

# Delegate Summary

## Introduction

The following is a distillation of the key decisions and highlights of this year's Annual Meeting to assist you in sharing what you have learned with your church. Among the potential opportunities to share with your congregation: highlighting key activities and decisions during a business meeting or worship service; providing a report to your congregation's board, council, or leadership team; submitting a written or oral report during a church business meeting, including a brief report in your church newsletter.

## Key Decisions and Highlights

- John Wenrich, Director of Congregational Vitality for the Evangelical Covenant Church and featured speaker for the meetings, challenged churches to consider their own vitality through the lens of the activity of the Holy Spirit and in light of internal and external challenges.
- Steve Dawson, President of National Covenant Properties, brought greetings and a ministry update from the Evangelical Covenant Church to delegates at both the Ministerial Association and Northwest Conference Annual Meetings. David Kersten, Dean of North Park Theological Seminary, was also in attendance.
- Northwest Conference Superintendent Mark R. Stromberg, who was re-elected to serve another four-year term, shared about the many great things that churches can do when united together in service.
- During his report, Stromberg also announced new resources the NWC will make available to pastors and lay leaders on the topic of human sexuality throughout 2015-16. The NWC will host a series of workshops and conversation groups designed to assist congregations in learning to minister well from within the position of the ECC.
- Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality, emphasized the important role that sharing stories can play in building momentum in church health. He highlighted the story of Zion Covenant Church in Ellsworth, WI, and shared a video featuring Zion's story.
- In addition to providing updates on "50 by '25," Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting, shared about new churches and the strong impact they are having in the region. Brown introduced the four new church fellowship groups, which are Catalyst Covenant Church (St. Paul, MN), Genesis Covenant Church (St. Louis Park, MN), Nuevo Pacto Covenant Church (Minneapolis, MN) and Renew Covenant Church (Eau Claire, WI).
- Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry, referenced the NWC's efforts to equip staff and volunteer leaders in Conference churches through ongoing initiatives like Imagine, Go:Serve, the CY&F Sabbath Retreat, and monthly Connection gatherings for leaders, among other programs. She also highlighted her office's role in offering ministry support to volunteers and lay leaders, personal and professional development opportunities for pastors and staff, monthly communication to ministry leaders, and efforts to equip solo pastors, church planters and parents in NWC churches.

- Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry, shared highlights from MOVE, a ministry service event for high school students, which took place a week prior to the Annual Meeting. MOVE 2015 featured a “Shark Tank” experience where all 19 youth groups were challenged to develop new ministry ideas to reach their communities. Two churches went home with grants from the NWC to help “their kingdom dreams become reality.” She also highlighted other NWC youth events like MUUUCE and Adventures in Leadership, which call students to closer relationships with Christ.
- Jeff Burton, Director of Pastoral Care & Development, and Judy Swanberg, Associate Director of Pastoral Care & Development, gave a joint report of their work to support the “personal and professional growth of our pastors and ministry staff.” The ministry area of Pastoral Care & Development in the NWC supports over 500 church staff and other leaders, spread over four states. PC&D staff announced the creation of new “Mini-Retreats” for pastors, as well as newly developed resources to help churches reformat their Pastoral Relations or Mutual Ministry Committees.
- Minnehaha Academy President Donna Harris shared many highlights from the life and activities of the school, including the recent groundbreaking on a 3,000 sq. ft. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Lab at the Upper School, an increase in the school’s scholarship endowment fund, new language immersion courses at the Middle School, and a renovated science exploration lab and innovation center at the Lower School.
- Delegates to the meeting participated in the “Celebration of Mission” Ministry Fair where they had opportunity to learn about a variety of Conference and Denominational ministries and organizations.
- Various choirs and musical ensembles from Salem Covenant Church led attendees in worship during the Friday evening worship service. The 2015 Candidates for Ordination & Commissioning (10) were also recognized and prayed for during the service.
- A special offering taken during the service raised an additional \$1,925 to support CHIC 2015 scholarships for students in NWC churches.
- Maplewood Covenant Church (Maplewood, MN) and Evangelical Covenant Church (Deerwood, MN) were honored with a special Living Legacy Litany and a video showing highlights from throughout the ministry life of Maplewood. Both churches held their final services earlier in 2015.
- Worship service attendees also heard testimony from two students enrolled in the Solid Rock Discipleship Program at Lake Beauty Bible Camp, both of whom thanked supporters and relayed the impact the discipleship school has made in their lives.
- During Saturday’s Business Session, delegates approved a ballot that included: electing Jim Volling (Excelsior Covenant Church, Excelsior, MN) to serve as NWC Executive Board Chairperson, electing Sheila Anonsen (Knollbrook Covenant Church, Fargo, ND) and Dennis Edwards (Sanctuary Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN) to 5-year terms on the NWC Executive Board, and electing Chris Gehrz (Salem Covenant Church, New Brighton, MN), Greg Karpenko (Bethlehem Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN) and Jane Matheson (Linwood Covenant Church, Wyoming, MN) to 5-year terms on the Minnehaha Academy Board of Trustees.
- Delegates also approved the MA budget, and the full NWC budget of \$1,497,013—which includes a designated Church Planting budget of \$418,445—at the meeting’s second Business Session on Saturday morning.