

Developing fruitful, sustainable ministry

NWC ENGAGES PAST PLANTERS TO COACH NEW PASTORS

By Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting

Church planting is a very challenging ministry call. I've heard it said that the most important thing in church planting is finding the right church planting pastor. The Northwest Conference has invested significant time and energy over the last few years to develop really good systems of pre-assessment and assessment to insure that we have the right people, with the right resources, planting in the right locations.

Studies show us that after identifying the right church planting pastor, however, coaching is the next most important determinate of fruitful, sustainable ministry. Until recently, the task of coaching has fallen to the Director of Church planting for each conference in the Evangelical Covenant Church.

This actually worked pretty well when I first began as the DCP for the Northwest Conference. We had only a handful of church plants, and I could devote significant time to each of these pastors and their church plants.

Over the last five years, we have planted significantly more new

churches, which has stretched the conference's ability to resource and coach each church planter the way we know we must.

Two years ago we began researching ways to better deliver the high level of coaching that our church planters need and deserve. Out of that research we developed a relationship with the folks at Creative Results Management, a Christian coach training organization.

Along with three other DCPs from other conferences, I attended a five-day, 60-hour coach training workshop in October. This resulted in my being licensed to not only coach, but to become a trainer of coaches. In early December, the Covenant hosted a two-day coach training workshop where we invited five former or current church planters from the Northwest Conference, along with a number of coaches from the other conferences in the denomination.

The DCPs who were trained and licensed in October led the training. Those who attended from our conference were, John DuBall, pastor of New Day Covenant Church in Rochester, MN; Brad Kindall, pastor of The Gallery Covenant Church in St. Paul, MN; Remy Diederich, pastor of Cedarbrook Church in Menomonie, WI; and Eric and Bonnie Sparman, pastor and spouse from Excelsior



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Minnehaha Academy celebrates Centennial

Minnehaha Academy will soon reach its 100-year milestone and will commemorate a century of integrating Christian faith and learning. The school is busy preparing many events and activities for the 2012-13 school year to honor Minnehaha's rich heritage and Covenant roots through celebration and thanksgiving.

We hope you come along side us. Details announcing these happenings will be announced this spring.

NWC Children & Family Ministry Luncheon

The Northwest Conference Children & Family Ministry Commission is once again hosting a training event for all Children & Family Staff Ministers on Feb. 23 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Plymouth Covenant Church in Plymouth, MN.

The featured speaker will be Denise Kjesbo, professor and lead faculty of the Master of Arts in Children's and Family Ministry Program at Bethel University in St. Paul, MN. More details will be available soon.

2012 Women's Renewal Conference

The 2012 Women's Renewal Conference, sponsored by Women Ministries of the Northwest Conference, will take place at First Covenant Church in Red Wing, MN, on March 23-24.

- Theme: "Uniquely U"
- Speakers: Debbie Griffith and Meagan Gillan.

Check out www.wmnwc.org or contact Christi Pease, Director of WM NWC, with any questions (director@wmnwc.org or 651.285.9636).

NWC news in your inbox

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

STEPPING FORWARD IN VITALITY

By Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality

In 2008, the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership conducted a national survey of congregations from a wide variety of traditions in an attempt to identify what influences or improves the vitality of a local church. Their findings identified that growing congregations have a clear mission, are open to change, have strategies in place to welcome and connect new members, offer vibrant worship and program opportunities for the congregation, have learned how to manage conflict, and appreciate and recognize volunteers.

Over the last 5 years, the Evangelical Covenant Church, in partnership with its conferences, has been on a journey of not only identifying key factors that influence vitality (The Ten Healthy Missional Markers), but has been developing strategic inputs and resources for pastors and congregations to move forward in pursuing healthy missional growth.

The core components for vitality have been framed in a Vitality Pathway for congregations to serve as a guide for pastors and lay leaders to lead healthy missional change. This pathway includes things like the Veritas and EPIC workshops, Vitality Teams and Behavioral/Relational Covenants for the church. Additional components of the Pathway include the Pulse survey—a vitality assessment tool for congregations to diagnose the "10 Healthy Missional Markers"—and CO-OP coaching for pastors who are leading congregational revitalization.

The conference has extended invitation to our churches to pursue the vitality pathway, and you have responded.

In 2011, we had six new churches participate in the Veritas workshop and form Vitality Teams and Behavioral/Relational Covenants for their congregations. In addition, we had six churches engage in the EPIC workshop for their leaders. The Pulse survey was taken by eight of our churches this past year, and they are using the survey's findings to frame their future ministry development.

Seven of our pastors have been receiving CO-OP coaching designed to help them lead strategically and organizationally. And as pastors and leaders are stepping forward in faith, believing that they as congregations have not reached their full kingdom potential, God is honoring their faithfulness. Fueled by the Holy Spirit, signs of new life and missional momentum are emerging within these congregations.

We now look forward to 2012 and the opportunity to partner with more churches in pursuit of going deeper with Christ and further in mission. An additional component we look to add to the Vitality Pathway is a strategic ministry planning workshop. This workshop will help congregations understand and implement a strategic ministry planning process to move them forward in becoming a healthy missional church.

As we step forward with you we anticipate God's continued guidance and blessing as together we pursue congregational vitality throughout our conference.

SOONG-CHAN RAH TO SPEAK AT 2012 NWC ANNUAL MEETING

The 2012 Northwest Conference Annual Meeting, which will feature the theme "Mission Friends: Love Mercy, Do Justice,"

will take place April 20-21 at Alexandria Covenant Church in Alexandria, MN. "Love Mercy, Do Justice" is one of the Five Smooth Stones (core ministries) of the Evangelical Covenant Church. In keeping with the theme of this year's meeting, Dr. Soong-Chan Rah will be the keynote speaker for both the NWC Annual Meeting, and the Ministerial Association Annual Meeting, which takes place April 19-20 at the same location.

Rah is Milton B. Engebretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, IL, and the author of "The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity." He is formerly the founding Senior Pastor of the Cambridge Community Fellowship Church (CCFC), a multi-ethnic, urban ministry-focused church committed to living out the values of racial reconciliation and social justice in the urban context. He currently serves on the board of Catalyst Leadership Center and Sojourners/Call to Renewal.

Brochures and registration materials will be mailed to our churches soon, so make plans to select your delegates and register.

LOVE MERCY, DO JUSTICE



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN YOUTH MINISTRY

By Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry

Preacher, teacher, event planner, counselor, mentor, curriculum writer and EMT are just a few of the hats an average youth pastor wears. The Northwest Conference is committed to coming alongside our youth pastors to provide them with resources to equip them in these roles.

We meet monthly for our Youth Pastor's Connection where we are challenged and encouraged by each other as well as guest speakers like Jim Beilby, professor at Bethel University, and Heather Flies, youth pastor at Wooddale Church and national speaker.

We gather annually for a youth pastor's retreat as well as the denomination's national Youth Workers Connection (this year, in Chicago). We also partner with other organizations to provide access to some great voices in youth ministry.

One such partnership is with Recharge, a one-day, multi-denominational training event for youth and children's workers held in January of each year. The Northwest Conference has been part of the leadership team of this event since its beginning.

This year, over 750 youth workers from the upper Midwest gathered at St. Andrews Church in Mahtomedi, MN. Encouraging both paid and volunteer ministry leaders was a strong emphasis of the day. This year,



More than 750 youth workers and volunteers attended Recharge 2012 at St. Andrews Church in Mahtomedi, MN, on Jan. 7.

Janet Anderson, a long-time volunteer at Oak Heights Covenant Church in Hutchinson, MN, was publically honored for her leadership and commitment to ministry.

A number of Covenant churches use Recharge as a second semester kick-off for their leaders. Crossview Covenant in Mankato, MN, has been taking its leadership team for several years. Their tradition is to end the day by going out to dinner to process what they've learned.

This year, The Sanctuary Covenant Church in Minneapolis, MN, brought a number of

leaders from the youth (Mosaic) and children's (Royal Hood) ministries. Edrin Williams, youth pastor, describes the day: "Recharge 2012 was a great opportunity for the Mosaic team to be together for some fellowship, sound teaching and great worship! We were inspired, challenged and loved on from start to finish. It was definitely a great start to our 2012 leader development plan!"

If you're interested in learning more about the different leadership development opportunities for NWC youth workers, contact Ginny Olson at gabby@nwc-cov.org.

I LOVE THE CHURCH!

By Mark R. Stromberg, Superintendent

Several years ago, former Superintendent Jim Fretheim shared a message at a Northwest Conference Annual Meeting entitled, "I love the Church!" His words were both inspiring and challenging to me. His message caused me to consider my own commitments and convictions.

In retrospect, I realized that, like Jim, I love the Church. And, like Jim, I do not love it because it is easy or fun, but because it is the body of Christ. It is his bride. It is to be a reflection of the kingdom of God.

Yet, due to the challenges facing it, we do not always experience the peace and joy that we associate with our calling as children of the Heavenly Father. Being part of the Church, being part of a church, can be difficult—very difficult. After all, in this world we will have troubles. It is why our Lord fervently prayed for his followers; that they would be one in unity and love. Yet, my commitment to it runs much deeper than whether it is always reflective

of the unity and love that Jesus desires. After all, in my own sinfulness I am also part of the problem!

Recently, I have been reflecting a lot on the nature of the Church and pondering my own perceptions of it. I realize that my attitudes and expectations have been shaped, to a large degree, by a culture of success and self-fulfillment. And I do not believe I am alone in this. Sadly, these things have permeated much of our church life. We have been conditioned to want things to be enjoyable and fulfilling. We want excitement and variety. We feed on energy and emotion. Quite simply, we want church to be painless.

After all, we see billboards and fliers promising a church experience that will cause the participants to forget that they are even at church at all! We hear self-help messages and implied low expectations of participation and sacrifice; hardly a call to "take up the cross" or to "pour oneself out" in the name of Jesus.



Moreover, I wonder how long it has been for some of us since we last heard a sermon addressing what the Bible has to say about sin and judgment and hell (or even heaven for that matter).

When I decided to attend seminary, my former pastor, David Larsen, said these words to me: "Remember Mark, whatever you win people with is what you win them to." In other words, if we set the expectation for pain-free community and painless participation, then we should not be surprised by our own disillusionment (or that of others) when the going gets tough.

However, if we rightly understand that our call to community is a call to duty and discipleship, we will be better equipped to navigate the challenging days ahead in our own local congregation. We will be more prepared to do the right thing simply because it is the right thing to do; and because we love the Church ... for we love it's Lord.

DEVELOPING FRUITFUL, SUSTAINABLE MINISTRY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Covenant Church in Excelsior, MN.

The focus was on training these individuals to coach our newest church planters from the day they begin, and continue that coaching relationship for the first 5 years of the new church. Who better to coach than someone who has recently experienced the very things the new planting pastor is facing.

The coaching consists of a monthly face-to-face meeting with the coach and church planter, two phone contacts each month and occasional contact via e-mail or Skype. The coaches were trained in a Christian coaching methodology, and they are being provided coaching content through modules that sync with the church planter training we deliver to each new planter and congregation.

I am very excited about what this coaching model will do to “up our game” in church planting. We can deliver the high degree of coaching we must have and can contextualize it through these individual coaching relationships. We can also ensure that we deliver the content that we desire through these relationships and can customize it based on the needs of individual planters and situations.

Everyone needs an advocate who understands the unique pressures and stresses of the ministry they’re engaged in. They also need someone who will challenge assumptions by asking the right questions, listen well, provide access to the right resources at the right time, and help them to see other possibilities.

This new coaching system will provide a

WHAT THEY’RE SAYING: RESPONSES FROM COACHES

“I’m a bit jaded when it comes to conferences and workshops. Been there. Done that. But this was one of the best workshops I’ve ever attended. It gave me some practical tools for not only coaching pastors but talking to people in general. ... I think it will make me a better coach, counselor, friend and husband. I highly recommend it.” – *Remy Diederich, lead pastor of Cedarbrook Church in Menomonie, WI*

“One of the most important calls as a pastor and teacher is to ‘equip the saints for the work of the ministry.’ ... I’m excited to put this into practice on a daily basis in working with our church planters in our conference. I believe this avenue of support and coaching will enable us to have healthier pastors and churches as we move forward.” – *John DuBall, lead pastor of New Day Covenant Church in Rochester, MN*

“Looking back on our own experience as a church planting couple, we would have benefited greatly from having a coach—or better yet, a coaching couple—to come alongside us. Church planting can be very lonely work at times, and when a supportive church community doesn’t exist yet, coaching can help provide a vital safety net of encouragement. ... Church plant coaching is probably going to prove itself to be an incredibly important part of God’s vision for church planting—of supporting pastors and spouses—working together as a Covenant family to be ‘Mission Friends’ to communities right in our own backyards.” – *Eric and Bonnie Sparrman, pastor/spouse, Excelsior Covenant Church in Excelsior, MN*

way to do all of those things and more. The coaching model is also scalable, which will allow us to increase our level of planting without sacrificing the quality of what we are currently offering. Ministry is changing, the world is changing, and we are moving forward to find the best ways possible to engage that world with the Good News of Jesus Christ through our church planting efforts.

NORTHWEST CONFERENCE CALENDAR

JANUARY 28-30 // Youth Workers Connection – Chicago, IL

JANUARY 30 – FEBRUARY 3 // Midwinter – Chicago, IL

MARCH 23-24 // Women’s Renewal Conference – Red Wing, MN

MARCH 30-31 // M.O.V.E. – First Covenant, Minneapolis, MN

APRIL 19-21 // NWC Annual Meeting – Alexandria, MN

JUNE 16-23 // Adventures in Leadership - Grand Marais, MN

JUNE 21-23 // ECC Annual Meeting – Irvine, CA

JULY 15-20 // CHIC – Knoxville, TN

SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 1 // Town and Country Workshop – Grand Rapids, MN

OCTOBER 1-3 // Ministerial Association Retreat – Grand Rapids, MN

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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.