



TO PARTNER & BECOME FRIENDS

TWO COMMUNITY COVENANT YOUTH GROUPS JOIN IN UNIQUE WEEK OF MISSION

Although located in drastically different settings, two Northwest Conference youth groups joined together in common mission June 20-24. The two groups come from churches sharing the name Community Covenant Church—but one is from north Minneapolis, the other from the small town of Upsala, MN.

“We spent half of the week in Minneapolis, and half of the week in the Upsala area so that we could learn from each other about what it means to be Jesus’ servants in an urban and a rural setting,” explained Nathan Hillman, director of youth and family at the Upsala church.

The two groups worked with ministries involved with homeless youth, camping, clothing for those in need, creation care, hunger issues and more.

“As we spent time downtown and on the farm, in the community center and in the convent, packing meals and chopping wood, we

were reminded of God who is God of all. Each place we worked was doing such different work, but all in the name of Jesus,” said Mark Hakanson, youth director at the Minneapolis church. “The diversity of their concerns for people opened our eyes to the many ways that God calls us to join him in mission wherever we find ourselves.”

While Hillman and Hakanson were “dreaming and talking” about the trip beforehand, both youth workers wanted their students to experience things outside of their everyday worlds, and to learn what it means to truly partner and become friends with people from a different setting.

“We wanted them to see that, whatever needs the other neighborhood has, our neighborhood has needs too,” Hillman explained. “We’re hoping that this won’t just be a one week thing, but an ongoing relationship between two churches in very different settings with one Lord and one mission.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Pine Valley Covenant Church closes

The Northwest Conference wishes to announce that Pine Valley Covenant Church (formerly Bethany) of Cloquet, MN, voted to close its doors and conclude its ministry after 87 years of service in the Name of Jesus Christ. The final service of celebration and remembrance was held Sunday, Aug. 28

NWC Superintendent Mark Stromberg preached at and presided over a time of commemoration and thanksgiving to God for His blessings through the years. Please be in prayer for the remaining members as they grieve the loss of their church, but also as they seek to find new places of service within other congregations.

NWC and North Park to host VIVE event

VIVE is a college prep event for under-represented Covenant students and their friends. It's designed to increase the following among students in grades 7-12: college readiness-levels, access to opportunities, student persistence, admission/retention success-rates.

This new initiative was formed out of North Park University with the desire to help bridge educational gaps that exist between students, as well as to inspire and support under-represented Covenant students and their friends on the road to college.

The Minneapolis VIVE Kick-Off Event will take place at the Minnehaha Academy North Campus on Saturday, Oct. 29, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Steve Fitzhugh, (former NFL player and attendee of Sanctuary Covenant Church) will be the main speaker. For more info, visit www.northpark.edu/Admissions/VIVE.

NWC news in your inbox

Get our monthly UPDATE e-mail newsletter to learn more about NWC news and events. E-mail bryan@nwc-cov.org to sign up.

CONFERENCE CHURCHES ENGAGE CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY PATHWAY

As a conference working in collaboration with the Evangelical Covenant Church, one of our core priorities is promoting congregational vitality among all of our churches. We identify congregational vitality as a journey of life, energy, passion, discovery and hope. It is a result of the living God breathing new life into the heart of a congregation. We read in Ezekiel 37:6 that this is God's desire: "I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord." We want to celebrate the number of NWC churches over the last few months that have taken steps forward on the Congregational Vitality Pathway. This pathway provides steps, strategic tools and insights to foster greater missional health within the local church.

There are various steps identified on the Vitality Pathway—including the Veritas workshop. Over the past few months, we have had four congregations participate in Veritas. An additional step on the pathway is the EPIC workshop (Empowering People, Inspiring Change). Two of our churches recently completed EPIC, and we have a number of churches scheduled for both EPIC & Veritas this fall. A third strategic step on the pathway is the PULSE survey. PULSE is a vitality assessment tool based on the 10 healthy missional markers for congregations and:

- Provides awareness of the current reality of a local church
- Updates progress annually

- Links the church more closely with the mission and message of Jesus
- Suggests next steps and,
- Encourages spiritual discernment for the church.

Over the last few months, four of our churches have participated in the PULSE assessment as well.

In addition, we continue to develop the Congregational Vitality Pathway in order to better serve our churches. One recent outcome of this commitment is in September we piloted a one-day strategic ministry planning work-

shop called ONE, with three of our churches. Our desire is that ONE will become another core step and resource for guiding churches toward greater vitality and effectiveness. We will keep you informed as this opportunity further develops.

It is our prayer that every Covenant church become a healthy, missional church. By "healthy" we mean pursuing Christ. By "missional" we mean pursuing Christ's priorities in the world. Another strategic element for vitality is to engage our people directly in mission—extending them beyond the program needs and operations inside the church. In this issue, we are highlighting an example of this missional pursuit in the story below, through the efforts of Bloomington Covenant Church as they address the unjust industry of sex trafficking. We hope their story will encourage many other missional endeavors by our churches.



BLOOMINGTON COVENANT TO HOST ANTI-TRAFFICKING EVENT

Cyd Johnson was a pediatric urology nurse at Children's Hospital who was concerned over the high number of children from other countries who were being treated for various issues. Many of them were Somalians. Then she heard the news reports of a nationwide sting targeting a Somalian child-trafficking ring. "That was like a gut bust to me," she says.

In January she quit her job to engage in anti-trafficking work full-time. She started an anti-trafficking task force at Bloomington Covenant Church, where her husband, Tim, is the pastor. She is working to connect Northwest Conference churches around the issue and has started to make presentations at various groups and churches.

On Oct. 28-30, her church will sponsor Daybreak, a three-day anti-trafficking forum. Anyone is welcome to attend, but it is especially targeted to clergy, medical personnel, and social service workers. CEU credits will be available. For more information or to pre-register, call the church at 952-831-8339. Registration is a suggested donation of \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. *To read the full story online, visit www.nwc-cov.org/news.*



AIL, MUUUCE AND THE NEXT SEASON

By Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry

Summer is prime season for youth ministry. In the Northwest Conference, youth leaders led camps, mission trips, VBS', bike trips, Bible studies and more. In and among these busy schedules, they had faith conversations and times of prayer and experienced God at work among adolescents and their families. As part of the conference's work to partner with local churches, there were two major events that book-ended the summer: Adventures in Leadership in June and MUUUCE in August.

In June, 21 high school students came together at Adventurous Christians to spend a week together learning about what it means to be a Christian leader. During AIL, they were challenged in conversations, teaching times and time out on the trail, to discover what gifts and talents God has given them for leadership and how they need to steward those gifts in ministry and in their communities. Visit our C,Y&F photos/videos page to see reflections from AIL.

In August, over 800 middle and junior high school students and leaders celebrated the end of summer at Faith Covenant Church in Burnsville, MN. MUUUCE 2011 marked 25 years of gathering junior high students for a weekend of high-energy activity, worship and learning.

Featuring a pirate theme, the Most Unbelievable Ultimate Urban Camping Experience was a "grand, splendid, extraordinary time full of fun and deep spiritual growth," according to Adel Irwin, student leadership coordinator at Faith Covenant. It was a great opportunity for students to come together before school started and consider what kind of priority Christ will have in their lives this coming year.

While I was able to pop in and get a taste of the MUUUCE experience, my work with the conference officially started Sept. 1. Already, I



In June, 21 high school students participated in Adventures in Leadership 2011 at Adventurous Christians in Grand Marais, MN.



MUUUCE 2011 brought together over 800 middle and junior high school students from NWC churches.

have had a chance to meet many of the youth pastors and youth workers at our monthly gathering. It was amazing to hear how many of them have been in youth ministry for years and how committed they are to loving kids and loving God.

As they shared stories of how God has been at work in the midst of the various youth ministries this summer, it was clear that this was an unusual group of people—people

who don't mind sleeping on church floors, who look forward to biking for miles or being part of a water balloon fight, who should own stock in McDonald's and Dairy Queen for all the times they "have to" eat there, all so that they can help an adolescent understand that there is a God who loves them and has a dream for their lives. It's an exciting privilege to come alongside them and see where God is going to take us this next season.

TO PARTNER AND BECOME FRIENDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"The highlight of the experience was watching God make two groups into one. Through our common purpose of pursuing Christ and his kingdom, we became something more than two youth groups by the end of the week," Hakanson reflected. "This unity came not in spite of our differences but because of them. We came to appreciate the richness of our diverse communities and experiences."

"I think the coolest thing was how well

our groups got along. We didn't want to mingle at the beginning, but it caught on so quickly. We all formed great friendships, and at the end of the week we didn't want to leave," said Maddy Norgard from Community Covenant, Minneapolis.

"The entire trip was a blast. From digging trenches to splitting wood to tubing, everything we did we made fun," said Dawn Evoniuk from Community Covenant, Upsala. "Helping others, meeting fun new friends

and serving God all at the same time was an awesome experience!"

As the weeklong experience ended around a campfire on a lake in Upsala, the two groups found it painful to leave one another.

"God had brought us together through work, worship, shared meals and shared memories," Hakanson said. "We look forward to a continued partnership and are grateful to God who calls us to unity with him and with one another."

CHET OFFERS TRAINING FOR LATINO PASTORS

After several years of praying and planning, CHET Minneapolis has begun holding classes. CHET (Centro Hispano de Estudios Teologicos) Minneapolis will offer training in Spanish for Latino pastors and church leaders in the Twin Cities area. The desire for this training center was born out of a need recognized by Mike Brown, the Director of Church Planting for the Northwest Conference, and a desire expressed by our Hispanic churches and pastors.

"As we identify potential pastors, and are seeing increasing opportunities for ministry in the Latino community, we also recognized the huge need for training and equipping that

is sensitive to cultural and language issues," Brown said. "We are really excited because of the great need and desire for this type of training."

Thirty-five interested individuals attended a recent informational meeting about the program. CHET has begun meeting at Minnehaha Academy on Monday nights from 7-9 p.m. Minnehaha was originally founded to educate children of Swedish immigrants and is now opening its doors to educate another generation of immigrants.

CHET Minneapolis is currently being staffed by a team of individuals fluent in Spanish,

who hold Master's degrees, and who have graciously agreed to be a part of this new opportunity.

The program's initial offering is an intro to ministry class taught by Pastor Javier Carrillo, whose wife Connie has agreed to be the director of CHET Minneapolis. The Carrillos are both graduates of CHET in the L.A. area and also graduates of North Park Seminary.

The intention is to continue to expand to offer the full CHET curriculum at the Minneapolis site. Pray for the Northwest Conference as we continue to work through the logistics in rolling out this very important program.

LA BENDICIÓN AND REDEEMER CELEBRATE HISPANIC HERITAGE

By Linda Gustafson, Redeemer Covenant

On Sept. 17-18, La Bendición and Redeemer Covenant Churches partnered together to recognize and celebrate Hispanic Heritage weekend. Juan Lopez, pastor of the NWC church plant La Bendición, and pastors from other Hispanic congregations planned the free festival that took place Saturday afternoon at Redeemer.

From around the Twin Cities and over 15 nations, people came together to enjoy music and dancers, activities for the children, displays, handcrafts, and authentic foods from South America, Central America and the Caribbean. Testimonies were shared by a local pastor and by newly commissioned Covenant missionaries Julio and Katie Isaza.



"This event put the joint ministries of La Bendición and Redeemer Covenants Churches into the center of the broader community Christ has called us to serve," said Redeemer's Pastor Steven Larson. "Brooklyn Park is one of the most diverse communities in the state of Minnesota."

La Bendición and Redeemer came together again on Sunday morning for a joint wor-

ship service. A worship team comprising of members from both congregations led songs in both Spanish and English. Guest speakers, Julio and Katie Isaza, gave their testimonies and spoke about their plans for the future. The women of La Bendición provided desserts following the service, giving all a chance to fellowship together. To view pictures, see Redeemer Covenant's Facebook page.

NWC STAFF

Mark Stromberg // mark@nwc-cov.org
Superintendent

Jon Kramka // jon@nwc-cov.org
Director of Congregational Vitality

Mike Brown // mike@nwc-cov.org
Director of Church Planting

Ginny Olson // ginny@nwc-cov.org
Director of Youth Ministry

Cheryl Theilen // cheryl@nwc-cov.org
Office Administrator

Bryan Malley // bryan@nwc-cov.org
Director of Communications

The Northwest Conference
3106 47th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406

Web: www.nwc-cov.org

E-mail: info@nwc-cov.org

Phone: 612-721-4893 // 1-800-756-6692

Fax: 612-721-4895



northwest conference
developing leaders. thriving churches.

The Northwest Conference is a regional conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church. We are approximately 140 churches in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota.

NORTHWEST CONFERENCE CALENDAR

OCTOBER 4-5 // Parish Nurse Retreat – Covenant Pines Bible Camp, McGregor, MN

OCTOBER 8 // S.A.L.T. – Bloomington Covenant Church, Bloomington, MN

OCTOBER 10-12 // Ministerial Assoc. Retreat – Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria, MN

OCTOBER 28-30 // Daybreak – Bloomington Covenant Church, Bloomington, MN

OCTOBER 29 // VIVE Kick-Off Event – Minnehaha Academy, Minneapolis, MN

NOVEMBER 12 // Imagine – A day for those serving Children & Families – Wilmar, MN

JANUARY 7, 2012 // Recharge – St. Andrew's Church, Mahtomedi, MN

JANUARY 30 – FEBRUARY 3, 2012 // Midwinter – Chicago, IL

MARCH 30-31, 2012 // M.O.V.E. – First Covenant, Minneapolis, MN

APRIL 19-21, 2012 // NWC Annual Meeting – Alexandria, MN

JUNE 21-23, 2012 // ECC Annual Meeting – Irvine, CA

JULY 15-20, 2012 // CHIC – Knoxville, TN