



NWC Ministry Priorities contribute to development of healthy missional leaders

By NWC Staff

Being a leader is not easy! It takes courage and resiliency. It takes patience and determination. It requires the ability to balance being both catalyst and stabilizer. Effectiveness in leadership is also magnified when leaders are good at both identifying and coming alongside others with leadership potential. In the Northwest Conference, this is what we seek to do.

Our NWC Vision pertains to healthy missional churches. As we drill down into what is required for this to become reality, our Mission statement is as follows,

The Mission of the NWC is to engage, empower and equip

healthy missional leaders, as we believe that this is an essential component in growing healthy missional churches. Therefore, NWC leadership is committed to establishing a healthy missional leadership culture in which pastoral and lay leaders are identified, developed, resourced and supported. In all we do, we will seek to serve pastoral and lay leaders, helping them to become godly and effective leaders.

And as we seek to be faithful to fulfill our Mission, here are just a few ways this is manifested in our NWC Ministry Priorities:

Congregational Vitality

The presence of godly leadership is fundamental to every congregation being healthy and missional. Ruth Haley Barton reminds us, "The key role of leaders in the church is to *discern* and *do* the will of God." In other words, congregational leaders are to steward God's mission as expressed through the church.

Embedded in our Vitality architecture are 10 Healthy Missional Markers for congregations—#9 being **A Culture of Godly Leadership**. When followers were asked, "What reflects effective" ➡



“...tive leadership?” they offered these five traits: They model the way; Inspire others through a shared vision; Challenge the process; Equip others to act; and Encourage the heart.

We remain committed to resourcing and supporting godly leadership in guiding the faithfulness and fruitfulness of every local church.

Church Planting

As we talk about our mission as a group of churches called the Northwest Conference, we are referring to the pursuit and sharing of the Gospel in every city, town and neighborhood throughout the Conference and around the world.

The goal of Church Planting has always been about joining Jesus in His mission of reaching people in a rapidly changing world. Church Planting requires us to identify, equip and send pastors to the mis-

sion field. God uses a lot of different types of leadership to plant, but to see sustainable and fruitful new churches, we need to find and develop leaders.

One thing is clear, without gifted, called planting pastoral leadership, we can't fulfill our mission to plant. We identify gifted leaders through a formal Assessment process and we equip those pastoral leaders through our Church Planter Training Intensive and active coaching. The right leader in the right place, with the right resources, is our goal so that we might see the greatest Kingdom impact.

Children, Youth & Family

Developing leaders in Children, Youth & Family ministry is of vital importance. Effective ministry with children, youth and their families won't happen if our ministries

are full of good intentions, but poorly led.

The Northwest Conference equips ministry leaders and volunteers through monthly Connection meetings during the school year, as well as webinars and coaching conversations. Ministry leaders tell us they come to our monthly gatherings to “collaborate, laugh and share life together.”

Both the Children & Family Connection, as well as the Youth Pastor's Connection, create safe spaces to talk about the challenges of ministry and to learn how to be better equipped to lead. It allows for focused interactions where newcomers in ministry can learn from those who are more experienced.

We also collaborate with other denominations and youth ministry organizations on Recharge, an ecumenical day of training for children, youth and family ministry leaders

held annually in five locations. We invest in the leadership development of high school students via Adventures in Leadership, a one-week leadership intensive done in collaboration with Adventurous Christians. Through Go:Serve, our children and family service day, we teach even the littlest what it means to be a servant leader. You can never start too soon to develop leaders in the Church.

Pastoral Care & Development

The work of pastors takes place in a very complex environment. Pastors serve as leaders in a mission that is truly life and death, carried out by volunteers, operating as a family. In support of our mission to engage, empower and equip healthy, missional leaders we are committed to the care and development of our pastoral leaders. To accomplish this we encourage healthy peer connections among our pastors. In addition, we provide consultation to church leadership teams and pastoral relations committees toward the end of creating church structures that support pastor's personal and professional health.

The foundational service we offer is personal support and coaching of pastors through difficult seasons. It is critical for pastors to know that they are not alone in their challenging calling.

Our prayer

It is our prayer that all who are engaged in our shared ministry be true to our mission as we carry out the work God has called us to do. This is also our prayer for each pastor and church leader in our region. And may all who come behind us find us faithful!

Solid Rock forming 'Christ-centered disciples'

By Tyler Menssen, Director, Solid Rock School of Discipleship

Solid Rock School of Discipleship, a ministry of Lake Beauty Ministries, is an academic discipleship school for high school graduates focused on forming Christ-centered disciples and developing leaders.

Founded in 2014, we are built around four key themes to help strengthen our students' foundations of faith, and build within them the capacity to be leaders and disciple-makers in the world. These four key themes are: Christ, community, camp and classroom.

The classroom aspect of Solid Rock consists of 27 credits of college-level, biblical and theological courses along with a 2-week study-tour of Israel.

Students live and learn at camp, which offers engaging, fun activities and leadership opportunities. Our students engage with, support and provide leadership for Lake Beauty's program events and guest groups on Saturdays. Students also provide leadership in a local church's Wednesday night programming.

The students' classroom and camp experiences are lived out in a close-knit, Christ-centered community. Through mentoring, small groups, community worship and the closeness of the community, students further develop their skills to communicate, build relationships, work together and build trust with one another.

Upon graduation, Solid Rock



students are better-equipped communicators and relationship builders. These are key components in both disciple-making and leadership.

We believe the most important aspect of discipleship and leadership is having an identity firmly rooted in Christ, and understanding what it means to be a new creation in Him.

From this understanding, we hope flows a passion to share the love of Christ with others, to make more disciples and to lead with the mind and character of Christ.

We are proud to see Solid Rock alumni actively leading in the ministries of their local churches and college campuses.

Next year's Solid Rock year begins with orientation on Aug. 24, 2017, and runs through graduation on May 9, 2018.

Please be in prayer for our students, staff and faculty as we prepare for the year and pray we continue to see God work in and through the lives of Solid Rock students.

For more information on Solid Rock please visit our website at www.solidrockmn.org.



Three new Church Plants sign Covenant Agreements at 2017 NWC Annual Meeting

By Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting

God has been ever faithful as we have stayed focused on our goal to see 50 new churches planted in the Northwest Conference by the year 2025. The commitment we made at our Annual Meeting in May 2014 is stretching us and causing us to walk by faith in ways we couldn't have imagined—but it has been an exciting journey so far! As we entered into this fiscal year, we have seen nine new churches planted in our Conference.

Early in our 2016/2017 year, we saw the planting of Lighthouse Covenant Church in North Minneapolis with Pastor Dee McIntosh.

At this year's Northwest Conference Annual Meeting (April 27-29) we will have had the great joy of seeing three new churches become reality. Signing Covenant

Agreements, which signal the official start of a new church plant, are Pastor Steve Anderson, planting Lakeside Covenant Church in the Chanhassen, MN, area, Pastor Dan Lukas, planting Awaken Covenant Church in St. Paul, MN, and Pastor Sten Carlson, planting Midcurrent Covenant Church in Hudson, WI.

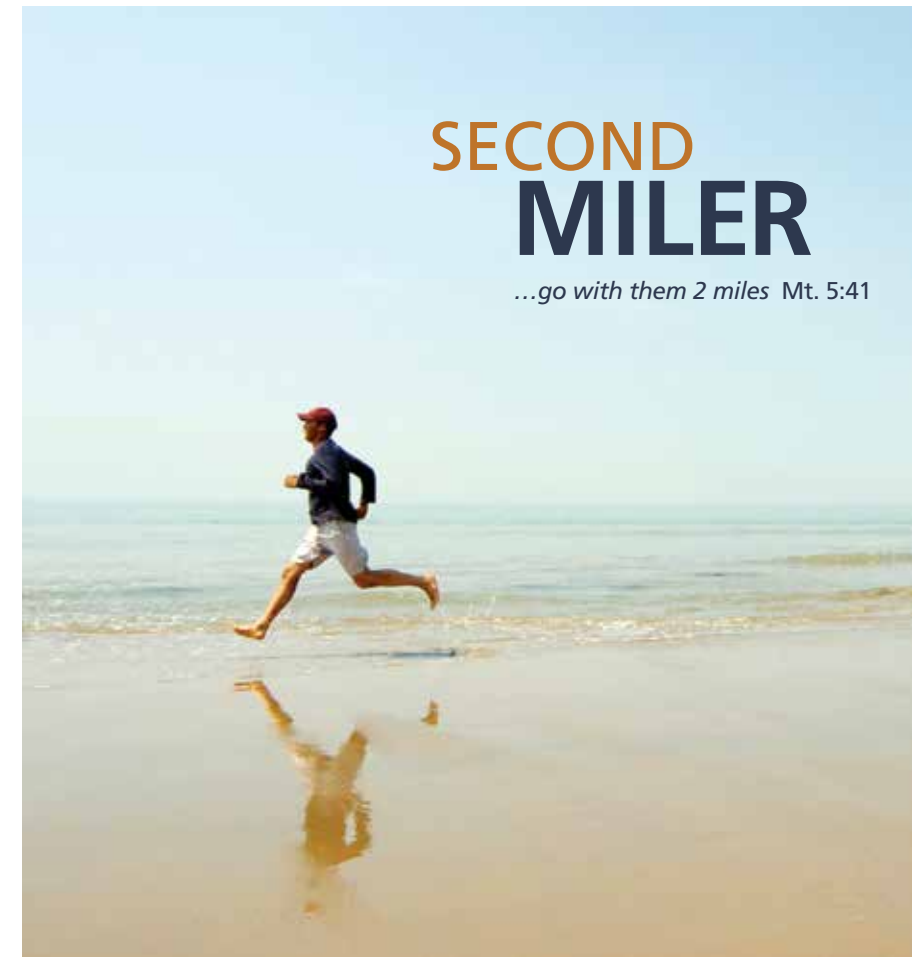
We are on track and seeing God open doors and raise up gifted leaders. We are so very thankful for the generosity of your churches in supporting the Northwest Conference.

We are also so very grateful for those churches that have decided to step up and directly support a new church so it can become a reality. Church Planting in the Northwest Conference is, and always has been, a partnership.

The Evangelical Covenant Church, the Conference, local churches and individuals raise funds together to make church planting possible.

As we look ahead to what God might do next, we are very much aware that to live into this call as a Conference we will need to raise funds well beyond the support we receive from your local churches. This goal will only be possible through the sacrificial giving of individuals and churches who hear and respond to the call of God to reproduce new churches throughout the Northwest Conference.

Thank you all for your generosity. Our prayer and dream is to see an Evangelical Covenant Church reaching people for Jesus in every city, town and neighborhood across the Northwest Conference.



Become a Second Miler!

By Mark R. Stromberg, Superintendent

The Second Miler program in the Northwest Conference brings together willing people to further the ministry of NWC churches and constituent ministries by giving financial assistance to help with the immediate needs, specifically related to capital improvements, in many of our smaller or newer churches.

Since 1959, Second Milers have provided assistance to nearly 400 projects. Answering the call of Jesus in Matthew 5:41, we have responded to the needs of congregations by “going the second mile” and serving them in His Name.

Four times each year (quarterly), Second Milers receive a notice about a new project. By giving a suggested donation of \$20 each time, we are taking the next step ... going the second mile ... making a difference in a tangible way in the life of a sister congregation or ministry. This is part of what being connected is all about—lending a helping hand.

Our goal in 2017 is to sign up 50 new members. Would you be willing to be one of them?

Please sign up today by contacting Jessa Anderson at the NWC office at jessa@northwest-conference.org or 612-721-4893.



Minnehaha Academy, Solid Rock racial reconciliation event draws 200

Minnehaha Academy and Solid Rock School of Discipleship co-hosted a night of worship and discussion on racial reconciliation in February. The evening featured a keynote address by Dr. Michael Emerson, one of the nation's leading scholars on race and religion, and a panel discussion featuring area ministry leaders. Over 200 people were in attendance.

“The evening focused on historic barriers to racial equality,” said Paulita Todhunter, Director of Diversity at MA. “A panel of local pastors who serve multicultural congregations addressed these trends of segregation and offered strategies to remedy the natural tendency to separate and instead foster a more unified Church across race. We left with the hope that reconciliation can be realized through applying methods of these multicultural churches.”



Gary and Pauline Carlson



Karl and Sue Peterson



Barbara and Steven Swanson

3 Covenant missionary families spend home assignment in Minnesota

By Jessa Anderson, Administrative Coordinator

The Northwest Conference is home to many missionaries that are working to transform the world for the Kingdom of God. Currently, there are three Covenant missionary families on home assignment for the year—each working to revision, visit with ministry partners and prepare for a new season of missionary work.

Gary and Pauline Carlson

Gary and Pauline Carlson have been missionaries in Japan for over 33 years. They have been part of three church plants in their years in Japan, the most recent being the Shonan Community Church in the city of Fujisawa. Gary preaches and leads worship music with his guitar.

Pauline has taught conversational English classes and plays a djembe (drum) in worship.

In addition to church planting ministries, Pauline has spent the last eight years as the chairwoman of the board of directors of Christian Academy in Japan (CAJ), a school for missionary children the Covenant helps to support. In addition, Gary has taught missiology at Covenant Seminary for the past seven years. This seminary is run by the Japan Covenant Church and is located in Tokyo.

During this year on home assignment, their schedule has taken them to most of their 30+ supporting churches, a number of which are in the Northwest Conference. When not traveling, they

enjoy being part of Excelsior Covenant Church in Excelsior, MN, and the changing seasons in Minnesota!

Karl and Sue Peterson

Karl and Sue Peterson currently serve as missionaries in Mexico. The Mexico Covenant Church has around 50 churches in four geographic areas. The Peterson's missionary ministry in Mexico has focused on relational evangelism, discipleship, Christian formation ministries, leadership development and congregational vitality. They have partnered in a significant way with the Mexico Covenant Church to translate and contextualize the Evangelical Covenant Church's Congregational Vitality workshops and materials into Spanish.

Karl and Sue, along with their two sons, Jonathan and Zachary, started their home assignment in July 2016. During this time, they have personally visited, shared with, and thanked, each of the 32 churches that support their ministry—23 of which are a part of the NWC.

The Petersons have been able to use their stay to focus on quality time with family and extended family—an important aspect of home assignments. Karl and Sue have each also focused on continued education. Sue participated in a Deeper in Christ SPE retreat in the fall.

Karl has audited two Congregational Vitality courses at North Park Theological Seminary and will audit a third course next fall. He also had the opportunity to give two VERITAS workshops (part of the Congregational Vitality pathway) in Spanish to 5 Hispanic congregations in the L.A. area.

Barbara and Steven Swanson

Barbara and Steven Swanson are currently on home assignment in transition from serving in Belgium for the past 12 years, to serving in Sweden. Since 2004, both Barbara and Steven have served in Belgium in transformative roles.

Steven was the pastor of the Antwerp International Protestant Church, and Barbara worked with refugees and immigrants in the Mosaic Project. Their church community included 130 people from 38 different nations. In the last four years, God brought many people from Muslim backgrounds into their lives and with the local church partners, they reached out in friendship and love and saw the Holy Spirit transform lives. In 2015, they were able to baptize 18 new believers in Jesus Christ!

The Swansons have spent the past nine months in the United States sharing the transforma-

tion stories of their new friends in Europe.

"God is alive in them and they walk with Jesus every day!" Steven said. "The media often reports the negative side of refugees. From our human perspective this migration of people is a crisis, but in God's eyes it is a great opportunity for sharing His love with our new neighbors."

As they prepare to transition to living in Sweden in June, the Swansons look forward to their new ministry of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the immigrants and the locals in Sweden who have forgotten their spiritual heritage.

The Northwest Conference is honored to have our missionary families call Minnesota "home-base" for their time on home assignment, and we rejoice in the great work that is happening all over the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

12 NWC pastors participating in ECC Intentional Evangelism Cohort

By Beth Seversen, Evangelism Director, Make and Deepen Disciples, Evangelical Covenant Church

Twelve lead pastors from the NWC are currently participating in a 10-month intentional evangelism cohort that launched in September. The purpose of the cohort is to develop leaders in their personal relational evangelism and in leading evangelism culture change in their churches. The cohort is co-led by Beth and Mark Seversen and sponsored by Make and Deepen Disciples.

Lead pastors meet for three hours monthly in a learning community focused on strengthening personal evangelism in natural ways that others can imitate. Pastors learn how to lead and impart evangelism passion, instruction and coaching to key leaders in their churches and lead their congregations to become radically hospitable, welcoming and accepting of non-Christians.

"I think the cohort has helped to craft some of the language we can use and to understand what it means to make new disciples. Becoming a Christian is not simply a one-time commitment, but it is a discipleship process," said Pastor Dennis Anders of Community Covenant Church (Huntley, MN). "That is where I'm heading as I seek a new paradigm, getting back to a better understanding of what evangelism is. It is about drawing people to the Lord Jesus Christ and it is a process."

The cohort integrates current research on evangelism¹:

- Statistically the more spiritual conversations congregants are reported to have with non-Christians, the greater the number of new faith commitments.
- The higher the percentage of church newcomers that were formerly unchurched, the higher the number of new commitments that are retained by churches.
- The more non-Christians are invited and present in our churches, the greater the number of new faith commitments that are made and retained.
- 76 percent of unchurched people say that if their friend really values their faith, they don't mind talking about it. 50 percent of unchurched people report that they would attend church when asked by a friend.

We should be encouraged and empowered by these statistics! Evangelism is something that everyone is called to do, and can do naturally! Pastor Steve Weishmann from Harris Covenant Church (Harris, MN) commented on the cohort's core value, "Evangelism is



NWC Pastors currently participating in the cohort

John Jacobi
Brad Jackson
Todd Ertsgaard
Steve Thompson
Steve Weihsmann
Bob DeYoung
Dennis Anders
Ileana Garcia-Soto
Todd Van Zee
Mauricio Dell'Arciprete
Dan Wheeler
Todd Spieker

not a separate department in the church, but meant to be a part of everything we're doing."

Want to learn more about participating in a cohort in your Conference? Contact mdd@covchurch.org.

¹ Findings reported by Dr. Rick Richardson and Beth Seversen from the 2016 Unchurched Study at the Amplify Conference at the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism, Wheaton College on June 27, 2016.

Spiritual Direction provides support, clarity in seasons of ministry

By Jan Bros, Pastor of Abbey Way Covenant Church

Sometimes as a professional leader—one ordained to ministry within the Church—I find the boundaries between the work of ministry and life of my soul can become blurred, especially when I am not intentionally tending to my relationship with God. While ordinary days have their own challenges, "muddiness" is most noticeable for me in times of transition and change.

I can find myself lost, spun around and confused in a deep, dark wood. I need desperately a place to come home to "who I am" as a child of God. For me, this usually happens outside of my normal day-to-day activities, in a quiet space and set apart time, companioned by someone who can listen well to my story, helping me recognize the Holy Spirit's voice of love, forgiveness and guidance to me as a person not just as a pastor.

For those who are called to ministry, one of the supporting spiritual practices that can be very helpful in both ordinary and transition seasons is the ministry of Spiritual Direction.

Spiritual Direction comes in many different forms. It could be a one-time meeting at a retreat or conference with a spiritual director, where the gift of holy objectivity is given through someone who is completely outside of the normal circle of life. It could also be a regular monthly appointment with a trained spiritual director—whether in person, by phone or



Jan Bros (center)

through Skype—where a stable, knowing relationship provides the needed consistent foil to our heart's hungers. It could even be a regular rhythm of gathering with a facilitated Spiritual Direction group comprised of other clergy persons, where the pausing to listen and reflect deeply with others in vulnerability becomes the place of opening to the Holy Spirit's guiding presence.

Whatever form Spiritual Direction takes, the component pieces

are the same: shared desire to seek God; willingness to speak one's own heart; open posture of listening; and prayerful attention to the movement of the Spirit.

The Northwest Conference has many gifted spiritual directors that are available to meet and explore the potential value of the ministry of spiritual direction with you. Contact Jeff Burton, the NWC's Director of Pastoral Care & Development, for more information.



MOVE 2017 encourages students to ‘illuminate’ the world around them

By Jessa Anderson, Administrative Coordinator

On Friday, March 31, 185 students and youth workers from throughout the Northwest Conference converged on Minnehaha Academy’s south campus in Minneapolis for MOVE 2017—a 2-day experience of teaching, worship, service and experiential learning.

This year’s theme was “illuminate,” focusing on God’s calling for His people to be bold in sharing the light of Christ through what they are doing and who they are. During MOVE, students had the opportunity to seek out what it means to illuminate the world around them through service and learning experiences.

The weekend started with a special concert from TRU-SERVA, a Twin Cities based hip-hop artist who uses music as a way to preach the Gospel and encourage positive change.

“The walls of the church need to fall down,” says TRU, “and people

need to get out of their seats and go out.”

The evening continued with a worship service that featured the Covenant Worship Team. This multi-generational, multi-ethnic group is made up of members of New Covenant and Bethlehem Covenant churches in Minneapolis, and Maple Grove Covenant Church in Maple Grove, MN. Between the three churches, they have people from the USA, Mexico and 14 other Latin American countries.

“I really felt a connection to God through worship this weekend!” said one student, who was deeply impacted by the genuine and passionate worship experience brought by the team this year.

Edrin Williams, Pastor of Equipping and Formation at Sanctuary Covenant Church in Minneapolis, delivered a message on Friday evening and Saturday afternoon. He spent the weekend challeng-

ing students to “Light it Up” for the Lord. Using Matthew 5:14-16, as a scripture reference, Williams encouraged students to not be held back by the things in their lives that trip them up, but rather to change the world with their light.

After the message on Friday, churches were given time to talk and pray as a group and prepare themselves for the following day of service and learning experiences. Before the night ended, all of the churches joined in Minnehaha’s hockey arena (sans ice) playing games like Nine Square and Gaga Ball, taking pictures in the photo booth, and enjoying late night Taco Bell tacos and burritos.

On Saturday morning, youth groups spread out across the Twin Cities to serve at 11 different organizations. They played with children at a domestic abuse shelter, sorted donations at a thrift store, ➡

➡ painted rooms at a respite care facility, and helped with spring cleaning at several churches. Each of these ministry sites is deeply grateful for the servant-hearted work that is put in by these students and leaders. The impact is long-lasting.

After a morning of service, students headed out to locations throughout the Twin Cities for an “Urban Plunge” challenge. Each person received one dollar for lunch, the objective being to allow students to experience a little of what it might be like to struggle with poverty. Students were faced with the reality of limited opportunities and resources as they sought to provide lunch for their group with the money they were given.

“It was so great for our students to walk the neighborhood and be engaged in the culture,” said Amy Dufrene, Youth Pastor at Oak Heights Covenant Church in Hutchinson, MN. “I will be doing this at other times throughout our year as well!”

Students also used this time to explore the neighborhood, tasked with being aware of who might be considered “invisible,” and what resources may be lacking or harder to access as a person who lives in poverty.

At the completion of the challenge, groups headed back to Minnehaha Academy for a time of worship and another powerful message from Williams.

“This event was awesome,” said Josh Hodgson of Community Covenant Church in Upsala, MN. “Our students definitely left thinking hard and being changed by their experiences!”



Adventures In Leadership: Committed to training young leaders

By Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality

For the past 30 years, the Northwest Conference has been training emerging high school leaders through Adventures In Leadership (AIL).

AIL is framed from the same posture modeled by the Apostle Paul with young leader Timothy, when Paul told Timothy, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in faith and in purity ... Do not neglect your gift ... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress” (1 Timothy 4:12-15).

AIL is an 8-day immersion experience in Christian leadership facilitated through a partnership with Adventurous Christians in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA). The purpose of the experience is to provide student leaders with a biblical foundation, a leadership framework and designed leadership experiences that challenge and stretch them into new levels of awareness and discovery in Chris-

tian leadership.

We leverage the unique context of the BWCA to enhance this learning dynamic. The outcome of AIL is having each student discover a base framework for Christian leadership, unique to their own abilities and giftedness, from which they build upon into their futures. One way we promote this developmental process beyond AIL is we request the home church for each student to assume a mentoring role with their student over the next year; walking alongside of them as they pursue additional leadership opportunities in their church, their school and/or their community.

Past students have referenced AIL as transformational to their development as Christ followers and as leaders. We celebrate this legacy of leadership training and look forward to this year’s adventure with a new class of students on June 17-24.

NWC Family Go:Serve event scheduled for June 28, 2017

By Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry

Reality #1: Kids are eager to serve and learn about the world around them. Reality #2: Kids are more likely to develop a faith that lasts when caring adults invest in them.

We want to help your church in its ministry with young people by inviting you to Go:Serve, a one-day service-minded ministry event for kids and the adults who care about them. Serve and learn together, while growing together in faith.

NWC Family Go:Serve will be held at Redeemer Covenant Church in Brooklyn Park, MN, on Wednesday, June 28, 2017, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Go:Serve is in its fourth year of providing shared ministry and learning experiences for families with elementary-aged children.

What will we do? Kids and families will worship, serve, eat and learn. Service-oriented ministry projects will be both inside and outside at Redeemer Covenant,



with a quick field trip after lunch to a supermarket down the street for a cultural learning experience.

Schedule

- 9:30 a.m.** Check-in begins
- 10:00 a.m.** Morning worship
- 10:30 a.m.** Ministry projects at Redeemer
- Noon** Lunch at Redeemer
- 12:30 p.m.** Supermarket experience
- 1:30 p.m.** Closing session
- 2:00 p.m.** Go home!



We believe even young children can have an impact in their communities, and participating in ministry projects together as a family gives parents the tools needed to lead their families in developing a mindset of service and compassion.

Information was sent to churches in March, and registration is open now on our website (northwestconference.org).

We hope to see your family or church group there!

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NWC Calendar

6.17-24 » Adventures in Leadership – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

6.22-24 » Gather 2017 – Detroit MI

6.28 » Go: Serve 2017 – Redeemer Covenant Church, Brooklyn Park, MN

8.3-5 » MUUUCE 2017 – Crossroads Church, Woodbury, MN

9.6-8 » CRIM Retreat – Covenant Pines Bible Camp, McGregor, MN

10.9-11 » Ministerial Association Retreat – Lake Beauty Bible Camp, Long Prairie, MN