



## WHAT A SUMMER FOR NWC YOUTH MINISTRY!

From the Boundary Waters to Knoxville, from Woodbury to Lake Beauty, this summer was packed with Youth Ministry events designed to challenge NWC students to live and lead out of their faith.

### AIL

Adventures in Leadership took place in June at Adventurous Christians. This group of high school students who were nominated by their churches spent an intense week learning about leadership. Remember the "Duluth deluge" that impacted Moose Lake and Covenant Pines? The AIL crew was out on the trail during that time and learned what it meant to be a servant leader when circumstances are tough. In July, leaders and students from 2 other conferences participated in an AIL pilot to see how they can adapt the principles and format to their youth. The AIL leadership team included JJ Johnson (Grand Forks), Chelsie Kimball (Dassel), Ben Pease (New Brighton), Jamie Staples (Red Wing), and Annie Waterman (Plymouth).



### CHIC

July saw over 1,300 people from the Northwest Conference converge upon Knoxville, TN, for CHIC (that's 25 percent of the conference). High school students were challenged to face their weaknesses and sin, as well as injustice in the world, and grapple with the truth of the Gospel and how to live that out.

The word we kept hearing from youth pastors was "breakthrough;" stories of God breaking through students' harmful habits, family dysfunction, and sin as they surrender to Him. Ask any student who attended CHIC what "white flag" or "tov" stands for and you'll hear stories of life change.

### MUUUCE

There was barely time to unpack from CHIC before August came with MUUUCE. After 25 years of being hosted at Faith Covenant, this year, Crossroads Church in Woodbury picked up the baton. Jake Ker-



schner, Sandra Florin and their team of 160+ volunteers did an amazing job of making jr. highs feel welcome and loved!

Their creative team changed the church campus into Superhero headquarters. They thought of everything from MUUUCE tattoos, inflatable games, hair painting and hot donuts at the Welcome Fair, to homemade treats, hot coffee and a quiet room for tired adult leaders. Beyond crazy, messy CHAOS games and Valley Fair rides, students wrestled with what it means to follow Christ as a middle schooler.

Greg Speck mixed humor and stories into his messages about unleashing your inner hero and responding to God's desire for your life. Afterwards, he shared some of the feedback he received from students:

- "My life turned in a whole new direction. God has been changing me."
- "Before I went to MUUUCE I didn't really know how to talk to Him and now I do!!!"
- "Hearing you talk at MUUUCE really made me open my eyes! I let God into my life."

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## converge

### Converge 2012 to cover a wide range of topics

On Saturday, Oct. 27, the Northwest Conference will host a one-day workshop called Converge. The gathering will take place at Redeemer Covenant Church in Brooklyn Park, MN. It will begin at 10 a.m. and conclude at 3 p.m.

The purpose of the day will be to provide practical help to NWC churches by bringing in highly competent presenters to lead break-out sessions covering a wide-range of topics, including: Local Church Governance, Church Communications, Church Finances, Ministry Setbacks, Small Group Leadership, Funding Strategies, Working with Volunteers, Risk Management and MissionInsite Demographics Tool Training.

This workshop is open to all, but strongly recommended to church leaders. It is just one more way that the Northwest Conference is seeking to fulfill our mission to engage, empower, and equip healthy, missional leaders, knowing that this is pivotal in growing healthy, missional churches.

Lunch is included with each registration. The cost for the event will be \$177 per person with a maximum total cost per church of \$99. The registration deadline for Converge is Tuesday, Oct. 23.

Visit [nwc-cov.org](http://nwc-cov.org) or Contact Cheryl Theilen at the Northwest Conference office for more information about the event (612.721.4893, 1.800.756.6692 or [cheryl@nwc-cov.org](mailto:cheryl@nwc-cov.org)).

### 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](mailto:bryan@nwc-cov.org) to sign up.

## BLOOMINGTON COVENANT EMBRACES COMPASSION, MERCY AND JUSTICE

One of the developments in our commitment to Congregational Vitality in the Covenant has been the creation of the "10 Healthy Missional Markers" for congregations. One of the markers is: "Transforming communities through active compassion, mercy and justice ministries." For definition purposes we say compassion is "helping hurting people" and justice is "helping eliminate what's hurting people."

Bloomington Covenant Church is an example of one NWC congregation trying to respond to both of these realities.

BCC is involved in a new compassion effort through Closet of Hope, a free clothing store inside the church that is open the last Saturday of each month. Church member Dawn Anderson had the idea to start the ministry while sorting through clothes the church had collected from previous Coat Drives, Sock Drives, Blanket Drives, and other ministry efforts.

"God kept bugging me about setting up a free clothing store, but I kept telling him I was too busy. Well, we all know you can't say no to God, especially when he has something big in mind," Anderson said.

BCC's building is part of an old elementary school, and church volunteers went to work turning the old school library into Closet of Hope. The ministry received so many donations that after 3 months, the store expanded into a nearby classroom. In only 6 months of operation, Closet of Hope has served 624 guests. Volunteers have given 1,426 hours, done 112 loads of laundry, and baked 724 muffins to serve to guests.



"BCC members are stepping up to help our neighbors! People are amazed that this is going on in Bloomington," Anderson said.

"They had no idea there is such a need just blocks from our church."

Visitors to the store are let in 15 at a time and each guest can take 10 items. The store includes clothing, bedding, shoes, towels, purses and coats for all ages. Closet of Hope is open from

9 to 10:30 a.m., and according to Anderson, people line up as early as 7 a.m.

"Closet of Hope has caused us to look outside our walls to the needs right down the street. It has given us an awareness of what some families are going through," Anderson said. Closet of Hope accepts donations on Sunday mornings, Wednesday evenings and Tuesdays/Thursdays from 9 to 11 a.m. Contact Dawn Anderson at 952-882-9296 for more information.

Bloomington Covenant is also addressing local justice issues through Daybreak, an anti-trafficking task force working to connect NWC churches around the issue. Daybreak hosts periodic educational forums on human trafficking. The next event, "Cries in the Wilderness," will take place Nov. 3.

"Our target audience is men, but it will be geared to all people," explained Cyd Johnson, Daybreak founder. "Our goal is to increase the awareness of the increased demand for prostitution and the resultant market for the enslavement of women and young girls."

Look for more information on the forum and future Daybreak events soon.

## MINNEHAHA ACADEMY ALUMNI ARCHIVE HOUSE

Minnehaha Academy, the only Covenant PreK-12 school in the United States, has created an Alumni Archive House (a museum of sorts) at 3105 46th Ave. S., Minneapolis, behind the offices of the NWC. It is the home of 100 years of archives with a rich Covenant history and original items. The Archive house will be open to the public by appointment. Please email [advancement@MinnehahaAcademy.net](mailto:advancement@MinnehahaAcademy.net) if you'd like to visit Archive house.

**SAVE THE DATE: SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2013.** We invite you to the Minnehaha Academy Centennial Celebration and Worship—the same weekend as the 2013 NWC Annual Meeting—at Hognander Chapel, North Campus, 3100 W. River Pkwy., Minneapolis. Help us celebrate and give thanks for God's faithfulness to Minnehaha Academy and our Covenant roots for 100 years. Visit [MinnehahaAcademy.net/100](http://MinnehahaAcademy.net/100) for information.







## CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

### EMERGE

At the end of August, the NWC sought to prepare students and youth ministries for the school year with the very first Emerge high school leadership retreat.

The Covenant is developing this new experience to challenge high school students to step into leadership, and we were privileged to pilot it. The denominational development team included our own Ben Pease from Salem, New Brighton, and Kara Stromberg.



Almost 60 students and leaders from around the NWC experienced team-building challenges, reflected on how they're wired for leadership, and how God is calling them to lead in their communities.

A great example of this teamwork and leadership was exemplified in the worship team: Rocky Hovda from First Covenant in Willmar brought a team of high school students and leaders from various ministries in Willmar who led worship over the weekend.

Throughout the summer there was a strong recognition that these events were able to happen because of churches that believe in youth ministry and supported their students and leaders.

Whether it's donating at a car wash, buying baked goods, writing a recommendation, checking to make sure the church van is safe, or praying for God to work in adolescent hearts, ministry takes place because the whole body of Christ participates.

## MEET KARA STROMBERG

### DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

#### TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF:

I'm a native of Sioux Falls, SD, and a graduate of both Bethel College and Seminary. My ministry experience includes serving as Pastor to Youth and Families at Roseville Covenant Church and Director of Training at Youth Leadership. I currently work part time as an adjunct instructor at Bethel Seminary and am a member of the Covenant Church's speaker team. I was ordained in the ECC in 2010.

I'm married to Nate (Art Teacher at Minnehaha Academy upper school). We have two kids, Ben (1st grade) and Greta (Kindergarten). We live in St. Paul and our family worships at First Covenant Church in St. Paul, where I serve as volunteer Deacon of Spiritual Growth for children, youth and adults.

#### WHY CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

I'm excited to work with churches in this important ministry of passing on our faith to the next generation. I believe strong ministries for children and families are imperative if we are to have healthy, vibrant churches. I'm particularly excited to find new and innovative ways of resourcing under-resourced churches as they equip parents and volunteers. I welcome the opportunity to work with Ginny Olson in bridging the gap between children and youth ministries.

Since this is a newly developing position, I come with many ideas but no set agenda. The Northwest Conference is uniquely positioned to innovate and dream about what we can do to build strong children and family ministries since we are the only conference with dedicated staff positions in these areas. A

big piece of this is discerning the needs, and finding ways to tap into what's going well in our churches so we can resource others in our region.



Jon Kramka and the Children's Commission have done a tremendous job of establishing a strong foundation for children and family ministry in our conference. The Children's Commission meets monthly and has done some groundwork for setting three priorities for children and family ministry. The priorities are connection and peer support, resource identification and development, and ongoing professional development. I am grateful for this highly competent and dedicated team that has already established strong momentum in these areas. One practical next step is to create a regular e-news communication piece with the goal of staying connected to our churches, resourcing, networking and idea-sharing.

I look forward to meeting each and every one of you and hearing your hopes and dreams for what ministry to children and families can be in our conference. Please introduce yourself!

#### ONE MORE. ARE YOU RELATED TO SUPERINTENDENT MARK STROMBERG?

Nope.

## NWC TO HOST IMAGINE: A FREE ONE-DAY TRAINING EVENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY STAFF MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

The Children & Family Commission is excited to sponsor "Imagine: A day for those serving Children & Families." Imagine is designed to connect people who work with kids, deliver concepts to apply to your ministry, and provide a place to share ideas and ask questions.

The event is FREE and open to anyone who works with kids. Lunch will be provided, and the event will feature speaker Tiger McLuen, as well as time for discussion, freebies and opportunities to browse and purchase resources.

RSVP as a church group by Friday, Nov. 2, to 612-721-4893 or kara@nwc-cov.org.





# AWAKEN COVENANT COMMUNITY

Some people might have thought Micah Witham was joking when he said the congregation he pastors was going to start meeting in a comedy club, but he was serious.

Two-year-old Awaken Covenant Community initially met at a park picnic shelter, but switched to the Joke Joint a year ago. Witham found the club while driving around.

"When we saw the Joke Joint, I said to my wife, 'What would church in a comedy club look like?'" he recently told the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. "She said, 'How's that going to work? Are you just going to call the guy?' I said 'Yup! You get 80 percent of what you ask for!'"

Witham says the club has turned out to be a great space. "We talk about taking Jesus seriously and ourselves not too seriously," Witham said.

"To a large degree we're there because it is a comedy club," Witham said. "It says a lot about who we are and what we want to do ... If God created everything, what right do we have to say that this space is sacred and this space isn't?"

The reporter observed while attending the church that at least one person was knitting and others were checking their cell phones during the service.

In an email with Covenant News Service, Witham said, "So many of our folks utilize their phones for multiple things, including their Bibles. For example, YouVersion is a Bible app that we're using for a series called 'Eat This Book.'" The app has a 12-month reading plan the church members sign up for, "and then we're all reading the same texts



Awaken Covenant Community meets at comedy club the Joke Joint in Lilydale, MN.

together as a community."

Witham said it is possible that people are checking their e-mail, Facebook, or some other website, "but we started Awaken with the assumption/belief/conviction that the Spirit of God is at work leading people to and from Awaken. So we try to hold things, people and this church pretty loosely."

Holding on loosely has meant people keep staying. The church has quadrupled to about 120 attendees from its original 30. They are not all 20-somethings.

Linda Hilleque, 64, said, "It's a refreshing community, a broad community."

"I am so grateful for the relationship I/we have with the NWC and the resources available to us. The assessment process, the training, and now the ongoing coaching and ca-

maraderie with other church planters I receive from our gatherings has been invaluable," Witham said. "God is moving at Awaken and there is so much behind the scenes that has gone into us 'putting up our sails and catching the wind of what God is doing.' Certainly the NWC is a part of this story."

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**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, North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa.*

To learn more about Awaken, visit [awakencommunity.com](http://awakencommunity.com).

## NORTHWEST CONFERENCE CALENDAR

**OCTOBER 6** // VIVE – First Covenant, St. Paul, MN

**OCTOBER 9-10** // Parish Nurse Retreat – Covenant Pines Bible Camp

**OCTOBER 27** // Converge – Redeemer Covenant, Brooklyn Park, MN

**NOVEMBER 10** // IMAGINE – Crossroads Covenant Church, Forest Lake, MN

**JANUARY 12, 2013** // Recharge – St. Andrews Church, Mahtomedi, MN

**APRIL 12-13** // MOVE – First Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN

**APRIL 25-27** // NWC Annual Meeting – Minnehaha Academy, Minneapolis, MN

**APRIL 28** // Minnehaha Centennial Celebration – MA North Campus, Minneapolis, MN