In 2009 the Northwest Conference celebrates its 125th Anniversary of ministry and service. This is a wonderful time to praise God for what he has done in the past, but also an opportunity to look forward to the future blessings he will provide.

The immigrants who were to form what we now know as the Northwest Conference began arriving in America in the 1860s. The territory comprising Minnesota, Western Wisconsin and the Dakotas was wide open territory. The people took advantage of the Homestead Act to establish farms and settlements. Some were loggers, others worked in the mines, and many settled in the urban areas of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

In A Precious Heritage, our historian Phil Anderson writes, “The earliest Mission Friend activity in Minnesota began in 1866 in Kandiyohi County.” Families gathered for worship in their homes and a variety of itinerant preachers would come to preach and care for the people. On Oct. 27, 1884, at Salem Church in Pennock, MN, the Northwest Conference was officially organized. They had a four-fold purpose statement:

1. Christian congregations in the Northwest would be a help to one another
2. Provide help to the preachers
3. Strengthen the mission by working together
4. Respect the rights of individual churches

Karl Olsson describes these people: “They rode their horses along wretched tracks: they jounced on newly laid rails; they slept in barns and stables and the most primitive shanties and mud huts; they held services in kitchens under the open sky, in schoolhouses, and in scores of crude frame boxes called missionshuis. Everywhere they went the hunger was the same. People wanted God.”

Anniversary Celebrations at our Bible camps: We will have a special presentation at each of our family camps during the summer to highlight our rich heritage and to prepare us for the challenges of ministry in today's world.

Founders’ Day Rally at Salem Covenant Church, Pennock, MN: Our conference was founded in Pennock, MN, 125 years ago. We will gather on the site Aug. 16, 2009, to give God thanks and to worship and fellowship.
The Northwest Conference board and staff have spent the last few years and a significant amount of time and energy refocusing our ministry to better serve the churches in our region.

The result of the ministry planning process is a renewed vision that is focused on the greatest need, which is identifying, developing, resourcing and supporting leadership—both professional and lay—in our churches. We believe this strategy will enable those leaders to address the issues necessary to create and sustain healthy, missional congregations in the Northwest Conference long into the future.

**Church Planting**

The Northwest Conference commitment to “Developing Leaders, Thriving Churches” manifests itself in a multi-faceted approach. Our commitment to new church development is one of the many important ways we are seeking to assist and resource the churches in the Northwest Conference.

An inscription at the entrance of The National Archive reads, “The heritage of the past is the seed for the harvest of the future.”

This wisdom is true for churches. Church planting is a biblical pattern for mission that allows each of our established churches to reach into nearby neighborhoods and communities with the love of Jesus Christ.

Church planting is one piece of a broader mission strategy being implemented in many of our Northwest Conference churches. We are dedicated to assisting those who are adding church planting to their mix of outreach strategies as they seek to reach their Judea/Samaria with the love of Christ (Acts 1:8).

It’s not just those in the new church who find new life, however. Sponsoring churches routinely report added vitality in their own midst. Church planting provides a renewed missional focus for parenting churches. Church planting also taps into the spiritual principle that Jesus teaches us: We find our life by giving it away.

The Northwest Conference is committed to helping identify gifted leaders, helping those same leaders develop their gifts, providing a broad range of necessary resources, and walking alongside our churches and pastors in mutual support. These are the urgent priorities that your staff at the Northwest Conference has embraced so that together we might truly see “Developing Leaders and Thriving Churches.”

**Church Health**

Northwest Conference leadership is fully committed to the ongoing missional health and vitality of its churches. This is the highest priority of our work, whether these churches are brand new or have a shape and sizes—illustrating the diversity of our community—but the key is that they are all part of the same tree. Even so, we are all part of the same body, whose head is Jesus Christ!

The Northwest Conference is committed to helping its churches, especially through leadership development and health assessment.

We believe that these things are essential to the development of thriving local churches.
The men and women who founded our conference were passionate about people coming to Christ, and so are we! We stand in a long line of people who have proclaimed the love of God to their families and friends. Our work of planting new churches, of supporting established churches and reaching out to those in need goes on. The needs are great and time is of the essence.

Our 125th Anniversary Celebration includes the kickoff of a campaign to raise the additional funds that we need to expand our mission. We want to develop healthy leaders and thriving churches.

Your generous financial investment in the ministry is needed as our work expands. I invite you to prayerfully consider making a pledge of financial support.

Thanks for your partnership!

Jim Fretheim, NWC Superintendent

Supporting the Mission
Bloomington Covenant member creates Bible verse book

Carol Smith, a longtime member of Bloomington Covenant Church, felt called by God to ... butterflies! Carol has created beautiful greeting cards for several years but wanted to combine her artistry with her love of favorite Bible verses.

She visualized a way to minister to the children at the Bloomington Campus of Minnehaha Academy located in her church building. Carol began drawing intricate butterflies with tiny, smiling faces. Their names came to her as they took shape—Sophie, Mario, and even Esmeralda.

Carol matched each butterfly with a Bible verse in alphabetical order. For example, Felix's verse is “Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37) and Tabitha's verse is “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24).

With computer help from her husband and printing help from her son, Carol printed and bound a copy of Bible Butterflies for each first and second grader at the school. The children love the bright, friendly butterflies and are memorizing at least one verse each week.

Covenant Enabling Residences of Minnesota (CER-MN)

Currently, Covenant Enabling Residences of Minnesota (CER-MN) is looking for several individuals interested in serving on the governing board of the organization. This board provides oversight to Our Place and North Place in Duluth, as well as Friendship Place in Lino Lakes.

Board members also take part in discussing the potential of new Enabling Residences throughout the state of Minnesota. If you are interested, please contact Dana Norton at 218-624-3097.