

IMPRINTS

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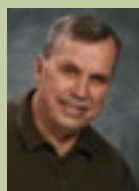


ANNIVERSARY



How can we help?

Thanks for the privilege of serving you! My colleagues and I are so grateful for this privilege. We are in the process of unveiling a new ministry plan (see inside). It has a two point focus: *developing healthy leaders and thriving churches*. We want to provide



coaches, resources and training opportunities for your church to help your pastors and leaders carry out their ministries. It has been said that the lack of leadership is one of

the most significant problems in today's church. It is our intention to bring in the best trainers and materials that we can to support your work. Healthy churches have healthy leaders.

It is also our desire to see churches that are thriving. What do we mean by thriving? To thrive is to flourish, to blossom, to see growth and change and to be excited about it. I am writing this in the spring of the year. It is a time of wonder and change. The land is alive! We want our churches to be alive! Open to God's call, celebrating his goodness, obeying his command to take this message to our communities. What do these turbulent times call for? Developing healthy leaders and thriving churches!

Jim Fretheim, NWC Superintendent

125 YEARS of MISSION

In 2009 the Northwest Conference celebrates it 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 missionshus. 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.

Developing leaders. Thriving churches.

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 neighbor-



hoods 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

The new Northwest Conference logo

As a natural outflow of the ministry planning process, the Northwest Conference logo has been redesigned to communicate more effectively aspects of our identity and to feature a more modern style.

As a simple metaphor for the body of churches in the Northwest Conference, the symbol of a tree is chosen to illustrate our ministry. Not only is the conference involved in church planting, but it is also committed to developing and supporting the broad spectrum of church-



es within our region.

Further, it is our desire that as each local church becomes healthier and thrives, it will produce new fruit of its own.

The leaves of the tree come in all

shapes 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.



rich history of service to God.

Therefore, the Northwest Conference is committed to focusing a significant amount of its resources on the process of church health assessment and recommendation—these things designed to “move the ball forward” for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom.

Further, the conference staff is committed to facilitating conversations within our churches around the topics of change and an intentional mission focus into their respective communities.

These things are essential because changing nothing within our churches will produce nothing different from what currently exists.

Therefore, NWC leadership is fully committed to assisting churches in making the necessary changes to move beyond survival and toward health and missional vitality.

Leadership Development

Another significant aspect of our common mission is the identification, development, resourcing and supporting of pastoral and lay leadership within the local church context. As Northwest Conference leadership looks to the future, this is also one of the top priorities for conference staff to address.

Without healthy missional leadership, it will be very difficult to move a church toward health and effectiveness, for it is local leadership that must find ways to keep healthy change alive and moving forward. Therefore, the Northwest Conference staff is resolved to assist in the process of leadership training and development through seminars, mentoring and assessment. After all, when leaders demonstrate actions that match their words, people will notice and begin to emulate the example set by them. On the contrary, nothing damages change

initiatives more than action and behavior of leaders that is inconsistent with their words. Thus, the Northwest Conference is committed to the integrity of local church leadership so that congregational health and vitality can become a reality.

Children, Youth and Family

Building on our historic commitment to youth ministry as a vital component of church health, the Northwest Conference wants to look for ways to extend support to children and family ministries as well.

Through direct training and support, strategic partnerships and referrals, we want to encourage thriving children, youth and family ministries through the local church. This commitment centers on the important formational task of moving children and family systems from understanding faith to internalizing and living out their faith.

Supporting the Mission

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



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.

CALENDAR

- May 2** Veritas Workshop – Oak Heights Covenant Church, Hutchinson, MN
- May 4-5** Youth Pastor Retreat – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN
- May 16** EPIC Workshop – Evangelical Covenant Church, Roseau, MN
- June 13-20** Adventures in Leadership – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

- July 12-17** CHIC – University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN
- August 13-15** MUUUCE – Faith Covenant Church, Burnsville, MN
- August 16** – 125th Anniversary Celebration, Salem Covenant Church, Pennock, MN
- October 5-7** Ministerial Association Retreat – Superior Shores, Two Harbors, MN

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northwest conference

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.

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 organiza-

tion. 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 dis-

cussing the potential of new Enabling Residences throughout the state of Minnesota. If you are interested, please contact Dana Norton at 218-624-3097.