

# STAND FIRM AND HOLD TO THE TRADITIONS

## Tenth Annual Report President Harold B. Graves Jr. September 23, 2015

Chairman Dr. Roy Rogers, members of the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and friends of Nazarene Bible College, I submit to you my tenth annual report as President of Nazarene Bible College.

Recent rulings by the United States Supreme Court have caused me to reflect on the culture in which we are preparing men and women to minister. Our mission states that NBC is an undergraduate, professional school of Christian ministry committed to academic and practical programs designed to educate students for service and leadership in a diverse world.

Perhaps in the United States we have never been more diverse. Cathy Lynn Grossman wrote in USA Today, “When it comes to religion, the USA is now land of the freelancers. The American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), finds that, despite growth and immigration that has added nearly 50 million adults to the U.S. population, almost all religious denominations have lost ground since the first ARIS survey in 1990.”<sup>1</sup>

The Pew Research Center states: “The Christian share of the U.S. population is declining, while the number of U.S. adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing. Moreover, these changes are taking place across the religious landscape, affecting all regions of the country and many demographic groups. While the drop in Christian affiliation is particularly pronounced among young adults, it is occurring among Americans of all ages.”<sup>2</sup>

The ARIS report supports the Pew Research finding: “In a nation that has long been mostly Christian, ‘the challenge to Christianity ... does not come from other religions but from a rejection of all forms of organized religion,’ the report concludes.”<sup>3</sup>

Secular writers, media, and groups continuously propagate the rise of secularism and the decline of religious influence on our culture, prophesizing the death of God, and the marginalization of Christianity. Groups such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, and the American Atheists seem to be everywhere, condemning and threatening Christian dialogue, symbols, and practice in the public square.

Jon Meacham in *Newsweek* magazine wrote: “Let's be clear: while the percentage of Christians may be shrinking, rumors of the death of Christianity are greatly exaggerated. Being less Christian does not necessarily mean that America is post-Christian. A third of Americans say they are born again; this figure, along with the decline of politically moderate-to liberal mainline

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<sup>1</sup> [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-03-09-american-religion-ARIS\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-03-09-american-religion-ARIS_N.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-03-09-american-religion-ARIS\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-03-09-american-religion-ARIS_N.htm)

Protestants, led the ARIS authors to note that ‘these trends ... suggest a movement towards more conservative beliefs and particularly to a more 'evangelical' outlook among Christians.’<sup>4</sup>

Pew research supports Meacham: “To be sure, the United States remains home to more Christians than any other country in the world, and a large majority of Americans – roughly seven-in-ten – continue to identify with some branch of the Christian faith.”<sup>5</sup>

I’m drawn to Meacham’s statement, **“these trends ... suggest a movement towards more conservative beliefs and particularly to a more 'evangelical' outlook among Christians.”**

In 2 Thessalonians the Apostle Paul writes to a church that because of increased persecution and suffering was withdrawing from their purpose and mission. The Thessalonians equated their suffering to the Second Coming of the Lord.

Paul writes: “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1 ESV

William Barclay comments: “Paul was telling the Thessalonians that they must give up their nervous, hysterical waiting for the Second Coming. He denied that he had ever said that the Day of the Lord had come. He told them that before the Day of the Lord could come much has still to happen.”<sup>6</sup>

Paul goes on to describe some of the things that will happen to reveal the Day of the Lord. “He pictures a growing rebellion against God, the emergence of one who was the devil incarnate as Christ had been God incarnate, a final struggle and the ultimate triumph of God.”<sup>7</sup>

In verses 13-15 Paul urges the Thessalonians to stand firm in the midst of uncertainty, persecution, and suffering.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 ESV)

This admonition caught my attention **“stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us.”**

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/meacham-end-christian-america-77125>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>

<sup>6</sup> Barclay, William, The Daily Bible Study Series: The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians Revised Edition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975) pg 212

<sup>7</sup> ibid

Recently, I have been thinking about tradition. Webster dictionary defines tradition as “a way of thinking, behaving, or doing something that has been used by the people in a particular group, family, society, etc., for a long time. The stories, beliefs, etc., that have been part of the culture of a group of people for a long time.”<sup>8</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tradition>

Thomas Merton in *No Man is an Island* wrote: “Tradition is living and active. Tradition does not form us automatically: we have to work to understand it. Tradition really teaches us to live and shows us how to take full responsibility for our own lives. Thus tradition is often flatly opposed to what is ordinary, to what is mere routine. Tradition, which is always old, is at the same time ever new because it is always reviving - born again in each new generation, to be lived and applied in a new and particular way. Tradition nourishes the life of the spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

Thomas Molnar emphasizes that tradition is not a static concept opposed to change. He refers to tradition as a sacred model in which ancient societies periodically returned to for self-renewal. He wrote: “From this regular ‘immersion in the origins,’ archaic man derived the energy to continue societal existence; without the sacred model, the community was incapable of ‘repairing’ (reforming) itself; with its help, natural degeneracy was arrested, or rather abolished, so that life might begin again.”<sup>10</sup>

So, when I speak of tradition, I refer to the sacred model of origins, while old are ever new, reviving, renewing, and reminding us that the past is “born again in a new generation, to be lived and applied in a new and particular way.”

Often symbols are used to illustrate traditions. Symbols are something that stand for or suggest something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance. For instance a heart is the symbol for love; the lion has become a symbol for courage; and the dove a symbol for peace.<sup>11</sup>

As a nation we have symbols which represent our traditions:

- The flag of the United States has 50 stars representing the 50 the states of the United States of America and the 13 stripes representing the 13 British colonies that declared independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain, and became the first states in the Union.
- The Statue of Liberty stands on Liberty Island in New York Harbor. It was a gift to the United States from the people of France, dedicated in 1886. The statue is of a robed female figure representing Libertas, the Roman goddess, who bears a torch and a tablet evoking the law upon which is inscribed the date of the American Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776. A broken chain lies at her feet. The statue is an icon of freedom and of the United States, and was a welcoming sight to immigrants arriving from abroad.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tradition>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/tradition?page=2>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/symbol>

These iconic symbols of the United States represent national traditions of freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

Symbols are used by the Church to illustrate message and mission.

- The Christian Cross, seen as a representation of the instrument of the crucifixion of Jesus, is the best-known symbol of Christianity.<sup>12</sup>
- The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper where the bread and wine are symbols of His broken body and shed blood.
- The seal of the Church of the Nazarene symbolizes the denominational mission to bring the Holiness message to the world.

Nazarene Bible College has symbols deeply embedded in our tradition which have become illustrative of our mission as an undergraduate, professional school of Christian ministry committed to academic and practical programs designed to educate students for service and leadership in a diverse world.

Dr. Ron Attig has spent his working life dedicated to preparing adults to evangelize, disciple, and minister to our world. With more than 40 years as a faculty member he is uniquely qualified to speak to two symbols that exemplify our mission.

#### **See Addendum A**

Foremost on the seal of Nazarene Bible College is an open Bible. After all, we are a Bible college. The Bible is at the core of our curriculum and central to everything we do. Through the years we have been blessed to have outstanding Bible teachers on our faculty. Certainly Dr. Tom King and Dr. Dan Powers follow in that rich tradition of scholars who love God's Word and teach it with passion. Dr. Tom King serves as Director of Bible and Theology Program. I have asked him to share how the Bible is a symbol of our mission.

#### **See Addendum B**

A recent symbol of our mission is the servant's towel. During commencement, after each graduate receives his or her diploma, a towel is draped over his or her arm. This towel has become a symbol of servanthood to our world. Tim and Susan McKeithen are true examples of NBC alumni who have evangelized, discipled, and ministered to our world.

#### **See Addendum C**

I am most grateful for the administrators, faculty, and staff of Nazarene Bible College who model servanthood every day as they serve Christ, our students, alumni, and the Church.

Our senior leadership team of Dr. Alan Lyke, Dr. David Church, Mrs. Shirley Cadle, and Mr. Fred Phillips give outstanding leadership to the Academic, Enrollment Management, Finance,

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<sup>12</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_cross](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_cross)

and IT departments. They are exemplary of the servant towel approach to ministry. They are my colleagues and friends. I am blessed to serve alongside of them.

In his report to the board, Dr. Alan Lyke wrote: “The faculty of Nazarene Bible College is the foundation of the college’s academic enterprise. Their efforts undergird the school’s fine academic standing and the quality of education offered by its programs. The college faculty consists of full-time resident faculty, part-time contractual faculty, and adjunct instructors. Each group is vital to the college’s ability to staff our various academic programs with credentialed and experienced women and men who are well grounded in their academic disciplines, who have “practiced what they preach,” and who are adept at using appropriate teaching methods with the college’s adult learners in either traditional campus or online teaching/learning environments.”

There is no group of people more dedicated to serving our administrators, faculty, students, and alumni than the NBC staff. Their commitment to customer service and to the mission of the college is above the ordinary. They are great people whom I respect and care for deeply.

Alumnus Ruben Villarreal had a moving post on his Facebook page about a symbol that stands tall in the very center of the Apostles Court. It is at the base of the Bell Tower that our graduates hold the torch and make their pledge to serve Christ, His Church, and the world.

Ruben wrote:

Jesus put His hand on my shoulder 20 years ago, and asked me to help Him build His church. My life has never been the same.

I took this picture in the middle of the Apostles Court, located at Nazarene Bible College (NBC), in Colorado Springs. There are 12 walkways leading to these steel beams. At the center of the walkways, stands this 90-foot bell tower and carillon. The three spires of the tower symbolize the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It's a sacred place where men and women are sent out to build His church.

During my entire time at NBC, I made a personal decision to never walk to the base of these tower's, until the day of my graduation. I knew it was a sacred place where I would say, "Yes" to the building of His church. So, for almost four years, I would intentionally walk around this tower as I walked this campus, until the day I graduated.

Now, I stand at the base of this tower that represents the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I've been a Pastor for almost 20 years. I say, "Yes"...again. It's an honor to help my Savior build His church. Humbled that He would use me, in spite of me.

These symbols, the Bible, the Torch, the Apostles, the Towel, and the Bell Tower are all traditions that tell a story of the NBC mission. Like Ruben, these traditions are sacred models of origins, while old are ever new, reviving, renewing, and reminding us that the past is “born again in a new generation, to be lived and applied in a new and particular way.”

These are challenging days for Christian colleges and universities that hold to the traditional view of scripture and practice. There is uncertainty to what the future might hold given the hostility toward Christianity and the rulings of a godless state. The secularization of education, void of Christian influence, will make it increasingly difficult for these Christian colleges and universities to stay on mission. Some will compromise, losing their spiritual moorings and drifting away from traditions upon which they were founded. Others will revisit the sacred model of origins, reviving, renewing, and reminding them that the past is “born again in a new generation, to be lived and applied in a new and particular way.”

This has been my desire in this report. I want you to know where I am as President of Nazarene Bible College. There are certain traditions or principles, if you will, that are non-negotiable. I believe there is evil in the world, that God has called His servants to minister grace in this fallen world, that God is in control, that we can trust the God who called us as messengers of grace, and that the ultimate triumph of God is certain.

To that end, Nazarene Bible College will continue to light the torch, teach the Bible, call for commitment, and model service, by offering academic and practical programs designed to educate students for service and leadership in a diverse world.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. **So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.** Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 ESV).

Respectfully Submitted,

Harold B. Graves Jr.  
President

## Addendum A

### The TORCH and APOSTLES

Ron Attig

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 NIV). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “You are like light for the whole world. . . Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:14, 16 CEV).

The Olympic games are a vivid reminder that the **TORCH** has been a powerful and inspiring **SYMBOL** throughout ancient and modern history. The founding faculty and administration of NBC envisioned our graduates as torchbearers, taking the light of Christ to a world lost in darkness. From the beginning years, they instituted what has become a treasured tradition on this campus for the past 45 years. We call it the Torch Ceremony.

It has become a “centerpiece” of the annual commencement season. In this impressive ceremony, an alumnus hands the flaming torch to the graduates with this challenge: “As you receive this flame, you have a charge to keep: a God to glorify, a never-dying soul to save.” Graduates take the torch into their hands, speak words that express their hearts’ purpose, and then pass the flame to each other.” Following the graduates’ sacred vows, a first-year student receives the torch as a representative of hundreds of men and women who are finding their way to this institution to have their lamps trimmed for more effective service.

The impact of this tradition is difficult to calculate. Some illustrations are indelibly etched on *my* memory:

- One year, Dan Rose came to his brother’s graduation. He was not a believer. He witnessed the testimonies in the Torch Ceremony. His spirit was captivated by the devotion and commitment expressed. After returning home, God began to work on his heart. Eventually God called him to preach and he came to Nazarene Bible College to be equipped. At his own graduation, *he* held the torch and made *his* vow. Today he is faithfully pastoring on the East Coast. He has also done mission work in Africa, Australia, France, and England.
- I am reminded that the Torch Ceremony has an intergenerational legacy. This past May, Bette Asuega held the torch that had been passed to her from her father, through hundreds of hands! He graduated 40 years ago!
- In a recent conversation with alumnus Steve Bell, he quoted verbatim the vow he made 32 years ago. I was amazed! He said, “I still keep that well-aged slip of paper in the rim of a painting in my office.”

Thousands of family and friends have witnessed the sincere and certain vows expressed by graduates each year. Here is a sampling from this past year. (video clips – 4 graduates)

The songwriter said it well: “The world lies in darkness, lost in their sin and they don’t even know the danger they’re in. [Our graduates], who are called to His glorious light . . . shine like a beacon of love In the night” (*Carry the Torch*).

A second SYMBOL that clearly illustrates the mission of Nazarene Bible College is beautifully illustrated in the stained-glass windows of this chapel. The SENDING TRADITION of our Lord is “always old, yet ever new. It is born again in each new generation” (Merton). We are a sending institution. Our students, called by Christ, are modern-day apostles.

We celebrate our mission in what we call the “Call and Response of Apostles.” This ceremony originated at the dedication of the Apostles Court in 1975. President Oliver approached Professor Audrey Williamson, asking her to prepare an appropriate ceremony to mark that occasion. We selected students to dramatically portray the apostles from the biblical account of Christ’s calling.

The impressiveness and challenge of our first apostles’ ceremony was so memorable that the administration requested repeat performances. Forty-plus years have come and gone and the ceremony continues! This past commencement season, the college hosted a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion of NBC apostles. We asked eleven former apostles to repeat their original portrayal. Here’s a sampling: (video clip – John the Beloved)

Rolf Kleinfeld, who portrayed Nathaniel in 1985, has faithfully served the Church of the Nazarene in the Asia-Pacific region. He returned this year from Cambodia to participate. (video clips – Nathaniel and Simon Zelotes)

Students who have participated throughout the decades have valued this experience as a highlight in their career at NBC.

This unforgettable, annual reenactment is combined with our Torch Ceremony in what we call the Convocation service. The Apostles Court, with its landmark bell tower is the setting. Twelve walkways projecting from the center lead in all directions. Commissioned by God, our graduates have literally taken the light of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Graduates, who leave NBC each year to fulfill God’s call, demonstrate the same dedication, the same faithfulness, and the same boldness of the first-century apostles.

### **Closing**

These SYMBOLS, these TRADITIONS at Nazarene Bible College, are convincing illustrations that we are committed to the sacred model given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Our graduates “will carry the torch, [they] will lift high the flame, [they] will march through the darkness with the light of His name, ‘til the glory of God is seen by the world” (*Carry the Torch*).

### **Works Cited**

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## **Addendum B**

### **Bible Tradition**

**Tom King**

Bible is NBC's middle name! As colleges around the country aspire to become universities, Nazarene Bible College, with honor and gratitude, has always found fulfillment and Divine direction in remaining a Bible college. The Bible is indeed central to our mission. Every traditional degree student graduates with a first major in Bible. The Bible and Theology core is a thirty-semester-credit-hour requirement for each of our regular Bachelor degree programs. Secondly students may choose a major which further defines their educational program.

We are not fundamentalists in our approach to the Bible; but rather we are staunchly Wesleyan and Nazarene. The 2013 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene affirmed our stance regarding the Holy Scriptures by continuing to sanction what I consider the exceptional wording of the Article of faith on Holy Scriptures; specifically the key phrase describing the Holy Scriptures as "inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation."<sup>1</sup>

Our students learn that the Bible is full of history, but it is not a history book; it refers to geography, but it is not a geography text; it prompts scientific questions, but it is not a science manual. The Bible is God's written revelation to humanity! We are not threatened by the realities of the context within which God has chosen to reveal His Word. The Bible was revealed in and through human history, and it comes to us in the form of literature. Thus, we apply historical, critical, and literary methods of investigation to the study of God's Word. At the same time, we never lose sight of the fact that the ultimate source of this written revelation is Divine, with a saving and theological message unlike any other literary work on the planet. As a result, our study is encompassed, from beginning to end, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer.

The Bible is central to our mission as the subject of intellectual and systematic inquiry. However, its value and our study, must never end with that truth. We investigate the biblical text as a source of faith, and the revelation of God's will and message for humanity. Thereby, NBC's purpose "to glorify Jesus Christ as Lord by preparing adults to evangelize, disciple, and minister to the world" is grounded in God's Word revealed in the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> Church of the Nazarene, *Manual/2013-2017 Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2013), 29.

## **Addendum C**

### **The Towel Tim McKeithen**

God calls people to serve Him in ministry from EVERY CORNER of the WORLD - and *I* can testify to that fact *personally!*

My story begins in the US. I earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Classical Music Performance from Johns Hopkins University. This training was very specialized and enabled me to win full-time employment in two international symphony orchestras.

My first job was with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. For five years there, I performed hundreds of concerts a year in Hong Kong and in most of Asia. At the end of five years, I won a position with the Barcelona Opera Company. For nine years, I performed hundreds of concerts a year in Barcelona and throughout Europe. You can see that God opened doors for me to *perform music ALL OVER THE WORLD, but that was not all God was doing!*

I had been raised in a Christian home, and had received Christ as my personal savior as a child. I gladly was an involved member of the Nazarene churches wherever I lived: USA or overseas. I taught Sunday School classes, I was a member of the church board, and I always was a member of the church's *worship* team, playing and/or leading the music each Sunday.

I had ALSO grown up hearing about the Great Commission and about God's call "*to make disciples in all the nations.*"

I felt tremendously *blessed* to be able to *LIVE ON the mission field!* My musician co-workers and colleagues were Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Japanese, Polish, Romanian, French, German, and Spaniard. Every day, I was surrounded by *the United Nations* at my workplace! These people were from the nations of the world, and very few of them had *ever* really heard about Jesus Christ.

During our time in Hong Kong, for instance, with the help of the Nazarene missionaries there, we began reaching out to those colleagues, inviting them to church, and starting up two Bible studies. When we moved to Spain, we continued this "tentmaker missionary" approach. We weren't *trying* to be missionaries; we were just trying to win our co-workers and neighbors to Christ!

God blessed us tremendously! And He always seemed to be opening doors for us. One day in Spain, we were asked by the missionaries to *pastor* the Barcelona Church of the Nazarene. This caught us completely by surprise. We had never studied to be pastors or missionaries! We prayed and accepted the call. I continued playing concerts with the orchestra, but I began to pastor - in Spanish - a small, but growing congregation of Spanish people. *God repeatedly impressed upon us a call to make disciples*, and to try to reach for Christ a multitude of people who had never before met an evangelical Christian - especially *one who was a foreigner in their country!*

For five and a half years, I pastored the Barcelona church as a bi-vocational pastor. We really were “tentmaker missionaries.” God had opened doors for me to not only perform music all over the world, but now, He was using me as a pastor in a country that had very few churches! *But that was not ALL God was doing!*

Years earlier, when we had prayed and had said “yes” to pastor the church, we asked if there were any way to begin studying for the ministry. We knew that we were not yet fully-equipped to be pastors! However, having a full-time job plus pastoring a congregation would limit my options to study (and this was many years before online classes). Furthermore, the nearest Nazarene churches were 300 miles away! I might be able to take a few courses here and there, but I knew that this would be limited, plus it would take almost an “eternity” to finish!

About this time, we began to sense God’s leading to pursue a *full-time* missionary career. Music was beautiful, BUT GOD HAD SOMETHING BIGGER IN MIND. We now understood that God had taken us to *the far corners of the world* to call us to be missionaries! We had come to know and love lots of lost people in *foreign lands*! *They needed to hear about Christ in their language!*

We began to search for a *special place* where we could prepare ourselves for full-time ministry. I had always heard about Nazarene Bible College and how it was dedicated to preparing adults for ministry – folks who might have come from a *previous* career. *This* was a special place.

I contacted Nazarene Bible College. They said, “We can help *you* prepare for the ministry!”

So, I resigned from the orchestra and from the church. I ended my professional musical career. Just like thousands of others before us, we sold everything and came to NBC.

I graduated from here a few years later, and we received a call from the Church of the Nazarene to be full-time missionaries to South America. We served in the ten countries there for ten years.

I would like to finish with a short note, now that we are back in the United States again at Nazarene Bible College. I am program director here for the *Hispanic* Pastoral Ministries degree.

*Who are the people that I now have the privilege of helping prepare for the ministry?* They are Spanish-speaking students living HERE in the United States taking NBC classes online. *Where are they from?* Our students are from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Colombia – literally from EVERY CORNER of Latin America! And they are all coming to Nazarene Bible College to prepare themselves to fulfill God’s call in their lives through Christian ministry in their Spanish language!