

SUMMER: A TIME OF EXCITEMENT AND JOY!

The most powerful memories I have of summer come from my childhood when school was out, and a summer of baseball, swimming and fishing lay ahead of me. How much better could it be? Perhaps the wonder of summer is so strong because in our area it is so brief? The good news of our gospel is that God's love is ongoing, not confined to a particular season.

Our conference has just finished hosting the 125th Annual Meeting of our denomination. What a rich time we had worshipping our God and celebrating new congregations—85 people ordained to Covenant ministry, new missionaries consecrated. It was a week of wonder and joy!

I pray that this summer will be a time of excitement and joy as you



experience the love of God in fresh ways. Our staff at the conference office enjoys working with you as we share the great news of new life in Christ. Are there fresh flowers and new shoots coming out of your ministry? Does your ministry garden need cultivating? Is it time to prune? Should you expand your ministry by transplanting? We would love to help!

I give you this prayer from James Vanden Bosch:

Dear God, send our roots rain: send our hearts ease,

So that we may show in our lives

That we can live rightly in this season of our lives.

And see it as if for the first time,

In wonder, in awe, and in a spirit of thanksgiving. Amen

In His service and yours, Jim Fretheim, Superintendent



MILESTONES FROM THE 2010 ECC ANNUAL MEETING

The 125th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church took place June 24-27 at the RiverCentre in St. Paul, MN.

OPENING WORSHIP SERVICE

The meeting kicked off with a worship service Thursday evening that featured Northwest Conference churches and leaders, as well as leaders from across the globe. The choir from Community Covenant Church in Minneapolis provided prelude music for the service and backed up the worship team, which included a full band of musicians and vocalists singing a variety of hymns and modern worship. Anne Vining, pastor of First Covenant Church in St. Paul, joined three other pastors from across the country to lead a call to worship for the service. The centerpiece of the stage for the meeting included an historic pulpit from First Covenant.

Gary Walter, president of the Evangelical Covenant Church, delivered a message entitled "Mission Cubed." Drawing from Galatians 2:1-10, Walter exhorted the gathering to address three critical challenges that have faced Christians since the gospel was first proclaimed: to share a gospel of unconditional love, to be inclusive of different cultures, and to live compassionately and justly.

NEW CHURCHES WELCOMED

During the Friday morning Business Session of the meeting, eight new churches from the Northwest Conference—along with churches from across the country—were received into membership. Mike Brown,



director of church planting for the Northwest Conference, introduced each church and its pastor to the delegates and attendees at the meeting.

"Today was a very exciting day for our new churches and our conference. We celebrate with our new churches as they join the Covenant family," Brown said. "These new churches represent the culmination of countless hours of planning, prayer and hard work."

The churches that were received into membership include: Abbey Way Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN; Cedarbrook Church, Menomonie, WI; The Compass Covenant Church, St. Paul, MN; Emmanuel Covenant Church, Shoreview, MN; Living Stones Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN; NewDay Covenant Church, Rochester, MN; Nueva Vida Covenant Church, Monticello, MN; and Verbo en Accion Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN.

FAMILY FESTIVAL AND PICNIC

The Evangelical Covenant Church hosted a Family Festival and Picnic on Raspberry Island on Saturday, June 26, in celebration of its 125th Anniversary. The event featured musical acts, a puppet show, food vendors, children's activities, and more.

"It's been fabulous. We've just had a wonderful time," said Pat Trautman, member of Redeemer Covenant Church in Brooklyn Park, MN. "I can hardly take two steps and I know someone else. My whole family is here."

Volunteers from NWC churches and ministries helped staff the event by taking tickets, helping run carnival events, and overseeing stage entertainment. The Family Festival Stage featured many talented musical acts from local and national churches.

ORDINATION, COMMISSIONING AND CONSECRATION SERVICE

Sunday morning's worship service at the 125th Annual Meeting celebrated the ordination, commissioning and consecration of new ministers and missionaries as they prepare to further their work in sharing the gospel with a rapidly changing world. Seventeen ministers from the Northwest Conference were ordained during the service. The service also brought to a close the four-day celebration of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

To see expanded coverage of the 125th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church, visit www.nwc-cov.org.

CEDARBROOK JOINS COVENANT, CELEBRATES OPENING OF NEW BUILDING

By Remy Diederich, Lead Pastor
Cedarbrook Church, Menomonie, WI

In a recent sermon series on "Transitions," I told our church that transitions are a good time to make improvements that you've always wanted to make. For example, when you remodel your house, it's a good time to buy new furniture. As we approached moving into a new building, I encouraged everyone to consider how we might use this natural transition to improve our "game" in other areas as well.

We took that advice to heart as a leadership team. For years we had struggled, feeling mismatched with our denomination. It wasn't a bad fit. It just wasn't a great fit. Two years ago we left our denomination and began exploring our options.

After discovering the Evangelical Covenant Church we decided to make the move at the same time that we moved into our new building. So, on June 13, 2010, we



celebrated the Grand Opening of our building, and on June 24 we were received into the Evangelical Covenant Church during the Annual Meeting in St. Paul, MN.

A little background for you: Cedarbrook Church was planted in January 2003. We started in a theatre, moved to a mall banquet center for more room and finally took

the plunge to build two years ago, right when the stock market crashed. We briefly wondered if we were crazy to build during a recession but figured we had nothing to lose. Amazingly, we raised \$1.4 million in pledges for a \$2.1-million building.

The building is not your typical church building. We chose a lodge theme and built a theatre auditorium for 400, rather than the typical multipurpose space that many churches do with their first building. We couldn't be happier with the space. The unchurched and old-timers all love it. In a small town of 15,000 we are the talk of the town and we have added about 100 people per Sunday so far. We hope we can sustain that through the summer.

It's an exciting time for us with both a new building and a new fellowship in the Covenant. We look forward to becoming increasingly a part of the Covenant family in the months to come. Be sure to stop in when you are in the area!

PUT IT ON YOUR CALENDAR!

Thrive North Dakota: Oct. 15-16

Thrive North Dakota will refresh, invigorate and inspire ministry leaders, staffers and lay volunteers and leaders with a renewed vision of ministry. The Thrive North Dakota team and Thriving Churches International would like to encourage you to take a break from the stresses of the world and come to a place where you can hear the Word of God, feel His presence and reignite your passion for Him, your marriage, life, future, kids and the ministry God has called you to.



"Our staff team has been to two Thrive events at Bayside Covenant Church in California, and the opportunity to expose our region to this training, enthusiasm and joy is an honor and I believe will help transform our people. I would encourage every pastor, team leader, person who works with people to gather as many people as you can and make the journey to Thrive North Dakota. Just the laughter alone will be worth the trip for your soul!" encourages Paul Knight of Hope Covenant Church Grand Forks, ND.

Thrive North Dakota costs \$49 and will offer a variety of breakout classes in multiple categories from ministry to personal development. General sessions will be fun, thought-provoking, worship-filled times that will blow the roof off the mall!

CONVERGE Workshop: Nov. 13

On Saturday, Nov. 13, the Northwest Conference will host a one-day workshop called CONVERGE. This will be another great opportunity to bring NWC churches together for learning and inspiration. The gathering will take place at Roseville Covenant Church in Roseville, 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 breakout sessions covering a wide-range of topics.

Some of the topics included will be:

- Church Finances for Treasurers
- Effective Communication Strategies
- Program Planning Evaluation
- Community Demographics and local "Soil Analysis"

In the coming months, more information and registration materials will be sent regarding this event. The cost for a church to attend CONVERGE will be minimal and will include all materials and lunch.

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.

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

WE WELCOME TWO NEW NWC CHURCHES

On July 1, 2010, we celebrated the beginning of two new congregations in the Northwest Conference. Pastor Steve Eng signed a Covenant Agreement to begin planting Catalyst Covenant Church in Alexandria, MN. We also signed a Covenant Agreement with Pastor Micah Witham of Awaken Covenant Church, which will meet somewhere in the eastern part of the Twin Cities. Please extend your best wishes and your prayers as these pastors begin this new and challenging work.

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO BECOME A CHURCH PLANTER?

Eng: I believe passionately that new churches are among the best ways for people to come to faith in Christ and to grow spiritually. The Covenant's Church Planters' Assessment Center confirmed that God has been preparing me for church planting for quite some time. There's just so much faith involved in the process of planting a new church, and so many opportunities for people to serve and grow and see the Lord's hand at work. Already the stories coming out of our experience just amaze us.

Witham: I chose to become a church planter for three main reasons. 1) The leading edge of growth in the Church is by far in the world of church planting. 2) At the end of my life I want to be found faithful by God with the gifts and talents He has given me. I want to invest my life in something that counts for the Kingdom, and I want to do it in a way that maximizes what God has given me. 3) God's unique call on my life. This past year has been a journey of faith and pressing into the promptings and leadings of God's Spirit,

which has led me to a place where I am confident that God has invited my family and me into this journey.

WHAT WILL BE UNIQUE ABOUT THE CHURCH YOU WILL LEAD?

Eng: While there are no congregations in Douglas County currently meeting in a public facility, we've also been blessed with wonderful facilities to rent at affordable rates. Besides being good stewardship, God is calling us to "go where the people are" and host worship services and other ministries in public places. As confirmation of that vision, the Lord has allowed us to rent space at a new elementary school in town that is also home to district-wide early childhood education programs.

Witham: Awaken is all about a group of people waking up to God's dream for the world. We see ourselves as a response to the invitation of God to partner with Him in the redemption of all things. We want to take seriously the challenge of contextualizing the gospel of Jesus in our unique setting and place.

HOW/WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE LOCATION FOR YOUR PLANT?

Eng: First of all, the Alexandria area has grown significantly in recent years ... and this growth is projected to continue. Alexandria also has the greatest "pull factor," meaning people drive farther for shopping, business and services than any other city/region of its kind in Minnesota.

Yet, there have been few new churches

planted here in recent years and the number of people far from God—especially younger adults—is growing here as elsewhere. Furthermore, Alexandria Covenant has a wonderful reputation in our community, and we believe that more Covenant churches in this area will only strengthen all of our ministries.

Witham: I can't explain it any other way than the fact that when my wife and I drove around in the neighborhood, and particularly up a street in St. Paul, we both experienced an overwhelming sense of this place being "home." It resonated deep in our hearts and spirits more than any other location we have served in or considered moving to. The location that we have agreed to rent space from is absolutely perfect for us in so many ways. The fact that it worked out for us to be there was a confirmation of our processing and praying for where God might be calling us to be.

If your church is wondering how you can take a missional step and help to parent or partner to see a new church planted, contact Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting for the NWC.

NWC STAFF

Jim Fretheim // jaf@nwc-cov.org
Superintendent

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

Jon Kramka // jon@nwc-cov.org
Director of Mission Development

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

Cheryl Theilen // cheryl@nwc-cov.org
Administrative Assistant

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

SEPTEMBER 8-10 // CRIM Retreat – Covenant Pines Bible Camp, McGregor, MN

OCTOBER 4-6 // Ministerial Association Retreat – Cragun's, Brainerd, MN

OCTOBER 10 // NWC Celebration – Duluth, MN

OCTOBER 12-13 // Parish Nurse Retreat – Covenant Pines Bible Camp, McGregor, MN

OCTOBER 15-16 // Thrive North Dakota – Grand Forks, ND

OCTOBER 24 // NWC Celebration – Dassel, MN

NOVEMBER 13 // CONVERGE Training Event – Roseville, MN