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Annual Meeting

Mission Friends: The Journey Continues

Praise God for the exciting things that are happening throughout our conference. People are coming to Christ, our churches are reaching out and improving the quality of life in their communities. New churches are being planted, and established congregations are finding new energy with a fresh vision.



The theme for our 2010 Conference Annual Meeting is, "Mission Friends: The Journey Continues." We have spent the past year celebrating our first 125 years of ministry and anticipating the wonderful things that God will do as our journey continues.

I encourage you to continue to pray for our conference ministry. In addition, I would like you to consider giving a special gift to help us expand our ministries throughout the conference.

Our annual meeting will be held on April 23- 24, 2010, in Woodbury, MN, at Crossroads Church, the largest congregation in the Northwest Conference. I encourage you to attend with a full slate of delegates to hear the good news of what has been and to gain fresh insight to the journey ahead.

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MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY



photo by Denise D. Peterson

The Rev. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil challenged attendees to embrace reconciliation and hear the call of God afresh and anew everyday.

Leadership Forum draws 200

On Jan. 16 approximately 200 people attended the Northwest Conference Leadership Forum featuring Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil at First Covenant Church in St. Paul, MN. Entitled "The Heart of Racial Justice," the event drew attendees from Covenant churches, as well as from churches and organizations throughout the Twin Cities.

"This is an important topic for me as a church planter because of my commitment to help develop a worship setting that is multi-racial," said Terrance Rollerson, pastor of The Compass Covenant Church in St. Paul. "It is only through forums like these that I am able to better equip myself with the knowledge that will enable me to equip those in ministry with me."

During the morning session, Dr. Salter McNeil gave a presentation titled, "Embracing the Cultural Mandate of God." During the afternoon, she shared on the topic, "8 Habits of Inter-culturally Competent Leaders." From the call of Abram in Genesis 12, she challenged attendees not to "settle in Haran," but to move out to new, unfamiliar places of promise God is calling us to.

"Being an ambassador of reconciliation requires that we be on the move like Abram. For Abram, that meant he had to leave the comfort of home behind. Some of his family even refused to go with him," said Community Covenant Church Pastor Luke Swanson, who attended the event with members of his church. "For us individually, reconciliation ministry can feel like moving, and I don't know that many people who like to move all that much. It's a lot of work. For us as a church, Salter McNeil reminded us that being reconciled to our brother and sister through Christ is not a one-time event but takes a lifetime to live out."

"I really appreciated the day. The cost was at a level that I could get a number of people there. The topic was central to my ministry," Rollerson said. "It is always an encouragement to be in the same place with people who are making the same commitment in terms of the ministry they do. I would look forward to having more forums such as this. In fact, I would be willing to make the commitment that my church would help sponsor more forums such as this."

Churches engage in multicultural ministry

Ministry is always contextual. For churches in the Northwest Conference, the face of our local context is changing.

A new immigrant arrives in the U.S. every 31 seconds. In 2004, Minnesota ranked third in the nation for new refugees, trailing only California and Florida. The state led the nation in “sub-Saharan” immigrants with a 619 percent increase from 1990 to 2000. There are currently more than 200 languages spoken throughout the Twin Cities. The Minneapolis light rail system now sells tickets in English, Spanish, Hmong and Somali.

As cities and neighborhoods become increasingly diverse, faith communities must adapt ministry models to remain effective in mission to their communities. Throughout the NWC, new and established churches are responding with new multicultural ministry strategies to reach their communities.

The Gallery in St. Paul

The Gallery Covenant Church, a 6-month old church plant, meets at Steppingstone Theatre in St. Paul, MN.

“Fifty yards to the south of us are Summit and Grand Avenues with their mansions, upscale shopping, and predominately white clientele. Fifty yards to the north are the historically African American Selby and Marshall Avenues,” explained Brad Kindall, senior pastor of The Gallery. “To the south we have great wealth. To the north there can be great poverty. The two communities, though separated by less than a mile, rarely interact.”

Because of these community characteristics, and the call for the Church to be “ambassadors of reconciliation,” leadership at The Gallery have woven qualities such as diversity, servanthood and outreach into their ministry DNA.

“God has blessed us with Ryan Daniel, a worship pastor from Trinidad, whose heart beats for racial reconciliation,” Kindall said. “Ryan is a real gift to us and is the first step toward creating a Gallery staff that looks like its community.”

“I’ve found that in diverse communities people will stay at a church if they sense a genuine move of God through genuine



Ryan Daniel, a native of Trinidad and local reggae and hip hop artist, leads worship at The Gallery Covenant Church, a new plant in St. Paul.

people. For us as a worship ministry, we are attempting to share authentic worship experiences that drive men to the heart of God,” Daniel said. “More importantly, however, to do it in such a way that various cultures can visit our church and share in expressions of worship that they can identify with. That is tough for a church of suburban transplants, but God equips for His purpose.”

Believing his leadership sets a pace for community engagement, Kindall “offices” in local coffee shops, restaurants, and even bars on Grand Ave. and Selby Ave. Staff meetings often take place in the same manner. The Gallery hosts a monthly event called Love St. Paul where members “seek to reach out in servanthood ways to our community,” Kindall explained.

“We have also made a decision as a church to move 50 percent of our weekly offerings outside our doors. Fifteen percent of that goes to world mission and church planting through the Evangelical Covenant Church and Northwest Conference, but 35 percent will go very strategically toward investment in the neighborhood we serve,” Kindall said. The church has committed volunteer power as well. “In my mind, until the community we serve sees us serving, we have no right to speak.”

“I think that Brad has really set a good tone for our approach to reaching out to the community. As a worship leader and reggae

hip hop artist, I believe that if Christ is truly lifted up, [individuals and communities] will be drawn to Him,” Daniel said. “God wants to reach this community (us included) more than we do. Our prayer is that He uses us mightily in every opportunity.”

First Covenant Church of St. Paul

At 135 years old, First Covenant Church of St. Paul has been around long enough to see its ministry context change many times. Located in an urban area on the East Side of St. Paul, the neighborhood is currently a first stop for many new immigrants.

“What was once a haven for Swedish immigrants 100 years ago has turned over many times and is now home for a strong Latino and Hmong population,” explained Kate Makosky, youth minister at First Covenant of St. Paul.

As part of a 2-year-long “strategic map” development process, staff and lay leadership at First Covenant Church of St. Paul have spent time considering their current ministry context.

“We used the Percept tool to study our immediate community and discovered that we had 38 of their 50 identified people groups living within a 2-mile radius of our church,” said Anne Vining, senior pastor. “We have then identified two key groups— young starters and urban families—and have intentionally sought to focus our ministries to

reach these two key groups while continuing to minister to the many generations already within our congregation.”

Children and youth programs within the church have been a leading edge for adapting ministry models to effectively reach the community. Instead of traditional VBS programming, leaders from the church interviewed community members and leaders about what children and youth on the East Side needed to know.

“The idea that this population needed to discover ‘the hero within’ and meet ‘the greatest hero of all, Jesus Christ,’ started to emerge,” Makosky said. “Our annual Hero Training Camp, held at the Phalen Rec Center, emerged from this vision. Children and youth from our community learn sports skills and other abilities, learn from ‘everyday heroes’ (people in our community) and learn



At First Covenant Church in St. Paul, children and youth ministry are leading edges for reaching the diverse community.

about Christ. It is no longer cost prohibitive, or a program focused solely on ‘our’ kids, but it is a ministry for the entire community.”

First Covenant Church of St. Paul has also formed a partnership with Farnsworth Aerospace School, which has two local campuses.

“We partner together for musicals, we are launching a tutoring team to be in the 5th-8th grade school twice a week, and we have a prayer team dedicated to praying for our ministry to Farnsworth,” Makosky said.

Worship and creative arts have played a key role in this “whole-church approach to ministry in our neighborhood,” Makosky said.

“You can see our commitment to children and youth in the way they are incorporated into our worship experience each Sunday morning. Youth regularly participate on our

worship teams, they are responsible for running the visuals each Sunday, they perform in drama and in the arts,” Vining said. “As we have become more clear and committed to a common mission, the lines have blurred between traditionally distinct youth ministries, children’s ministries, worship, outreach and mission. It’s all happening interchangeably as we grow together in the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and catch the vision of what God can do in and through us ... and (on most days) it’s exciting!”

First Covenant Church in Willmar, MN

Situated about 2 hours west of the Twin Cities, First Covenant Church in Willmar, MN, is also seeing its ministry context shift. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Kandiyohi County is 9.7 percent “persons of Hispanic or Latino origin,” compared with a statewide average of 4.1 percent. The city of Willmar itself is closer to 15 percent Hispanic or Latino. First Covenant Church in Willmar is at the beginning of considering God’s will for Hispanic ministry within the congregation. One year ago, the congregation became aware of a Hispanic church called Templo Mahanaim Asamblea de Dios that desperately needed a place to meet.

“Where they were meeting they had no heat and the temperature in the building was in the 30s,” said Dan Johnson, senior pastor of the church.

First Covenant leaders met with the Hispanic church’s pastor and wife, Hector and Sara Pinochette, and worked out a free facility sharing deal. “We just wanted to help them out until they could get their feet underneath them,” Johnson said.

Over the past year, the two congrega-



Pastors Dan Johnson and Hector Pinochette are making efforts to bridge cultural divides in Willmar.

tions have begun to interact through shared meals, a few joint services, and collaboration during a summer outdoor service. Johnson has also formed a close friendship with Pastor Pinochette.

“The benefits for us have been subtle, but powerful. We have had the opportunity to extend grace and love to our Hispanic brothers and sisters and to rub shoulders with them,” Johnson said. “Hispanic ministry now has a face and names and is up close and personal, whereas before it was simply a people group. That reality, in and of itself, is huge.”

Johnson hopes that bridging the cultural divide between congregations will only continue as church leadership considers the future of Hispanic ministry at First Covenant in Willmar.

“I think God has been preparing us for Hispanic ministry in our community through this relationship with Mahanaim that otherwise would not have happened,” Johnson said. “We continue to pray and seek God’s leading.”

ECC 125th Annual Meeting

The 125th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church will be held at the RiverCentre in St. Paul, MN, on June 23-27. Members of the NWC have a unique opportunity to participate in this meeting, as well as welcome and serve our denomination. Many volunteers will be needed throughout the meeting. A festival will be held on Saturday afternoon followed by a worship celebration in the evening. Make plans now to attend all or part of this meeting. More information about volunteer opportunities will be sent to your church.

Dear NWC churches,

Crossroads Church, with campuses in Eagan and Woodbury, is delighted to invite you to the 126th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Conference. The meeting, set for April 23-24, will be held at our new Woodbury Campus, a \$10 million facility on 32 acres of land.

Woodbury is a growing suburb of approximately 56,000 people in the Twin Cities metropolitan area—located just southeast of St. Paul, the state's capital. The city is in close proximity to one of Minnesota's largest employers, 3M, and to the St. Croix River Valley, providing a beautiful natural setting and year-round recreational opportunities. Woodbury is known for its attractive residential neighborhoods, which are connected by more than 100 miles of multi-use trails and surrounded by 3,000 acres of dedicated park land. Woodbury is also a retail shopping hub, with two major outdoor malls.

Crossroads Church has undergone tremendous changes in the past 18 months: we went "multi-site" in September 2008 by launching a campus in Eagan (merging with the former BridgePointe Covenant), we moved out of Cottage Grove into our

new Woodbury Campus 2 months later (November 2008), and then in June we sent off a couple of staff members and over 100 people to be the nucleus for The Gallery Covenant Church (a new church plant in St. Paul).

It's been quite a ride ... yet through it all God has continued to move. During this past year, attendance has grown by 35 percent and over 200 people have made first-time commitments to Christ! We look forward to sharing our excitement and hospitality with all the delegates from Northwest Conference churches. Just one warning—as you walk in our doors you will see a sign that says, "No perfect people allowed." That slogan fits one of our core values (authenticity). So, we urge you to consider this as you contemplate who to send as delegates this year. Our staff and greeters will turn away all "perfect" delegates and let in only "imperfect" people!

Seriously, we look forward to drinking coffee, sharing stories and making important decisions together that will further God's work throughout the Northwest Conference.

See you in April.

Warmly, Phil Print, Senior Pastor

CALENDAR

March 26-27 Women Ministries Annual Meeting – Alexandria, MN

April 9-10 MOVE – First Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN

April 15 Covenant Retirement Communities of Minnesota Annual Benefit Event — North Heights Lutheran Church, Arden Hills, MN

April 22-23 Ministerial Association Annual Meeting – Crossroads Church, Woodbury, MN

April 23-24 NWC Annual Meeting – Crossroads Church, Woodbury, MN

May 17-19 Youth Pastor Retreat – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

June 12-19 Adventures in Leadership – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

June 24-27 ECC Annual Meeting – River-Centre, St. Paul, MN

July 22-25 ECC Women Ministries Triennial – Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

NWC Staff

- **Jim Fretheim**
Superintendent
jaf@nwc-cov.org
- **Mark Stromberg**
Associate Superintendent
mark@nwc-cov.org
- **Jon Kramka**
Director of Mission Development
jon@nwc-cov.org
- **Mike Brown**
Director of Church Planting
mike@nwc-cov.org
- **Cheryl Theilen**
Administrative Assistant
cheryl@nwc-cov.org
- **Bryan Malley**
Director of Communications
bryan@nwc-cov.org

The Northwest Conference

3106 47th Avenue 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

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.

2010 Annual Meeting

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Where is the journey going? The journey is about expanding the kingdom of God in our conference. It is about evangelism, it is about training leaders, it is about reaching out to hurting people in our communities, it

is about multi-cultural ministries.

It is often said that the journey is more important than the destination.

Our journey is very important, but our destination, maturity in Christ, is every-

thing! We are dealing with matters of eternal consequence! The journey continues!

In His service and yours,

Jim Fretheim, Superintendent