

Response to “A God of Immeasurably More”*

Floyd T. Cunningham, Ph.D.

We give thanks to God every time we remember the faithfulness and vision of the leaders that he has brought to APNTS. God’s choice of Bruce Oldham as president of APNTS demonstrates the care that God has for APNTS.

God prepared Dr. Oldham splendidly well for this particular place and time in the 34-year history of APNTS. He began his ministry as a pastor and maintains the heart of a pastor, possessing tender care toward the community that God has given him. Before coming to APNTS, for more than twenty years Dr. Oldham served in administrative positions in Nazarene higher education. He was Director of Admissions and Student Recruitment, Executive Assistant to the President for Church Relations, and, finally, Vice-President for Enrollment Management at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, all the while teaching Christian education. During this time, for six years, 1995–2001, Dr. Oldham led as President of Nazarene Youth International. This global assignment exposed him to the Church of the Nazarene around the world. In 2005, he earned a Doctor of Education, concentrating in Higher Education Leadership, at Vanderbilt University (ranked among the top five graduate schools in this professional discipline). Following service at Mount Vernon, for two years Dr. Oldham served as Dean of the School of Christian Ministry and Formation at MidAmerica Nazarene University. Then he resumed pastoral ministry as Senior Associate Pastor of the historic Nashville, Tennessee, First Church of the Nazarene. Dr. Oldham brings to APNTS successful models for structuring and organizing the school for its maximum efficiency and best use of resources in order to achieve its mission.

With keen sensitivity to his new setting in the Philippines, Dr. Oldham anchored his inaugural address around three key Filipino proverbs: “If you plant, you will harvest,” “A broom is sturdy because its strands are tightly bound,” and “A person who does not remember where he came from will never reach his destination.”

* This paper is a response to Dr. Bruce Oldham’s inauguration address, “A God of Immeasurably More,” pages 63–75, above.

He spoke of the original vision of APNTS, as it was conceived in the minds of church leaders and established by first president, Donald Owens. Clearly Dr. Oldham has caught the same vision of APNTS serving the region—and the world—fulfilling God’s great commission in its own way as a graduate school in the Wesleyan tradition. As Dr. Oldham observes, this part of the world is “desperate for local pastors and tent-makers to invade the space that traditional missionaries can no longer fill,” and APNTS is a seminary “already planted and cultivated for a field to be harvested.”¹

Dr. Oldham expressed the strong “strands” that bind together APNTS. These include (1) a dedicated faculty, which has produced effective graduates scattered around the world; (2) passionate students; (3) a support network that includes the Global Mission of the Church of the Nazarene, local leaders, and like-minded denominations; (4) partnerships with various agencies, including theological associations; and, especially, (5) Christ Jesus himself, who represents the very purpose of APNTS.

Dr. Oldham has looked to the past history of APNTS in order to understand it well, in order to lead it into the future. He alludes to the thoughts of his teacher, Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, that evangelism must build upon the foundations of thought in order for the church to be strong. Indeed, APNTS, like other Nazarene schools, seeks the integration of the heart with the head as well as the “Word” with the “world,” as former President LeBron Fairbanks said. Dr. Oldham affirmed it this way, that APNTS must be both research- and ministry-oriented and continue “to serve as a ‘hub’ of graduate learning for Asia-Pacific.”² As a “hub” APNTS offers off-site graduate programs (“spokes,” as Nazarene educator Robert Woodruff put it) for the region. Dr. Oldham expressed the necessity of strengthening both the “hub” and the “spokes.” On the basis of his many years of experience in education, Dr. Oldham understands the importance of a “quality student experience,” and that means the total, holistic life of the seminary.

Strengthening the hub is a major challenge facing Dr. Oldham in the days ahead, as he has discovered. Balancing all of the factors that make for a “quality student experience” includes not only the quality faculty that God has brought to APNTS and the spiritual life of the school, but also the upkeep of

¹ Bruce O. Oldham, “A God of Immeasurably More,” above, 65.

² Oldham, 72.

physical structures, including dormitories and other facilities. Dr. Oldham expressed his commitment to the expansion and development of both the central campus, with its student body, and the off-site classes.

Dr. Oldham has caught the vision, mission, and purpose of APNTS. He is the right person, with all of the background and skills, drive and determination to develop strategic initiatives that will lead APNTS not just somehow but triumphantly into the next decades. The Christian faith is always "personally given" and Christian leaders lead from the heart. Dr. Oldham possesses a heart that is molded by his own personal experiences, and these give to all of his other gifts the graces of compassion and passion for the mission that God has given him. God has been faithful to APNTS across the years and has brought to the fore men and women used by him for facets and phases of the work that he had to accomplish at APNTS. Now, through Dr. Oldham, God is carrying APNTS on toward its "immeasurably more" future.

