

Arachnids, Aliens and Emerging Leaders ...

SUMMER YOUTH MINISTRY IN THE NWC

By Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry

What do wood ticks and extra-terrestrials have to do with leadership development? It depends on which of the three Northwest Conference youth ministry events you joined in this summer.

AIL

Fifteen high school students and six leaders from 12 different churches kicked off our summer of Conference youth ministry events in June by heading to the north woods of Minnesota to face down mosquitoes and woodticks while portaging canoes and experiencing a week of intense leadership development. These select students are nominated by their churches because of their leadership potential. They spend the first part of the week learning how to work as a team, how God has wired them for leadership, and about character qualities of godly leaders. They then put their education into practice as they lead out on the trail, getting constructive feedback from both their guides and fellow students.

AIL has been part of the DNA of the NWC for over two decades. Alumni have stepped into leadership in churches and ministries throughout our conference and beyond. They frequently cite how impactful this week was



"Before I turn away from the glories of MUUUCE and Emerge ... I just wanted to say a quick thank you for all the effort and energy that goes into those events and others just like it. They are the water to the seeds we plant all year long- and it is such a joy to see the growth. Without you, it simply would not be possible for us to provide such incredible events to our kids." - Sarah Holt, Program Director, Student Life Ministries, Bemidji Evangelical Covenant Church

in the development of their leadership calling. Now, other conferences are catching the AIL vision. Last year, the Canada and Central Conferences came to Adventurous Christians to experience AIL and this year, they each created their own event. This year, the East Coast Conference sent a pilot team to AIL with the plan to develop one in their area.

MUUUCE

The aliens showed up in August when 593 middle schoolers, 138 leaders, and 172 volunteers invaded Crossroads Church in Woodbury, MN, for an extra-terrestrial themed MUUUCE. Heather Flies, middle school pastor at Wooddale Church, challenged students on the "alien way" as she explored the theme based on 1 Peter 2:11, "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul." Besides



roller-skating and raiding Valleyfair, they wrestled with what it means to be designed by God and how to live a life based on Jesus' love for them. They also reached into pockets and backpacks and donated \$2,000 in dimes and dollars for Covenant Kids Congo.

EMERGE

The summer ended with the Conference's Emerge high school leadership retreat. Seventy-three students and leaders played and prayed and planned as they examined how they can be godly leaders both in their youth ministries and on their campuses this coming year.

These, and the other conference youth ministry events, flow out of our churches' commitment to leadership development, adolescent ministry, and the belief that we are stronger and better when we collaborate as the body of Christ.



READ MORE CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY NEWS ON PAGE 3



NWC calls Burton, Swanberg for Pastoral Care positions

The Northwest Conference is pleased to announce that Jeffrey Burton has been called to be director of pastoral care and development, and Judy Swanberg has been called to be associate director. Burton and Swanberg began their new positions Oct. 1 and were formally introduced at the Conference's Ministerial Association Fall Retreat at Sugar Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids, MN.

The new positions approved at this year's NWC Annual Meeting are intended to provide greater encouragement and support for those serving in vocational ministry. Currently, both positions will begin on a part-time basis with the intention of each role increasing in both scale and scope over the next few years.

"It is my prayer that those serving in ministry positions in our region will feel better supported and resourced through the calling of these two individuals to specifically come alongside of them," said Superintendent Mark R. Stromberg. "Our NWC executive board and local church delegates have made a big commitment by allocating funds in our budget for these new positions."

The Northwest Conference is the first in the denomination with positions dedicated to a pastor's spiritual formation and both personal and professional development.

"It would be extremely gratifying if the Northwest Conference could become known as a place where a new standard is set on what it means to both resource and support those in ministry," Stromberg said.



COMMUNITY COVENANT CHURCH BENEFIT CONCERT: A NIGHT OF UNITY AND PRAISE

Eight weeks after arson destroyed the sanctuary of Community Covenant Church in North Minneapolis and damaged much of the church office, hope is rising again.

"We were knocked down, but not knocked out. With Jesus on our side, we're going to make it. Even more, we are going to come back stronger: more hope, more justice, more changed lives in the name of Jesus," said Pastor Luke Swanson.

Community Covenant has many ministries that touch the lives of many in the neighborhood with hope and empowerment. Swanson sees the attack as not targeting the church alone, but on the whole community.

On Sept. 8, Community Covenant Church's Gospel Choirs held a fire relief benefit concert at Minnehaha Academy. Sanctuary Covenant Church's worship team and special guest Robert Robinson also shared in the service, infusing the night with uplifting song and testimony.

Covenant churches and other congregations from all over the Twin Cities, along with other city leaders, filled the auditorium in a powerful show of support. The night was a picture of the Kingdom—a diverse fellowship, united in worship, determined to live for God's glory, and overflowing with a contagious spirit of hope.

Among the many gifted singers, one highlight was Community Covenant's children's choir, with over 40 children singing out, "God made me and gave my victory." At the close of the night, one of Community's supporters shouted from the seats, "I think there was a fire in here tonight, because those choirs were hot!"

Swanson said, "All of the people in attendance were such an encouragement to me and to our church, a reminder that God is keeping his promise to build His church,

even if others persecute us and try to knock us down."

At one point during the service, all the pastors and city leaders came up on stage, surrounding Swanson as they lifted CCC up in prayer.

An offering was taken, and in combination with other funds related to the event, brought in over \$20,000 to help aid in the reconstruction of the church sanctuary and offices. Since the fire, other financial support has come in from churches and individuals around the country.

Swanson explained that because the sanctuary was built in the 1970s, and insurance only helps offset replacement costs of many of those outdated items, church leadership will take the repairs as opportunity to "move ahead in ministry."

Long-time issues that will be addressed as CCC rebuilds will include modernizing the lighting, sound system, and layout of the sanctuary to allow the church to "get back to being the hands and feet of Christ in our community," according to Swanson.

Community Covenant is very grateful to all those who have stood by them in their time of need. Swanson said of the many supporters, "Your presence and gifts have been an encouragement to us as we look to rebuild, come back stronger and continue to extend the love of Christ to North Minneapolis."

If you would still like to donate to Community Covenant Church, you can send gifts directly to 901 Humboldt Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55411. Or you can give online through Give Minnesota at: givemn.razoo.com/story/Cccfirerelieffund?referral_code=share

VIVE TWIN CITIES

By Edrin Williams, Director of Youth & Family Ministries, The Sanctuary Covenant Church

For the past two years, the Northwest Conference has partnered with our brothers and sisters at North Park University to bring VIVE Twin Cities to life. VIVE is the denomination's college readiness program for students in grades 7-12. The program "encourages students to envision themselves as college students and challenges them to fully invest themselves in their junior and senior high school studies." The goal of the program is to increase the number of college-ready students that graduate high school each year.

This is particularly important to a church like The Sanctuary that focuses so much of its attention on urban areas where education is often dismal at best. The truth of the matter is that without quality education and the support of initiatives like VIVE, countless urban youth will find themselves locked into cycles of poverty, marginalization and powerlessness. One mantra of our planning team is that "it's a justice issue," and that is the spirit of the event.

Each half-day event is filled with inspirational messages, practical workshops and energetic worship from the North Park Worship team. Included is a session for parents and youth leaders, as well as smaller breakouts with current college students. We really work to address this issue from a multitude of angles. VIVE 2013 will take place Oct. 26 at Crosstown Covenant Church in Minneapolis.

It's important to know that VIVE is not simply a program for urban churches. This event is for underrepresented students of any kind and seeks to do real and lasting good in the areas of college-readiness, access, and, ultimately, success. For more information about VIVE, visit northwestconference.org/children-youth-family/vive or contact Ginny Olson at ginny@northwestconference.org.

LESSONS LEARNED IN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

By Rose Lee-Norman, director of Royal Hood Children and Family Ministry at The Sanctuary Covenant Church

Intergenerational worship. The term carries so much meaning. Sometimes it is a beautiful depiction of all generations worshipping God, while it can be also be superficial and haphazard. While it is a value of our church to be intergenerational, at times it can merely be lip service. But because it is deeply rooted in my ministry calling and others on staff, we knew we could do better.

So during the fourth Sundays of the summer months, The Sanctuary Covenant Church decided to live out our value of all generations learning, growing and worshipping together by having intentional intergenerational worship services.

There are three lessons I took from this that I want to share with you as you also journey toward greater intergenerational ministry.

First, we all have different ideas of what intergenerational means. Our staff first had to ask the questions "why?" and "what?" Why are we doing this, what biblical context does it have and why is this necessary? Those conversations allowed us to understand why it is a value for our church body. We had to recognize that it does not mean simply having kids in church with everything miniature sized. Instead, it means engaging all generations, allowing families to worship together, and creating opportunities for learning across all generations.

Second, it takes a great deal of intentionality and careful planning. We had some successes, but we also had some flops. The times that did not work out were the times we had less thoughtful

planning. As a staff we recognized this is something new and therefore requires intentionality.

Third, all have to be willing to mix it up! We had to be willing to try different things, accept criticism, and think in new ways. It was vital that our senior pastor, Dennis Edwards, was able to lead intentionally and creatively. Because of his leadership and vision, we were able to add new elements. Here are some of the elements we tried:

- Changed the order of service to accommodate shorter attention spans
- Provided take home activities and conversation starters for families to allow greater discipleship at home
- Added movement during worship, including a dance performance, a mother-daughter dance and song, and a dance leader
- Segmented the 30-minute sermons into three parts
- Included call and response elements, prayer and songs for non-readers
- Invited all generations to lead in various aspects of the service together
- Allowed time for people from all generations to greet one another
- Allowed opportunities for intergenerational connection after worship

There is no question that intergenerational worship takes intentionality. That process of intentionality provided meaningful growth for both our staff and congregation.

Our summer of intergenerational worship was glorifying to God as all generations participated in worship, families worshipped together, and all generations learned from one another in the beautiful and difficult process of being the Body of Christ.

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 and families, 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 is included. Mark your calendars and plan to attend with your staff and volunteers.

SPEAKER: Scottie May is a popular author and speaker, as well as Associate Professor of Christian Formation and Ministry at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill. Scottie will speak on "The Faith Family: Generations being with God together." *RSVP as a church group by Friday, Nov. 1 to 612-721-4893 or kara@northwestconference.org*



IMAGINE

Saturday, Nov. 9 / 10 a.m.- 2:30 p.m.
Plymouth Covenant Church, Plymouth, MN

NEW CITY COVENANT CHURCH

By John March, Lead Pastor of New City Covenant Church in Edina, MN

Over the past few months I have had the privilege of working closely with NWC Superintendent Mark Stromberg on an exciting new opportunity for New City Covenant Church. A local church in Edina was subjected to a lawsuit that resulted in their property becoming available for acquisition via transfer. The lawsuit settlement required the transfer of the property, along with all the church's assets, to a like-minded evangelical church to be determined by a vote of their membership.

With Mark's help, we were able to submit a proposal that conformed to the settlement's stipulations and make a presentation to the Edina church's membership that resulted in New City Covenant Church being approved as the transferee by a vote of 27-7.

Throughout this process, I have gained a glimpse into the potential for conflict to wreak havoc on a congregation. The closing church was organized as an independent congregation detached from any denominational affiliation, and they suffered throughout this conflict because of it.

I've also become more aware of the importance of having a denomination standing with us, the local church, to support us as we pursue God's mission for our congregation.

Mark helped us navigate difficult emotional terrain, gave input as we worked with lawyers, and advised us on big decisions. We would not have been able to close on this property without help from the Northwest Conference staff.

New City's vision is to be a place where people can connect. We believe that salvation



New City Covenant Church now meets at its new permanent home in Edina, MN.

and transformation happen when we connect to God personally, to God's people, and to God's purposes. As we look to the future, we believe this new property will greatly increase our capacity to pursue our mission.

Prior to this move, Mike Brown, NWC director of church planting, had repeatedly told us that the facilities where we were meeting were a major hindrance to our growth. We struggled to find a space that matched our needs and fell within our price range. We anticipate this new property will enhance our capacity to pursue and achieve our mission.

It will improve the Sunday worship experience, the Soul Food meal we host after service, our mid-week events, and it will also provide a home-base from which we can serve our neighbors and the surrounding community. We are grateful for the help and support

we have received from the leaders of the Northwest Conference, and we look forward to seeing what God has next for us..

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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.

NORTHWEST CONFERENCE CALENDAR

OCTOBER 8-9 // Faith Community Nurse Retreat – Covenant Pines Bible Camp

OCTOBER 26 // VIVE – Crosstown Covenant, Minneapolis, MN

NOVEMBER 9 // IMAGINE – Plymouth Covenant, Plymouth, MN

JANUARY 11 // Recharge – Grace Fellowship, Brooklyn Park, MN

MARCH 14-15 // NWC Women Ministries Renewal Conference, Buffalo Covenant, Buffalo, MN

APRIL 4-5 // MOVE – First Covenant, Minneapolis, MN

MAY 1-2 // Ministerial Assoc. Annual Meeting – Rochester Covenant, Rochester, MN

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