

IMPRINTS



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Signs of life

I thank God for the powerful ways he is using our congregations to reach their communities.

Our congregation in Bemidji has a significant outreach that is directed to young families. They have classes for new parents, seminars on new baby-care and other classes as they attempt to offer a holistic ministry to families under the direction of Doug Giese, Pastor of Family Life Ministries.



Several of our congregations are going through times of suffering as they have buried dear ones who have lost their battles with cancer and gone to their heavenly home. These churches provide hope and compassion for those who grieve.

Our Parish Nurses play a key role in helping those who grieve. The power of our risen Christ is evident.

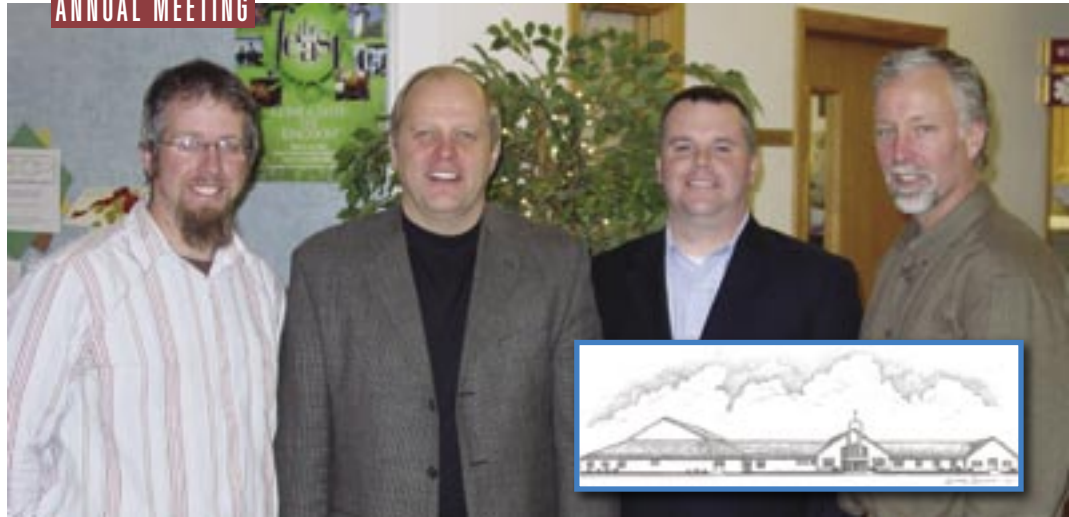
Our camps are all doing well with many people coming to Christ as well as believers being strengthened and encouraged. I am grateful for all of our camps and the tremendous job they do of nurturing tomorrow's leaders.

We celebrate the building projects:

- Lancaster, MN – Our Lancaster congregation is completing a new educational

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ANNUAL MEETING



The 2008 Northwest Conference Annual Meeting will be held at Mission Covenant Church in Poplar, WI. Pastoral staff of the church includes (left to right): Steve Cornelius (youth), Darrell Nelson (senior pastor), James Walsh (associate pastor) and Carey Vik (worship).

Dear NWC churches,

On behalf of Mission Covenant Church in Poplar, Wisc., I want to invite all the churches in The Northwest Conference to attend this year's Annual Meeting in Poplar, April 18-20, 2008.

Poplar is a rural community nestled in the northwestern corner of the state of Wisconsin, just miles from the shores of the largest freshwater lake in the entire world—beautiful Lake Superior. Although we are only a small village surrounded by similar villages and townships, we are within a 30-minute drive of the Twin Ports, Duluth/Superior.

Mission Covenant Church was founded on May 8, 1894, with 22 charter members. In over 113 years of existence, we have experienced a lot of change. We have transitioned from a strictly immigrant, Swedish-speaking church, Swedish Mission Congregation, to an English-speaking church, Mission Covenant Church, in the mid 1930s.

We have also built three different church buildings, two on our previous site in downtown Poplar where we were located for 102 years. The other is our present location, one mile southeast of the village, which we moved into in 1996. Since then we have undergone a couple of building projects adding on to our new facility.

We have also undergone numerous constitutional revisions and ministry changes to remain viable in our ever-changing world. Through all the changes we have experienced, the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ and the Word of God remained constant. God has been faithful to us throughout our history!

It is our hope that we will see all of you on April 18-20 in Poplar, as together we focus on our common ministry and God's goodness that is at work among us. So, please come and join us in 2008!

In Christ's Love,

Lead Pastor Darrell L. Nelson

Dr. John S. Wenrich, Director of Church Vitality

Dr John S. Wenrich is the Director of Congregational Vitality for the Evangelical Covenant Church. His role is to help established churches confront their current reality with hope, honesty and faith. He also speaks at numerous conferences and retreats.

John grew up in the Philadelphia area. He graduated from Villanova University with a B.A. in Communications, has a Masters of Divinity from Denver Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Seminary. He is an ordained minister of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Before moving to the Chicago area, John was in pastoral ministry for 21 years, serving at South Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Littleton, CO, as a staff pastor; Applewood Community Church in Golden, CO, as a church planter; and First Covenant Church in Portland, OR as a revitalization pastor.

He also worked in Saudi Arabia for two years as a news and sportscaster on radio and television, served as a media delegate to the 1984 Olympics for the Saudi Olympic Team and planted an underground church.

John and Julie have been married for 21 years and reside in Cary, IL. They have three sons: Jonathan (19), Joel (14) and Jordan (12) and a golden retriever named "Jake."

VERITAS: February 23, 2008

Northwest Conference churches are encouraged to attend the upcoming VERITAS presentation by Dr. John Wenrich, director of church vitality for the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Please note: The location and time for this event has changed. It will be held at Salem Covenant Church in New Brighton, MN. The day will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude no later than 3 p.m.

Dr. Wenrich is being used by God to call our churches to an honest assessment of current ministry life and health within our congregations. Over the past several years, he has led numerous seminars throughout the country—including several within the Northwest Conference. He continues to develop a structure and process for both

assessment and implementation in churches that are willing to "do what it takes" to reinvigorate their ministries.

Please note: Because this is such a critical topic for our churches to consider, our goal is to have 50 NWC churches participate in this event.

VERITAS is intended for both pastors and church leaders. A free lunch will be served.

Please make this event a priority for your church. As Dr. Wenrich continues to develop the process, we believe that it will be beneficial to attend, even if you have participated in one of the other presentations.

Please RSVP to Cheryl Theilen at the Northwest Conference office by Monday, Feb. 18, 2008.

Annual Meeting Preview – Veritas II: The Journey of Revitalization

Veritas got the conversation going. It encouraged us to confront our current reality with hope, honesty and faith. Now what?

With a common language set in place, how can we move forward in becoming a healthy missional church? By healthy we mean pursuing Christ. By missional we mean pursuing Christ's priorities in the world.

The good news is that God is already at work throughout the world and in our very own community. How does our church follow the Spirit wherever the Spirit leads? Knowing that the journey of revitalization is both adventurous and treacherous, how do we keep in step with the Spirit?

Dr. John Wenrich will be joining us for

our conference Annual Meeting to lead us through the next step of the journey and to tell us about the exciting developments in revitalization throughout the whole Covenant. He will help us discover valuable insights and

tools to create and sustain momentum, and will challenge us to join the growing movement of Covenant churches that are willing to ask the significant questions and take the significant steps to move forward into God's future.

A presentation to the ministerial association will be made on Friday morning. Two presentations will be given to the general delegation on Saturday morning. Churches are also encouraged to send additional leaders to the Saturday morning workshop with Dr. Wenrich.

January 2008 Friendship Place Update: 'They will know we are Christians by our love.'

Friendship Place is a ministry of Northwest Conference churches and groups, collaborating with Covenant Ministries of Benevolence. Friendship Place will be a duplex group home residence in Lino Lakes, Minn., for eight adults with developmental disabilities.

The need for a Christian group home, where vulnerable adults have the opportunity to live in a supportive and caring environment, is great. Moreover, we believe that God is pleased when His people provide for families and individuals with needs. In Matthew 25:40 Jesus tells us, "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Covenant Ministries of Benevolence in Chicago is currently providing support and management in the planning and construction of Friendship Place. After delays due to the planning and approval process,

we are on track to break ground in the spring of 2008. The exact timing will depend on the timing of further reviews and ap-

provals by the city of Lino Lakes.

Local fund raising efforts, combined with grants from Covenant Ministries of Benevolence and the Northwest Conference, have enabled us to raise \$330,000 thus far. These funds are sufficient to apply for a mortgage and begin construction.

However, in the past two years, there have been several cuts in state funding for the support of adults with developmental disabilities. Moreover, we anticipate further cuts in state funding, so it is imperative to continue fund raising efforts.

The goal of the Friendship Place Committee is to raise an additional \$100,000

to reduce the size of the mortgage. This will allow for much-needed funding for programming once the home is built. Please continue to pray and to give, as God lays this ministry on your heart.

Contributions can be sent to Friendship Place, 125 Ash St., Lino Lakes, MN 55126. The Friendship Place committee is also looking for the donation of a new or "lightly used" van, needed for transporting residents, beginning in the summer of 2008. Please contact Sharon Penner, chair of the Friendship Place Committee, if you know of someone who might be open to this possibility!

We are planning a groundbreaking celebration for Friendship Place this coming spring. Watch for news of this event, and come celebrate with us all what God has done, and will do, through the Friendship Place Covenant Enabling Residence ministry!

NWC Ministry Planning Update

The Ministry Planning Task Force for the Northwest Conference has met three times since our last update in the Fall 2007 Imprints newsletter. These interactive meetings were used to assess the ministry environment and

the findings and have arrived at some con-

We have come to realize that advancing without healthy missional churches. We are indebted to John Wenrich, director of

revise our stated mission and vision. We believe that our mission is to



Therefore, we believe we can best serve our churches by providing services and resources designed to help the leadership of these churches transform their communities. Our next ministry planning meeting will identify the values that will guide us, the measurable objectives we hope to accomplish in the next 3 years, and the strategies we hope to employ to help you be and do what God has called you to be and do. We exist to serve our churches—God’s chosen vehicle for His redemptive purposes.

Youth Pastors’ Retreat – Adven-
SPE (Sustaining Pastoral Excel-

significant ministry to its community

- Mankato, MN – New property has been purchased for a new campus and the construction is under way
- Moose Lake, MN- This congregation is about to begin construction of a multi-

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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.



both the youth and seniors.

of established congregations and the creation of new churches.