely sanctified." The use of the altar most respondents ranked as number four was "The altar as a place to receive communion." The use of the altar most respondents ranked as number five was "The altar as a place for ceremonies to be held."

TABLE 4-10: PERCEPTION OF PRIMARY USE OF THE ALTAR

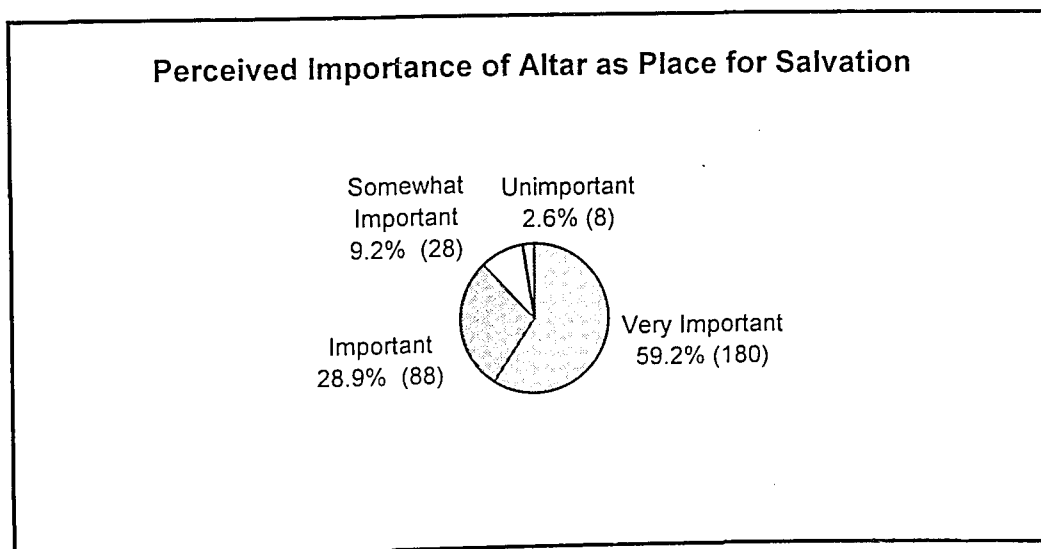
TYPE OF USE	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
A place to receive communion	14	18	21	198	48
A place to be entirely sanctified	14	92	167	19	8
A place for ceremonies to be held	11	10	16	47	216
A place to be saved	130	141	16	9	4
A place to experience God's presence	179	38	77	5	2

Perceived Importance of Altar Use

In addition to ranking five various uses of the altar in order of importance, pastors were also asked to indicate the importance of the five different uses of the altar: as a place of salvation, as a place of entire sanctification, as a place to experience the presence of God in prayer, as a place for ceremonies to be held, and as a place to partake of communion. Items seven to eleven on the survey instrument (Appendix 3) pertained to this question. Possible responses included "Very Important," "Important," "Somewhat Important," and "Unimportant."

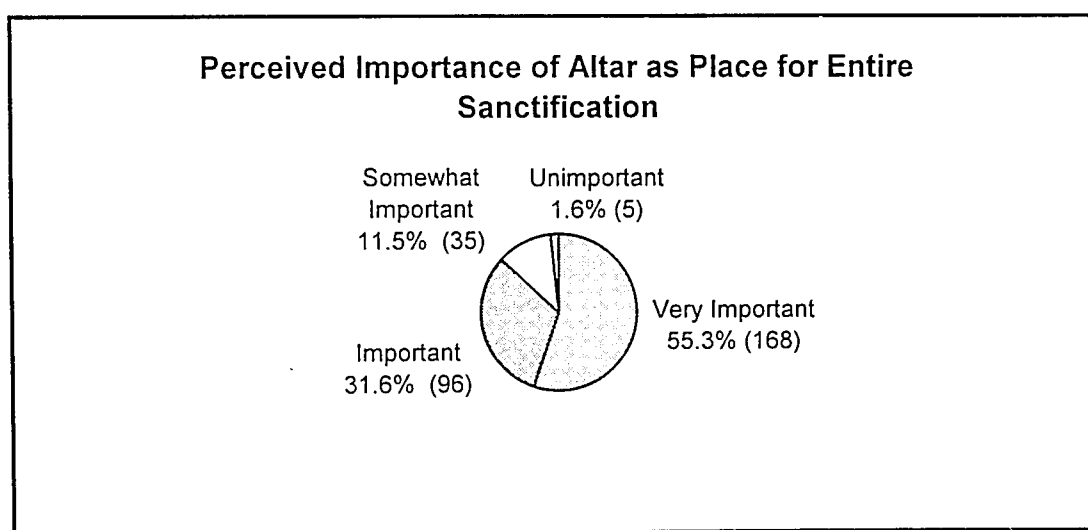
Graph 4-6 (and Table A-6, p. 136) discloses the degree of importance the respondents assigned the use of the altar as a place where people can be saved. Fifty-nine percent (59.2%) of respondents said the use of the altar as a place for salvation was very important and 29 percent (28.9%) said it was important.

GRAPH 4-6: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE FOR SALVATION



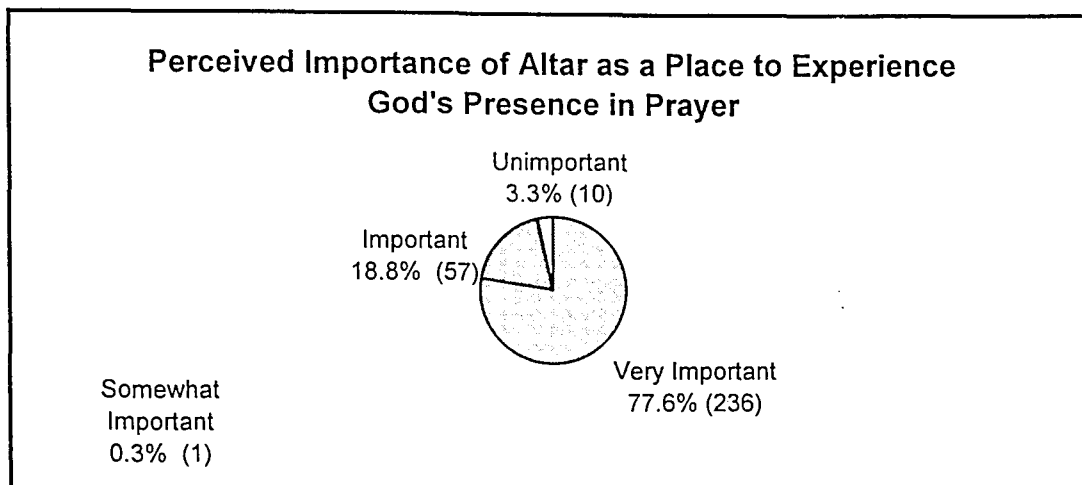
Graph 4-7 (and Table A-7, p. 137) discloses the degree of importance the respondents assigned the use of the altar as a place where people can be entirely sanctified. The response to this question was similar to the response to the question of the importance of the altar as a place where people can be saved (Graph 4-6). Fifty-five percent (55.3%) of the respondents said the use of the altar as a place for entire sanctification was very important and 32 percent (31.6%) said it was important.

GRAPH 4-7: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION



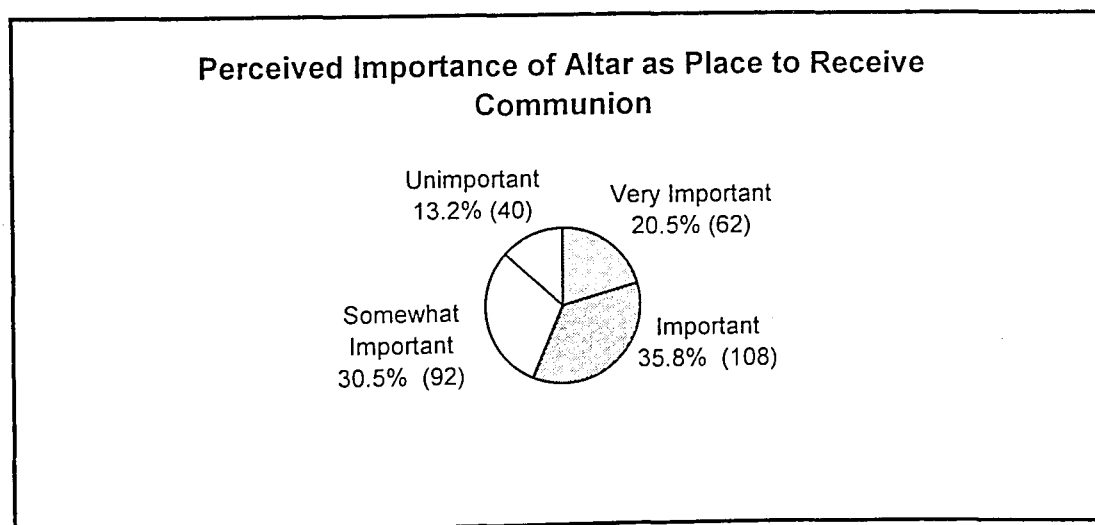
Graph 4-8 (and Table A-8, p. 137) discloses the degree of importance the respondents assigned the use of the altar as a place where God's people can experience His presence in prayer. More than any other use of the altar, respondents perceived this use of the altar as "Very Important." Seventy-eight percent (77.6%) of the respondents said the use of the altar as a place to experience the presence of God was "Very Important" and 19 percent (18.8%) said it was "Important."

GRAPH 4-8: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE IN PRAYER



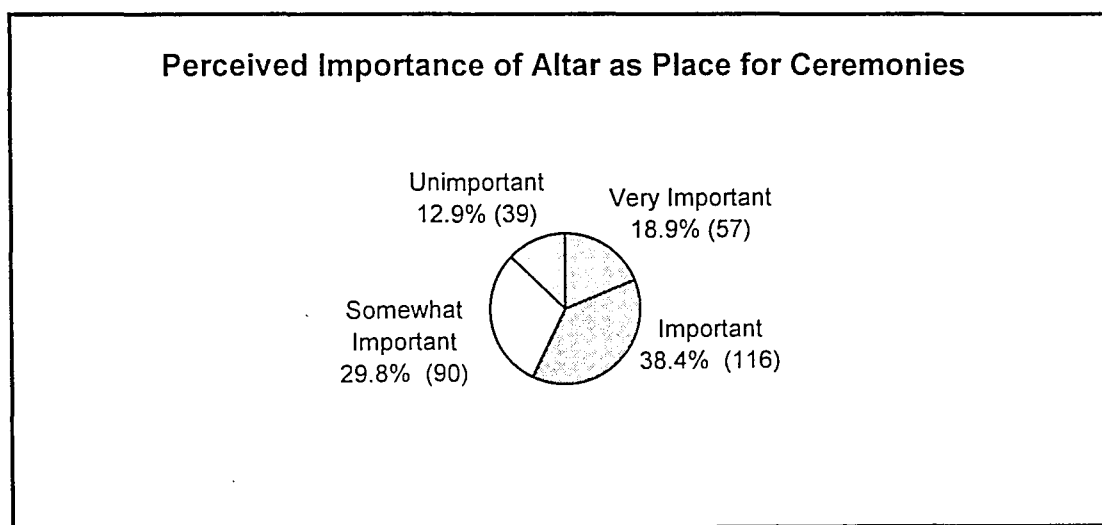
Graph 4-9 (and Table A-9, p. 137) discloses the degree of importance the respondents assigned the use of the altar as a place to receive communion. Respondents were more likely to judge this use of the altar as "Important" or "Somewhat Important." Thirty-six percent (35.8%) of the respondents said the use of the altar as a place for communion was "Important" and 31 percent (30.5%) said it was "Somewhat Important."

GRAPH 4-9: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE TO RECEIVE COMMUNION



Graph 4-10 (and Table A-10, p. 138) reveals the degree of importance the respondents assigned the use of the altar as a place for ceremonies. Response to this question was similar to the response to the use of the altar as a place for communion. Respondents were more likely to judge this use of the altar as “Important” or “Somewhat Important.” Thirty-eight percent (38.4%) of the respondents said the use of the altar as a place for ceremonies was “Important” and 30 percent (29.8%) said it was “Somewhat Important.”

GRAPH 4-10: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE FOR CEREMONIES



Variable of Church Size

Research Question 2 sought to determine if there are variables related to different types and frequencies of altar use in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. For purposes of clarity and logical progression, Research Question 2 is restated.

RQ #2: Are there variables which influence the way the altar is used in the Church of the Nazarene, and can certain characteristics be associated with the observed findings?

The first operational question related to Research Question 2 addressed the variable of church size as defined by average morning worship attendance. The data revealed no significant relationship between church size and use of the altar for specific altar calls for salvation (see Table A-11, p. 138), no significant relationship between church size and use of the altar for specific altar calls for entire sanctification (see Table A-12, p. 138), no significant relationship between church size and use of the altar for general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help (see Table A-13, p. 139), and no significant relationship between church size and the frequency of open altar invitations (see Table A-14, p. 139).

Table 4-11 reveals that church size is significantly related to altar use for communion. Churches with an average attendance of 250 or more are less likely to serve communion at the altar quarterly, and more likely to serve communion at the altar annually, than churches with an average attendance of less than 250. Churches with an average attendance of between ten and ninety-nine are most likely to serve communion at the altar on a quarterly basis.

TABLE 4-11: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION AT THE ALTAR BY CHURCH SIZE

Average Attendance	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
10-99	0	0	20	10.5	123	64.7	36	18.9	11	5.8	190
100-249	1	1.2	11	13.3	37	44.6	25	30.1	9	10.8	83
250+	0	0	6	5.0	3	12.5	12	50.0	3	12.5	24
unknown	0	0	1	20.0	2	40.0	2	40.0	0	0	5
Total	1	0.3	38	12.6	165	54.6	75	24.8	23	7.6	302

Chi-square = 29.027; df = 6; $p \leq 0.01$

The data produced by the instrument suggests that the variable of church size is not significantly related to the frequency of altar use for specific altar calls for salvation, for specific altar calls for entire sanctification, for open altar invitations and for general altar calls for spiritual renewal of help.

Church size is significantly related to altar use for communion. Churches with an average attendance of between ten and ninety-nine are most likely to serve communion at the altar on a quarterly basis. Churches with an average attendance of 250 or more are less likely to serve communion at the altar quarterly, and more likely to serve communion at the altar annually, than churches with an average attendance of less than 250. Several written responses to question #13 on the questionnaire addressed the logistical difficulty of serving communion at the altar in a large church. Responses representative of those comments included “It is very difficult to serve communion to 2,000 people around the altar—but it’s great for smaller churches,” (Appendix 7, #14) and, “The size of our congregation prohibits (use of the altar for communion) as an option on Sunday mornings” (Appendix 7, #71).

Variable of Geographical Location

The second operational question related to Research Question 2 addressed the variable of geographical location as determined by the eight educational regions in the United States, each with an identifiable regional Nazarene college or university: ENC (Eastern USA Region), MNU (North Central USA Region), MVNC (East Central USA Region), NNC (Northwest USA Region), ONU (Central USA Region), PLNC (Southwest USA Region), SNU (South Central USA Region), and TNU (Southeast USA Region).

Table 4-12 reveals that geographical location is significantly related to specific altar calls for salvation. Nazarene churches in the TNU and MVNC regions are most likely to give weekly altar calls for salvation and churches in the PLNC and NNC regions are least likely to give weekly altar calls for salvation.

TABLE 4-12: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR SALVATION BY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

REGION	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
ONU	15	36.6	22	53.7	3	7.3	1	2.4	0	0	41
SNU	17	47.2	17	47.2	2	5.6	0	0	0	0	36
TNU	29	59.2	14	28.6	5	10.2	1	2.0	0	0	49
PLNC	10	28.6	16	45.7	8	22.9	1	2.9	0	0	35
NNC	8	23.5	14	41.2	10	29.4	2	5.9	0	0	34
MVNC	17	53.1	11	34.4	2	6.2	2	6.2	0	0	32
ENC	14	31.8	19	43.2	10	22.7	1	2.3	0	0	44
MNU	9	31.0	15	51.7	4	13.8	0	0	1	3.4	29
unknown	1	25.0	2	50.0	0	0	1	25.0	0	0	4
Total	120	39.4	130	42.8	44	14.5	9	3.0	1	0.3	304

Chi-square = 30.462; df = 14; $p \leq 0.01$

The findings revealed no significant relationship between geographical location and the frequency of specific altar calls for entire sanctification (see Table A-15, p. 139).

Table 4-13 reveals that a significant relationship exists between geographical location and the frequency of general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help. Churches in the MVNC, ENC, and TNU regions are most likely to use weekly altar calls for spiritual renewal or help. Weekly altar calls for spiritual renewal or help occur with the least frequency on the NNC and PLNC regions.

TABLE 4-13: FREQUENCY OF GENERAL ALTAR CALLS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OR HELP BY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

REGION	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
ONU	22	53.7	14	34.1	3	7.3	1	2.4	1	2.4	41
SNU	19	52.8	16	44.4	1	2.7	0	0	0	0	36
TNU	32	65.3	13	26.5	2	4.1	2	4.1	0	0	49
PLNC	16	45.7	15	42.9	2	5.7	2	5.7	0	0	35
NNC	12	35.3	16	47.1	5	14.7	1	2.9	0	0	34
MVNC	24	75.0	4	12.5	4	12.5	0	0	0	0	32
ENC	26	65.9	10	22.7	5	11.4	2	4.5	1	2.3	44
MNU	14	58.6	8	27.6	5	17.2	1	3.4	1	4.4	29
unknown	2	50.0	1	25.0	0	0	1	25.0	0	0	4
Total	167	54.9	97	31.9	27	8.9	10	3.3	3	1.0	304

Chi-square = 25.870; df = 14; $p \leq 0.03$

The findings reveal no significant relationship between geographical location and the frequency of open altar invitations (see Table A-16, p. 140).

Table 4-14 reveals that a significant relationship exists between geographical location and the frequency of communion at the altar. Churches on the SNU, ENC and PLNC regions were more likely than churches from other regions to use the altar for communion on a monthly basis. Churches in the MVNC and TNU regions were less likely than churches from other regions to use the altar for communion on a monthly basis.

**TABLE 4-14: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION AT THE ALTAR
BY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION**

REGION	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
ONU	0	0	4	9.8	22	53.7	12	29.3	3	7.3	41
SNU	0	0	8	22.2	23	63.9	4	11.1	1	2.7	36
TNU	0	0	3	6.3	36	75.0	9	18.8	0	0	48
PLNC	0	0	7	20.0	11	31.4	12	34.3	5	14.3	35
NNC	0	0	2	5.9	14	41.2	12	35.3	6	17.6	34
MVNC	0	0	1	3.1	22	68.8	8	25.0	1	3.1	32
ENC	1	2.3	9	20.5	21	47.7	9	20.5	3	6.8	43
MNU	0	0	3	10.3	14	48.3	8	27.6	4	13.8	29
unknown	0	0	1	25.0	2	50.0	1	25.0	0	0	4
Total	1	0.3	38	12.6	165	54.6	75	24.8	23	7.6	302

Chi-square = 44.039; df = 21; $p \leq 0.01$

From the data produced by the instrument, it appears that the variable of geographical location is significantly related to the frequency of altar use for specific altar calls for salvation, general altar calls for spiritual renewal of help, and communion at the altar. Nazarene churches in the TNU and MVNC regions are most likely to give weekly altar calls for salvation and churches in the PLNC and NNC regions are least likely to give weekly altar calls for salvation. Churches in the MVNC, ENC, and TNU regions are more likely than churches from other regions to use altar calls for spiritual renewal or help weekly. Weekly altar calls for spiritual renewal or help occur with the least frequency on the NNC and PLNC regions. Churches on the SNU, ENC and PLNC regions were more likely than churches from other regions to use the altar for communion on a monthly basis. Churches in the MVNC and TNU regions were less likely than churches from other regions to use the altar for communion on a monthly basis.

Variable of P.O.F. Additions

The third operational question related to Research Question 2 addressed the variable of P.O.F. additions. The survey instrument allowed for six possible responses to Item #16: “Over the last three (3) years, what is the yearly average Profession of Faith additions to your congregation’s membership, as reported in your Annual Report?” Those responses included “0 each year,” “1-5 each year,” “6-15 each year,” “16-25 each year,” “26-45 each year,” and “more than 45 each year” (Appendix 3). To allow for more reliable analysis, the categories “16-25 each year,” “26-45 each year,” and “more than 45 each year” are considered together as “16+ yearly” in Tables 4-15, 16, 17, 18 and A-17.

Table 4-15 reveals that a significant relationship exists between P.O.F. additions and the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation. The findings indicate churches which averaged sixteen or more Profession of Faith additions annually over the last three years were more likely to have weekly altars calls for salvation than were churches which averaged fewer than sixteen Profession of Faith additions. Churches which averaged zero Profession of Faith additions were least likely to have weekly altar calls for salvation.

TABLE 4-15: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR SALVATION BY P.O.F.

P.O.F. Additions	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0 yearly	2	16.7	4	33.3	3	25.0	2	16.7	1	8.3	12
1-5 yearly	60	36.6	76	46.3	26	15.9	2	1.2	0	0	164
6-15 yearly	35	40.7	38	44.2	11	12.8	2	2.3	0	0	86
16+ yearly	20	64.5	6	19.4	2	6.5	3	9.7	0	0	31
unknown	3	27.3	6	54.6	2	18.2	0	0	0	0	11
Total	120	39.5	130	42.8	44	14.5	9	3.0	1	0.3	304

Chi-square = 19.038; df = 6; $p \leq 0.01$

The findings reveal no significant relationship between P.O.F. additions and the frequency of specific altar calls for entire sanctification (see Table A-17, p. 140).

Table 4-16 indicates a significant relationship exists between P.O.F. additions and the frequency of general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help. The findings reveal that churches which averaged zero annual Profession of Faith additions over the last three years had general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help with the least frequency.

TABLE 4-16: FREQUENCY OF GENERAL ALTAR CALLS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OR HELP BY P.O.F.

P.O.F. Additions	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0 yearly	1	8.3	5	41.7	2	16.7	3	25.0	1	8.3	12
1-5 yearly	97	59.1	50	30.5	12	7.3	3	1.8	2	1.2	164
6-15 yearly	46	53.5	27	31.4	9	10.5	4	4.7	0	0	86
16+ yearly	19	61.3	10	32.3	2	6.5	0	0	0	0	31
unknown	4	36.4	5	45.5	2	18.2	0	0	0	0	11
Total	167	54.9	97	31.9	27	8.9	10	3.3	3	1.0	304

Chi-square = 20.759; df = 6; $p \leq 0.01$

Table 4-17 indicates a significant relationship exists between P.O.F. additions and the frequency of open altar invitations. The findings reveal that churches which averaged zero annual Profession of Faith additions over the last three years had open altar invitations with the least frequency.

TABLE 4-17: FREQUENCY OF OPEN ALTAR INVITATIONS BY P.O.F.

P.O.F. Additions	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0 yearly	6	50.0	1	8.3	0	0	2	16.7	3	25.0	12
1-5 yearly	128	78.0	21	12.8	6	3.7	7	4.3	2	1.2	164
6-15 yearly	67	77.9	13	15.1	1	1.2	3	3.5	2	2.3	86
16+ yearly	23	74.2	6	19.4	0	0	2	6.5	0	0	31
unknown	6	54.6	3	27.3	2	18.2	0	0	0	0	11
Total	230	75.7	44	14.5	9	3.0	14	4.6	7	2.3	304

Chi-square = 16.240; df = 6; $p \leq 0.02$

Table 4-18 indicates a significant relationship exists between P.O.F. additions and the frequency of communion at the altar. The findings reveal that churches which averaged zero annual Profession of Faith additions over the last three years had communion at the altar with less frequency than other churches.

TABLE 4-18: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION AT THE ALTAR BY P. O. F.

P.O.F. Additions	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0 yearly	0	0	0	0	5	41.7	6	50.0	1	8.3	12
1-5 yearly	1	0.6	19	11.7	100	61.3	29	17.8	14	8.6	163
6-15 yearly	0	0	11	12.8	42	48.8	27	31.4	6	7.0	86
16+ yearly	0	0	7	23.3	11	36.7	10	33.3	2	6.7	30
unknown	0	0	1	9.1	7	63.6	3	27.3	0	0	11
Total	1	0.3	38	12.6	165	54.6	75	24.8	23	7.6	302

Chi-square = 15.068; df = 6; $p \leq 0.02$

The findings reveal that the variable of P.O.F. additions to church membership significantly relates to the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, open altar invitations, and use of the altar for communion. Churches which averaged zero annual Profession of Faith additions over the last three

years use the altar for specific altar calls for salvation, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, open altar invitations, and communion at the altar with less frequency than other churches. The findings also indicate that churches which averaged sixteen or more Profession of Faith additions annually over the last three years were more likely to have weekly altars calls for salvation than were churches which averaged fewer than sixteen Profession of Faith additions. The variable of P.O.F. additions does not appear to have significant relationship to the frequency of use of the altar for specific invitations for entire sanctification.

Variable of Pastor's Years in the Ministry

The fourth operational question related to Research Question 2 addressed the variable of the pastor's years in the ministry.

The findings reveal no significant relationship exists between the pastor's years of experience and the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation (see Table A-18, p. 141), no significant relationship between the pastor's years of experience and the frequency of specific altar calls for entire sanctification (see Table A-19, p. 141), no significant relationship between the pastor's years of experience and the frequency of general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help (see Table A-20, p. 141), and no significant relationship between a pastor's years of experience and the frequency of communion at the altar (see Table A-21, p. 142).

Table 4-19 shows that a significant relationship exists between the pastor's years of experience and the frequency of open altar invitations. The findings reveal that pastor's with between thirty-one and forty-two years of experience give open altar

invitations with less frequency than other pastors, and pastors with between twenty-one and thirty years experience give open altar invitations with more frequency than other pastors.

TABLE 4-19: FREQUENCY OF OPEN ALTAR INVITATIONS BY PASTORAL EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0-10 years	76	73.1	15	14.4	4	3.8	4	3.8	5	4.8	104
11-20 years	87	78.4	19	17.1	3	2.7	2	1.8	0	0	111
21-30 years	46	85.2	2	3.7	0	0	4	7.4	2	3.7	54
31-42 years	17	60.7	6	21.4	1	3.6	4	14.3	0	0	28
unknown	4	57.1	2	28.6	1	14.3	0	0	0	0	7
Total	230	75.7	44	14.5	9	3.0	14	4.6	7	2.3	304

Chi-square = 13.490; df = 6; $p \leq 0.04$

The findings reveal that the variable of pastoral experience has no significant relationship to the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, and the frequency of communion at the altar.

The findings do reveal that a significant relationship exists between pastoral experience and open altar invitations. The findings reveal that pastors with between thirty-one and forty-two years of experience give open altar invitations with less frequency than other pastors, and pastors with between twenty-one and thirty years experience give open altar invitations with more frequency than other pastors.

Variable of Church Age

The fifth operational question related to Research Question 2 addressed the variable of the age of the church, as determined by the official date of organization of the church.

The findings reveal no significant relationship between church age and the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation (see Table A-22, p. 142), no significant relationship between church age and the frequency of specific altar calls for entire sanctification (see Table A-23, p. 142), no significant relationship between church age and the frequency of general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help (see Table A-24, p. 143), no significant relationship between church age and the frequency of open altar invitations (see Table A-25, p. 143), and no significant relationship between church age and the frequency of communion served at the altar (see Table A-26, p. 143).

Variable of Growth Rate

The sixth operational question related to Research Question 2 addressed the variable of the church's growth rate over the last five years.

The findings reveal no significant relationship exists between church growth and the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation (see Table A-27, p. 144), no significant relationship between growth rate and specific altar calls for entire sanctification (see Table A-28, p. 144), no significant relationship between the church's growth rate and the frequency of general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help (see Table A-29, p. 145), and no significant relationship between growth rate and the frequency of open altar invitations (see Table A-30, p. 145).

Table 4-20 indicates a significant relationship exists between the church's growth rate and the frequency of communion served at the altar. The findings reveal that churches with a decrease in attendance were less likely than other churches to serve communion at the altar on a monthly basis, while churches with a growth rate of 11-20 percent were more likely than other churches to serve communion at the altar on a monthly basis.

TABLE 4-20: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION AT THE ALTAR BY CHURCH GROWTH

GROWTH RATE	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
decrease	0	0	3	4.4	41	60.3	19	27.9	5	7.4	68
remained same	1	2.0	7	14.0	29	58.0	9	18.0	4	8.0	50
1-10%	0	0	12	13.3	55	61.1	20	22.0	3	3.3	90
11-20%	0	0	7	21.2	15	45.5	9	27.3	2	6.1	33
over 20%	0	0	6	13.3	17	37.8	13	28.9	9	20.0	45
unknown	0	0	3	18.8	8	50.0	5	31.2	0	0	16
Total	1	0.3	38	12.6	165	54.6	75	24.8	23	7.6	302

Chi-square = 22.628; df = 12; $p \leq 0.04$

Additional Responses

Item #13 on the survey instrument (Appendix 3) allowed respondents to make additional comments on the use of the altar. One hundred twenty-three (123) pastors (40.3%) responded to the question, "What additional comments on the use of the altar would you like to make?" (Appendix 7). The response to this open-ended question indicates a high degree of interest in the subject.

Some respondents expressed concern at what was perceived to be a decrease in altar use, attributing this decrease to a reluctance and resistance among the laity to use the altar. Respondents wrote, “People are less responsive to altar calls for crisis experiences or for a general invitation than a decade or so ago” (Appendix 7, #44) and, “Its importance seems to be waning” (Appendix 7, #95).

Several respondents acknowledged the importance of this study on the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. Many respondents wished to clarify other responses on the survey. Many other respondents affirmed the importance and value of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene with comments like “May our churches never be without altars where people can come for spiritual help” (Appendix 7, #3), and “Just seeing the altar helps people to remember that we are a Christ-centered and prayer-driven church” (Appendix 7, #145).

Transition in Altar Use Determined

Research Question 3 sought to determine if there has been a transition in the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. For purposes of clarity and logical progression, Research Question 3 is restated.

RQ #3: In what ways are contemporary Nazarene practices, with respect to the altar, congruent and/or incongruent with biblical uses and historical practices in the Church of the Nazarene?

The data reveals the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA to be widespread, frequent, and varied. The altar is no longer identified solely with evangelism, as it was early in Nazarene history. Indeed, the altar is now closely identified

with the church's worship and with its evangelism. One respondent wrote of this dual focus of the Nazarene altar. "The altar is a good place to meet God. The pulpit is where we hear about God. Together, they are central in worship and evangelism" (Appendix 7, #122). It should be repeated that the Nazarene altar is no longer viewed solely as a *method of evangelism*. The Nazarene altar is increasingly viewed as a *means of grace*. With varying frequencies, the altar is used for specific altar calls for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, open altar invitations, communion at the altar, and twenty other uses listed by respondents.

Notable is the evidence that the most frequent use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene is an open altar invitation during pastoral prayer, a use which occurs weekly in over three-fourths of Nazarene churches. While not primarily evangelical in nature, the open altar provides evangelistic opportunities. "We've had more people saved during open altar time than we've had with closing altar calls," wrote one respondent. "For me and my people, it's a great testimony to the presence of God in our services." (Appendix 7, #238).

While the current use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene has shifted from the church's traditional and historical use, current Nazarene use of the altar reflects more the biblical use of the altar as a place for personal encounter with God for a variety of reasons. The altar continues to be viewed as a place of repentance, surrender, and consecration, but it is now also viewed as a place of gratitude, obedience, refuge, worship, praise, healing and spiritual renewal.

Summary

The findings of the study revealed answers to each of the three Research Questions.

Research Question 1

How is the altar currently being used in the Church of the Nazarene?

- ◆ The greatest percentage of Nazarene churches use the altar for specific altar calls for salvation at least monthly (42.6%). Specific altar calls for salvation occur usually weekly in 39 percent (39.3%) of Nazarene churches, at least quarterly in 14 percent (14.4%) of Nazarene churches, and annually or semi-annually in 3 percent (3.0%) of Nazarene churches.
- ◆ The greatest percentage of Nazarene churches use the altar for specific altar calls for entire sanctification at least monthly (38.3%). Specific altar calls for entire sanctification occur at least quarterly in 37 percent (37.0%) of Nazarene churches, usually weekly in 12 percent (11.6%) of Nazarene churches, and annually or semi-annually in 12 percent (11.6%) of Nazarene churches. Specific altar calls for entire sanctification never occur in 2 percent (1.7%) of Nazarene churches.
- ◆ The greatest percentage of Nazarene churches use the altar for general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help usually weekly (54.9%). General altar calls for spiritual renewal or help occur at least monthly in 32 percent (31.9%) of Nazarene churches, at least quarterly in 9 percent (8.9%) of Nazarene churches, and annually or semi-annually in 12 percent (11.6%) of Nazarene churches. %. General altar calls for spiritual renewal or help never occur in 1 percent (1.0%) of Nazarene churches.

- ◆ The greatest percentage of Nazarene churches use the altar for open altar invitations usually weekly (75.7%). Open altar invitations occur at least monthly in 15 percent (14.5%) of Nazarene churches, annually or semi-annually in 5 percent (4.6%) of Nazarene churches, and at least quarterly in 3 percent (3.0%) of Nazarene churches. Open altar invitations never occur in 2 percent (2.3%) of Nazarene churches.
- ◆ The greatest percentage of Nazarene churches use the altar for communion at least quarterly (54.6%). Communion is served at the altar annually or semi-annually in 25 percent (24.8%) of Nazarene churches, at least monthly in 13 percent (12.6%) of Nazarene churches, and usually weekly in less than 1 percent (0.3%) of Nazarene churches. Communion is never served at the altar in 8 percent (7.6%) of Nazarene churches.
- ◆ Other uses of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene include healing/anointing services, pastor's personal use, prayer meetings, installation of officers/dedication of workers, sending services, corporate prayer, intercessory prayer, pre-service prayer, special offerings, reception of new members, dedication of children, prayer in conjunction with church board meetings, baptisms, all night prayer meetings, revival, private prayer during week, installation of pastor, place to leave stewardship commitments, prayer as a family, and covenant renewals.

Research Question 2

Are there variables which influence the way the altar is used in the Church of the Nazarene, and can certain characteristics be associated with the observed findings?

- ◆ The variable of church size is not significantly related to the frequency of altar use for specific altar calls for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, or open altar invitations. The variable of church size is significantly related to the frequency of altar use for communion. Churches with an average attendance of 250 or more are less likely to serve communion at the altar quarterly, and more likely to serve communion at the altar annually, than churches with an average attendance of less than 250. Churches with an average attendance of between ten and ninety-nine are most likely to serve communion at the altar on a quarterly basis.
- ◆ The variable of geographical location is significantly related to the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, and for serving communion at the altar. Nazarene churches in the TNU and MVNC regions are most likely to give weekly altar calls for salvation and churches in the PLNC and NNC regions are least likely to give weekly altar calls for salvation. Churches in the MVNC, ENC, and TNU regions are most likely to use altar calls for spiritual renewal or help weekly. Weekly altar calls for spiritual renewal or help occur with the least frequency on the NNC and PLNC regions. Churches on the SNU, ENC and PLNC regions were more likely than churches from other regions to use the altar for communion on a monthly basis. Churches in the MVNC and TNU regions were less likely than churches from other regions to use the altar for communion on a monthly basis. The variable of geographical location is not significantly related to the frequency of specific altar calls for entire sanctification.

- ◆ The findings reveal that the variable of P.O.F. additions to church membership significantly relates to the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, open altar invitations, and use of the altar for communion. Churches which averaged zero annual Profession of Faith additions over the last three years use the altar for specific altar calls for salvation, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, open altar invitations, and communion at the altar with less frequency than other churches. The findings also indicate that churches which averaged sixteen or more Profession of Faith additions annually over the last three years were more likely to have weekly altars calls for salvation than were churches which averaged fewer than sixteen Profession of Faith additions. The variable of P.O.F. additions does not appear to have significant relationship to the frequency of use of the altar for specific invitations for entire sanctification.
- ◆ The findings reveal that the variable of pastoral experience has no significant relationship to the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, and the frequency of communion at the altar. The findings do reveal that a significant relationship exists between pastoral experience and open altar invitations. The findings reveal that pastor's with between thirty-one and forty-two years of experience give open altar invitations with less frequency than other pastors, and pastors with between twenty-one and thirty years experience give open altar invitations with more frequency than other pastors.

- ◆ The findings reveal no significant relationship between the variable of church age and the frequency of altar use for specific invitations for salvation, specific invitations for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, open altar invitations, or the use of the altar to serve communion.
- ◆ The findings reveal that the variable of church growth significantly relates to the frequency of use of the altar to serve communion. The findings reveal no significant relationship between church growth and the frequency of specific altar calls for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help, or open altar invitations.

Research Question 3

RQ #3: In what ways are contemporary Nazarene altar practices, with respect to the altar, congruent and/or incongruent with biblical uses and historical practices in the Church of the Nazarene?

The findings indicate a transition has taken place in the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. A thorough review of the related literature revealed that the altar in the Church of the Nazarene has been historically identified primarily with evangelism. The findings of this study reveal the current use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA to be widespread, frequent, and varied. The altar is no longer identified solely with evangelism. Indeed, the altar is now closely identified with the church's worship and with its evangelism. With varying frequencies, the altar is used for specific altar calls for salvation, specific altar calls for entire sanctification, general altar

calls for spiritual renewal or help, open altar invitations, communion at the altar, and twenty other uses listed by respondents. Nazarene altars are most frequently used for open altar invitations and general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help. Most Nazarene pastors say the most important role of the altar is to serve as first, “a place to experience God’s presence,” and second, “a place to be saved.”

While the current use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene has shifted from the church’s traditional and historical use, current Nazarene use of the altar reflects more the biblical use of the altar as a place for personal encounter with God for a variety of reasons. The altar continues to be viewed as a place of repentance, surrender, and consecration, but it is now also viewed as a place of gratitude, obedience, refuge, worship, praise, healing and spiritual renewal.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the current practices of altar use in American congregations of the Church of the Nazarene, USA, to evaluate those findings in light of the biblical uses of the altar and the historical use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, and to determine if a transition has indeed taken place in the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. Chapter 5 interprets the data offering a summary of the major findings, implications of the findings, unexpected findings, limitations, suggestions for future studies, and concluding remarks.

Summary of Major Findings

The findings revealed a widespread, frequent, and varied use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. The data also demonstrates that certain variables are significantly related to altar use in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. Furthermore, the findings indicate a transition has taken place in the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

Frequency and Types of Altar Use

- ◆ Weekly altar calls for salvation occur in 39 percent (39.3%) of Nazarene churches.

Specific altar calls for entire sanctification occur usually weekly in 12 percent

(11.6%) of Nazarene churches. Weekly use of the altar for general altar calls for

spiritual renewal or help occur in 55 percent (54.9%) of Nazarene churches. Weekly

open altar invitations occur in 76 percent (75.7%) of Nazarene churches. Communion is served at the altar weekly in less than 1 percent (0.3%) of Nazarene churches.

- ◆ Monthly altar calls for salvation occur in 43 percent (42.6%) of Nazarene churches. Monthly altar calls for entire sanctification occur in 38 percent (38.3%) of Nazarene churches. General altar calls for spiritual renewal or help occur monthly in 32 percent (31.9%) of Nazarene churches. Open altar invitations occur monthly in 15 percent (14.5%) of Nazarene churches. Communion is served at the altar monthly in 13 percent (12.6%) of Nazarene churches.
- ◆ Quarterly altar calls for salvation occur in 14 percent (14.4%) of Nazarene churches. Specific altar calls for entire sanctification occur at least quarterly in 37 percent (37.0%) of Nazarene churches. General altar calls for spiritual renewal or help occur at least quarterly in 9 percent (8.9%) of Nazarene churches. Open altar invitations occur at least quarterly in 3 percent (3.0%) of Nazarene churches. Quarterly use of the altar for communion occurs in 55 percent (54.6%) of Nazarene churches.
- ◆ Annual or semi-annual altar calls for salvation occur in 3 percent (3.0%) of Nazarene churches. Specific altar calls for entire sanctification occur annually or semi-annually in 12 percent (11.6%) of Nazarene churches. General altar calls for spiritual renewal or help occur annually or semi-annually in 12 percent (11.6%) of Nazarene churches. Open altar invitations occur annually or semi-annually in 5 percent (4.6%) of Nazarene churches. Communion is served at the altar annually or semi-annually in 25 percent (24.8%) of Nazarene churches.

- ◆ Specific altar calls for entire sanctification never occur in 2 percent (1.7%) of Nazarene churches. General altar calls for spiritual renewal or help never occur in 1 percent (1.0%) of Nazarene churches. Open altar invitations never occur in 2 percent (2.3%) of Nazarene churches. Communion is never served at the altar in 8 percent (7.6%) of Nazarene churches.
- ◆ Other uses of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene include healing/anointing services, pastor's personal use, prayer meetings, installation of officers/dedication of workers, sending services, corporate prayer, intercessory prayer, pre-service prayer, special offerings, reception of new members, dedication of children, prayer in conjunction with church board meetings, baptisms, all night prayer meetings, revival, private prayer during week, installation of pastor, place to leave stewardship commitments, prayer as a family, and covenant renewals.

Variables Related to Altar Use

The findings reveal that certain variables are significantly related to the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene.

- ◆ The frequency of specific altar calls for salvation is significantly related to the variables of geographical location and P.O.F. additions to church membership.
- ◆ The frequency of specific altar calls for entire sanctification is not significantly related to any of the variables considered.

- ◆ The frequency of general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help is significantly related to the variables of geographical location and P.O.F. additions to church membership.
- ◆ The frequency of open altar invitations is significantly related to the variables of P.O.F. additions to church membership and years of pastoral service.
- ◆ The frequency of communion served at the altar is significantly related to the variables of church size, geographical location, P.O.F. additions to church membership, and church growth.

Transition in Altar Use Discovered

The findings indicate a transition has taken place in the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA. A thorough review of the related literature revealed that the altar in the Church of the Nazarene has been historically identified primarily with evangelism. The information produced by this study indicates a broadened use and function of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene. The findings reveal the Nazarene altar is now closely identified with the church's worship as well as its evangelism. The most frequent use of Nazarene altars is for open altar invitations and general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help. Most Nazarene pastors say the most important role of the altar is to serve as first, "a place to experience God's presence," and second, "a place to be saved."

Implications of the Findings

In Leviticus 6:12 God commands His people, “The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out.” The command appears again in 6:13, “The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.” God’s intention for His people obviously included the continuous use of the altar. The findings of this study indicate the fire of Nazarene altar use has not gone out.

The findings do indicate a transition in altar use has occurred in the Church of the Nazarene. The altar is no longer identified primarily with evangelism, but is used in varied ways and is especially identified with worship. One pastor wrote, “I believe the altar is the center of worship in our church” (Appendix 7, #241).

While the current use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene has shifted from the church’s traditional use, current Nazarene use of the altar reflects more the biblical use of the altar as a place for personal encounter with God for a variety of reasons. A survey of the Old Testament reveals that the earliest altars were built for a variety of reasons and used as places of gratitude, obedience, sanctuary and refuge, worship, praise, prayer, repentance, surrender, consecration, and spiritual renewal. Most of all, Old Testament altars were places and symbols of humanity’s personal encounter with God and memorials of past encounters with God. The altar continues to be viewed as a place of repentance, surrender, and consecration, but it is now also viewed as a place of gratitude, obedience, refuge, worship, praise, healing and spiritual renewal.

Several respondents indicated that evangelism now takes place outside the walls of the church more than it does inside the walls of the church. This indicates a change in the church’s *method* of evangelism, not its *theology* of evangelism. The altar, once used

primarily for the traditional altar call, is now being used as a place for God's people to experience His presence in prayer, while still retaining a role in public evangelism. The altar in the Church of the Nazarene is much more than a mourner's bench, although it is also that. In short, the altar has become a part of the liturgy and overall purpose of the church and is not limited to use as an evangelistic method or tool. While the traditional altar call may be employed less frequently in the church than it was fifty years ago, the altar itself is probably employed more frequently.

My interpretation is that the current use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene reflects much more a biblical understanding of the use of the altar and less the traditional, historical use within the Church of the Nazarene.

Unexpected Findings

Interest in this study--as indicated by the high response rate and the percentage of respondents which answered the two open-ended questions--was much stronger than anticipated.

The variety of ways in which Nazarenes pastors indicated they use the altar was also enlightening. In addition to the five uses of the altar the survey instrument researched, respondents listed twenty additional uses of the altar.

Forty-three pastors mentioned healing in their response to the open-ended question about additional uses of the altar. One pastor wrote, "We use the altar to pray for people to be healed in body as well as their soul" (Appendix 6, #30). Many pastors emphasized the use of the altar for anointing with oil and prayer for healing.

I had not anticipated the profound appreciation I feel for the Nazarene pastors who

helped me by responding to the questionnaire. As I entered the data from the surveys and read comments offered by the respondents, I was struck by the fellowship, kinship, and brotherhood shared by Nazarene pastors.

Several pastors spoke of their personal use of the altar. The altar is important to Nazarene clergy not only as a place for public ministry, but also as a place for personal prayer and private devotions.

None of the respondents mentioned the use of the altar for ordaining elders and deacons in the Church of the Nazarene, or the use of the altar for the installation of General Superintendents. Perhaps respondents omitted listing this use due to the frequency in which these two activities take place. Ordination of elders and deacons takes place once a year on each district. The installation of new General Superintendents takes place once every four years at the quadrennial General Assembly.

Limitations

The findings from this study are specifically applicable to the Church of the Nazarene, USA, and may be generally applicable to other Wesleyan-Armenian denominations in the holiness tradition and to the Church of the Nazarene, International. The definition of “altar” delimits the study to those churches which make use of a kneeling altar and altar calls as opposed to those churches which make no use of a kneeling altar or altar calls.

Suggestions for Future Studies

This study contributes to the ongoing literature about the altar and will provide understanding of both the historical and current uses of the altar in the evangelism and

worship of the Church of the Nazarene.

Future studies could consider if a cause and effect relationship exists between the use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene and church growth or church size. A further study might consider if a transition in Nazarene preaching has paralleled the transition in altar use. Another study could determine if altar use in other Wesleyan-Arminian denominations is identical or similar to Nazarene altar use. A future study could employ the survey instrument used in this study to describe use of the altar at that future point and determine if change in altar use is ongoing. One more study could determine if these findings are applicable to the Church of the Nazarene, International.

A Call for the Altar

Robert Coleman in his study, The Origin of the Altar Call in American

Methodism, writes,

...like it or not, until there can be found an evangelistic method more suited to the temperament and aspirations of the American people, the “altar call” of the distinctly revivalist origin and flavor is likely to remain a vital part of evangelical worship. (Parrott 156)

The altar call remains an effective evangelistic method in the Church of the Nazarene, though its current use is not limited to evangelism.

Nazarene altars have become more than a place where people are saved and sanctified. Nazarene altars are used as places of repentance, obedience, refuge, worship, praise, prayer, surrender, commitment, and spiritual renewal. They are places where people make, renew and acknowledge spiritual covenants with God.

The open altar invitation has put the altar in a new perspective. By changing the altar’s primary use from evangelism to that of worship and evangelism, Nazarenes have

made the altar “user-friendly,” and Nazarene altar use has become more biblical. As long as the altar is perceived as a place where people for whatever reason can approach God in prayer, the altar will have an important role both in Nazarene worship and evangelism. It may be that as altar use increases in worship it will also increase in evangelism.

The transition in altar use in the Church of the Nazarene has not been accepted in all quarters. As recently as the summer of 1995 I heard a Nazarene evangelist, preaching in a district camp meeting, publicly rebuke pastors who “abuse the altar by giving general invitations.” The evangelist, lamenting what he perceived to be a dangerous decline in the traditional evangelistic use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, blamed the decline on the widespread use of the open altar. I would counter that Nazarene altar use today might be practically nonexistent had the Church of the Nazarene narrowly limited altar use to a method of evangelism and not broadened its use of the altar to reflect biblical examples of altar use. If Nazarene altars are to continue to burn brightly with use, it will be because altar use remains frequent and varied.

At the same time, two inherent dangers are found in the widespread use of the open altar. The first danger is that Nazarenes may become so familiar, so comfortable with the altar that we lose our sense of its holy sacredness as a physical reminder of the presence of God. The second danger is that the transition may swing so far that we cease using the altar evangelistically for specific altar calls for salvation and entire sanctification, and use it exclusively for open altar invitations or general altar calls for spiritual renewal or help. One pastor, hinting of this danger, commented, “I believe that ‘open altar’ time in the middle of the service decreases (the) effectiveness of (an) invitation at (the) end of (the) service” (Appendix 7, #58).

One Sunday morning recently I preached about finding God's will for your life. I intentionally planned the pastoral prayer to follow the sermon. Sensing God's leading in a powerful way, at the end of the message I said, "During our time of family prayer this morning, many of us are going to want to pray about God's will for our lives. Perhaps you've come to the realization in the last few moments that God wants to forgive you of your sins and save you. Or maybe you are already a Christian, but this morning you know God wants to make you holy by filling you with his Holy Spirit, and you are willing to give yourself completely to Him. There are also some who are seeking God's guidance concerning major decisions in their life. We have an altar where you can pray this morning. In fact, the altar probably isn't big enough to hold all who will come, so we will use the front pews as an altar as well, and you can feel free to come forward and kneel there. As we stand and sing a chorus to prepare our hearts for prayer, please come if you are seeking God's will in a specific matter."

Megan and her friend, Dale, attended the Church of the Nazarene for the first time that Sunday. They joined some two dozen individuals who came to the altar in response to the invitation. Some of the seekers prayed to be saved, others prayed to be sanctified, and many prayed about special needs in their lives and in the lives of others.

As long as persons have the capacity and responsibility to respond to God's grace the altar will have a place in the Church of the Nazarene. Nazarenes will continue to have a viable, useable altar if the altar is not viewed exclusively as a means of evangelism, but primarily as a means of grace—a place where the people of God can experience His presence and grace in powerful ways. The altar will need to be perceived as a place to receive grace and a place to acknowledge grace: prevenient grace, saving

grace, sanctifying grace, healing grace, helping grace, keeping grace.

While this study reveals that certain variables are associated with the varieties and frequency of Nazarene altar use, it must again be acknowledged that “ultimately, each pastor and congregation decide on the importance of the altar and how it is to be used in their local church.” (Parrott 185)

APPENDIX 1

Subject Notification Card

November 21, 1997

Dear Fellow Pastor:

I am a Nazarene pastor completing the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary. My final project is a dissertation pertaining to the current use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA.

You have been selected as one of 400 Nazarene pastors to be surveyed with a questionnaire pertaining to the use of the altar in the church you pastor.

It will take approximately five minutes to respond to the questionnaire, which should arrive in one week.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Edward L. Estep

APPENDIX 2**Survey Cover Letter**

November 28, 1997

Dear Fellow Pastor:

I am completing the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary and hope to graduate May 1998. My final project is a dissertation pertaining to the current use of the altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA, an issue which I believe to be of interest and importance to each of us who pastor in the Church of the Nazarene.

You and 399 other pastors of Nazarene churches were scientifically selected to participate in this survey. Only 400 churches out of 5,132 are being surveyed, so it is important that all participants respond. It will only take you a few moments to complete the questionnaire, which you can return anonymously. I promise you confidentiality. No one will ever be able to connect the answers on your sheet with you personally.

Find enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which you may return the questionnaire. Also enclosed is a self-addressed, stamped postcard which has a number that has been assigned to you. If you place the postcard in return mail when you return the completed questionnaire, I will know that you have completed the survey and will not need to contact you again.

Thank you for your help with this effort. Please return the questionnaire by December 12, 1997.

Sincerely,

Edward L. (Eddie) Estep

enc.: questionnaire
return envelope
return postcard

APPENDIX 3

Questionnaire

A Survey of the Use of the Altar in the Church of the Nazarene, USA Among Selected Senior Pastors

(Please complete and return immediately)

Instructions: You have been selected to participate in this survey sent to selected Nazarene pastors in the United States. The confidentiality of this questionnaire has been assured through the anonymity of the survey. Please return your completed survey in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by December 12, 1997. Thank you in advance for your help in this study.

Please check the one box that most accurately represents your answer to each question.

1. How often do you give a specific altar call for salvation after a sermon?
 - a. ☐ Usually Weekly
 - b. ☐ At Least Monthly
 - c. ☐ At Least Quarterly
 - d. ☐ Annually or Semi-annually
 - e. ☐ Never
2. How often do you give a specific altar call for entire sanctification after a sermon?
 - a. ☐ Usually Weekly
 - b. ☐ At Least Monthly
 - c. ☐ At Least Quarterly
 - d. ☐ Annually or Semi-annually
 - e. ☐ Never
3. How often do you give a general altar call for spiritual renewal or help after a sermon?
 - a. ☐ Usually Weekly
 - b. ☐ At Least Monthly
 - c. ☐ At Least Quarterly
 - d. ☐ Annually or Semi-annually
 - e. ☐ Never
4. How often do you use an open altar general invitation during pastoral prayer?
 - a. ☐ Usually Weekly
 - b. ☐ At Least Monthly
 - c. ☐ At Least Quarterly
 - d. ☐ Annually or Semi-annually
 - e. ☐ Never

(turn to back)

5. How often do you serve communion at the altar?
- a. ☐ Usually Weekly
 - b. ☐ At Least Monthly
 - c. ☐ At Least Quarterly
 - d. ☐ Annually or Semi-annually
 - e. ☐ Never
6. Please rank the five following uses of the altar in order of importance from 1-5, using all five numbers, with 1 being most important and 5 being least important.
- a. ____ The altar as a place to receive Communion
 - b. ____ The altar as a place where people can be entirely sanctified
 - c. ____ The altar as a place for ceremonies (weddings, dedications, etc.) to be held
 - d. ____ The altar as a place where people can be saved
 - e. ____ The altar as a place where God's people can experience His presence in prayer
7. In the church you pastor, how important is the use of the altar as a place where people can be saved?
- a. ☐ Very Important
 - b. ☐ Important
 - c. ☐ Somewhat Important
 - d. ☐ Unimportant
8. In the church you pastor, how important is the use of the altar as a place where people can be entirely sanctified?
- a. ☐ Very Important
 - b. ☐ Important
 - c. ☐ Somewhat Important
 - d. ☐ Unimportant
9. In the church you pastor, how important is the use of the altar as a place where God's people can experience His presence in prayer?
- a. ☐ Very Important
 - b. ☐ Important
 - c. ☐ Somewhat Important
 - d. ☐ Unimportant

(continued on next page)

10. In the church you pastor, how important is the use of the altar as a place to receive Communion?

- a. ☐ Very Important
- b. ☐ Important
- c. ☐ Somewhat Important
- d. ☐ Unimportant

11. In the church you pastor, how important is the use of the altar as a place for ceremonies (wedding, dedications, etc.) to be held?

- a. ☐ Very Important
- b. ☐ Important
- c. ☐ Somewhat Important
- d. ☐ Unimportant

12. Please describe any additional ways you use the altar: _____

13. What additional comments on the use of the altar would you like to make?

Background information is very important. Please check the appropriate category or fill in the blank to the best of your knowledge.

14. Please check the college region in which your church is located.

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> ONU (Central) | e. <input type="checkbox"/> NNC (Northwest) |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> SNU (South Central) | f. <input type="checkbox"/> MVNC (East Central) |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> TNU (Southeast) | g. <input type="checkbox"/> ENC (Eastern) |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> PLNC (Southwest) | h. <input type="checkbox"/> MANU (North Central) |

15. Please indicate the average worship attendance of the church you pastor, as reported in your Annual Report: _____ per Sunday

(turn to back)

16. Over the last three (3) years, what is the yearly average of Profession of Faith additions to your congregation's membership, as reported in your Annual Report?
- | | |
|--|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> 0 each year | d. <input type="checkbox"/> 16-25 each year |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 each year | e. <input type="checkbox"/> 26-45 each year |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> 6-15 each year | f. <input type="checkbox"/> more than 45 each year |
17. Please check the box which most accurately represents your congregation's cumulative worship attendance growth rate the last five (5) years:
- a. ☐ a decrease in attendance over the last 5 years
 - b. ☐ attendance has remained the same the last 5 years
 - c. ☐ an increase of 1-10% over the last 5 years
 - d. ☐ an increase of 11-20% over the last 5 years
 - e. ☐ an increase of more than 20% over the last 5 years
18. Including all churches you have served, how many years have you served as a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene?
- _____ years
19. What year was the church you pastor organized? _____

Thank you for your help! Please mail this questionnaire in the addressed and stamped envelope provided, or return to :

**Eddie Estep
640 Simon Kenton Avenue
Maysville, KY 41056**

APPENDIX 4

Respondent Reply Card

Respondent: Please drop this card in the mail at the same time you return the completed questionnaire.

Dear Researcher:

I am sending this postcard at the same time that I am putting my completed questionnaire in the mail. Since my questionnaire is completely anonymous, this postcard will tell you that you need not send me a further reminder to participate in your study.

APPENDIX 5

Survey Follow-Up Letter

December 12, 1997

Dear Fellow Pastor:

I know these are busy days and I appreciate your time, so I will make this letter brief.

As of Friday, December 12, I have had no reply from the questionnaire which I hope reached you about two weeks ago. Perhaps you mislaid the questionnaire, or it may have been lost in the mail.

In any event, I am enclosing another copy of the questionnaire. Since I am surveying only 400 selected Nazarene pastors in the United States, your response is very important. It will take only five minutes to complete the questionnaire. I hope you can find the time somewhere in your busy schedule today to complete it and drop it in the nearest mail box. I'd like to get them all back. Will you help me?

Thanks! I appreciate your kindness.

Sincerely,

Edward L. (Eddie) Estep

enc.: questionnaire
return envelope

APPENDIX 6

**Written Responses to Question #12:
“Please describe any additional ways you use the altar”**

#	<u>Comment</u>
1	We use open altar every service, used by several of our people.
2	I try to use the altar at least one time per Sunday: open altar, altar call, or close with prayer as a family praying for a specific reason (revival) or group (teens).
3	As pastor I pray at the altars weekly when no one else is in the sanctuary.
5	Healing services. Covenant renewals.
7	I as the pastor spend time alone at the altar seeking God’s direction and praying for my congregation.
10	The altar as I present it is the focal point of all services and is always open for any need, especially for salvation.
12	I make it a point for our people to use the altar during our Mid-week services for intercessory prayer and whenever possible, kneel at the altar when counseling persons on personal salvation or family issues.
15	Wednesday nights we close the service with the whole congregation gathered at the altar for prayer.
17	Pray for special groups (teachers, mothers, fathers, Vets, healing, anointing oil). Prayer meeting during week.
18	Healing services.
19	Wednesday night family prayer time, all who wish are invited to pray at the altar. Saturday night prayer services around the altar. I use the altar for my personal prayer time as pastor.
20	Consecration of Christian workers, revival, common commitment to a purpose, dedications.
23	For anointing with oil and prayer for healing. I believe the altar is a place where Christians especially can bring any necessary need to God in prayer.

- 24 Many times on Wednesday or Sunday evening I call all the congregation to the altar to pray for our needs: revival, etc.
- 26 Meet to pray before service and also conclude midweek services.
- 30 We use the altar to pray for people to be healed in body as well as their soul.
- 32 Healing services, worker dedication services, intercessory prayer.
- 34 A place of unscheduled church prayer for needs and revival. I open the church for people to visit and use at their discretion.
- 38 Anointing.
- 39 Anointing services. Time of prayer for individual problems.
- 40 The main way our church uses the altar is for family altar time on Sunday morning worship. There is something special about kneeling at the altar with your family.
- 44 Healing, prayer meetings.
- 46 Representative special prayer.
- 48 For healing services.
- 52 Healing services, sending services, prayer prior to worship, Tuesday night during "Dare-to-Care" ministry.
- 56 Use it as a place for congregation to leave stewardship commitments, place to pray for healing, etc.
- 57 Monthly we open the altar for a healing service.
- 58 Installation of officers.
- 61 I use the altar as my special place to have quiet time with the Lord Jesus Christ. I am there often praying for the needs of the congregation.
- 62 Baptism, anointing the sick, joining the church. I kneel daily to pray for myself and my people. I prepare my own communion and kneel before the elements and ask for guidance before the service. The joy I experience is indescribable.
- 69 To give commitments with board.
- 74 Private prayer, all-night prayer meetings, early morning prayer.

- 78 Family altar time is very important to our church and we do so weekly, also I use the altar many times as a place to begin or end board meetings.
- 81 Build marriage relationship again. Any difference in couples or church members to reconcile their differences. Prayer all nite-1st Friday of each month.
- 84 We take communion once each month. In December we use the altar.
- 87 The altar is used every Sunday at pastoral prayer time. Often issues are resolved there that would have been resolved at an invitation following a message.
- 89 My wife and I use the altar as a place to pray for the service each Sunday before people arrive.
- 90 To gather in to pray for specific needs, i.e. healing, salvation for others, etc.
- 93 Intercessory prayer meeting weekly on Tuesday nights.
- 95 Baby dedications/baptism, receiving of new members, dedication of newly elected church officers.
- 97 Pray and anoint people for healing and acts of service, ministry. Sending people out to minister in another area. Praying over the church board in an induction service.
- 102 Commitment with response cards / giving God control of certain areas; all-church prayer focus to end service; sermon demonstrations for “laying” objects before God, etc. Anointing for healing, dedication of people leaving church for ministry assignments.
- 104 Prayer before board meetings, personal times of prayer, families reconciled.
- 105 These questions are difficult to answer because I currently serve a “baby” church (2 years old) that meets in a public library. In 3 months I have used the portable altar only once—my installation—at DS’s request.
- 108 The questionnaire covers almost everything about the altar.
- 111 Open altar time during pastoral prayer every Sunday morning.
- 116 At weddings we use a kneeling bench. We serve communion about 8 times annually but not always at altar—often come to altar afterwards.
- 117 Small groups come to the church at various times during the week for intercession. Actually, we usually take the altar out for weddings.

- 120 Weekly prayer services.
- 122 We use it before going out in service for the Lord. Praying for His anointing, protection, wisdom.
- 125 A place where burdens, problems, etc. can be laid as an aid to faith and commitment.
- 128 Our altar is used as a gathering place for prayer for the entire congregation.
- 131 Come and go communion the first Sunday in January. Each family/member is given ten minutes with me to personally serve them communion.
- 134 Installation of officers, prayer for graduating students.
- 135 I generally baptize by pouring or sprinkling and do so at the altar. Prayer and anointing for healing is usually done at the altar.
- 138 Occasionally I have left offering plates on altar and had people bring their offerings to the altar to make connection that we are not giving (to) Church, but to God.
- 141 Family communion together.
- 142 Saturday morning prayer meetings.
- 143 We use the altar for anointing the sick and special needs for healing.
- 144 1) petition for healing (all: physical, psychological, spiritual, relationship); 2) collecting offerings.
- 146 Altar is used for prayer for the sick—anointing the sick with oil.
- 149 Family prayer, family communion, prayer meeting prayer, revival preparation prayer, etc.
- 151 Our altar is used 6 days per week in a 7 a.m. prayer meeting and frequently used in praying for healing.
- 154 We use the altar as a place for anointing people for healing.
- 155 We teach that the altar is not just a piece of furniture in the church, but that it is and/or can be very important to one's Christian walk.

- 156 We are building a new worship center. The altar has been a center of focus in design and promotion of vision, as a place on a slab of concrete where generations of people will find Christ.
- 159 I like to use the altars of our heart more than the physical use. We serve a God who lives within.
- 164 The greatest use in our church has been pastoral prayer time, special prayer for the unsaved, symbolic of our total surrender, and a public testimony of salvation (especially if saved outside the church building).
- 166 Healing and anointing every week.
- 170 Reception of new members.
- 173 I personally pray at our altar during the week on a regular basis in intercession.
- 178 Dedication of children, sending services, anointing.
- 180 Family communion, baptisms, healing services.
- 187 We use the altar as a place to receive new members into the church.
- 188 Prayer by church board. Training children in use of the altar.
- 189 For healing needs.
- 191 I use the altar before services to dedicate myself and message to God and to pray for those who would come.
- 194 Children, who have completed a mini-course on communion, receive their first communion in a special ceremony. On the anniversary of beginning my pastorate the church family surrounds our family at the altar and prays for us. During deputation services we have the missionary (and family) kneel and we pray for them.
- 197 Place of commissioning sending out Work & witness teams. Promise Keepers to PK Conferences. Teachers and leaders for new assignments. Teachers into Russia, China, for three-week assignments.
- 198 Anointing for healing, intercessory prayer for other's salvation, healing, etc.
- 200 Used as a place to place offering collection plates once offering is taken is a way of symbolizing the offering as our "ail."

- 201 A place where people can be healed.
- 203 Alabaster offerings, children's prayer, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving celebrations. Please share your feedback with the Eastern Kentucky District. Thank you.
- 205 Installation of officers.
- 207 A place to come for anointing, prayer for healing.
- 208 We have an open altar prayer time each Sunday a.m.
- 215 Family time of prayer.
- 216 Private praying.
- 217 A sacred place where people can come freely and humble themselves before God and receive His beautiful infilling.
- 218 Sometimes on a Sunday evening I'll preach an inviting message from the altar.
- 222 Anointing for healing.
- 223 Healing services.
- 224 Worship by hymns/song, testimonies.
- 227 For healing.
- 231 We use the altar (mourner's bench) as a place for anointing for healing. People come to the altar for communion and then take the elements back to their seats. I view this as coming to the altar though not kneeling at the mourner's bench.
- 232 Healing services.
- 233 We use the altar (sometimes) for special offerings, such as alabaster, etc.
- 234 Men's prayer breakfast on Saturday. Personal prayer when everyone is gone. Corporate prayer and praise together.
- 235 Recommitment of Christians, prayer and fasting emphasis, uniting the Body of Christ--we are one in the bond of love. The altar is a place of God's anointing in healing!
- 241 Pre-service prayer.

- 242 Anointing for healing.
- 243 We have early morning prayer (5 am-7 am) every day at our altar.
- 248 Family prayer time, Children's prayer time with the pastor.
- 250 A place where husband and wife/families can bond with the Lord; very special needs.
- 257 I like to close worship services with altar prayer.
- 258 Healing service; a place of renewal for the church; a refuge during tragedy.
- 260 A place where people can share their joy and sorrows with one another: hugs, eye contact, neighborly love.
- 261 We use the altar for Sunday morning prayer, prior to the beginning of Sunday School.
- 265 Altar always open and encouraged.
- 267 Worship.
- 268 We use the altar every service.
- 269 We will sometimes use the altar at the close of the service for general prayer there.
- 274 We have the children to gather around the altar and sing periodically and also to pray with and for them there.
- 275 Anointing services, baby dedications, reception of church members.
- 283 Prayer for healing.
- 285 Healing services.
- 287 Healing services.
- 289 As a public testimony of God's work in our heart. I use it for personal daily prayer.
- 290 Altar is open before each service to allow people to have personal time with Jesus, before the service begins.

- 293 We have altar services to pray for self, intercession, healing or lost members and friends of the church.
- 294 Sending services for Work & Witness projects. Praying for specific ministry groups within the church: We have those people come to the altar and we pray specifically for them. Healing services.
- 295 Before services—seeking God’s presence.
- 297 The altar is a place for encountering God in response to His Word. It is a place of salvation and sanctification—sanctification being defined as spiritual growth. All of the above are equally important to the whole of worship—none is of greater significance.
- 301 A place to lay your burden before God with a friend.
- 303 I believe wholeheartedly in “First of all, prayer.” Any business of the church spiritually or otherwise can and should be prayed about maybe even around the altar as a church family!

APPENDIX 7

**Written Responses to Question #13:
“What additional comments on the use of the altar would you like to make?”**

#	<u>Comment</u>
2	Most important is salvation (from death to life). Altar should be seen as a place to meet God! Salvation, sanctification, His presence in prayer, Communion, and the above mentioned ceremonies can take place away from the altar and still be a very valid and meaningful time. It is sometimes disheartening to deal with barren altars (as far as people being saved and sanctified) when some/many in your church consider that the bottom line. I feel this study is a very pertinent one.
3	May our churches never be without altars where people can come for spiritual help.
6	Jesus Christ is the Gift and Sacrifice where ever you make the altar (it is Him).
10	We need to teach our children that the altar is a very special place that they need not fear using (it) as they feel need. A person should not feel afraid to go to the altar. They should not be classified as backsliders if they do go.
12	I always use the altar for the installation service of those elected to the various offices following our annual church meetings.
13	My altar is always open during all services.
14	The altar is still very important in our church. It is very difficult to serve communion to 2000 people around the altar—but it’s great for smaller churches.
15	The altar in the heart of the person where the soul touches God is more important than the furniture which we use as an “altar” in our churches. But, I’m glad we have altars in our churches as a means of helping people experience God’s presence.
17	Keep it (the altar being the prayer bench).
19	The altar is not actually used in weddings and dedications. These activities are at the front and in proximity to the altars of the church.
20	We must keep the altar as a part of our worship and ministry.
22	We must never lose it.

- 23 I believe it to be important, that we preach from the pulpit the need for a family altar in the home.
- 24 To me the altar is a very sacred place and should be used as a place to humble ourselves and seek God's presence.
- 25 While people intellectually believe the altar is important, there is a growing reluctance to use it in response to specific invitations. Those who do almost always have deep Nazarene roots.
- 30 The altar is not the only place we make contact with the Lord, but it is very important to have it in the local church.
- 32 The altar is quickly becoming a forgotten instrument in the place of worship. This is to the detriment of the Church!
- 37 While traditional churches use it more and more, new trends lead away from such a format. I still think it's important!
- 40 I don't think we use the altar as often as we should. There is something special and different about bowing before the Lord at the altar. I think that it helps me concentrate more on what I'm praying about. My personal devotions are more meaningful when I have them at the altar.
- 42 We must alert and educate our people that they should lead others to Christ outside the walls of a building and allow the altar to be a place of public testimony and renewal.
- 44 People are less responsive to altar calls for crisis experiences or for a general invitation than a decade or so ago.
- 46 Our primary goal in evangelism is off campus ministry while our target for Sunday is primarily a worship celebration.
- 52 The question (on the altar and ceremonies) is a bit confusing because we do not use our altar in a Roman Catholic tradition—rather it is a place for people to pray—the altars are generally removed for weddings.
- 53 I am equating altar with mourner's bench and not an altar rail.
- 57 The altar is sat on, jumped on by many—is not sacred the way it used to be.
- 58 I believe that "open altar" time in the middle of the service decreases effectiveness of invitation at end of service.

- 61 I make it clear that the altar is always open. A person does not have to wait till the end of the service to pray.
- 62 Many of my parishioners are no longer able to kneel due to illness. They sit on the first row. Others have hardened their heart and say, "We do our praying at home."
- 64 Comment in regard to question #16: Professions of Faith does not indicate those that have experienced salvation or sanctification. Membership does not equal saved people in our church anymore.
- 66 Churches should keep their altars and use them to God's glory!
- 68 To me the altar is a very special and vital place where people can meet God.
- 70 Our altar is used primarily for personal ministry. Invitations for salvation are made while people remain seated.
- 71 I love and appreciate the altar. But I would remind you that Jesus nor the apostles used it the way we do. Question #10 is unfair—the size of our congregation prohibits it (use of altar for communion) as an option on Sunday mornings.
- 74 The altar as a tool for encounter with God will always be significant in my ministry.
- 77 Most of the time, we distribute the communion elements throughout the sanctuary; not just at the altar.
- 81 We have other denominations come together in our communities. Where evil spirit or demon possessed has been cast out of couples. (sic)
- 84 I know of no N.T. reference to a physical altar on earth.
- 85 We no longer view it (the altar) as "the place" to do all your God business. It is a tool in the tool box—a method among many. But every week is a week to get saved. Every service is a service to be sanctified holy.
- 89 We use it as a place to anoint and pray for healing. A few weeks ago we prayed for a 7 yr. old who had one leg 1 ½ inches shorter than the other. Within a week they were the same length. Doctor could not explain it. Praise the Lord!
- 90 The altar is what it is taught and modeled to be. If the pastor makes it "out of place," it soon will be.

- 93 It seems out people are reluctant to use altar, even longtime members. Some will raise hands indicating need for prayer (salvation, sanctification, other needs) but still not come forward. We're attempting to make altars more "friendly," and educate our people to its use by various means, including handout (enclosed) to church leaders.
- 95 Its importance seems to be waning.
- 97 To also use the altar in praying over a group of people planting a new church in another area.
- 98 Altar services as used by Nazarenes would cause my people to leave. Altar services as such do emotional release instead of dealing with a person's real problems. Too many return trips with no life change. 90% of what goes on at the altar is of little or no long term affect. Deals more with neurosis than anything else (ineffectively).
- 100 We need to keep it a focus in our services.
- 102 Very important to our church demonstrating humility before God, seeking God, public response to God's call.
- 103 Completed with assumption that "mourner's bench" is the altar furniture described in survey, and not communion table at the front of most sanctuaries.
- 104 I have found that sometimes salvation and sanctification is better handled one on one and not necessarily at the altar.
- 105 If I had an altar to use each week I would tend to use it far more regularly for 1) Christians with calls, 2) to "nail down" decisions on salvation and sanctification less frequently, 3) communion and rituals even less frequently.
- 107 Altar is seen as a place of 1) prayer, 2) commitment.
- 108 Every Christian church should have an altar and encourage the use and importance of it.
- 110 I would like for the church leaders (board members) to pray for each service before each (service) begins.
- 111 The altar is a very vital part of our church may we never remove it!!
- 116 Use it or lose it.

- 117 Just seeing the altar helps people to remember that we are a Christ-centered and prayer-driven church.
- 122 I've always conveyed the concept, the altar is a good place to meet God. The pulpit is where we hear about God. Together, they are central in worship and evangelism.
- 124 Many of our new Christians are saved in their biweekly meetings with a Christian friend/discipler.
- 129 Sometimes it really helps the whole church to gather in around the altar for prayer. It is place of grace not disgrace.
- 130 Whenever we have communion it is always at the altar.
- 131 The altar is important to me but not as important to my people.
- 132 The altar is a place of public encounter. It is where we consecrate ourselves publicly and where we believe God can reach us publicly.
- 134 I believe the altar is a sacred and central place of the sanctuary.
- 138 I have seen the value of using "commitment cards" to seek out the spiritually hungry on (an) individual basis. This allows pastor (and staff) to meet and greet people at the altar at close of service.
- 141 I enjoy the altar and I hope we never get away from using it all the time!
- 143 The only comment I can make is that the altar is one of the significant tools of worship in our service. Even though I give an altar call usually every week for either sanctification or salvation I have very little response. Most of the time I have a big response to personal needs. My pastoral prayer and family altar is a big success here.
- 144 The altar is a place for 'action'--that is, a 'place' for a person to publicly display or confess intentions between themselves or the church, etc.
- 146 The altar is not the only place to be saved or sanctified, but a good place to experience salvation, etc.
- 149 I use the altar as I pray the pastoral prayer (I kneel there myself).
- 158 Question 6: many are equal (i.e.: b. d. e.)

- 159 Altars are very important to our structure of belief. The key is using them in a positive manner, not condemning.
- 160 Most salvation happens one on one—not in church. But the altar becomes a place to publicly confess the earlier decision.
- 164 The altar remains central in our worship and communion with God. I have occasionally joined my congregation in seeking God at an invitation to show that the altar is important for us all.
- 166 I have strong convictions for public use of the altar, yet public confessions and repentance is less common.
- 167 Questions make me wonder about your definition of “altar”. I assumed you meant the “mourner’s bench” and not the platform or area used by Catholics, etc. Your questions 10,11 imply the latter.
- 170 A place that represents the presence of God--OT times. It was the only point available to the congregation except the priest who could go beyond to the Holy of Holy place.
- 178 The altar is the second most important piece of furniture in the church, the pulpit being the first.
- 182 The altar at our church is always open during the entire service if someone needs to pray.
- 184 I am finding it necessary to include an educational element i.e. defining the altar’s various uses for those new to the church. I see this as a positive.
- 188 We are equipping our people to reach their “yet-to-be-Christian” contacts for Christ outside the church rather than primarily bringing them into church for salvation.
- 189 People need to become comfortable with the altar as their special place to draw close to God.
- 191 While the altar is (an) important part of our heritage, the privacy factor today holds some back. The altar needs to be opened, but assurance must be given that God is as close as a whispered prayer, to those who would seek Him.
- 192 My use of the altar reflects not only my perception of its importance—but my use (and your data) is skewed by my perception of the needs and nature of my particular congregation—particularly in small church settings.

- 193 In recent years I have had a sense of people's reverence for the altar fading.
- 197 Concerning communion, if time would allow I would use the altar often, but too many people for such a short time.
- 201 A place where our people can pray for each other.
- 202 I apologize for any ambiguity you may encounter with this survey. I am a new pastor, not just here but overall. I graduated from Nazarene Theological Seminary last May—this is my first pastoral experience. I'm still "getting my feet wet," pastorally speaking. I'm sorry once again if this particular questionnaire is vague in any way. Thank you and God bless you as you complete your D. Min. program at Asbury.
- 203 Thank you for sending this questionnaire on altars. This is the central location that most Christians identify, where genuine repentance and confession of sin to God is made, forgiveness toward our brothers and sisters, and total consecration to the Lord resulting in the sanctification process.
- 208 The Lord can save, etc. anywhere people are. The altar is used during worship.
- 209 The altar is not the only place to meet God, but is a very important place because it is sanctified (set apart) for that very purpose.
- 214 I nearly always open the altar at the close of the service and ask people to make a commitment to Christ or a decision concerning His call on their lives. The altar is very important to me. Our society does not have the same concept. Therefore, our use of the altar has been changed but not forgotten.
- 215 It is one of the important places in the church.
- 216 Good place to commune with God.
- 220 I understand the need for this kind of survey. I do, because the importance of the altar in my church is largely because it is important to ME and not because of its importance to the people.
- 222 A place for fasting and prayer. I should use the altar more often for the church to gather together for prayer, pastor and others as they will.
- 223 While the altar is important to my people—so I use it—the idea that salvation or sanctification can only be received at an altar or during an altar call is absurd. I know those who've prayed for salvation at the steering wheel of their car.

- 225 Dr. V. H. Lewis, General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, said,
“The only thing of consequence takes place around our altars.”
- 226 We do not have an altar (“Mourner’s Bench”?) at this church but do use the front
of the church for this purpose. The altar as a piece of furniture is of no
importance at all.
- 230 Even though response is not great, the altar is very important to our work and
ministry to the people.
- 231 This is somewhat confusing since the altar is in the heart. It can be conceived as
the communion table—or the prayer or mourner’s bench at the front. Since you
have not specified I have used the communion table with regards to communion
and the bench to others.
- 232 Question 6 was very difficult to answer because the altar is very important to each
use.
- 233 Despite holding the altar in such “high esteem,” very few people use the altar on
their “own decision.”
- 234 I very seldom will move them (the altars). Not out of legalism, out of reverence.
- 235 The altar is a place where the people of God gather to corporately pray together
for His guidance, strength, and healing.
- 238 We’ve had more people saved during open altar time than we’ve had with closing
altar calls. For me and my people, it’s a great testimony to the presence of God in
our services.
- 241 I believe the altar is the center of worship in our church.
- 244 Most of our spiritual decisions are made in a small group setting.
- 246 I find there is more resistance from the congregation to come to the altar these
days. It doesn’t lessen the importance, however, I find it difficult.
- 248 It’s the most important piece of “furniture” in the church!! Without it I can see no
need for a building—everything starts and ends with prayer and an altar!! Altars
were here way before a building. It’s the only place to truly offer yourself as a
sacrifice to the Lord after you have been cleansed!
- 250 Weddings and dedications are sealed at the altar before God, the other things
mentioned can be done anywhere with equal success.

- 255 People can be saved, etc. basically anywhere. The altar, during services, is well used.
- 256 I seldom give altar calls. Instead I call for a response of an uplifted hand and pray. That I do on a regular basis.
- 259 Please never remove them from our churches as some have done.
- 260 It is a place that has become neglected by the church. It should be a place where all our spiritual sacrifices are made.
- 261 In 1998 our emphasis for the year will be on more prayer time around our altars.
- 268 I can't understand why any saved and sanctified pastor would have any reservations about why the altar is so important.
- 274 I personally feel the altar is essential in the worship but as a new pastor I have not led my people to totally accept this.
- 280 I do not highlight the altar as a special meeting place, because I am always, in all types of situations, encouraging people to meet God face to face. However, I do believe the altar is a very meaningful place to sense God's presence.
- 283 My prayer would be that we will never take the altar out of the church.
- 286 I feel the altar is important for salvation and sanctification but I also deal with people at other places.
- 288 13 years as pastor, 14 years as evangelist. Communion is served at altar annually, received in pews twice per month. As an evangelist and pastor I regard the altar as a vital part of the public worship meeting but feel we should guard against 'deifying' the front of the sanctuary, or giving the impression it's the only place we can experience blessing.
- 289 We simply must keep it in our churches and keep using it.
- 293 Everything that will happen in the church or community will be dealt first at the altar where people will pray through.
- 294 With many things changing within the church (most of it needed) the altar needs to be a constant! There is something about people kneeling before God that speaks of reverence and a willingness to talk to Him and a belief that He hears and answers prayer.

- 297 The issue of importance is spiritual formation and growth. The altar is a place of encountering God and it can never have any of the above as more important.
- 301 The altar is a place of reverence before God. But most of the people here are saved at their homes. But let's never give up the importance of the altar.
- 302 It is the best place that I know of to talk with God with your church gathered around and praying with you.
- 303 It should be the center of attention in the church as well as at home! Here to proclaim God's saving grace and sanctifying power.

APPENDIX 8

Tables

TABLE A - 1: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR SALVATION

Frequency of Altar Calls for Salvation	#	%
Usually Weekly	120	39.5
At Least Monthly	130	42.8
At Least Quarterly	44	14.5
Annually or Semi-annually	9	3.0
Never	1	0.3
TOTAL	304	100.1%*

*due to rounding

TABLE A - 2: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR ENTIRE
SANCTIFICATION

Frequency of Altar Calls for Salvation	#	%
Usually Weekly	35	11.6
At Least Monthly	116	38.3
At Least Quarterly	112	37.0
Annually or Semi-annually	35	11.6
Never	5	1.7
TOTAL	303	100.2%*

*due to rounding

TABLE A - 3: FREQUENCY OF GENERAL ALTAR CALLS FOR SPIRITUAL
RENEWAL OR HELP

Frequency of Altar Calls for Spiritual Renewal/Help	#	%
Usually Weekly	167	54.9
At Least Monthly	97	31.9
At Least Quarterly	27	8.9
Annually or Semi-annually	10	3.3
Never	3	1.0
TOTAL	304	100%

TABLE A - 4: FREQUENCY OF OPEN ALTAR INVITATIONS

Frequency of Open Altar Invitations	#	%
Usually Weekly	230	75.7
At Least Monthly	44	14.5
At Least Quarterly	9	3.0
Annually or Semi-annually	14	4.6
Never	7	2.3
TOTAL	304	100.1%*

* due to rounding

TABLE A - 5: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION AT THE ALTAR

Frequency of Communion at the Altar	#	%
Usually Weekly	1	0.3
At Least Monthly	38	12.6
At Least Quarterly	165	54.6
Annually or Semi-annually	75	24.8
Never	23	7.6
TOTAL	302	99.9%*

* due to rounding

TABLE A - 6: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE FOR SALVATION

Importance of Altar as a Place for Salvation	#	%
Very Important	180	59.2
Important	88	28.9
Somewhat Important	28	9.2
Unimportant	8	2.6
TOTAL	304	99.9%*

*due to rounding

TABLE A - 7: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

Importance of Altar as a Place for Entire Sanctification	#	%
Very Important	168	55.3
Important	96	31.6
Somewhat Important	35	11.5
Unimportant	5	1.6
TOTAL	304	100%

TABLE A - 8: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE IN PRAYER

Importance of Altar as a Place to Experience God's Presence	#	%
Very Important	236	77.6
Important	57	18.8
Somewhat Important	1	0.3
Unimportant	10	3.3
TOTAL	304	100%

TABLE A - 9: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE TO RECEIVE COMMUNION

Importance of Altar as a Place to Receive Communion	#	%
Very Important	62	20.5
Important	108	35.8
Somewhat Important	92	30.5
Unimportant	40	13.2
TOTAL	302	100%

TABLE A - 10: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ALTAR AS PLACE FOR CEREMONIES

Importance of Altar as a Place for Ceremonies	#	%
Very Important	57	18.9
Important	116	38.4
Somewhat Important	90	29.8
Unimportant	39	12.9
TOTAL	302	100%

TABLE A - 11: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR SALVATION BY CHURCH SIZE

Average Attendance	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
10-99	73	38.2	79	41.4	33	17.3	5	2.6	1	0.5	191
100-249	33	39.8	39	47.0	9	10.8	2	2.4	0	0	83
250+	12	48.0	9	36.0	2	8.0	2	8.0	0	0	25
unknown	2	40.0	3	60.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total	120	39.5	130	42.8	44	14.5	9	3.0	1	0.3	304

Chi-square = 2.948; df = 4; $p \leq 0.57$

TABLE A - 12: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION BY CHURCH SIZE

Average Attendance	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
10-99	25	13.2	68	35.8	72	37.9	23	12.1	2	1.1	190
100-249	8	9.6	36	43.4	28	33.7	10	12.0	1	1.2	83
250+	1	4.0	10	40.0	10	40.0	2	8.0	2	8.0	25
unknown	1	20.0	2	40.0	2	20.0	0	0	0	0	5
Total	35	11.6	116	38.3	112	37.0	35	11.6	5	1.7	303

Chi-square = 3.307; df = 6; $p \leq 0.77$

TABLE A - 13: FREQUENCY OF GENERAL ALTAR CALLS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OR HELP BY CHURCH SIZE

Average Attendance	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
10-99	104	54.5	60	31.4	18	9.4	8	2.6	1	0.5	191
100-249	47	56.6	25	30.1	7	8.4	2	2.4	2	2.4	83
250+	13	52.0	10	40.0	2	8.0	0	0	0	0	25
unknown	3	60.0	2	40.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total	167	54.9	97	31.9	27	8.9	10	3.3	3	1.0	304

Chi-square = 1.985; df = 6; $p \leq 0.92$ **TABLE A - 14: FREQUENCY OF OPEN ALTAR INVITATIONS BY CHURCH SIZE**

Average Attendance	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
10-99	147	77.0	22	11.5	7	3.7	9	4.7	6	3.1	191
100-249	64	77.1	13	15.7	2	2.4	4	4.8	0	0	83
250+	16	64.0	8	32.0	0	0	1	4.0	0	0	25
unknown	3	60.0	1	20.0	0	0	0	0	1	20.0	5
Total	230	75.7	44	14.5	9	3.0	14	4.6	7	2.3	304

Chi-square = 9.101; df = 4; $p \leq 0.06$ **TABLE A - 15: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION BY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION**

REGION	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
ONU	3	7.3	22	53.7	12	29.3	4	9.8	0	0	41
SNU	4	11.1	17	47.2	14	38.9	1	2.7	0	0	36
TNU	7	14.6	20	41.7	14	29.2	5	10.4	2	4.2	48
PLNC	4	11.4	7	20.0	17	48.6	7	20.0	0	0	35
NNC	3	8.8	10	29.4	13	38.2	6	17.6	2	5.9	34
MVNC	5	15.6	14	43.8	11	34.4	2	6.3	0	0	32
ENC	4	9.1	16	36.4	17	38.6	7	15.9	0	0	44
MNU	5	17.2	9	31.0	12	41.1	2	6.9	1	3.4	29
unknown	0	0	1	25.0	2	50.0	1	25.0	0	0	4
Total	35	11.6	116	38.3	112	37.0	35	11.6	5	1.7	303

Chi-square = 22.638; df = 21; $p \leq 0.36$

TABLE A-16: FREQUENCY OF OPEN ALTAR INVITATIONS BY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

REGION	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
ONU	26	63.4	9	23.0	1	2.4	3	7.3	2	4.9	41
SNU	32	88.9	3	8.3	0	0	1	2.7	0	0	36
TNU	32	65.3	10	20.4	2	4.1	4	8.2	1	2.0	49
PLNC	27	77.1	6	17.1	1	2.9	0	0	1	2.9	35
NNC	29	85.3	3	8.8	1	2.9	0	0	1	2.9	34
MVNC	25	78.1	5	15.6	1	3.1	1	3.1	0	0	32
ENC	34	77.3	4	9.1	2	4.5	4	9.1	0	0	44
MNU	24	82.8	3	10.3	0	0	1	3.4	1	3.4	29
unknown	1	25.0	1	25.0	1	25.0	0	0	1	25.0	4
Total	230	75.7	44	14.5	9	3.0	14	4.6	7	2.3	304

Chi-square = 15.386; df = 14; $p \leq 0.35$ **TABLE A - 17: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION BY P.O.F.**

P.O.F. Additions	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0 yearly	2	16.7	4	33.3	1	8.3	4	33.3	1	8.3	12
1-5 yearly	17	10.4	59	36.2	68	41.7	18	11.0	1	0.6	163
6-15 yearly	11	12.8	37	43.0	29	33.7	9	10.5	0	0	86
16+ yearly	3	9.7	14	45.2	9	29.0	2	6.5	3	9.7	31
unknown	2	18.2	2	18.2	5	45.5	2	18.2	0	0	11
Total	35	11.6	116	38.3	112	37.0	35	11.6	5	1.7	303

Chi-square = 14.663; df = 9; $p \leq 0.10$

**TABLE A - 18: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR SALVATION
BY PASTORAL EXPERIENCE**

Years of Experience	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0-10 years	35	33.7	40	38.5	23	22.1	5	4.8	1	1.0	104
11-20 years	46	41.4	50	45.0	12	10.8	3	2.7	0	0	111
21-30 years	25	46.3	24	44.4	5	9.3	0	0	0	0	54
31-42 years	13	46.4	11	39.3	3	10.7	1	3.6	0	0	28
unknown	1	14.3	5	71.34	1	14.3	0	0	0	0	7
Total	120	39.5	130	42.8	44	14.5	9	3.0	1	0.3	304

Chi-square = 12.075; df = 6; $p \leq 0.07$ **TABLE A - 19: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR ENTIRE
SANCTIFICATION BY PASTORAL EXPERIENCE**

Years of Experience	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0-10 years	8	7.7	32	30.8	44	42.3	17	16.3	3	2.9	104
11-20 years	16	14.4	49	44.1	34	30.6	11	9.9	1	0.9	111
21-30 years	5	9.4	23	43.4	21	39.6	4	7.5	0	0	53
31-42 years	5	17.9	11	39.3	10	35.7	1	3.6	1	3.6	28
unknown	1	14.3	1	14.3	3	42.9	2	28.6	0	0	7
Total	35	11.6	116	38.3	112	37.0	35	11.6	5	1.7	303

Chi-square = 13.804; df = 9; $p \leq 0.13$ **TABLE A - 20: FREQUENCY OF GENERAL ALTAR CALLS FOR SPIRITUAL
RENEWAL OR HELP BY PASTORAL EXPERIENCE**

Years of Experience	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0-10 years	52	50.0	33	31.7	12	11.5	5	4.8	2	1.9	104
11-20 years	72	64.9	31	27.9	5	4.5	2	1.8	1	0.9	111
21-30 years	29	53.7	19	35.2	6	11.1	0	0	0	0	54
31-42 years	12	42.9	10	35.7	3	10.7	3	10.7	0	0	28
unknown	2	28.6	4	57.1	1	14.3	0	0	0	0	7
Total	167	54.9	97	31.9	27	8.9	10	3.3	3	1.0	304

Chi-square = 10.692; df = 6; $p \leq 0.10$

TABLE A - 21: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION AT THE ALTAR BY PASTORAL EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
0-10 years	1	1.0	12	11.7	54	52.4	25	24.3	11	10.7	103
11-20 years	0	0	17	15.5	61	55.0	26	23.6	6	5.5	110
21-30 years	0	0	6	11.1	30	55.6	15	27.7	3	5.6	54
31-42 years	0	0	2	7.1	17	60.7	6	21.4	3	10.7	28
unknown	0	0	1	14.3	3	42.9	3	42.9	0	0	7
Total	1	0.3	38	12.6	165	54.6	75	24.8	23	7.6	302

Chi-square = 4.622; df = 9; $p \leq 0.87$ **TABLE A - 22: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR SALVATION BY CHURCH AGE**

Year of Organization	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1980-1997	14	35.0	18	45.0	8	20.0	0	0	0	0	40
1960-1979	20	45.5	16	36.4	5	11.4	3	6.8	0	0	44
1940-1959	35	33.0	47	44.3	20	18.9	4	3.8	0	0	106
before 1940	48	45.7	44	41.9	10	9.5	2	1.9	1	1.0	105
unknown	3	33.3	5	55.6	1	11.1	0	0	0	0	9
Total	120	39.5	130	42.8	44	14.5	9	3.0	1	0.3	304

Chi-square = 6.489; df = 6; $p \leq 0.38$ **TABLE A - 23: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION BY CHURCH AGE**

Year of Organization	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1980-1997	4	10.0	11	27.5	20	50.0	5	2.5	0	0	40
1960-1979	4	9.1	17	38.6	17	38.6	5	11.4	1	2.3	44
1940-1959	14	13.3	41	39.0	36	34.3	12	11.4	2	1.9	105
before 1940	12	11.4	45	42.9	35	33.3	11	10.5	2	1.9	105
unknown	1	11.1	2	22.2	4	44.4	2	22.2	0	0	9
Total	35	11.6	116	38.3	112	37.0	35	11.6	5	1.7	303

Chi-square = 4.890; df = 9; $p \leq 0.370491$

TABLE A - 24: FREQUENCY OF GENERAL ALTAR CALLS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OR HELP BY CHURCH AGE

Year of Organization	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1980-1997	22	55.0	14	35.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	0	0	40
1960-1979	30	68.2	8	18.2	3	6.8	2	4.5	1	2.3	44
1940-1959	58	54.7	34	32.1	10	9.4	4	3.8	0	0	106
before 1940	53	50.5	37	35.2	11	10.5	2	1.9	2	1.9	105
unknown	4	44.4	4	44.4	1	11.1	0	0	0	0	9
Total	167	54.9	97	31.9	27	8.9	10	3.3	3	1.0	304

Chi-square = 5.288; df = 6; $p \leq 0.51$

TABLE A - 25: FREQUENCY OF OPEN ALTAR INVITATIONS BY CHURCH AGE

Year of Organization	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1980-1997	31	77.5	4	10.0	2	5.0	1	2.5	2	2.5	40
1960-1979	37	84.1	6	13.6	0	0	0	0	1	2.3	44
1940-1959	80	75.5	14	13.2	4	3.8	6	5.7	2	1.9	106
before 1940	78	74.3	18	17.1	0	0	7	6.7	2	1.9	105
unknown	4	44.4	2	22.2	3	33.3	0	0	0	0	9
Total	230	75.7	44	14.5	9	3.0	14	4.6	7	2.3	304

Chi-square = 4.983; df = 6; $p \leq 0.55$

TABLE A - 26: FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION AT THE ALTAR BY CHURCH AGE

Year of Organization	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1980-1997	0	0	7	17.5	19	47.5	9	22.5	5	12.5	40
1960-1979	0	0	10	22.7	17	38.6	13	29.5	4	9.1	44
1940-1959	1	1.0	8	7.6	67	63.8	24	22.9	5	4.8	105
before 1940	0	0	12	11.5	57	54.8	26	25.0	9	3.6	104
unknown	0	0	1	11.1	5	55.6	3	33.3	0	0	9
Total	1	0.3	38	12.6	165	54.6	75	24.8	23	7.6	302

Chi-square = 12.843; df = 9; $p \leq 0.17$

**TABLE A - 27: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR SALVATION
BY CHURCH GROWTH**

GROWTH RATE	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
decrease	20	29.0	35	50.7	9	13.0	4	5.8	1	1.4	69
remained same	16	32.0	25	50.0	8	16.0	1	2.0	0	0	50
1-10%	47	51.6	31	34.1	11	12.1	2	2.2	0	0	91
11-20%	12	36.4	15	45.5	6	18.2	0	0	0	0	33
over 20%	20	44.4	15	33.5	8	17.8	2	2.4	0	0	45
unknown	5	31.3	9	56.3	2	12.6	0	0	0	0	16
Total	120	39.5	130	42.8	44	14.5	9	3.0	1	0.3	304

Chi-square = 11.935; df = 8; $p \leq 0.16$

**TABLE A - 28: FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC ALTAR CALLS FOR ENTIRE
SANCTIFICATION BY CHURCH GROWTH**

GROWTH RATE	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
decrease	7	10.1	28	40.6	18	26.1	14	20.3	2	2.9	69
remained same	5	10.2	20	40.8	19	38.8	5	8.2	0	0	49
1-10%	12	13.2	30	33.0	41	45.1	6	6.6	2	2.2	91
11-20%	3	9.1	15	45.6	11	33.3	4	12.1	0	0	33
over 20%	7	15.6	18	40.0	16	35.6	3	6.7	1	2.2	45
unknown	1	6.3	5	31.3	7	43.8	3	18.8	0	0	16
Total	35	11.6	116	38.3	112	37.0	35	11.6	5	1.7	303

Chi-square = 14.200; df = 12; $p \leq 0.29$

TABLE A - 29: FREQUENCY OF GENERAL ALTAR CALLS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OR HELP BY CHURCH GROWTH

GROWTH RATE	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
decrease	32	46.4	22	31.9	9	13.0	5	7.2	1	1.4	69
remained same	31	62.0	12	24.0	6	12.0	1	2.0	0	0	50
1-10%	52	57.1	32	35.2	4	4.4	2	2.2	1	1.1	91
11-20%	20	60.6	10	30.3	1	3.0	1	3.0	1	3.0	33
over 20%	25	55.6	14	31.1	6	13.3	0	0	0	0	45
unknown	7	43.8	7	43.8	1	6.3	1	6.3	0	0	16
Total	167	54.9	97	31.9	27	8.9	10	3.3	3	1.0	304

Chi-square = 9.271; df = 8; $p \leq 0.32$ **TABLE A - 30: FREQUENCY OF OPEN ALTAR INVITATIONS BY CHURCH GROWTH**

GROWTH RATE	Usually Weekly		At Least Monthly		At Least Quarterly		Annually or S/A		Never		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
decrease	55	79.7	6	8.7	2	2.9	5	7.2	1	1.4	69
remained same	38	76.0	8	16.0	1	2.0	1	2.0	2	4.0	50
1-10%	69	75.8	14	15.4	3	3.3	4	4.4	1	1.1	91
11-20%	26	78.8	5	15.2	0	0	2	6.1	0	0	33
over 20%	32	71.1	8	17.8	1	2.2	1	2.2	3	6.7	45
unknown	10	62.5	3	18.8	2	12.5	1	6.3	0	0	16
Total	230	75.7	44	14.5	9	3.0	14	4.6	7	2.3	304

Chi-square = 3.418; df = 8; $p \leq 0.91$

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