

**ANNUAL  
MEETING**

# STRENGTHEN CHURCHES

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**SALEM COVENANT  
CHURCH**



**NEW BRIGHTON,  
MINNESOTA**

## NWC 2015 Annual Meeting to focus on leadership and Congregational Vitality

The 2015 Northwest Conference Annual Meeting will take place at Salem Covenant Church in New Brighton, MN on April 16-18, 2015. The theme for the upcoming meeting is “Strengthen Churches,” and components of the event will focus on Congregational Vitality in our churches.

The Ministerial Association Annual Meeting (for pastors and spouses) takes place April 16-17, and the Northwest Conference Annual Meeting (for pastors, spouses, delegates, lay leaders and others) takes place April 17-18.

We’re very excited to have John Wenrich, Director of Congregational Vitality for the Evangelical Covenant Church, joining us as our speaker for both meetings. During the Ministerial Association Annual Meeting, he will focus on the topic of leadership.

“At the Ministerial Association, we’re specifically going to look at the character and competence of a leader, that dynamic convergence between being and doing,” Wenrich said.



Throughout the Northwest Conference Annual Meeting, Wenrich will challenge attendees to consider the “strong and undeniable link between Congregational Vitality and the Holy Spirit,” he said. “We’re going to see how to appropriate more of the Spirit’s power and presence, both congregationally and individually.”

Other topics will include current challenges facing churches today, “like this tension between externally focused congregations and internally focused congregations. And also, what metrics do we use to measure the faithfulness and fruitfulness of a church? Is it just bodies, bucks and bricks—the traditional way of measuring ‘success’? Or is it something more wholistic and biblical than that?”

The 2015 meeting will again feature a Ministry Fair, worship service, and new this year will be opportunities to interact with authors from throughout the Conference.

Mark your calendars and begin considering who from your church should attend this year’s meeting. Registration details and more information will be posted online and delivered to each church in the coming weeks.



## Mark your calendars for MOVE 2015

*By Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry*

MOVE 2015 is April 10-11 at Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis. This two-day event for NWC high school students and their friends combines practical service, amazing worship and education.

Join us as we examine issues of justice and compassion that affect adolescents and others—whether in the Twin Cities, local communities in our region, or throughout the world.

## Children & Family leaders reminded of vital partnerships at Imagine 2014

*By Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry*



Imagine, our annual event for Children & Family Ministry leaders and volunteers, was graciously hosted by Salem Covenant Church in New Brighton, MN, on Nov. 8, 2014. Ministry leaders enjoyed lunch, fellowship, resource giveaways, heartfelt worship and an inspiring message from ministry veteran Jim Wideman. Attendees remarked:

*"Just what I needed. Thank you."*

*"Thank you for the reminder that I am a minister, not a babysitter!"*

*"It was encouraging to hear from someone who has been doing ministry for such a long time."*

Wideman reminded leaders that burnout is never a part of God's plan, so ministry leaders must find ways to stay encouraged, focused

and nourished in order to finish well. He also emphasized the vital partnership between church and home.

"Children have 936 weeks between when they are born and their 18th birthday. If a child never misses church, you have only 14 weeks to establish the Gospel message in their hearts," Wideman said. "Educators know that kids who get help at home do better in school. So we've got to find a way to get some of those weeks back."

The Northwest Conference remains committed to training and encouraging volunteer teams. We hope you make plans to include Imagine in your ministry leadership calendar for next year.

## Sabbath Renewal Retreat for CY&F leaders March 1-3 at Covenant Pines Bible Camp

*"Most of the things we need to be most fully alive never come in busyness. They grow in rest."* — Mark Buchanan, "The Holy Wild: Trusting in the Character of God"

Anyone who works with young people in a staff ministry position is invited to Covenant Pines Bible Camp for a few days to rest and renew your soul. Judy Swanberg, NWC Associate Director of Pastoral Care & Development, will facilitate our time together,

providing spiritual direction along with guided reflection and generous times of solitude.

The retreat takes place Sunday evening through Tuesday morning. Contact Kara Stromberg by email at [kara@northwestconference.org](mailto:kara@northwestconference.org) to register.



## Go: Serve 2015 to offer shared learning and outreach for NWC families

*By Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry*

Families with young children, mark your calendars for Go: Serve, scheduled for Saturday, May 2, 2015, at Redeemer Covenant Church in Brooklyn Park, MN. This event is intended to bring NWC families together for a shared learning and outreach opportunity.

Go: Serve is a family event, targeted to families with kids in PreK through upper elementary school. This is an opportunity for families to serve and learn together in a family-friendly—yet stretching—environment suitable for younger children.

Registration materials will be available in March. For those of you who may drive from farther away, we encourage you to consider making a weekend of it! We're happy to provide resources on places to stay, worship or visit to turn this experience into a full weekend.

Contact [kara@northwestconference.org](mailto:kara@northwestconference.org) for more information.



## VIVE 2014 helps increase college readiness

*By Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry*

High school and middle school students, parents and pastors packed the hallways of Hope Academy on an early November Saturday morning. Sleepy excitement filled the air as they munched on massive doughnuts and prepared themselves for both education and inspiration. It was time for VIVE 2014, which took place on Nov. 8 in Minneapolis.

For the last several years, churches in the Northwest Conference have partnered with North Park University to host VIVE—a college readiness event for 7th to 12th grade students and their parents or guardians. VIVE emerged from a commitment by North Park and local Covenant congregations to increase college readiness, access and success rates for underrepresented students.

There are a variety of seminars on topics led by local and national educators and pastors, including: the ins and outs of financial aid, how to prepare your college application, how to plan for college as a middle school student, and how to support your child's faith journey at college. Students had a chance to interview with admission counselors from several universities.

Great worship by Urban Jerusalem and motivation from James Barnett, a Minnehaha graduate and Principal of Minneapolis College Preparatory School bookended the half-day event.





# CHIC 2015 expected to draw 6,000+ Covenant students and leaders to Knoxville

By Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry

CHIC 2015 is the Covenant's triennial conference for high school students. It takes place July 12-17 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN. The event is comprised of five days of worship, Bible study, and large group gatherings with speakers such as Louie Giglio, Eugene Cho, Shane Claiborne and Judy Peterson. There's music by groups like for King & Country, KB and Propaganda, as well as seminars, friendships and fun.

In 1956, several hundred Covenant high schoolers gathered for Covenant High Congress (now CHIC). At CHIC 2012, there were over 6,000 students and leaders in attendance. Many CHIC alumni tell stories about committing or re-committing their lives to following Christ while at CHIC. Others trace their call to ministry or missions to this event.

The early bird registration deadline is Jan. 14. After that, the price goes from \$599 to \$649. Registration forms for both

students and adult leaders are available at [chic2015.org/registration](http://chic2015.org/registration). Other information about CHIC can be found at [chic2015.org](http://chic2015.org).

## Transportation

The Northwest Conference offers coach bus transportation to CHIC for \$205 per person. By riding a NWC bus, churches don't have to worry about exhausted leaders driving, renting vans, or taking out extra insurance policies. Churches can hop on a NWC bus at various stops throughout the Conference. Transportation registration is due March 1. Information is available at [northwestconference.org/chic-2015-bus-info](http://northwestconference.org/chic-2015-bus-info).

## Volunteer

A lot of volunteers are needed to pull off an event for 6,000+ people. If you're interested in volunteering, visit [chic2015.org/volunteer](http://chic2015.org/volunteer). CHIC is looking for staff in the areas of administration, hospitality, recreation and support.

## Scholarships

CHIC is a fantastic experience for high school students and their leaders. However, there are some students in our churches who desperately want to go, but finances get in the way. Maybe their parents aren't Christians and don't see the importance of a faith-based event like CHIC. Perhaps their families are struggling with financially challenging circumstances.

Whatever the reason, we want to make sure every student who wishes to go to CHIC, gets to CHIC. The NWC is seeking to raise \$10,000 in CHIC scholarships. If you, or someone you know, would like to contribute, visit [youcaring.com/other/get-northwest-conference-kids-to-chic/265502](http://youcaring.com/other/get-northwest-conference-kids-to-chic/265502) or send a check to the Northwest Conference office. We are using [youcaring.com](http://youcaring.com) because (other than a small credit card processing fee) all of the money contributed goes to CHIC scholarships.

# Adventures in Leadership 2015: Celebrating 25 Years

*By Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality*

In 1991, a handful of youth pastors within the Northwest Conference shared a vision with Conference leadership for creating a unique leadership development experience for high school students. From this vision Adventures In Leadership (AIL) was born.

This summer (2015) we are celebrating 25 years of this transformational journey in leadership with students through AIL. The program continues as a unique partnership between the NWC and Adventurous Christians, which leverages the context of the Boundary Waters Wilderness Canoe Area as the laboratory for students discovering, developing,

and refining their leadership abilities from a biblical framework.

We recognize God's blessing and use of AIL with students over the years, even as we anticipate and prepare for this coming year! And a big "shout out" to AIL alumni now scattered around the globe making a difference in their world!

The Northwest Conference also celebrates the expansion of AIL over the last few years to the Central, Canada and East Coast Conference, and we look forward to engaging with the Midwest, Pacific Southwest and Minnehaha Academy for future AIL offerings.



## New Pastoral Care & Development initiatives launched

*By Jeff Burton, Director of Pastoral Care & Development*

Pastoral Care & Development staff members were engaged in several new initiatives this fall. We launched the new Clergy Care Team at the Ministerial Association Retreat. It was exciting to have 18 of 21 current members of this new team present for initial orientation and training. Team members will be making quarterly contact with the credentialed pastors and ministry staff in their districts.

Judy Swanberg, Associate Director of Pastoral Care & Development, has been supporting the re-formation of the NWC Credentialed Clergy

Women (currently nearly 60 who are licensed or ordained). She is also offering spiritual direction to each of the 11 students at the new Solid Rock Discipleship program at Lake Beauty Bible Camp.

One of our projects for 2015 is to plan a few one- or two-day retreats focused on relevant topics and/or affinity groups. Our goal is to offer these experiences in regional settings so that the cost and travel time is manageable. We have some excellent people resources right here in our Conference for leading such experiences.

We continue to connect with pastors, staff and spouses who are going through various levels of crisis or times of new discernment. We have also been available for church leadership groups that are looking for assistance with offering care and development resources or experiences to their pastors.

Contact Northwest Conference Pastoral Care & Development at: Jeff Burton, [jeff@northwestconference.org](mailto:jeff@northwestconference.org)  
Judy Swanberg, [judy@northwestconference.org](mailto:judy@northwestconference.org)

## MA Spiritual Formation and Discipleship Grant

*By Donna Harris, President,  
Minnehaha Academy*

Minnehaha Academy is deeply grateful for a generous gift given by caring donors to support spiritual formation and discipleship within the school community. The gift of \$300,000 will be dispersed over a period of 5 years.

Northwest Conference Superintendent Mark Stromberg and I, and members of the NWC staff and MA faculty, have thoughtfully and prayerfully envisioned the development of annual plans that will include the following five areas of focus: Chapel, Classroom Resources, Staff and Faculty Spiritual Life, Student Spiritual Life, Whole Community Spiritual Life.

Through this grant and with God's help we are confident that seeds of faith will be sown, hearts will be turned toward our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our spiritual foundation will be fortified, and the spiritual heartbeat of our community will beat even stronger.



# Essential Women

## Women Ministries Renewal Conference 2015

*By Christi Pease, Director of Women Ministries of the  
Northwest Conference*

On March 27-28, 2015, join other women to be renewed, be refreshed and be transformed at the Women Ministries of the NWC Renewal Conference at Hope Covenant Church in St. Cloud, MN.

Friday evening begins with a time to relax and connect while enjoying hand waxing and delicious food. Next, join in a time of dynamic worship that will revive your spirit. Meagan Gillan, Director of Women Ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church, will bring powerful and engaging teaching as we explore our theme—"Essential Women: The Aroma of Christ."

On Saturday, enjoy additional worship and teaching, WMNWC

ministry highlights and meeting, and your choice of wide-ranging breakout sessions such as: Freedom from Depression, Help with Finances, Caring for those with Developmental Disabilities, Deeper Joy through Bible Study, Creating a Witness Bracelet, and *Fragancia de una Mujer: Canal de Compasion, Generosidad y Misericordia*. Spanish interpretation is available.

The cost for the Renewal Conference is \$40 for Friday and Saturday (includes Saturday lunch); \$20 for Friday night only; \$30 for Saturday only (includes Saturday lunch.) Check out [wmnwc.org](http://wmnwc.org) for more information or to register (registration opens Jan. 15, 2015).

## Solid Rock Discipleship off to a strong start

*By Brian Alnes, Executive Director of Lake Beauty Bible Camp*

Solid Rock Discipleship at Lake Beauty Bible Camp has completed its first semester. It has been an amazing journey so far. We have completed the first four classes, and we have spent 13 days in Israel and Jordan seeing the places where Jesus walked.

We have been blessed by the pastors who have given time and talent to make this program a reality. The students have been poured into, and the pastors leave having had an amazing time investing in

the lives of students. The pastors are able to see the growth that is happening in the lives of the students. They are also able to see that this type of program is building the next generation of leaders for the Church.

We are excited for the students return for next semester and to see the continued growth in their lives. For more information visit [lbbc.com](http://lbbc.com). To follow more Solid Rock updates Like our Facebook page at [facebook.com/solidrocklbbc](https://facebook.com/solidrocklbbc).





## 50 by '25 initiative needs 'all hands on deck'

*By Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting, and Mark Stromberg, Superintendent*

At our 2014 Northwest Conference Annual Meeting last May, we launched an initiative to see 50 new churches started within our region over the next 10 years. Perhaps you've heard the statistic that 3,500 churches close their doors each year in the United States. At the current pace of Church Planting we are barely replacing closed churches and not addressing the growing population all around us!

America is now the third largest mission-receiving nation in the entire world. The population is growing increasingly diverse as the world is coming to us. So, we asked ourselves a question: What should we do about this situation, if anything? We prayerfully asked God what our response should be to these stark realities. We made the decision to embark on an unprecedented mission together.

This will only be possible if we approach this bold vision for Church Planting as a partnership between the Covenant, the Conference and local churches. Christianity has always expanded because faithful people started new churches at home and abroad. So we set a goal, all of us work-

ing together, and God has already been faithful as we have moved forward in faith.

### Updates from our new churches

In May, Pastor Jeff Olson planted Catalyst Covenant Church, which now worships on Sundays at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. On June 1, Genesis Covenant Church was born. Pastor Steve Wiens leads Genesis Covenant, which worships Sunday mornings at Sabes Jewish Community Center in St. Louis Park, MN.

In August, Pastor Jamie Staples began planting Renew Covenant Church in Eau Claire, WI. Virtually all the local district Covenant churches have partnered to make this new work happen, as well as Jamie's former church, First Covenant of Red Wing, MN.

New Covenant Church (Nuevo Pacto) officially began on Oct. 1, with Pastor Mauricio Dell'Arciprete leading. The congregation is currently worshipping at Minnehaha Academy and will begin worshipping at its parent church, Bethlehem Covenant in Minneapolis, early in the New Year.



Many of you—and many of your churches—have asked, “How can we be involved?” You can start by having Mike Brown host an informational meeting at your church. You can commit to directly support a new church financially as an individual or as a church. You can commit to partner with other churches in your area to see a new church started in an underserved neighborhood or community.

Our collective call is to reproduce churches that reproduce disciples that will raise up a new generation that will lay the foundation for the next great move of God. We need “all hands on deck” to make this happen. This is not someone else's call. It is our call! Will you join in and find a way for your church to support 50 by '25?

# Navigate 2014 helps churches from across the country become healthy and missional

By Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality, and Jeff Burton, Director of Pastoral Care & Development

The Northwest Conference and Minnehaha Academy served as hosts of the national Navigate Conference 2014, which took place at the school Oct. 31 to Nov. 2. An initiative of the Covenant Office of Congregational Vitality, the purpose of Navigate is to help established churches navigate their way to becoming healthy and missional by establishing synergistic partnerships with the ECC, their regional Conference and other local churches on the same journey.

Navigate invited participants to drill deeper in their understanding of the Ten Healthy Missional Markers for Congregations and the unique leadership competencies required for effective revitalization ministry.

Twenty-two churches from eight different conferences were represented by teams of pastors and lay people. The two churches from the



Northwest Conference were Harris Covenant Church in Harris, MN, and Calvary Covenant Church in Grantsburg, WI.

This fifth Navigate event included a number of "firsts." We had our first new church plants represented, our first church from Alaska, and our first missionary, Karl Peterson from Mexico City. A special guest and prayer team

member was the newly elected President of the Covenant Church in Mexico, Marisol Velazquez. A special thanks to all the staff, volunteers and local worship leaders who served throughout the weekend.

## NWC Calendar

**1.26-30 » Midwinter Conference** - Denver, CO

**3.1-3 » Children, Youth & Family Ministry Sabbath Retreat** - Covenant Pines Bible Camp, McGregor, MN

**3.27-28 » WMNWC Renewal Conference** - Hope Covenant Church, St. Cloud, MN

**4.10-11 » MOVE 2015** - Minnehaha Academy, Minneapolis, MN

**4.16-18 » NWC Annual Meeting** - Salem Covenant Church, New Brighton, MN

**5.2 » Go: Serve** - Redeemer Covenant Church, Brooklyn Park, MN

**6.20-27 » Adventures in Leadership** - Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

**7.12-17 » CHIC 2015** - University of Tennessee

**8.6-8 » MUUUCE** - Crossroads Church, Woodbury, MN

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