



LET'S CELEBRATE THE CHURCH

It is fashionable these days to point out what is wrong with the local church. There are any number of books that have predicted its demise and irrelevance.

Yet Scripture tells us it is "the bride of Christ" and goes on to say that even "the gates of Hell will not prevail against it."

God is doing great things through the churches in our conference. Our focus as a conference is developing leaders and promoting thriving, healthy churches.

Are there issues? Of course. We are fallible people.

I encourage you to join your church. Be a faithful member! Support the ministry of your church in any way that you can. Be



patient with your pastor and your leaders. Pray for your church. Bring others with you!

Thank God that you hear the message faithfully proclaimed every Sunday. Be patient if all your favorites are not sung each week. Thank God for all those who worked hard to make the service possible! Worship God with all that you have!

Kevin DeYoung writes, "Don't give up on the Church. The New Testament knows nothing of churchless Christianity. The invisible church is for invisible Christians. The visible church is for you and me." See you on Sunday!

Jim Fretheim, Superintendent



NWC CHURCHES REACH OUTSIDE THEIR DOORS

One major sign of church health is a congregation's willingness to engage in effective outreach to its community. At the Northwest Conference, it's our desire to shine a spotlight on some of churches who are doing outreach in new and creative ways.

FIRST COVENANT'S PARTNERSHIP WITH FARNSWORTH GROWS

Farnsworth Aerospace Elementary is a public school across the street from First Covenant Church on the East Side of St. Paul. For many years, students from the school participated in the Religious Release Program offered at First Covenant. In 2006, Dr. Vincent, principal of the school, agreed to have those students participate in a Christmas musical, which was presented both at the church and the school.

Two years later, Dr. Vincent became the principal of Cleveland Middle School, in addition to Farnsworth Elementary. The middle school had struggled for the past 5 years with low results from standardized testing and was on the "No Child Left Behind" list as a result. It was clear the school needed transformation.

In 2009, the Christmas musical "Just Believe" played a part in that transformation,

"Forty percent of the cast from Farnsworth have signed up to go for the first time to Covenant Pines Bible Camp this summer. God is at work!"

with students from both Farnsworth and Cleveland schools participating with children from the church. All performances were held at the Cleveland auditorium and Sunday worship was moved there as well for a special performance.

With each production, the level of participation of students increased and the expectations grew higher. This year the Ministry Team and Lay Leadership sought to engage more of the congregation in the whole process, with the goal of building relationships with the community. A large team of drivers provided transportation while others provided food for all rehearsals. A Prayer Team was praying for the whole production and for each participant by name, as the congregation was challenged in worship through adult spiritual growth opportunities to "become missional friends," the theme for Lent. Even though there were many obstacles and difficult challenges along the way, the spring production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" came together in a miraculous way.

"As a result of the relationships formed with the Farnsworth students, many are participating in the Wednesday night program and some are even bringing their parents," said Richard Voth, Minister of Worship & Creative Arts at First Covenant Church of St. Paul. "Forty percent of the cast from Farnsworth have signed up to go for the first time to Covenant Pines Bible Camp this summer. God is at work!"

THE GALLERY JOINS WITH LOCAL GRADE SCHOOL

One of the Northwest Conference's newest churches, The Gallery Covenant Church in St. Paul, has begun a relationship with the Barack and Michelle Obama Service Learning Center, a grade school in the church's neighborhood. The Gallery has made a bold commitment to move 35 percent of its offerings outside its doors to serve its local community. The largest part of this giving will be going to the Obama school.

Pastor Brad Kindall, the son of public

school teachers, felt early on a financial and people-power investment in one of the local schools would be one of the best ways to let the local community know his new church was there to serve. The Gallery's first investment will be purchasing what is called a Peaceful Playground for the Obama school. The school had applied for a grant to purchase the playground, but was disappointed to see the funding fall through. Principal Lori Simon told Pastor Kindall the teachers were "jumping up and down" when they heard The Gallery had stepped in to help.

In addition, The Gallery community will be investing volunteer hours tutoring students in reading, serving at evening school events, gardening with the second grade classes, and providing monthly treats for the faculty and staff.

"Over 90 percent of the students at this school are living at or below the poverty line. We feel honored to be able to serve Jesus in this way," Kindall said. "Five years from now, just imagine the stories we'll be able to tell of God's handiwork!"

PRAIRIEVIEW COVENANT CHURCH SENDS BEARS TO HAITI

Six-year-old Josh Mottl was watching the news about Haiti's earthquake in January when he felt very strongly that children in Haiti needed stuffed animals to comfort them. He stood up in Prairieview Covenant Church in New Richmond, WI, two weeks in a row and told of his project and asked people to help.

Josh and his family could never have imagined what would come from that request for the church people to help him. The New Richmond News came to his house and interviewed him for a front-page article in mid February. He collected 530 animals and had calls from as far away as Barron and Ladysmith, WI, for donations.

At Midwin-



Josh Mottl of Prairieview Covenant Church.

ter, Nancy King, wife of Prairieview pastor Rudy King, went to the World Relief meeting on Haiti and was able to connect with the Rev. Ed Carey of Kingdom Covenant

Ministries, in Miami, FL. They have many Haitians in their congregation and they are able to get things to the people of Haiti. Volunteers from Prairieview mailed 12 large boxes of animals to Miami in early March. It has been fun to see what God can do with a small child's dream.

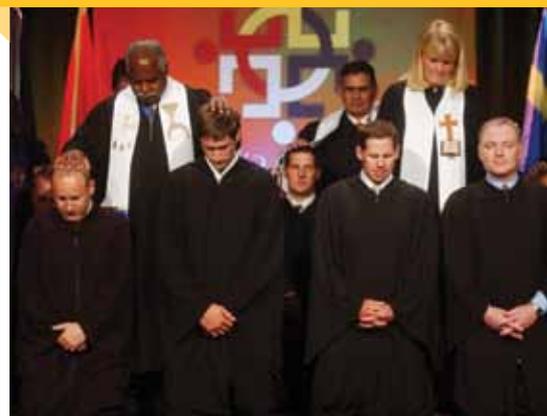
ZION COVENANT HOSTS BASEBALL BAT GIVEAWAY

On Dec. 24, 2009, Zion Covenant Church joined forces with Rally Sporting to give away 120 personalized baseball bats to kids who might not otherwise have received a Christmas gift. The giveaway was the idea of Randy Hartl, who owns Rally Sporting with his wife Anita. Randy's co-worker, Lowell Peterson, is a member of Zion Covenant Church and led the effort to raise funds to support the initiative.

Each child was given a tour of the plant where the bats are made and then invited to sign their names to be laser inscribed on their bat. The highlight of the event was the presence of Minnesota Twins batting coach Joe Vavra, a childhood friend of Randy Hartl's. Joe was available for pictures and conversation and distributed some bats at Children's Hospital on Christmas Day. Plans are underway to repeat the giveaway this Christmas.



ECC 125TH ANNUAL MEETING DETAILS



Living Our Affirmations: A Commitment to the Whole Mission of the Church

This year's Annual Meeting marks the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Fellow Covenanters from all over the country will converge on the River-Centre in St. Paul, MN, June 24-27, to celebrate this milestone.

Throughout the meeting, nightly worship services will be open to all who wish to attend.

On Saturday, June 26 from 2 to 6 p.m., the ECC will host a Family Festival and Picnic on Raspberry Island in St. Paul. The celebration will include music, entertainment, games and other activities for the whole family.

Sunday morning's worship service, also open to all who wish to attend, will focus on ordination, commissioning and consecration.

The 2010 Annual Meeting will also offer many opportunities to connect with friends new and old, learn from engaging speakers and breakout sessions, and worship together as a national church family. Many volunteers from the Northwest Conference are needed to support this meeting.

Please contact Cheryl (cheryl@nwc-cov.org) to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

To see a complete schedule of events or register for the 2010 Annual Meeting, visit www.covchurch.org/am.

WE WELCOME FOUR NEW NWC CHURCHES

In September and October of 2009, we witnessed the birth of two new congregations in the Northwest Conference. In September, Pastor John March signed a Covenant Agreement to begin planting New City Covenant Church (www.newcitycov.org) in the St. Louis Park area of the Twin Cities. On Oct. 1, Michael Behm also signed a Covenant Agreement to begin the planting of Real Life Covenant Church (www.reallifecov.com) in Waseca, MN, parented by Vista Covenant Church of New Richland, MN. Please extend your best wishes and prayers as Pastor March and Pastor Behm begin this new and challenging work.

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO BECOME A CHURCH PLANTER?

Behm: It is more than a choice—it is what God has for me. God has been grooming me for this my whole life. It fits my passion to reach out to people that do not know how God connects to their lives.

March: Before I went to seminary, I spent a year living in Malawi, Africa. While in seminary, I spent a summer in Thailand and a summer in Beijing, China. I was sure that I was going to be a long-term missionary. But then, as I continued to work in the local church throughout my schooling, I increasingly became aware of my pastoral giftings. I had a heart for mission work, but I felt gifted for pastoral ministry.

Church planting provided an opportunity for me to work within my passions for missions and at the same time utilize my giftings for pastoral ministry. Over the last few decades the cultural landscape in the United States has shifted, increasingly transforming our neighborhoods into mission fields.

Church planting was the perfect mix of mission work and pastoral ministry I was looking for.

WHAT WILL BE UNIQUE ABOUT THE CHURCH YOU WILL LEAD?

Behm: This church is about real people striving to be like Jesus in real life. In life there are hurts and hang-ups, abuse and addictions. Jesus meets these real issues with real answers. Jesus heals the hurts, forgives the hang-ups, comforts the abused and frees the addicted. We get to help connect people to Jesus.

March: New City Covenant Church is located in the Southwest Suburbs of Minneapolis. In this area, as in most suburban areas in America, people are isolated and individualistic. I think this is the cause of a lot of dissatisfaction with life that Americans experience. We are one of the most mentally ill nations on the planet, despite our affluence. Our hope at New City is to alleviate some of this pain by helping people connect with each other, with God and with God's purposes. We believe people long for honest and grace-filled relationships. One of our central disciplines is hospitality.

HOW/WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE LOCATION FOR YOUR PLANT?

Behm: I spent a year doing an internship in New Richland, MN. Through the internship I found that God has designed me to be a church planter. The wonderful people at Vista Covenant Church were being led to start a new church in Waseca, MN, so it was a perfect match!

March: We chose the location for our church because that is the context where my wife and I live. I grew up in Edina and graduated from Edina High School. My wife and I moved back to Edina about three years ago, and our children have been in the school system here since then.

We have made a number of friends through

our kids, sports, social activities, community events and I have been able to reconnect with old high school friends as well.

This is our home, and it is where we are connected so it felt like it was the most organic place for us to start a church.

TWO MORE CHURCHES

On April 1, 2010, two more new churches were born as church planters signed Covenant Agreements. Please extend your best wishes and prayers to Pastor Nicole Bullock at Blue Oaks Covenant Church, which will be meeting in the Brooklyn Center area of the Twin Cities. Also extend your warmest wishes and prayers to Pastor Rob Jacobson at Restoration Covenant Church which will be meeting in the Apple Valley area of the Twin Cities. God continues to work to grow the Kingdom, and the Northwest Conference, through new church development as we reach out through church planting. Thank you for your support of Northwest Conference Church Planting.

NWC STAFF

Jim Fretheim // jaf@nwc-cov.org
Superintendent

Mark Stromberg // mark@nwc-cov.org
Associate Superintendent

Jon Kramka // jon@nwc-cov.org
Director of Mission Development

Mike Brown // mike@nwc-cov.org
Director of Church Planting

Cheryl Theilen // cheryl@nwc-cov.org
Administrative Assistant

Bryan Malley // bryan@nwc-cov.org
Director of Communications

The Northwest Conference
3106 47th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406
Web: www.nwc-cov.org
E-mail: info@nwc-cov.org
Phone: 612-721-4893 // 1-800-756-6692
Fax: 612-721-4895



northwest conference
developing leaders. thriving churches.

The Northwest Conference is a regional conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church. We are approximately 140 churches in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota.

NORTHWEST CONFERENCE CALENDAR

MAY 17-19 // Youth Pastor Retreat – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

JUNE 12-19 // Adventures in Leadership – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

JUNE 24-27 // ECC Annual Meeting – RiverCentre, St. Paul, MN

JULY 22-25 // ECC Women Ministries Triennial – Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

AUGUST 12-14 // M.U.U.U.C.E. – Faith Covenant Church, Burnsville, MN