



Minnehaha Academy community rallies around the theme 'Together We Rise'

By Stan Friedman, News and Online Editor, Covenant Companion

It wasn't long after the explosion at Minnehaha Academy on Aug. 2 that news outlets began to let their audiences know what had happened. There would be constant coverage that day and in the days to come. Beyond a collapsed building, what audiences saw and heard about was resilience and courage, supported by faith, hope and love.

They learned of Donald DuBois, the chief maintenance worker at Minnehaha Academy. He had gone to the boiler room to investigate an unusual noise and was told by contractors working in the room to get out of the building as fast as

he could because there was a gas leak. But DuBois didn't run outside. He ran up the stairs to warn others that they needed to get out.

The public learned how employees who had heard DuBois also ran to warn co-workers and visitors. After the blast, employees—some of them seriously injured, having been thrown across offices by the force of the explosion—helped others to work through the debris and get out of the collapsed building.

The public learned about the two employees who died: Ruth Berg, the receptionist whose smile and kindness was treasured by



those who knew her; and custodian John Carlson, himself a Minnehaha graduate, who handed out Dilly Bars to students and encouraged them to keep at their studies.

They saw pictures, not only of a destroyed building but also the words written large on butcher block paper that hung on a fence around the property. ➡



What a beloved community Minnehaha is a part of!



As we mark over two months since the tragic explosion at Minnehaha Academy that took the lives of Ruth Berg and John Carlson and destroyed a major part of the Upper School building, our hearts still ache for the loss of our beloved colleagues and the cherished space

where generations of young people were educated and discovered and deepened their Christian faith.

But amidst the pain, we have experienced great joy and hope. We have seen the evidence of our good and gracious God as we relocated the Upper School to a beautiful building in Mendota Heights in record speed—with an army of support—and witnessed our school community draw closer to God and one another.

Our hearts are overjoyed with the outpouring of love and care we have received in the immediate aftermath of the blast and the weeks that have followed. We have been offered condolences and well wishes from people from all over the world whose hearts have been stirred to volunteer their expertise, support the school financially and pray.

We are grateful to the entire team from the Northwest Conference, many of whom were with us on the scene of the explosion on Aug. 2—they held our hands, prayed with and comforted us.

We are grateful for the dedicated and ongoing time of prayer at the Covenant churches throughout the world and the notes, emails, cards and gifts we have received from pastors and church leaders. It was especially moving for NWC Superintendent Mark Stromberg and ECC President Gary Walter to join us at our Back-to-School Worship Service. Their words of encouragement and gifts in support of faculty were tremendously uplifting. What a beloved community Minnehaha is a part of!

Now, as we look toward the longer-term future and the opportunities before us, we know our Heavenly Father is with us. Our hope is in Him and we trust in His guidance.

Donna Harris
President, Minnehaha Academy

Minnehaha is far more than a building!

One of the personal treasures I have is a medal my great grandfather, Olaf Erickson, received for raising funds to build Minnehaha Academy back in 1913. I have shown this medal to others on numerous occasions, and it is one of the first things I would grab if my house were on fire and I could only take a few objects with me while heading out the door.

Having said this, it has currently taken on new meaning in light of the recent explosion at the school. After all, we know that Minnehaha is far more than the building my great grandpa (along with so many others) helped make possible.

Rather, it is the students, faculty members, alumni and parent community that makes the school what it is—regardless of where it meets. Moreover, that which remains most central to its core identity is Jesus Christ, the Lord of all learning, because He is the Lord of life.

And while the facilities may change, may the same never be said for its mission of integrating Christian faith and learning. On this, I can just hear my great grandpa Olaf shout a hearty, “AMEN!”

Mark R. Stromberg
Superintendent, Northwest Conference

➡ The words declared “You Can’t Shake Our Foundation.” It was signed by the Class of 2018, who had no idea where they would be attending school for their senior year.

They saw 700 people turn out for a vigil at the Lower Campus the night of the blast and then nearly 1,000 people participate in a “Unity March” two weeks later, when the school remembered those who died, honored the first responders and began to look forward.

They saw Bryan Duffey, a maintenance worker and assistant soccer coach who had to have one leg amputated, return to watch his Redhawks play.

Two weeks after the blast, the Academy was able to enter into a two-year lease with the city of Mendota Heights on a building that once housed Brown College, a for-profit school that closed its doors in January. In a Herculean effort, architectural firm ATS&R and contractor Mortenson Construction were able to pull off a remarkable feat and adapt the building for the school’s needs. Workers said they had been inspired by the Minnehaha community and were determined to reach what generally would be an unobtainable goal.

Faculty and staff from the Lower, Middle and Upper Schools formed a “task force” to bake cookies and other treats for the Mortenson crews throughout the construction period. Students handed out Dilly Bars to the workers, who expressed gratitude for the generosity and excitement over having helped the school open. And over Labor Day Weekend, some 100 volunteers helped set up furniture in the classrooms so that school could open that Tuesday.

The cameras and reporters were there to record the day as 350 students started back to class and were welcomed with applause and cheering by teachers and staff still dealing with their own grief and physical pain. Among the students were some who enrolled following the explosion because they had seen how the Minnehaha community had responded to the tragedy.

Minnesotans saw time and again how members of the Minnehaha community expressed their faith in God. They had seen injured president Donna Harris speaking from a wheelchair the night of the vigil and saying, “We trust God. He is going to do phenomenal work through you, through

those who are called to serve.” They heard NWC Superintendent Mark Stromberg provide assurance and express confidence that God would continue to work for the good of those who love Him even in the midst of great tragedy, lifting the school from the ashes.

The school has rallied around the theme “Together We Rise,” and everyone connected with the school has said they hope that their faith will be a witness to others. It already has.

School and Northwest Conference leaders are still determining how to proceed on any construction or reconstruction at the site. It could take months before a final decision can be made. Much of the building will need to be razed, which will take several months. The gymnasium and fine arts buildings survived, but it is unclear whether they will be able to be used any time soon.

The Northwest Conference has declared October to be Minnehaha Academy Month and congregations are encouraged to dedicate one Sunday to help fundraise and show support for the school. Learn more at northwestconference.org/event/minnehaha-month/.

3 newest NWC church plants putting down roots in their communities

By Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting

We introduced a bold new Church Planting initiative called “50 by ’25: Our Mission to Plant” at the 2014 NWC Annual Meeting. Our prayerful goal was to see 50 new churches planted in the Northwest Conference in a 10-year timeframe.

This last fiscal year we saw the birth of four new churches in our Conference, and we have a number not quite ready to launch in various stages of development for this new year, which began July 1.

At our 2017 NWC Annual Meeting, we had the great privilege to witness the signing of three Covenant Agreements, which is the contract that signals the beginning of a new church plant. We are so excited to bring you an update on each of our three newest churches: Awaken East Covenant Church, Lakeside Covenant Church and Midcurrent Covenant Church.

As you read what they’ve written I would ask that you commit to keep them in your prayers as they seek to reach their communities with the Good News of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected from the dead. Our neighborhoods, small towns, small cities and urban centers all need to hear that there is a God who loves them.

Please also remember to pray for the Northwest Conference as we raise funds for this huge vision—and as we wait on God to raise up gifted planting pastors.

Awaken East Covenant Church, Maplewood, MN

Pastor Dan Lukas

A small group of people trickled into the park on a humid, cloudy July morning. They chased wobbly toddlers. Pulled leashes on overly-friendly pups. Sipped coffee and tea. Strummed squeaky acoustic guitar strings. Listened to one another. And listened to God, together.

Some of them have known each other deeply for many years. Others have just been added to the fold. Some are fall-on-their-knees in love with Jesus. Others are hurting, frustrated and unsure. But together, they meet to learn from each other, and to know and be known. To exist in community while growing deeper into who they are and who Jesus is. By orbiting in one another’s atmospheres and letting life experiences intertwine, they can begin to live out the hope of their hearts: To practice the way of Jesus in the renewal of all things.

This congregation was born out of Awaken Covenant Community, in the West 7th neighborhood of Saint Paul. The congregation began simply with people—meeting in parks, living rooms, basements and backyards, willing and waiting to see what God might have in store for a continuation of Awaken Community ... in another community. After holding preview services once monthly through-



out the summer, they put down roots on Sept. 23 as they began weekly Sunday services at Ashland Theater in the Maplewood Community Center, in Maplewood, MN. Learn more about Awaken East at awakeneast.com.

Lakeside Covenant Church, Chanhassen, MN

Pastor Steve Anderson

Jesus invites people—ordinary, everyday people—to follow him. He lets them know they belong because they are loved. As people spend time with Jesus, experience his unconditional love, grace and mercy, they come to believe in him and begin changing the world.

This invitation often begins on the side of a lake (Lake Genesaret—Sea of Galilee). We desire friends and neighbors in our community to consider this invitation from Jesus that changes everything at Lakeside Covenant Church. Our Vision at Lakeside is: Share Life, Pursue Jesus and Change the World.

Located in the Chanhassen—Chaska area, we desire to ➡

➡ create space where we invite one another to belong because we are loved by God, bring honest questions, grow in faith, believe in Jesus and become more the people God dreamed us to be.

Excelsior Covenant Church generously supports this new church through a variety of resources. Pastor Steve Anderson was previously on staff at Excelsior and is rooted in the community of the southwest suburbs.

This fall, Lakeside is holding monthly preview worship services beginning Sept. 17, at Bluff Creek Elementary School in Chanhassen. We are excited to draw in people from the community who have been watching and are curious about this new church in the Southwest metro. Find more information about Lakeside Covenant Church at lakesidecov.org

Midcurrent Covenant Church, Hudson, WI

Pastor Sten Carlson

Over the course of the last 10 years or so, I began to realize something—maybe you’ve noticed the same thing. It’s no longer the norm that individuals or families have had a positive experience with the local church, or any experience at all. So many of our neighbors, co-workers, friends and family members don’t have any interest in the local church altogether.

That breaks my heart, and when I realized it breaks God’s heart too, I knew I had to do something to change that. Why? Because the local church is the hope of the world, and I knew God had been shaping me to lead within it! And with that, Midcurrent Church was born—to reach more people for Jesus and to teach people to live more like Him!

We were beyond excited to hold our first preview service in Hudson, WI, on Sept. 24, where we set out to create worship experiences that are designed to capture the attention of people not yet in the room. If we can capture their attention, we believe God can capture their heart!

My deep thanks to the Northwest Conference staff for guidance through this journey of church planting. Thanks to Cedarbrook Church (Menomonie, WI), Renew Church (Eau Claire, WI), Bethel Covenant Church (Ellsworth, WI), Zion Covenant Church (Ellsworth, WI), and Hinsdale Covenant Church (Hinsdale, IL) for their partnership in our ministry. And thanks to all our Conference churches for the support of church planting in the ECC! Learn more at midcurrentchurch.org.

‘Immerse: The Covenant Bible Reading Experience’ announced

More than 400 churches and over 40,000 people read through the entire New Testament together over the past year through Covenant Community Bible Experience. That’s about half of our Covenant churches! Many finished and asked, “What’s next?”

The Make and Deepen Disciples team recently introduced “Immerse: The Covenant Bible Reading Experience.” Immerse will be a way that your congregation can take a journey through the entire Bible through a series of 8-week campaigns over the course of three years. If you were a fan of Community Bible Experience, you will find that Immerse is a similar initiative and will be a fantastic next step. Two Immerse Bible volumes are available to order now: “Immerse: Messiah” (New Testament) and “Immerse: Beginnings” (Genesis, Deuteronomy).



The other four Immerse Bible volumes will soon be available to order as well.

Covenant churches also benefit from a special 10% ECC discount when using the order code COVENANT10. Learn more and order Immerse volumes at immerse.covchurch.org.

Awaken, Genesis utilizing network model

By Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting

The Network or Parish Model of planting churches is a fairly new concept. With this model, churches bring a church planter on staff with the intent of sending them out in 6-12 months to plant another church that shares not only the DNA of the original church, but also will share the name, administrative resources and some shared leadership.

The difference between this model and satellite campuses is that each of these churches has its own local pastor who preaches and leads. The intent is that these sister churches will continue to plant new sites together—year after year—to reach specific neighborhoods or communities.

Awaken Covenant Community
“Parish Model” is the phrase we are using to describe our latest efforts in Church Planting. For us, it was born out of both a desire to be a part of planting new churches in the Covenant, but also some strategic and pragmatic reasons—including not wanting to move locations or add services to address capacity issues at our current location.

The hope and dream is to have multiple locations called Awaken, committed to the same mission, vision and values, with local Lead Pastors leading and teaching in smaller neighborhood or regional locations that are connected relationally and by name.

We believe this allows us to replicate the DNA of Awaken, which many have found to be life giving,



but not allow it to be dependent upon one person/leader. We are able to access and leverage the resources and best practice of the denomination when it comes time for assessment and training, but we often do the front-end work of finding people who might be a good fit in the Awaken culture.

So far, our experience has been positive. We have had one Church Planter in Residence who just recently planted the first Awaken Parish (Awaken East) on Sept. 24. We’ve learned the value of residencies, and also the difficulty of bringing someone in from the outside and trying to send them out in only 6 months time.

– Micah Witham, Lead Pastor, Awaken West 7th

Genesis Covenant Church
We dream of establishing a network of connected, rooted and liturgical churches called the Genesis Network—united in mission, vision and values.

“Connected” expresses our desire that people would know each other and be known, using their gifts in partnership with God and each other. In order to be connected, we believe we must also

have relatively small congregations (100 to 500) and relatively small staffs (1 to 10).

“Rooted” expresses our desire to love and serve the neighborhoods and cities in which each church is nested, being communally responsive and responsible.

“Liturgical” expresses our style of worship, where we follow the church calendar and the Revised Common Lectionary, so that we will remain rooted in the bigger story of God as we live out the Kingdom of Jesus in our own local stories and settings.

Each Genesis Network church will be an autonomous (but Evangelical Covenant) church with its own staff, board of overseers and budget. We want to develop the Genesis Network for two reasons: 1) We believe churches like ours (connected, rooted, liturgical) are needed in the 21st century, and 2) We believe church planting is extremely difficult to do, so the Genesis Network can be a collaborative community of likeminded pastors who help each other and who don’t have to reinvent the wheel.

– Steve Wiens, Senior Pastor, Genesis Covenant Church



Families come together for day of service and learning at Go:Serve 2017

By Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry

Thirty-one families from 16 different churches converged on Redeemer Covenant Church in Brooklyn Park, MN, on June 28 for NWC Family Go:Serve, a day of service and experiential learning for families.

This is the fourth year for Go:Serve, an event designed for families with children in PreK-upper elementary school. The day was an opportunity for families to learn and grow together in a family-friendly, yet stretching environment suitable for younger children.

The event kicked off with activities for kids, including a prayer wall and a binocular-making craft as a visual reminder to be careful observers of the world around us. After worship, Covenant missionary Sue Peterson led the kids in an activity where attendees learned about sharing the love of Christ with others as the paralytic’s friends did when they brought him to Jesus on a mat. Sue reminded kids that God calls people at all ages to serve God as missionaries—whether overseas or in our own communities.

Kids were given an official Go:Serve passport to carry with

them throughout the day and received a sticker in their passport after completing each ministry project. Kids were also in charge of the family debriefing throughout the day, using the questions provided in their passport books.

Families participated in three ministry projects—assembling birthday bags for homeless kids, creating joke-themed care packages for staff at our five Northwest Conference camps, and creating encouraging and hopeful place-mats to be delivered to kids at the children’s hospital.

The planned free community-based car wash was rained out, but families rallied around the indoor projects. Kids expressed interest in learning about the different ministries, and participating in these projects showed that even young kids can make a difference.

Volunteers from Linwood Covenant Church donated the supplies to assemble the birthday bags. Each child received a homemade, reusable birthday bag, a few small toys and a boxed cake mix with frosting so they could celebrate their birthday with a small party.

After a taco lunch, families drove down the street to Dragon Star Foods, where they each had \$5 to spend on dessert. Families purchased all kinds of interesting candy and food, while experiencing new cultures, foods and smells. One participant shared that the supermarket was the most stretching experience of the day.

Another parent summarized the most meaningful part of the day this way: “Seeing children find joy in serving Jesus by caring for others,” while others appreciated that the event “exposed needs of people in our communities.” All enjoyed being able to serve alongside kids and families from other Covenant churches.

Families gathered back at Redeemer Covenant for a chance to share highlights and stories from the day. Kids and families were sent out with a blessing to go and look for ways to serve their communities back home. We hope families from your church can join us for Go:Serve next year, or dream about hosting a similar event in your own community!

COVENANT CAMPS

in the northwest conference



SUMMER CAMP HIGHLIGHTS



COVENANT PARK BIBLE CAMP

Mahtowa, MN • covenantpark.org

The past year has brought some exciting new developments at Covenant Park. In May, we poured a new basketball court and started construction on two buildings—a new cabin and camp store/canteen. We are so thankful for the support and large force of volunteers from our churches that adopted and took the lead on these projects.

This year also brought an evaluation process of where we are and where we are going as a camp. As we look at creating renewed direction for the ministry, as well as a long range plan for the development of camp's facilities, we have already seen renewed life and excitement taking root across camp and its partnerships. This planning and visioning process will continue in the coming year, and we look forward to the new life that God continues to produce both in the ministry life of camp and the spiritual journey of each camper and guest! – *Kaela Strom, Director*

LAKE BEAUTY BIBLE CAMP

Long Prairie, MN • lbbc.com

Thanks be to God for what He accomplished at Lake Beauty this summer. God certainly challenged us with a theme of “SET FREE,” from Galatians 5:1. We considered together how we can be set free from sin, set free for salvation, and set free to serve and love! God's Holy Spirit moved during each week at camp, as we challenged each camper to nail his or her sins on the cross, which was located on the bottom of our chapel hill.

As much as we enjoyed the outrageous fun of a summer at camp, we also fully experienced the challenge that a theme like SET FREE brought to us. We humbly ask for your prayers for those campers and summer staff who joined us this summer! – *Matt Rudeen, Program Director*



COVENANT PINES MINISTRIES

ADVENTUROUS CHRISTIANS

Grand Marais, MN • adventurouschristians.org

One of my favorite times this summer was when the groups returned to camp. After they had cleaned their gear and taken a sauna to wash off, they came to the lodge, sat with friends and fellowshiped. It's here the stories began to pour out.

One girl in particular stands out to me. She was going through a season of doubt and rediscovered her faith out on trail.

That is just one of many next steps that were taken this summer. Each next step was as varied as doing devotions, repairing a relationship, leaving perfectionism behind, going to church, praying, limiting screen time, etc. For each decision that was made this summer I am grateful to the God that we serve. – *Brad Shannon, Director*

COVENANT PINES BIBLE CAMP

McGregor, MN • covenantpines.org

There are many stories of God's work this summer at CPBC. I'd like to share one story of a camper named Levi.

Levi had been attending a church and coming to camp for a few years, but he said that he had never completely given himself over to God. He would come to camp and just have a ton of fun. Throughout his life, his dad was rarely present. He would enter his life, but inevitably he would leave again.

Levi told us that camp was a safe place to experience God's love. At camp he experienced the loving Father he needed. Levi now says he has completely given himself to God and is excited to claim his identity as a child of God. – *Matt Braun, Director*

BLUEWATER COVENANT BIBLE CAMP

Grand Rapids, MN • bluewatercovcamp.org

Bluewater Covenant Bible Camp celebrated 50 years of camping on Bluewater Lake. With a Former Staff Reunion, Bob Stromberg comedy show, and a message from NWC Superintendent Mark Stromberg, our Family Campers enjoyed memories and entertainment of what God has done through this beautiful camp.

Our Youth Camp numbers were at an all time high. Through our theme of “A.I.M.”, based on the Great Commission, the campers were able to experience Adventure, hear of their Identity in Christ, and embrace the Mission He calls us to.

We look forward to God's Kingdom being impacted through Bluewater for the next 50 years and pray that the relationships, activities and facility (new cabins, outdoor pavilion, and new Chapel) point others to give God glory. – *Chadwick Persons, Director*





Summer Youth Ministry events challenge and equip NWC students

By Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry

Adventures in Leadership

When you were in high school, were you a leader or a follower? This summer, 19 high school students who were identified by their NWC churches as leaders came together for an intense week of leadership development as part of Adventures in Leadership.

Based at Adventurous Chris-

tians in Grand Marais, MN, these students explored the character and the disciplines of godly leaders, experienced what it means to work as a team and faced their leadership fears. As they headed out into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, they put their leadership into practice—including their orienteering and camping skills.

If you know of a high school

student in your church who has strong leadership potential, consider nominating her/him for the next Adventures in Leadership in June 2018. Contact Ginny Olson at ginny@northwestconference.org.

MUUUCE

The Most Unbelievable, Ultimate, Urban Camping Experience is the Northwest Conference's



↳ annual middle school summer blow out. From Aug. 3-5, 625 middle school students and their leaders from 42 Covenant churches gathered at Crossroads Church in Woodbury, MN, for fun, worship, middle-school-focused teaching and small group discussions.

Anna Cornell, Pastor of Student & Family Ministries at Bloomington Covenant Church, observed, "This is the first time our kids have been part of a larger church experience. It's like a mini-CHIC. They get to experience the Covenant as a whole."

The theme, "Jesus Is," got students thinking about their relationship with Christ. Ben Kerns, a long-time Covenant youth pastor, speaker and author from Marin, CA, challenged the students to wrestle with who Jesus is in their lives and how they live that faith out with their friends.

Students had a blast at the massive Welcome Party that was a middle schooler's dream. It included lots of giant inflatable games, a GAGA ball pit, hair painting, mini-donuts, sno-cones and popcorn. They also spent time at Valley Fair and the Big Thrill Factory where they could ride go karts, climb high ropes, spend time in the arcade, jump on trampolines or let loose with laser tag.

But it wasn't all fun and games. These middle school students proved that they can be part of the big picture of God's work. Together, they raised \$1,882 for Covenant Kids Congo.

AIL: One generation devoted to the next

By Rev. Brad Shannon, Director of Adventurous Christians

The psalmist declares, "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray do not forsake me O God, until I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (Psalm 71:17-18).

God has this plan that life and love, and leadership and wisdom—and especially knowing Him—should be passed along from one generation to another generation; that there be a generation with knowledge and wisdom and insight. The idea is that each generation is to devote themselves to the next generation so that, "From generation to generation we will proclaim your praise" (Psalm 79:13).

As the new Director of Adventurous Christians, I had the privilege to share in Adventures In Leadership 2017, a clear and beautiful demonstration of how this gets lived out in the Church today. Believe it or not, it all began with some of you. It was a powerful moment when your faith community pointed to a young person and said, "We see something in you, we believe in you, let us invest in you."

Through that affirmation and support, 19 students from all over our Conference ended up at Adventurous Christians for a weeklong journey of self-discovery. What awaited them when they arrived at camp was another set of adults ready to affirm, encourage and invest in these students. Between the NWC staff, youth pastors from around the Confer-



ence, and the camp staff, there were almost as many adults as kids devoting themselves to this next generation.

It didn't take but a brief time for this group of strangers to become a community. From those very first moments I was blessed to watch the AIL experience work in the lives of both the students and adults as they learned, shared, worshipped and practiced Christian leadership.

Real transformation took place as these students went through AIL together. They discovered who God was calling them to be as Christian leaders. My prayer is that those experiences will translate into greater fruit back in your churches and in schools across our Conference.

Maybe the great AIL experience is a product of a good curriculum, or the unique wilderness setting, but I'm pretty sure it's more about one generation devoting themselves to the next generation, and in that, God showing up.



UNITE: CHIC 2018

Every three years, high school students from Covenant churches across North America and beyond gather together to discover how God is calling them as adolescents to follow Him. It's five days of worship, learning, transformation and fun. CHIC 2018 takes place July 15-20 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN.

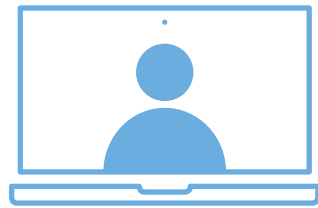
Registration fills up fast. The Early Bird registration deadline is Jan. 18, 2018. After that, the price goes from \$599 to \$649. Registration forms for both students and adult leaders are at chicconference.org/register.

The Northwest Conference offers coach bus transportation to CHIC for \$230 per person. Churches can hop on an NWC bus at various stops throughout the Confer-

ence. Information and registration materials are available after Oct. 1 at northwestconference.org.

CHIC is a transformational experience for high school students. However, there are students in our churches who desperately want to go but can't afford it. Maybe their parents aren't Christians and don't see the importance of a faith-based event like CHIC, or their families are struggling with financially challenging circumstances. Whatever the reason, we want to make sure every student who wants to go to CHIC, gets to CHIC.

If you would like to help a student get to CHIC, contact Ginny Olson at gabby@northwestconference.org or call the Northwest Conference office at 612.721.4893.



Using tech to train leaders

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

Did you know that our Covenant camps rely on local pastors and ministry leaders to speak each summer? This spring, we gathered six children and family ministry leaders via video conferencing for a training session on how to prepare for a week of camp speaking.

For this meeting, we specifically focused on communicating the Gospel to the trailblazer age group (4th-6th graders). Our topics included the purpose and role of the speaker, developing the theme, using scripture and illustrations, navigating technology in a camp setting, age-appropriate salvation language, and best practices for how to utilize time during the week.

Those who participated were grateful for time spent with others to spur on creativity, and felt better equipped to communicate the Gospel to kids at camp this summer.



Mentoring can be life-changing for pastors, young and old

By Jeff Burton, Director of Pastoral Care & Development

Mentoring is one of the many ways our pastors are being strengthened in their roles. It is most often not a formal process—but it can be a life-changing process for leaders at all stages of life.

Here is a recent testimony from one of our young leaders, Pastor Nathan Hillman from Thomastown Covenant Church in Staples, MN.

"I've never been a DIY person. Whether it was learning to change the oil in my car or learning to communicate with people in healthy ways, I've always needed a lot of help. I guess that's why, eight years ago, I was so thrilled that I got to start hanging out on a monthly basis with retired Covenant pastor, Merrill Kindall. Merrill has encouraged me, listened to me, prayed for me, and told me countless relevant stories from his own life and ministry. I thank God for him. Ministry today is too complex and dangerous for DIY."

A simple approach for pastors looking for a mentor can be asking a more experienced pastor for the privilege of meeting periodically just to ask the two or three most current questions on your mind related to life and ministry.

The recent report, "The State of Pastors," from Barna Research and Pepperdine University, states that there are more pastors over 65 years old still serving than all pastors under 40. This reveals at least two important things. There is a good supply of mentors out there, and there is a massive transition of leadership just ahead that suggests an urgent need for mentoring.

Hoffner hired as MA's new Executive Director of Faith Formation

David Hoffner is Minnehaha Academy's new Executive Director of Faith Formation, which fills a position that was created based on recommendations from the Arbor Research Group last spring.



Hoffner has served Minnehaha Academy for the past 11 years teaching AP Economics, Philosophy, and Bible, chairing committees in the work of faith formation, and in recent years overseeing the Upper School's Advisory Program and participating in Chapel planning. David is a graduate of Wheaton College and holds an advanced seminary degree from Regent College.

"We are excited to welcome David to this leadership position," said Dr. Donna Harris, President of MA. "Minnehaha will be blessed by David's wisdom, intellect, heart for God and His people, a love for Minnehaha and a deep passion for the faith formation of the members of our school community."

The announcement of Hoffner's appointment to staff and faculty at the back-to-school worship service was met with a thunderous standing ovation.

"I think my love of learning and people is suited to Christian education," Hoffner said. "My way of being in the world flows from my love of God and neighbor, and so I strive to exist in the school environment as an agent of His love and grace. I don't think of Christian schooling as a job, but more as a calling."



#BetterTogether in western Wisconsin

By Leslee Hugare, Zion Covenant Church, Ellsworth, WI

Each life tells a story. One can look back upon his/her life and see the story unfold—and also look ahead with anticipation and hope for the pieces yet untold.

The same can be true looking at the stories of local churches. In these stories—in these pieces of history—much is told of the church and its people. At times, history defines these aspects of life for far too long, which can create barriers to momentum, growth and needed change.

This was the case for two Northwest Conference churches in western Wisconsin—Bethel Covenant Church and Zion Covenant Church. In the stories of these congregations were chapters that prevented them from being on mission together in the community of Ellsworth.

However, in time and with healing, the hope of new beginnings

has started as these two congregations have realized that they are #BetterTogether.

On July 16, 2017, Pastor Todd Spieker (Bethel Covenant Church) and Pastor Dave Hugare (Zion Covenant Church) brought the two congregations together for one worship service at the Ellsworth High School Auditorium.

Over the past few years, the churches have joined together for youth ministry, hymn sings and Maundy Thursday services. Now was the time to bring them together to experience Sunday morning worship together—something these churches have not done together in many, many years.

Pastor Hugare said of their time together, “For the first time in over 50 years of Zion’s existence at our current location, we joined with our sisters and brothers from Bethel to worship and remind each other

that we are in mission together!”

The time together was focused on how followers of Jesus truly are #BetterTogether. The churches combined their worship teams, greeters and ushers and together worshipped once again.

Following the service, the churches played a Bethel vs. Zion softball game, shared in a CHIC fundraiser lunch and enjoyed being together as a family of believers.

“In a world that sometimes seems intent on division, it was wonderful to celebrate the God that brought us together in worship, ministry and even mission,” said Pastor Spieker.

Both churches continue to look ahead with hope and anticipation of how God will use them to bless the community of Ellsworth and their congregations for years to come.



Solid Rock community life encourages disciple-making

By Tyler Menssen, Director, Solid Rock School of Discipleship

On Thursday, Aug. 24, Solid Rock School of Discipleship started our year by welcoming students and their families to our first day of orientation. It was an amazing day for Solid Rock staff and professors to meet the students and their parents, pray with them and get the year started off well. We continue to pray God will do transformative work this year in the lives of our students.

Solid Rock is a 9-month academic discipleship school for high school graduates at Lake Beauty Bible Camp. Our purpose is forming Christ-centered disciples and developing leaders.

Students have begun their fall semester classwork, which includes a Bible survey class, church history, our Israel tour preparation class and Cornerstone (which integrates college-level writing with spiritual formation and character development).

During the spring semester, students will embark on a two-week tour of Israel, study the life

of Jesus and take classes in Christian ethics, theology and money management.

The most exciting part of the year for students is the community life they get to experience at camp. This community life includes small groups, mentoring, worship, serving and leading in different camp areas, and being involved in the church community of Grace Covenant Church in Little Falls, MN. The community life of Solid Rock is intended to help students learn what it means to be loved by God, and encourage them to begin a life of discipleship and disciple-making.

The application for Solid Rock’s 2018-19 year is available on our website. We are also hosting Preview Day on Saturday, Oct. 28, from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. for students and their parents in grades 9-12. Preview Day is a great opportunity to come see what a year at Solid Rock will entail. Registration for Preview Day and information can be found online at solidrockmn.org.

WMNWC gearing up for fall and spring events

By Rachel Kleinschmidt, Consultant for Women Ministries of the Northwest Conference



As the fall ministry season kicks off, so does women’s ministry! Last spring, we had a very successful Renewal Conference at New London Covenant Church in New London, MN. It was a fantastic time of worship, fellowship and learning with Marnie Swedberg and many amazing breakout sessions. A huge thanks to the women’s group and worship team at New London Covenant for hosting!

This fall, four camps in the Northwest Conference hosted women’s retreats. Covenant Park Bible Camp and Bluewater Bible Camp’s retreats took place Sept. 15-17, and Covenant Pines Bible Camp and Lake Beauty Bible Camp’s retreats were held Sept. 22-24.

Covenant Park featured speaker Diane Lee from Aberdeen, SD, and Bluewater hosted speaker Jennifer Thyng, with the theme “Better Together.”

At Covenant Pines, attendees heard from Kyliah Villa of ➡

WMNWC gearing up for fall and spring events continued...

➔ Crosstown Covenant Church in Minneapolis, and at Lake Beauty, the speaker was Terry Friedlein of Riverwood Covenant Church in Greenfield, MN, speaking on "Bringing Broken and Dead Things to Life."

These retreats were an amazing opportunity to get away from it all at our beautiful camps and be fed by great speakers and worship.

Looking ahead to spring, WMNWC has begun setting the wheels in motion for Renewal 2018. The theme will be BLESS, the intentional discipleship initiative put on by the Make and Deepen Disciples mission priority of the ECC. The speaker will be Marcy Baumann, the Eagan Campus Pastor of Crossroads Church.

Those of you who attended the NWC Annual Meeting will remember Marcy from her talk at the Friday night gathering. We are so blessed and excited to



have her share at Renewal! The 2018 Renewal Conference will be held March 16-17, 2018, at Bloomington Covenant Church in Bloomington, MN. Be watching our website (www.wmnwc.org) for more information about registration and lodging starting in January.

NWC Calendar

- 10.28 » NCP Financial and Real Estate Training for Church Leadership and Staff**, Awaken Covenant Community, St. Paul, MN
- 1.6 » Recharge** - New Hope Church, New Hope, MN
- 1.13 » Recharge** - Hope Lutheran Church South Campus, Fargo, ND
- 2.3 » Recharge** - Location TBD, Cedar Rapids, IA
- 2.10 » Recharge** - Location TBD, Duluth, MN
- 3.13 » Ministerial Association Symposium** - Location TBD
- 3.16-17 » Women Ministries Renewal Conference** - Bloomington Covenant Church
- 4.6 » MOVE 2018** - Minnehaha Academy South Campus, Minneapolis, MN
- 4.26-27 » Ministerial Association Annual Meeting** - Buffalo Covenant Church
- 4.27-28 » Northwest Conference Annual Meeting** - Buffalo Covenant Church
- 6.16-23 » Adventures in Leadership** - Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN
- 7.15-20 » CHIC 2018** - University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

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