

IMPRINTS



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The only option

The theme of this issue of Imprints is “equipping church leaders.” We believe this is the heart of our ministry to the congregations of The Northwest Conference. Our mission is to “encourage, develop and support healthy missional churches.”



In his powerful book “Missional Church,” Darrel Guder writes, “Mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s

purposes to restore and heal creation. Mission means ‘sending’ and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history.”

Missional churches are about getting the Good News of Christ to their communities. Mission is not just one option for our congregations—it is the only option! I believe the key to church revitalization is theological. Jesus told us that the business of the church was to “make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Churches experience new life when they take this command of our Lord seriously! We are committed to assist our churches in doing just that!

Jim Fretheim, NWC Superintendent

EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS

LEARNING & LEADING

In the book “The World Is Flat” (2005), Thomas Friedman told of a visit with former Secretary of State Colin Powell before his resignation. He recounted how Powell stated that the world had gone flat due to Google.

This fact changed everything. As a result, Powell noted that he no longer needed his staff to find basic information for him. This was something he could now obtain on his own by simply doing a search on the Internet.

Further, Powell described his newly acquired ability to communicate directly and rapidly with foreign leaders anywhere in the world, at any time. He no longer needed staff members to make communication connections, because this was something he could do on his own. Due to dramatic changes in technology, what Powell now said he needed most from his staff was not information, but action!

This story illustrates the changing face of leadership due to the rapidly changing world in which we live. As a leader, Secretary Powell had to adjust his own work activity, communication style, and expectations of others to keep pace with these profound changes. Because he was a learner, he was able to keep up with the



demands of his position. Because he was adaptable, he did not resist the very changes that were necessary in order to remain an effective leader.

The change dynamics affected more than just Powell, however. This story also highlights the changing nature of the roles of others within his organization. Those working with Powell needed to adapt as well. It appears that Powell now expected far more from his associates than would have been acceptable in an earlier time. He wanted to know what they thought. He desired that they engage in the process of change, and act.

Thus, in the midst of his leadership duties, Colin Powell was a learning leader. Further, he sought to create a learning organization, where others on his team could identify and solve problems along with him. In this way, the organization could continue to develop and adjust to meet new challenges and opportunities.

This is the nature of leadership today, because the pressure on most organizations—churches included—requires both learning and adaptability. In other words, it requires change. Therefore, leaders, both

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Lewis Lake Covenant Church at Veritas

On Feb. 23, 2008, a parade of four vans and cars left the parking lot of the Lewis Lake Covenant Church. The caravan was headed for Salem Covenant Church in New Brighton, MN, and the Veritas seminar led by Dr. John Wenrich, director of congregational vitality for the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Our group of Covenanters was excited and full of anticipation. After all, there are great things happening at Lewis Lake, but we still sense that the Lord has much more for us to do. We want to know how to become an even greater healthy, missional church—pursuing Christ and his priorities in the world. We were not disappointed by our participation in the Veritas event.

Hearing John’s presentation ignited conversations within our group about the current ministries at our church and the challenges for the future. We continued



Church groups held “balcony discussions” during the Veritas Seminar at Salem Covenant Church, New Brighton, MN, on Feb. 23, 2008.

the conversation at the coffee shop on the way home, at council the next month, at our Elder and Diaconate meetings, and in the parking lot.

We are now talking about new ways to reach the unchurched, help visitors to find their place in our congregation, and

become a greater blessing to our community. We believe that our Veritas experience will prove to be a wonderful catalyst for new and exciting ministry at Lewis Lake in the days ahead. Thanks to the Northwest Conference for providing this event!

Pastor Bob De Young

Farewell to Toni Schwabe

Toni Schwabe has been serving faithfully for 12 years as an active member of the Board of Women Ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church. During those 12 years, she served the last 9 years as Director of Women Ministries of the Northwest Conference, and before that, 3 years as President of Women Ministries.

If you have been involved in Women Ministries you would not only know her name but probably also recognize her by her face! Toni has preached in many of your churches, she has been involved in training your women for leadership in your churches to bring about vision for how your women can further God’s kingdom through Women Ministries.

She has driven many miles to meet and greet you in the Red River Valley, and all across the Northwest Conference. Toni radiates the love of the Lord and has lead denominational cross-cultural opportuni-



ties and been a guest speaker at many retreats and District meetings.

Toni has never-ending energy for the Triennials that

come our way every three years and deep compassion for Our Place, North Place and Friendship Place, AVA (Advocacy for Victims of Abuse), and our new 2008 Women Ministries Denominational Project of Human Trafficking.

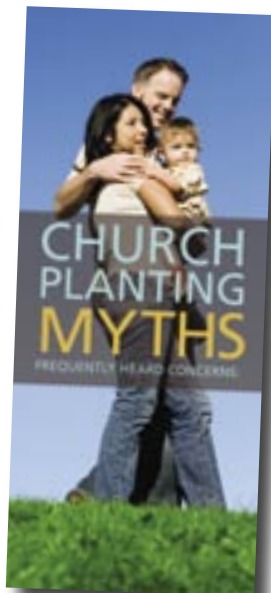
Toni, how can we ever begin to express our deep gratitude for all the hours you have blessed the Northwest Conference with! You have a great heart for God, and

now He is leading you into waters where you have never been.

We wish you God’s best. Our prayers and our love will follow you as you journey forward to where God specifically will call you! That incredible smile of yours, and your passion and energy that you have given to God, will not soon be forgotten!

From all whose fingertips touch Women Ministries throughout the Northwest Conference, we share our prayers and our love for you at this time! We thank God for you Toni Schwabe—that you have blessed our lives in amazing ways. You have made a difference and given us vision for connecting women and “advancing God’s kingdom through Women Ministries that equip women to grow, serve and reach out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Praise be to God!

*Wendy Anderson
NWC Women Ministries President*



New NWC Church Planting Materials

Church Planting is one of our primary strategies to reach our neighborhoods and our world for Jesus Christ. At the Northwest Conference, we take God's call to reach new communities, neighborhoods and people groups very seriously. From the earliest days, the Covenant Church has been committed to starting new churches. At one time your church was one of those new church plants.

As a part of our comprehensive plan to equip our churches and leaders for the mission God has given us, we are working to provide the best tools possible.

Church planting remains a mystery for



far too many in our churches and communities, so we have been developing resources that will help clarify how we plant churches, why we plant churches,

and how the Conference can assist your church in being a part of planting a new church. Our goal as a conference staff is to help every church discover how they can be involved in our at-home mission work through being a part of planting a new church or churches.

The materials listed in this article are designed to provide enough information to assist our churches by answering key ques-

tions. These new brochures will explain how individual churches can parent a new congregation, or how groups of churches can partner to plant a new church. We also have a brochure that addresses the key myths surrounding church planting.

The NWC is also introducing a new program called Church Planting Partners—or CPP—that will allow individual households to get involved in Northwest Conference Church Planting by committing monthly prayer and financial support to Conference church planting efforts.

For more information contact Michael Brown, director of Church Planting for the Northwest Conference.

Natural Church Development

NCD is NOT a program! Rather, it is a process of unleashing the growth potential God has already planted in each individual and every congregation ... naturally.

Using a simple, user-friendly assessment tool, NCD compares strengths and barriers to responses from congregations around the world. Then it provides practical tools to enrich the "soil" to enable deeper, wider and higher growth as followers of Jesus Christ.

My church has now used this particular assessment tool three times over the past five years. We have appreciated its clarity and "non-programmed" advice for growing God's way, in the context in which we are planted in Rochester, MN. It is NOT an "add water and stir" sure-fire formula to guarantee growth.

However, NCD is a biblical, Christ-centered valuable instrument to assist congregations who want to get a handle

on where the Holy Spirit might be leading them for revitalization and renewal.

We are also grateful for the coaching we have received from Northwest Conference staff.

For more information on Natural Church Development, I would encourage you to contact our NWC certified coach, Associate Superintendent Mark Stromberg.

Rev. Dr. Gary W. Downing, Lead Pastor, Rochester, MN Covenant Church

Book Review

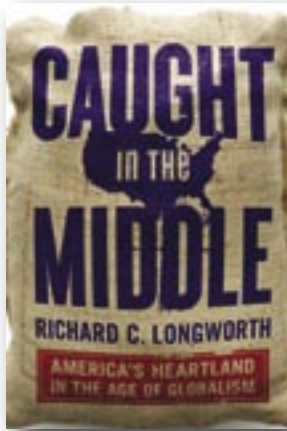
By Jim Fretheim
NWC Superintendent

“Caught in the Middle: America’s Heartland in the Age of Globalism” — by Richard C. Longworth

Annie Dillard once wrote, “If I wanted to feel good all the time I would move to California.” The Northwest Conference is in a unique setting—the Midwest. Richard Longworth gives a penetrating analysis of the history of the heartland and the issues that globalization brings to it. He spent three months, and put 11,000 miles on his car, driving through the Midwest.

Reflecting on his journey, Longworth observes, “In these quiet neighborhoods, beyond the mills and the parking lots, the old towns look as if nothing has changed, although everything has.”

He argues that globalization is the most powerful force our area has ever encountered.



While you may not agree with all of Longworth’s conclusions, he gives a frank evaluation of the changes that have been occurring during the last 30 to 40 years. We see the loss of jobs, the exodus of our young people, and the growth of mega-farms. He argues that the future is global.

“The global future promises riches for much of the

Midwest—it’s global cities, global farmers, global universities, global corporations, global citizens. But it also promises to leave much of the rural and small-town Midwest behind. In the conversation carried by e-mail and satellite phone from Chicago to Hong Kong to Sao Paul, the old-style farming economy will play no part.”

“Caught in the Middle” can be a significant resource for our church leaders as we pursue Christ’s mission in the world. The issues will not go away!

CALENDAR

May 3 Children’s Ministry Workshop – CrossRoads Church, Cottage Grove, MN

May 5-7 Youth Pastors’ Retreat – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

May 6-7 SPE (Sustaining Pastoral Excellence) Seminar – Maple Grove Covenant Church, Maple Grove, MN

June 14-21 Adventures in Leadership – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

June 21-24 The Feast – Green Lake, WI

June 24-26 Covenant Annual Meeting, Green Lake, WI

August 14-16 MUJUUCE – Faith Covenant Church, Burnsville, MN

October 6-8 Ministerial Association Retreat with Ray Johnston (pastor of Bay-side Covenant Church, Granite Bay, CA) – Cragun’s, Brainerd, MN

October 18 Constructs Seminar with John Wenrich – Maple Grove Covenant Church, Maple Grove, MN

Learning and Leading

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pastoral and lay, must be learners and must encourage others within their congregations to become learners as well. It is only through this commitment to learning that leaders and followers alike will be able

to adapt in a constructive manner to the complex changes taking place.

What are you doing to remain a learner? How is your church providing opportunities for growth? How are your people navigating the rapid changes tak-

ing place all around them, both outside and inside the church walls? In short, what is it that God would have you learn in the days ahead?

Mark R. Stromberg, NWC Associate Superintendent

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The Northwest Conference is a regional conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church. We are approximately 130 churches in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota.

