



Saved from a Fire and Serving the Lord

By Lance Howard, College/University Representative

When I was a small child, I accepted Christ as my Savior. I was supported, trained, and taught in my local Church of the Nazarene in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. I grew in wisdom and stature through the mentoring I received at home with my parents—educators who modeled their faith in Christ through a lifetime of personal and professional highs and lows.

I received a strong foundation in the Scripture and formulated a biblical worldview through the Caravan activities and the Sunday School programming of my church. I gained a greater understanding of my faith. I learned more about the core tenets of my beliefs and the ways the world was interrelated with God's kingdom. As I memorized many scriptures, I gained a genuine desire to serve Christ and others.

My calling as an educator is an extension of my personal walk with Christ, my family, my educational experiences, and my employment choices. It reflects a lifetime of spiritual pilgrimage/service, being an active member in a Christian community, and serving Christ through a firm vocational commitment that supports education.

God's Faithfulness, Provision, and Providence

When I was in third grade in rural Minnesota, a fire at our house nearly killed my whole family—an experience I have continually referenced as an example of God's faithfulness, provision, and providence. Despite the tragic loss of everything we owned, our family experienced God's protective hand. He woke our family in the middle of the night and helped us escape the burning building. We miraculously escaped despite my preschool-age sister running back to her bedroom for something as the house filled with smoke. We climbed out a window in our pajamas into the frigid winter air. The car refused to start because of the cold.

We finally made our way to the neighbor's house a mile away, where mom called the fire department. My father fought the fire barefooted as the fire spread through the whole house. Afterwards, he was transported to the hospital with frostbite.

In spite of our homelessness, God provided for our family's physical and safety needs through the love of our friends, church, and extended family. We stayed with friends for a while and eventually relocated into town while my family worked to rebuild our home. Through that painful experience, we witnessed how God healed and restored my father's severely frostbitten feet that had swollen to the size of basketballs. Without God's healing, my dad's feet would have been amputated. I thank God for His healing touch.

Up through my high school years, my faith grew by faithfully attending church, teen youth group, district events/summer camp, and Nazarene Youth Congress in 1987. My teen years were especially impactful to my personal and spiritual development.

After high school, I enrolled at MidAmerica Nazarene University, where I was involved in student government and served as the director of social life. I met many great people there and knew a heartfelt connection with Christ and others. The friendships established there have continued to be a blessing.

In 1991, I graduated from MNU with a degree in psychology with a religion minor. I served as a youth pastor for a Nazarene church plant in the suburbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota, while I worked with the local school district as the site leader for the special education childcare program at the Bell Center in Anoka, Minnesota.

In 1993, I married my college sweetheart, and we moved to Colorado Springs, where we attended Trinity Church of the Nazarene. We found a place to live, and I received a job offer to work as a custodian at the church and teach physical education at Trinity Christian School.

We attended Trinity church for 24 years until 2018, and I served on the staff at the Trinity Christian School for four years and as interim youth pastor for six months. In lay ministry, I have served in the children's department, teen ministry, young adult/college and career, and young married couples' classes. I also served multiple terms on the church board.

Professionally, I have had over 25 years in education, covering all ages of students (preschool through adults). I have taught seven years in the classroom and been in leadership as principal or vice-principal for 15 years. Through God's grace, I worked several years in both Title I and high SES level schools/programs. I worked in the public education/charter education for over 13 years. I have been blessed to help start two charter schools in the Denver metro area in dual-language programs that have included the construction of two new buildings (elementary and middle school).

Blessed with Opportunities

Over the years, I have been blessed with the opportunity to support our Nazarene Christian education by being involved at the general church level. I have worked with a variety of Nazarene educators through service on the Nazarene Educators Worldwide (NEW) executive

council. NEW (formerly the Nazarene International Education Association) was originally formed to support Nazarenes in education ranging from preschool to college/university level and global schools. NEW desires to help equip students/educators in all areas of education.

I personally know the benefit of Nazarenes working in education since I am a product of this heritage as the child of an NNU graduate (NNC class of 1960) and now as the father of two current NNU students. I love the education and experiences that I received while attending MNU and have a deep desire to have that experience replicated in the lives of my children. I received a well-rounded Christian education and made lifelong friendships that equipped me for a wide variety of life experiences.

As a result of my Nazarene education and great experiences in college, I was blessed to meet my future wife, get married, and raise a family of three children who also share testimonies of personal salvation in Christ and who have a love for our Nazarene denomination and educational heritage. Two of my three children attend NNU (one sophomore and one senior), and my youngest is making plans to attend NNU after he graduates from high school in 2021.

Looking Back and Forward

In my current role, I want to help pass on a positive Christian experience to the students at NNU by being actively involved in the community on campus and helping to shape lives for a future of Christian service. My active commitment to Christ, local church experiences, commitment to ministry, and the support of education have all led me through a lifetime of service in education. I am excited about the impact of NNU as I am currently serving as director of club sports and recreation, where I am starting a new club athletics program. I also support a student government association outdoor club that helps students enjoy subsidized trips featuring God's glorious creation.

I look forward to seeing how God works to further His kingdom through my vocational and ministry opportunities.

Lance Howard lives in Nampa, Idaho. He is on staff at Northwest Nazarene University as the director of club sports and recreation. Lance has 24 years of elementary education experience with public and charter schools as teacher, assistant principal/academy director, and principal, respectively. You may contact Lance at ldjlhoward@gmail.com.