



The staff and executive board leadership of the Northwest Conference are committed to engaging, empowering and equipping healthy, missional leaders, as we are convinced that this is essential for the development of healthy, missional churches. Therefore, we continue to seek to provide quality resources and training for both pastors and lay leaders of NWC congregations. In recent months, this commitment has been expressed through two new training opportunities which are intended to strengthen the local church. A brief description of each follows:

NAVIGATE 2010

John Wenrich, director of congregational vitality for the Evangelical Covenant Church, can often be heard saying, "The journey of vitality

is both adventurous and treacherous." As the denomination and NWC continue to develop tools and resources to help established churches become healthy and missional groups of leaders from three NWC churches joined groups from across the country in Kansas City, MO, Nov. 3-7, to participate in Navigate.

A description for this new initiative says the journey of vitality is "accomplished by the Holy Spirit empowering congregations as they walk the Congregational Vitality Pathway." Navigate accelerates the process by catalyzing resources on the denominational, conference and local levels. The program is a "one-two-three" strategy consisting of one national gathering, two conference cluster gatherings and three local church follow up visits.

Throughout the Navigate experience, Wenrich described the vitality partnership as a "chord of three strands, which is not easily broken"

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SEARCH COMMITTEE NOMINATES STROMBERG



By Rev. John Stewart
NWC Executive Board Chair

On Saturday, Dec. 4, at Crosstown Covenant Church in Minneapolis, MN, the Superintendent Search Committee prayerfully chose Mark Stromberg to succeed Jim Fretheim as Northwest Conference Superintendent. This concluded a several-month process that began in mid-July when the NWC Executive Board met with Evangelical Covenant Church President Gary Walter to discuss proper procedure for the task.

Highlights of the process included the appointment of advisory members, in addition to the current Executive Board, to better reflect the conference's growing diversity; receiving responses to a superintendent search questionnaire from nearly a third of our churches; meeting with Gary Walter to discuss the over 30 names suggested for consideration; and getting to know the final selected candidates through written responses and actual interviews.

I believe I speak for the whole committee when I say that perhaps the greatest joy in this process was the palpable sense of the Holy Spirit's leading. Everyone involved felt humbled at being part of this task. We had great input from conference churches and leaders. We had wonderful interaction with the denomination, and especially with Gary Walter. We had great joy in meeting tremendous leaders who represent the missional heart of the ECC.

Thank you to everyone who prayed for and encouraged the committee over the last few months. They have been a great team! We look forward to working with Mark in his new role, if elected by NWC delegates at our conference annual meeting in April.

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(Eccl. 4:12) comprised of the denomination, the conference and the local church.

"I've heard ECC President Gary Walter say, 'We're in it together,' approximately 34,973 times. Well, I saw 'in it together' in action at the Navigate launch," said Ben Swanson, pastor of Edina Covenant Church in Edina, MN. "Pastors and laity alike were treated with respect usually reserved for 'successful churches.' We felt like the heroes of a new adventure."

Swanson, as well as Pastors Todd Kussman from Rice Creek Covenant Church in Lino Lakes, MN, and Ryan Eikenbary-Barber from Bethlehem Covenant Church in Minneapolis, gathered with Navigate pastors from other conferences Nov. 3-5, and lay leaders from each church joined them for additional training Nov. 5-7.

Large group sessions during Navigate covered topics ranging from evangelism to vitality to prayer. Break-out sessions at Navigate covered such topics as a review of the vitality pathway and tips for church chairs in revitalization congregations.

"Besides getting tools and ideas, we were refreshed spiritually," Swanson said. "The talks were not only content-filled, but inspirational. The worship times were Spirit-filled and deeply impactful."

Following Navigate, the three NWC pastors involved will meet monthly, and leaders from each church will gather twice in 2011. Each church will also benefit from regular consultation with NWC Associate Superintendent Mark Stromberg, a Navigate Core Team Member.

"We have been greatly encouraged that our conference (& denomination) has been willing to invest resources in helping established churches like ours retool for ministry in our current world," Kussman said. "I believe it bodes well for our future together!"

CONVERGE 2010

Despite the largest November snowstorm in 19 years, 90 people braved the elements to attend the first NWC CONVERGE event at

Roseville Covenant Church in Roseville, MN on Nov. 13.

"As NWC staff, we were amazed at the number of people who braved the elements and still participated in CONVERGE—in spite of the weather and road conditions. We look forward to repeating many of these same workshops, with some helpful modifications, at our NWC Annual Meeting in Mankato in April," said Mark Stromberg, NWC associate superintendent. "We believe that providing these practical workshops can be of great assistance to our churches, as it allows us to lean into our NWC mission of empowering and

equipping healthy missional leaders."

"My broadest impression of CONVERGE was that we are deeply blessed by our current conference staff," said Alan Johnson, pastor of Karmel Covenant Church in Princeton, MN. "I have been attending workshops for many years, and felt the two I attended were as good as any I have been to anywhere."

The one-day leadership training

event featured workshops designed to equip church leaders in a variety of areas. Workshops at CONVERGE included: "Effective Church Finances," "Developing a Powerful Communications Strategy for Your Church," "Mission-Insite," "How to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Church Programs," "Church Constitutions and Local Church Governance," "Exploring Community Mission: Reaching Your Jerusalem," and "KidShift: It's a New Day for Children & Family Ministry in Today's Effective Church."

"Now that we're home, things we learned are continuing to surface," Johnson said.

As a result of attending CONVERGE, Karmel Covenant is continuing to explore community mission, as well as discuss the future of its own governance.

"Change is a slow process, requiring both patience and steadfastness. The very fact that six of our key leaders attended CONVERGE and came away favorably impressed was significant for us," Johnson said. "It will make it that much easier to gather a team for the next similar event."



EMBRACING THE SHIFT IN CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY

By Suzanne Elliot

Children's Pastor at The Gallery Covenant Church in St. Paul, MN

Our American culture is shifting ... again. The seeker-sensitive era is waning, and the emergent movement isn't hitting the mark for families. In just under 40 years, the U.S. population has expanded by just fewer than 100 million people and of these, over 70 million are under the age of 17.

Church leaders know this and have responded well. Most churches around the country have well-developed children's ministries in place.

But this new shift is different because it is a new way of thinking about all-church ministry. Not since "Sunday School" became "Children's Ministry" has the church seen such a shift. Unfortunately, too many senior church leaders see ministry with kids and their parents as a marketing tool for attracting new families.

But Children's Ministry leaders know—and they will tell you—that what today's parents yearn for is to be together as a family inside the Church. That's the shift. Being the church together—kids, teens, parents, grandparents, singles ... everybody together for specific aspects of church life.

Parents today are the generation that was poised to be the most self-indulgent, selfish and greedy generation ever. Instead, they are rejecting the success-driven affluence of their parents and replacing it with life together. They want to be with their children and each

other. They ask for advice from parents and grandparents. There is no "family meal" time because every meal is family meal time. Both parents are equally involved with homework and school conferences and changing diapers as well as teaching kids to behave well.

These parents crave spirituality because it adds to the fullness of their family's life ... but there's a problem ... they are biblically illiterate. In David Olson's book "The American Church in Crisis" he writes that the "goal is to move the church into more fruitful ministry so that the church can transform the culture with the love and grace of God."

It is only within family that we have the very best chance to grow into people who live for and serve Jesus. Influence of family doing life together does for the individual what ministry cannot do. Children and teenagers learn from watching their parents and each other and other families. Adults learn from watching other parents in action, and from the innocent ideas of their children and teenagers.

So church must become inclusive of children and teenagers serving alongside adults, of children and teenagers in worship together with their families, of children and teenagers leading and inspiring outside of the current silos of youth or children's ministry. This doesn't mean that church needs to "dumb-down" or become childish to be inclusive. It means that church must do what it has always been called to do. Creatively reinvent itself for this next shift of being the church together.

Suzanne Elliot will present her workshop, "KidShift," at the 2010 NWC Annual Meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S COLUMN



Significance vs. Success

Gary Walter, president of the Evangelical Covenant Church, has said, "Success is about the life we lead. Significance is what lives on because of the life we live."



This is an important issue for us personally, and for the ministries that we are involved in.

What will be said about the ministry of our congregations 25 years from now? How will the work of the Northwest Conference and our denomination be evaluated? What will be said about you or me?

People are coming to Christ. Our churches are feeding families, sending out mission teams and making a difference in their communities. I recently had a councilwoman from a local community say to me, "This community needs this church. You can't let it fail!" We want these ministries to continue!

I want to challenge you to consider investing in the future of your church, your conference and our denomination! Our current giving is very important, but it is also critical that we invest in the future of our ministries. My wife and I just set up a trust agreement with Covenant Trust that will benefit our conference and denomination when we are gone. We want to help support the on-going work of the Covenant. How about you? Have you made any plans?

Let us know how we can help you support these ministries.

*In His service and yours,
Jim Fretheim, Superintendent*

EUGENE CHO TO SPEAK AT M.O.V.E. 2011!

The Northwest Conference is happy to announce that Eugene Cho has agreed to be the speaker at M.O.V.E. 2011. Cho is the founder and Lead Pastor of Quest Church, an urban, multicultural, and multi-generational Covenant church in Seattle, WA, and the founder and Executive Director of Q Cafe—an innovative nonprofit community cafe and music venue.

Cho and his wife, Minhee, are also the founders of One Day's Wages, "a new movement of people, stories and actions to alleviate extreme global poverty." The strategy of ODW is to create a collaborative movement via integrating Human Relationships, Social Media/Technology, and the Power of Story. ODW promotes awareness, invites simple giving (one day's wages), and supports sustainable relief through partnerships, especially with smaller organizations in developing regions.

M.O.V.E. is "Mission Outreach Venture and Experience," an opportunity for senior high students (9th-12th grade) and youth leaders to have a "hands on" mission experience in an urban setting. In addition to Cho, John Lee and the Church of All Nations praise team will be leading in worship. Look for more details coming soon!

M.O.V.E.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NWC CHURCH PLANTS

NUEVA VIDA COVENANT CHURCH

Pastor Carlos Mendez of Nueva Vida Covenant Church in Monticello, MN, has been very busy since he took over for Javier Carrillo in late summer. Carlos, and his wife, Rosalinda, have started Bible studies for Spanish speakers in six communities around Monticello. They have also been building ministry teams and are doing very intentional outreach to the families in the area.

Attendance has been increasing after being flat for the last two years—even with the uncertainty created by the current immigration environment.

RIVERWOOD COVENANT CHURCH

Riverwood has seen significant growth in attendance, focus and giving over the last few months, according to Keith Robinson, senior pastor. They are working with Rollie Persson from National Covenant Properties to begin building on their property in the spring of 2011. The church's food pantry outreach is serving 100s of families in need in the Rockford area.

NEWDAY COVENANT CHURCH

In August 2010, an "historic event" took place outside the doors of the YMCA in Rochester, MN.

"The three Covenant Churches (Rochester Covenant, Salem Road Covenant, and NewDay Covenant) all met for a combined Bluegrass Worship Service & Potluck," explained John DuBall, pastor of NewDay. "We had over



John DuBall, pastor of NewDay Covenant Church

400 people come from these churches, as well as a number of people from the community (and the YMCA). It has been well over 20 years since the Rochester Covenant Community has come together in a joint effort this way. All those involved are looking forward to gathering again at the YMCA next year."

VERBO EN ACCION COVENANT CHURCH

October was an important month in the life of this Hispanic plant. On Oct. 10 the church baptized 10 people during a special service. The church also hosted its first youth retreat—attended by 12 students—at Covenant Pines Bible Camp in McGregor, MN. And on Oct. 16, Verbo celebrated the opening of Verbo en Accion Covenant Church in Worthington, MN.

"We had six conversions and a supporting group of 25 people, including pastor Ezequiel and his wife Martha," explained Verbo's Minneapolis Pastor Juan Ovando.



CHURCH PLANTING FAQS:

What does the assessment process look like?

The assessment process is a formal evaluation that is done at one of our national assessment centers each year.

An individual, or couple if married, is brought in for an intensive 4-day assessment process that includes the use of several evaluative personality tools, observation, interviews, and group exercises that are designed to give us the best possible snapshot of your readiness to plant an Evangelical Covenant Church.

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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, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota.

NORTHWEST CONFERENCE CALENDAR

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 4 // Covenant Midwinter Conference – Chicago, IL

MARCH 25-26 // Women Ministries Spring Renewal Event – Minneapolis, MN

APRIL 1-2 // M.O.V.E. – Minneapolis, MN

APRIL 28-30 // NWC Annual Meeting – North Mankato, MN

MAY 16-18 // Youth Pastor's Retreat – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

JUNE 11-18 // Adventures in Leadership – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN

JUNE 25-28 // The Feast – Estes Park, CO

JUNE 28-30 // Evangelical Covenant Church Annual Meeting – Estes Park, CO