

# MINISTRY REPORT 2014



**STRENGTHEN** CHURCHES

SALEM COVENANT  
CHURCH

**ANNUAL  
MEETING**

NEW BRIGHTON,  
MINNESOTA

**APRIL 16-18, 2015**



**northwest conference**

developing leaders. thriving churches.



# Strengthen Churches

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,  
Greetings in the Name of our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ!

Welcome to the **2015 Northwest Conference Annual Meeting**; a time when we look back at the blessings of the past year and look forward to the opportunities that stand before us. We have been a *blessed people*! The question is whether or not we will remain a *faithful people* in the midst of the challenges we face in our local church contexts, but also together as Covenant churches joining for the purpose of work and witness to the power of the Gospel to transform lives in our region.



These are not easy days for the Church. Rather, these are days filled with difficult challenges that press in upon us as we seek to be faithful to the Gospel; proclaiming a faith that has been handed down to us by faithful, godly women and men. Would they be pleased with what they see? Let's face it ... **we are seeking to live obedient lives in a day when the culture is rapidly changing** ... a day in which, for many, the only thing deemed immoral is to deem anything immoral! Ours is a day that will require perseverance, graciousness, tenacity, love, wisdom, obedience, faithfulness, patience, sacrifice and a commitment to the *Word of God as the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine and conduct*. It is with these imperatives in front of us that we focus our attention on the strengthening of churches to live in to our holy calling as members of the body of Christ.

Further, we know that the *journey toward vitality can be both adventurous and treacherous*. Within our region, we have seen examples of both ... sometimes within the same church, at the same time. This can be a source of both encouragement and discouragement ... sometimes within the same church, at the same time. Yet, God has called us to **share the good news of Christ** in a world that desperately needs a good word. And this can be best accomplished as we trust in the Lord of the harvest, but also as we do all we can to strengthen our "ministry-muscle." After all, the life of faith is comprised of trusting the Lord for those things outside of our control, yet also accepting responsibility for those things over which we have some level of control. *Dependence and accountability* ...

We are especially grateful to have John Wenrich, Director of Congregational Vitality for the Evangelical Covenant Church, with us throughout our time together. We look forward to what he will share with us through his proclamation of the Word of God and the facilitation of workshops for both NWC pastors and delegates. We will also hear reports with an eye toward giving witness to God's faithfulness.

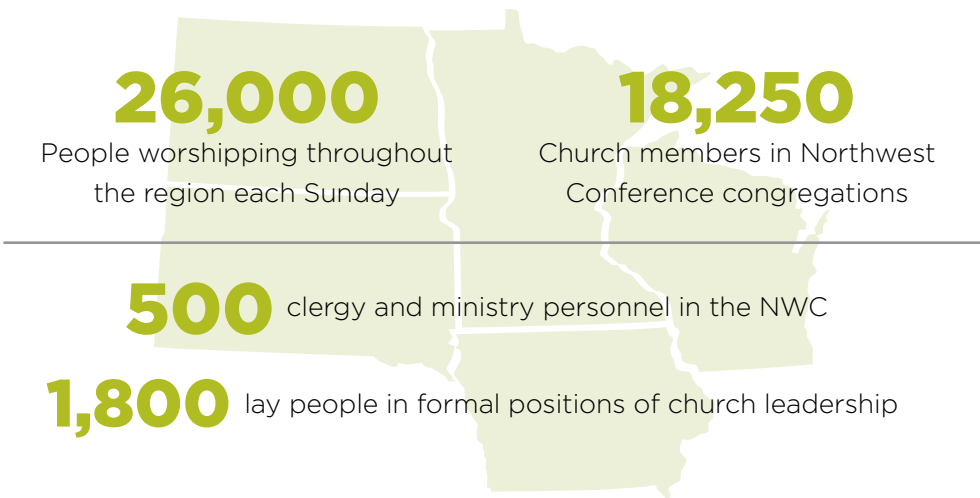
As always, we will celebrate the beginning of new churches and also the witness of churches that have breathed their last breath to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. All these things we will do because it is good and right to give thanks to God, even as we look forward to doing all we can to strengthen our individual ministries and our joint ministry as Covenant churches working together within the Northwest Conference. Thanks for being a part of this gathering. May the Holy Spirit strengthen your own resolve to be faithful in the midst of the challenges you face in being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Courage!  
Mark R. Stromberg, Superintendent



## Developing leaders. Thriving churches.

The **Northwest Conference** is a mission region of the **Evangelical Covenant Church**. It is comprised of roughly **140 churches** in Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. These churches come in all shapes and sizes. They are **urban, ethnic, town & country** and **suburban**.



Beyond local churches, the ministry of the NWC is also bolstered by **five Bible camps** and **Minnehaha Academy**; a Pre-K through 12th grade school on two campuses in Minneapolis, where Christian faith and learning are integrated.

### Ministry Priorities

**CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY**

**CHURCH PLANTING**

**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY**

### Ministry Support

**PASTORAL CARE & DEVELOPMENT**

**ADMINISTRATION**

**COMMUNICATION**

**FINANCE**



I am grateful for the opportunity I have to serve as Director of Congregational Vitality for the Northwest Conference. The NWC holds Congregational Vitality as one of three ministry priorities, which allows me the privilege to walk alongside of pastors and congregations in their pursuit of greater vitality. For us, vitality is not about sustaining and maintaining; it's about **thriving, growing and depending on God** to lead the congregation deeper in Christ and further with Christ in mission.



Lovett Weems, Director of The Lewis Center for Church Leadership, reflects on the need for congregational vitality with these observations: “Every congregation begins as an outwardly-focused group of believers, intent on reaching out to those with whom they want to share the Gospel message. The temptation for a church in times of change, however, is to turn primarily inward and become more of a members-focused organization, thus turning away from its earlier identity as an outwardly-focused, mission-directed church.” Therefore, experience demonstrates that to be healthy and missional, congregations must incorporate regular disciplines of **honest, humble assessment and renewal** centered on God’s mission for the church.

On the following page I have provided some additional thoughts from some of our churches who have chosen to pursue vitality in their current season of life. I pray that their testimonies will inspire other congregations to do the same.

*For the cause of Christ and His Church!*  
*Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality*

WHAT ARE WE SEEING?  
MORE NWC CHURCHES ARE:

- Prayerfully discerning, and pursuing a renewed sense of mission and vision clarity for their current ministry contexts.
- Welcoming newcomers and finding ways to connect them into their faith community.
- Renewing a commitment to being “good neighbors” and finding fresh ways to bless their communities.
- Experiencing an increase in whole life stewardship by their people and the joy of investing themselves in the mission of the church.



BETHEL MISSION COVENANT,  
ELLSWORTH, WI

“We are a 135 year old church wondering what God has for us next and we began talking with the NWC about Congregational Vitality nearly a year ago. Through that time the NWC has been there with us every step of the way, providing resources, advice, encouraging us to seek God as a church, and helping us to get the conversation started.”

SALEM MISSION COVENANT,  
PENNOCK, MN

“Veritas launched us into a new season of productive ministry and brought new missional energy and excitement to our fellowship.”

EVANGELICAL COVENANT,  
INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MN

“The vitality journey that has included Veritas, Epic and Pulse has allowed us as a church to prioritize and focus ministry both inwardly



and outwardly. Instead of making ministry primarily about programs we are now being challenged to view ministry more as a lifestyle as we learn to ‘love like Jesus’ and to ‘be a greater blessing to our community.’”

BETHLEHEM COVENANT,  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN

“The Congregational Vitality Pathway helped us to discern what the Holy Spirit was already doing in the community, gave us tools to negotiate conflict, inspired cultural

change, and fostered growth of a healthy and missional identity as a congregation.”

UNITED COVENANT,  
CLEAR LAKE, WI

“We have implemented significant positive change in our church structure and ministry because of the Vitality process. The resources provided have helped our church take much needed steps toward a healthy, missional culture.”



I want to begin my report for this year’s Annual Meeting booklet where I believe it should begin, with a huge thanks to all of you. This last year we rolled out a bold new initiative with **“50 by ’25: Our Mission to Plant.”** With this announcement at last year’s Annual Meeting we committed to the planting of **50 new churches over the next 10 years.** This is a very exciting goal, but also one that will stretch us beyond what we have experienced in the past. Our call was for every church to answer the question: “What can we do to see another new church started in the Northwest Conference?” Our belief is that every church can and should do something. Church Planting is a part of the New Testament model for mission. We believe that planting is within the reach of every church as we take whatever we have and place it in Jesus’ capable hands. There is no shortage, no scarcity, when we trust our efforts to the Lord.



Our Church Planting efforts have always revolved around partnerships. Partnerships with the denomination, the Conference, and our local churches. Following last year’s Annual Meeting, where the theme was **“Start Churches,”** we had many of you contact the Conference office wondering how you and your church could get involved in making the dream a reality. The vision seems to be taking root and growing! We’ve had individual churches commit to parent a new church plant, and we’ve had groups of churches join together and pool resources to see a new church started. So thanks again for your willingness to say yes to Jesus, and see new mission outposts started throughout the Northwest Conference.

*By His Grace and for His Glory, Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting*

UPDATE ON “50 BY ’25: OUR MISSION TO PLANT”

Since last May we have had four new churches started under this new initiative. On May 1, **Catalyst Covenant Church**, led by Pastor Jeff Olson, was birthed. Catalyst had partner churches join them in getting started. Emmanuel Covenant in Shoreview, Salem Covenant in New Brighton, and Christ Church, a Covenant church in Rhode Island, all partnered to make this plant possible. Catalyst meets Sundays at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.

On June 1, **Genesis Covenant Church**, led by Pastor Steve Wiens, was started. Genesis Covenant meets on Sundays at Sabes Jewish Community Center in St. Louis

Park, MN. They have a partnership with Christ Presbyterian Church.

On Aug. 1, **New Covenant Church (Nuevo Pacto)** was birthed. New Covenant is led by Pastor Mauricio Dell’Arciprete. They meet on Sundays at their parent church, Bethlehem Covenant, a 101-year-old church that is parenting a new church start for the very first time.

Oct. 1 saw the beginnings of **Renew Covenant Church** in Eau Claire, WI. Renew is led by Pastor Jamie Staples. Renew has a number of



key partnerships. First Covenant in Red Wing, Cedarbrook Church in Menomonie, WI, United Covenant in Clear Lake, WI, Bethel Covenant in Ellsworth, WI, Zion Covenant in Ellsworth, WI, and First Covenant in River Falls, WI. This is one of the first times we have had a group of district churches rally to see the planting of a new Covenant Church.

Church planting is undeniable proof of our love for our neighbors and our communities. Thank you again for your faithfulness in living into the Great Commission.



CATALYST

**LOCATION:** St. Paul, MN  
**PLANTER:** Jeff Olson  
**DATE STARTED:** May, 2014  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “In December we moved to weekly worship services, and we have found that many within our community are new to church, faith or are connecting with a church for the first time in years—and we think that is marvelous. Now with a little over 2 months of weekly worship services under our belt, we see just under 75 joining us every week on Sundays, 3 small groups studying the word together outside of Sunday mornings, and each week we are seeing new faces at our events, gatherings and studies and are eager to join us, grow and serve. For many on our team this adventure in faith has radically changed their lives. I am beyond thankful for the team God is building.”

CITY OF LAKES

**LOCATION:** Minneapolis, MN  
**PLANTER:** Dave Berge  
**DATE STARTED:** October, 2013  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “This first year saw us go from a committed core of just over 20 people, to a fellowship that now consists of over 70 people who are now regularly and actively engaged in our ministry. Numbers

aren’t everything, but they are something and a sign that the Covenant and this Conference’s commitment to Church Planting is bearing fruit for the kingdom. Our prayer for this year is that we would continue to grow deep and wide, and that our congregation would become self-sustaining to the point where we’re able to begin planning to plant another church by the Fall of 2017.”



GENESIS

**LOCATION:** St. Louis Park, MN  
**PLANTER:** Steve Wiens  
**DATE STARTED:** June, 2014  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “After three monthly preview services in July, August, and September, we began meeting for weekly worship on Oct. 12. Since then we average over 250 people each Sunday morning. We have a generationally-diverse community—lots and lots of kids and more grey hair than you’d expect for a church plant. More than 40 volunteers show up on Sundays, working together so that those who come to Genesis might hear an invitation from God into a new beginning.”

GRACE OUTREACH

**LOCATION:** New Brighton, MN  
**PLANTER:** Paul Robinson  
**DATE STARTED:** July, 2013

**THE QUICK STORY:** “When we left Totem Pole Park (former meeting place) our average weekly attendance was 35 and now we’re averaging near 50 each week. My prayer is that we would continue to ‘prosper even as our souls prosper.’ We can see God’s blessings all around us. Our Children’s Ministry fully launched last year ... thanks be to God! Our Praise Team is growing, maturing and learning how to lead us into God’s presence. I am amazed at what God has done in this group.”

LA BENDICION

**LOCATION:** Brooklyn Park, MN  
**PLANTER:** Juan Lopez  
**DATE STARTED:** March, 2009  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “La Bendicion continues to develop new leaders through CHET Northwest Conference. ... We continue to strengthen our relationship with Redeemer Covenant Church involving our children and youth at their programs like AWANA, youth camps and youth mission trips. We pray to continue to further develop this relationship.”

LAOTIAN

**LOCATION:** Brooklyn Center, MN  
**PLANTER:** Soudinh Penkhay  
**DATE STARTED:** July, 2002  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “Praise the Lord Jesus Christ who is still blessing the Laotian Covenant Church in 2014. With God’s help we served the Lord Jesus together. He sent our Gospel team to do outreach with non-Christians in the Lao community and share about the Lord Jesus Christ. Many people visit our church every



Sunday and some have come to believe in Jesus.”

LIVING SPRINGS

**LOCATION:** Brandon, SD  
**INTERIM PASTOR:** Ben Zabel  
**DATE STARTED:** January, 2000  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “We have seen growth in so many areas: attendance, small group participation, youth ministry, financial giving, baptisms, new members, worship ministry, and community fellowship events. We are regularly worshipping 130+ people on Sunday mornings, which is up from averaging around 100 last year at this point. God is doing amazing things!”

NEW COVENANT

**LOCATION:** Minneapolis, MN  
**PLANTER:** Mauricio Dell’Arciprete  
**DATE STARTED:** October, 2014  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “New Covenant Church is a growing, multi-cultural community. Dozens of families gather each Sunday to seek God’s presence, learn from God’s Word and enjoy fellowship as a part of God’s family. In the fall of 2014, we started nine Small Groups. A total of 68 individuals were a part of these groups: Women, Men, Couples, Youth, and Children had Bible Studies designed specifically to help them grow in their relationship with Jesus.”

NUEVA VIDA

**LOCATION:** Rogers, MN  
**PLANTER:** Carlos Mendez  
**DATE STARTED:** January, 2006  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “The Lord gave us grace before the mobile home

park managers at Maple Hill Estates in Corcoran, MN, and opened a room designated to community events to have our Spanish classes and Bible Studies all year long and for FREE. The Lord has extended his grace and love by opening Northridge Fellowship Baptist Church doors indefinitely for us to continue our work for the Lord in Rogers, MN. ... The Lord has instructed us to minister to kids and teenagers in our communities in order to reach their parents and other adults, so this would be our goal in years to come—so help us God to achieve.”



RENEW

**LOCATION:** Eau Claire, WI  
**PLANTER:** Jamie Staples  
**DATE STARTED:** August, 2014  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “We are seeing two great things happen as we plant. The first is that people who have been wounded by church are finding that we are a trustworthy place to come. Praise God that people that were at the point of giving up on church can find healing and hope in the body of Christ. The other is that new people, that haven’t been to church in a long time, are finding Jesus again. I am thankful for what Jesus is doing through Renew Church.”

ROOTS

**LOCATION:** St. Paul, MN  
**PLANTER:** Touger Thao  
**DATE STARTED:** June, 2013  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “After a few months of preparation, last April, my wife and I and this small group of misfits kicked off our weekly worship gathering in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood in Saint Paul, MN. We started off as strangers but through blood, sweat and tears, we’ve moved toward becoming dear friends and our circle is ever increasing. We’ve grown from a small group of 12, to 45 regular attenders. We believe God has amazing plans for us this year, and we can’t wait to realize them and share them with you!”

VERBO EN ACCION

**LOCATION:** Minneapolis, MN  
**PLANTER:** Juan Ovando  
**DATE STARTED:** April, 2009  
**THE QUICK STORY:** “First of all, I want to give thanks to God because we have seen His glory and power in every service we have—knowing it is only by His mercy and love He has for us that we have been able to achieve anything so far at our church. This past year of 2014, has brought us a big success in being more close to each other as the family we are—and because of this, more new people have come, wanting to know more about God.”



Learn more about Northwest Conference Church Planting at [northwestconference.org](http://northwestconference.org)



**“Whoever tells the stories defines the culture.” – Dr. David Walsh**

In a complex and rapidly changing world, many voices compete for the attention of our children. The Church is uniquely positioned to **shape this next generation for Christ**, and we must be mindful as we minister to this generation that:

- is the most diverse generation ever
- is passionate, entrepreneurial and worried about the environment
- is able to multitask across multiple screens
- chooses visuals over text
- now carries in their pockets that which used to sit on our desks
- thanks to their parents, is born with a digital footprint on social media
- and suffers from a constant fear of missing out



The challenges and opportunities are real. The Northwest Conference is committed to helping churches engage with this new generation of children and families. It is our hope that **young people will be equipped to keep the story of Christ and Christ’s work in the world front and center** so that this next generation will grow up with a strong faith.

Through our commitment to resourcing, encouraging and equipping churches in Children & Family Ministry, we are seeing progress in the following areas:

- churches are implementing current research to help equip young people develop a faith that sticks post-high school
- churches are embracing partnerships with families, understanding that it is the church and the home working together that has the strongest impact
- ministry leaders are actively pursuing child protection and safety measures to ensure our ministries are safe places for our most vulnerable populations
- ministry leaders are networking with each other, sharing ministry resources and encouraging each other to grow personally, spiritually and professionally
- Churches are partnering with community leaders to dream of new and creative ways to bring children and family ministry outside their walls and into the community

**God is moving in exciting ways in our churches**, and I am honored to help build a strong foundation of faith in our children by pursuing effective and strategic ministry with our littlest ones and their families.

Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry





MOVE

Mission Outreach Venture and Experience (**MOVE**) is an opportunity for senior high students (9th-12th grade) and youth leaders to have a hands-on mission experience in an urban setting. At MOVE 2014, students and leaders explored the theme “Lose Yourself.”

MUUUCE

**MUUUCE** stands for “The Most Unbelievable, Ultimate, Urban, Camping Experience” for middle-schoolers and junior-highers. The theme for this 28th annual event was “EPIC: Extraordinary Preposterous Incredible Creations.” Crossroads Church in Woodbury, MN makes this event possible with its amazing team of leaders and volunteers.

AIL

**Adventures in Leadership (AIL)** is a select camp for high school students that intentionally develops and strengthens leadership skills. Recently, several other Conferences in the ECC have taken the concept and developed AILs of their own.

VIVE

**VIVE** is a college readiness program for students in grades 6 through 12. It focuses on students who are the



first in their families to go to college and those who are under-resourced. It is done in connection with North Park University in Chicago.

RECHARGE

Each January, Covenant churches from the NWC join with 700 other children and youth volunteers for a day of training and encouragement at three locations in the Twin Cities, Fargo and Cedar Rapids. **Recharge** included powerful speakers and workshops on a variety of topics. We always have a strong Covenant presence at this event and we hope you can make plans to bring your team next year.

C&FM CONNECTION

We gather on the third Thursday of most months at Salem Covenant Church, where children and family ministry leaders connect for lunch, prayer, encouragement and learning. Carpool with your favorite youth pastor!

YOUTH PASTOR'S CONNECTION

The gatherings are designed for encouragement, connecting and learning. They happen once a month during the school year (except December).



IMAGINE

On Nov. 8, 2014, the NWC Children & Family Commission gathered staff and volunteers serving children and families for a day of affirmation, training and conversation. **Imagine** was free and included lunch, worship and nationally known children’s ministry leader, Jim Wideman. Salem Covenant Church served as host and we look forward to offering **Imagine** again next fall.

GO:SERVE

An event for families with kids in PreK-upper elementary school, **Go: Serve** will be held at Redeemer Covenant Church in Brooklyn Park on May 2, 2015 and is an opportunity for families to learn and serve together in a family friendly, yet stretching environment.

SABBATH RETREAT

Healthy ministries begin with healthy leaders. **The Children, Youth & Family Ministry Sabbath Retreat** was held at Covenant Pines March 1-3, 2015. This retreat was a chance for children, youth and family ministry leaders to get away, get some rest, and be with God. Stay tuned for more opportunities like this.



**“In a space of just five years, the percentage of teenagers attending church every week has plummeted by 25 percent”** (Scott Thumma, “A Health Checkup for U.S. Churches,” Hartford Institute for Religion Research).

Many of our churches are feeling the effects of this statistic. Youth ministry leaders cite an increased emphasis on athletics, packed school schedules, as well as families focusing on other priorities besides church. This rapidly changing adolescent culture means that **youth workers have to become even more innovative and strategic** as they figure out ways to minister to adolescents and their families.

The mission of Youth Ministry in the Northwest Conference is to come alongside these hard-working, creative youth leaders and support them in their efforts through **education, encouragement and networking**. We also collaborate with our churches, camps and other organizations to offer discipleship- and leadership-oriented events for adolescents and for leaders. These events are regularly being evaluated and tweaked to make sure we’re meeting the needs of our churches.

The largest event that our denomination hosts is CHIC—a triennial conference for high school students. The NWC already has **1,200 people registered to attend**. Years of planning, prayer and fundraising go into this experience. Pray for our students as they grapple with the call of Christ on their lives and for our leaders as they serve.

While fewer adolescents may be attending church on a regular basis, it doesn’t mean that Christ is any less at work in the lives of our students. It just means that we need to be strategic in our discipleship and leadership development efforts. It is a privilege to serve alongside those who seek to understand the shifting teenage culture and to creatively minister in the midst of it.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry





# PASTORAL CARE & DEVELOPMENT

Within the broader mission of developing healthy missional leaders our role focuses on the personal and professional growth of our pastors and ministry staff. In framing the need for such a ministry in 2013, our NWC Superintendent spoke of the unique challenges of pastoral ministry in these days: *“Pastoral ministry has never been easy. Yet, it is becoming more challenging with each passing year. While many churches are seeking to become more healthy and missional, they are faced with greater obstacles that hinder both health and growth.”* – Mark Stromberg



The challenges, (personal and professional) have led to a staggering dropout rate.

### Professional pressures

**Consumerism of today’s Christian** – Most pastors were not trained to run a “small business” in a fast changing culture where there is no built-in loyalty of “customers” and an abundance of choices, but that is what ministry often feels like today.

**The draining nature of counseling** – The complexity of people’s problems today can be overwhelming for the compassionate pastor who got into this to help people but often with no formal training in counseling.

**Speed of culture and information** – Our minds are overwhelmed with an exponentially growing amount of information, drawing us away from contemplation, which is at the heart of our calling and our health.

### Personal pressures

**Difficulty in achieving any helpful separation between personal life and ministry life** – When expressions are used like “the church family,” it certainly emphasizes that this is a group of people a pastor leads but also a group that are like relatives in some sense. It is quite difficult to make the separation between personal and professional.

**Ignorance of good mental and emotional practices** – Pastors often see signs of burnout as something else to be conquered as opposed to a warning sign that I am going about things in the wrong way.

We feel blessed to have the opportunity to try to minister to these personal and professional challenges through one-on-one connections and group interactions.

### Last Year’s New Priorities

**Clergy Care Team** (20 Pastors serving 15 Districts) was formed and is functioning, conducting quarterly contact with each credentialed pastor.

**Spiritual Directors Network** – Spring and fall retreats continue to be held for our Spiritual Directors Network, which has grown to 30 members; retreat costs are partially supplemented by the Ministerial Association. Two small group direction models were piloted this year under Judy’s leadership, one for pastors in the metro area and one for year-round camp staff at Covenant Pines. Judy was also invited to provide spiritual direction for students in the first year of the Solid Rock Discipleship Program at Lake Beauty.

*Jeff Burton, Director of Pastoral Care & Development*  
*Judy Swanberg, Associate Director of Pastoral Care & Development*

## Mini-Retreats

One of our projects for 2015 is the planning of some one day events or 24-hour **Mini-Retreats, focused on relevant topics and/or affinity groups**. Our goal is to offer these experiences in regional settings so that the cost and travel time is manageable. We have some excellent people resources right here in our Conference for leading such experiences. The retreats will not only provide good resources but the experience of **building deeper and healthier peer relationships** (with most designed for 10-20 participants). Our goal is to have four events per year.

Some of the Mini-Retreats will focus on Jesus’ invitation to “Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while” (Mark 6.31b). The first of these will be held May 18-19 at Lake Beauty Bible Camp and is entitled “A Day in Jesus’ End of the Boat.” The leader is Keith Meyer (pastor, Hope Covenant Church, St Cloud) with Judy Swanberg as co-facilitator.

Another series of Mini-Retreats will cover the multiple issues related to pastors in their final season of fulltime ministry. Those retreats will be targeted for pastors 55 and older, which includes over 40 percent of the lead and solo pastors in our Conference.

One-day events on specific topics are also being considered.



## Church Pastoral Care & Development Teams

**Pastoral health and growth requires the efforts of many** and cannot be a reality without the participation of the local church. Most churches do not feel equipped for such a ministry, and in fact are using systems that often have built-in hindrances.

To assist in developing a more comprehensive partnership between pastors and local churches, our department has been creating resources to re-vision this vital ministry. Where churches have existing groups, like Pastoral Relations Committees (PRC) or Mutual Ministry Committees (MMC), there is often confusion and overlapping of responsibilities with other standing leadership structures. A common scenario is that a PRC or MMC would have the following four areas of responsibility: Pastoral Care, Pastoral Development, Conflict Management, Personnel.

There are inherent problems with this mixture of roles in the hands of the same group. We would advocate for a more careful assigning of these roles, which would likely result in the creation of a new Pastoral Care & Development Team at your church that could be resourced by our department.

**We invite churches to consider their current structure** and use our resources and our personal consultation to create a healthier process for the care and development of your pastor(s) and staff ministers.

The Director of Finance position was created in response to a recognized need for fraud prevention and best financial practice resources for our churches and ministry entities as well as general management of Northwest Conference funds.

**Just as churches have ministry cultures, they also have financial cultures.** There may be open and frank communication about money or the financial situation may be a secret. There may be a generous spirit of ministry investment or a closed-fisted approach to spending. There may be one person in charge or there may be a team of people who together make financial decisions. The budget may be a rule or it may be a guideline.

Financial culture is also impacted by realities of available people and available funds. Where a church lands on each of those spectrums determines the financial culture of that institution, and we quickly learn that there are no two situations that are exactly the same.

There are some basic rules of good sound financial operations. The best practices that I anticipate producing will be centered on those basic, good, sound rules nuanced for the variety of financial cultures in our churches. **Some practices may challenge a culture to change, some may build on what is already in place.**

As the “50 by ’25” Church Planting initiative continues to build momentum we have a prime opportunity to start those churches off with a strong financial system with policies and procedures to guide them into the future. We also provide accounting service for a period of time as a church is becoming established. Those same financial services are available on a fee basis to existing churches.

Sandy Norris, Director of Finance

FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING SERVICES AVAILABLE

No Charge

- Sample financial policies and procedures (expense reimbursement policy, expense approval policy, offering count/deposit procedure, etc.)
- Sample forms (expense reimbursement form, check request form, offering count form)
- Sample job descriptions for Finance Team (overseeing Financial Officer/Treasurer, Disbursement position, Receipts position)
- Compensation questions (package configuration, taxable vs non-taxable, voluntary withholding for clergy, benefit structuring)
- QuickBooks technical questions
- Deductibility questions
- “Quick Questions” (The conversations that start “I just have a quick question for you ...”)

Fee for Service

- On-going bookkeeping service resulting in monthly financial reports (may include donation receipts, bill payment service and payroll service)
- Financial review (similar to an audit)
- Training events (one-on-one or group)
- Extended consulting on financial matter

Northwest Conference Communications

Throughout 2014, we have worked to refine the presentation of the Northwest Conference brand and develop new promotional materials. In June, the staff performed a **Brand Audit** to assess how our visuals and language were lining up with the evolution of the brand. We **redesigned core NWC brand materials** (business cards, signage, overview brochures, website) and I have worked with staff to clarify language related to our Ministry Priorities and Ministry Support areas that will roll out in the new website design and overview brochures. We also updated the branding for Imagine, and created branding for the new Go: Serve event. Both were well received.

Our most regular communication pieces are our e-mail newsletters. We continue to send two NWC **Updates** per month, in addition to specific ministry area news updates. We also implemented design updates to and expanded the length of the **Imprints** print newsletter, and I continue to support existing NWC events and initiatives through the creation of fresh promotional materials throughout the year. I look forward to the roll out of many of these new Communication pieces in 2015.

Bryan Malley, Director of Communications

Northwest Conference Administration

A few highlights from the past year include:

**STAFF:** We welcomed Sandy Norris, Director of Finance; and Jessa Anderson, Administrative Coordinator to our staff. Sandy provides bookkeeping and accounting services to individual churches as well as oversees the finances of the Conference. Jessa is our front desk receptionist and spends her time assisting Bryan with communications, coordinating events, and providing support to all staff.

**BUILDING:** Offices have been reconfigured and equipment has been purchased to create work spaces for all staff. New outdoor signs have been added to make us more visible. And a gas fireplace insert was installed.

**CHIC:** Ginny Olson and I are the CHIC liaisons for the Northwest Conference. Ginny is promoting the event and will be leading our NWC counselors at CHIC. I am coordinating the bus transportation.

**CHET:** There are currently 43 students enrolled in the 6 pre-ministerial level courses. New procedures for sharing information with CHET Compton have allowed us to do a better job of serving our students.

Thank you for the continued privilege of serving the NWC!

Cheryl Theilen, Director of Administration



Integrating Christian faith and learning since 1913

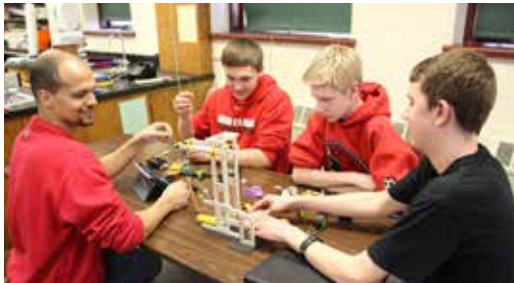
Founded by Covenant pastors in 1913, Minnehaha Academy continues to flourish because of its mission to provide high quality education integrating Christian faith and learning, with a Lower and Middle School that serves PreK through grade eight and an Upper School that serves grades 9-12, both located in Minneapolis along the Mississippi River.

*“Not only honor students, but honorable students”*  
- Mark Stromberg '78

Minnehaha Academy challenges students to grow in reasoning, words and actions guided by Christian values and principles. School life centers on a Christian perspective and servant leadership.

STRONG ACADEMICS ARE DRIVEN BY PASSIONATE TEACHERS

Minnehaha Academy’s illuminating and engaging learning experiences prepare students for challenging post-secondary opportunities. Our teachers are experts in their subject areas and are committed to offering excellent educational experiences to students. Minnehaha Academy offers 18 Advanced Placement courses in the sciences and humanities, more than any other private school in the state.



INCLUSIVE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ARE INTEGRAL TO THE MINNEHAHA EXPERIENCE

At all ages, Minnehaha encourages students to explore a wide range of learning experiences. The flexibility afforded to students allows them to participate in a variety of the school’s excellent sports, fine arts programs and extracurricular activities.



We showcase 20 performing groups that provide opportunities for every age and ability level in band, orchestra, choir and drama. We offer 25 Varsity teams, as well as athletic activities for our younger students.

MINNEHAHA ACADEMY, A NORTHWEST CONFERENCE SCHOOL

- Founded by NWC pastors and lay leaders 102 years ago, Minnehaha Academy remains a vital ministry of the Northwest Conference.
- MA is excited to continue our scholarship program for up to three students in grades K-12 (depending on space availability) from each NWC church. For more details or to apply, please call 612-728-7776 or email Admission@MinnehahaAcademy.net
- Members of NWC churches are eligible to receive 100 percent of demonstrated financial need.



ACT recognition was given to MA’s senior Erik Ubel as a National Merit Semifinalist with a composite score of 36 on the ACT test. Davis Ryan and Jorie Schwab were also recognized as National Merit Commended Scholars. SAT recognition goes to junior Alexandra Wilson who scored a perfect 2400 on the SAT test.

WHAT’S NEW AT MINNEHAHA?

UPPER SCHOOL

STEM Lab: The new STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) Research and Design Center will be approximately 3,000 sq. feet of space that will enhance many science offerings in grades 9-12. Groundbreaking is planned for April 2015 with anticipated completion in September 2015.

Leadership Studies Class: A new elective is offered to students in grades 10-12 who desire a process of exploration to learn about leadership that is applicable for students now, as well as after graduation.

LOWER AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Math Curriculum: New to students in Kindergarten-grade 5 is Math in Focus, an innovative math program based on the proven Singapore Math approach. This program provides students with a rigorous curriculum that emphasizes mathematical fluency and conceptual

mastery while engaging learners in higher-level problem solving skills.

Middle School Language Immersion Courses: Beginning in Fall of 2015, the middle school will offer immersion-like courses for advanced language students in French, Chinese, Latin and Spanish.

Science Exploration Center: Scheduled to be up and running later this school year, a new science space will give students access to exciting hands-on, robust opportunities in a state-of-the-art workspace.

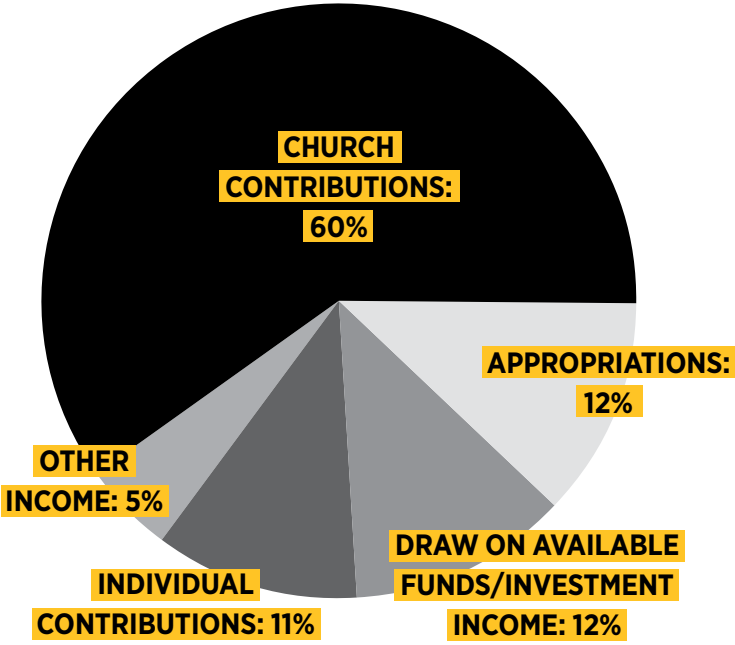
Park Innovation Center: A new technology lab is currently under development which features new programs, computers, robots and curriculum so our students are not just using technology, but creating technology through coding and engineering.

Playground: In another unique engineering project, Lower School students are participating in the actual design of a renovated playground at the Lower and Middle School—helping to identify needs, using 3-dimensional and computer models to create initial prototype designs, then giving final feedback for the improvements. This project will not only provide some basic introductions to engineering and design, but will result in a new and improved play space that promotes physical wellness and inclusive play.

Visit [minnehahaacademy.net](http://minnehahaacademy.net) to learn more.



2014/15 NWC BUDGET  
INCOME: \$1,406,502



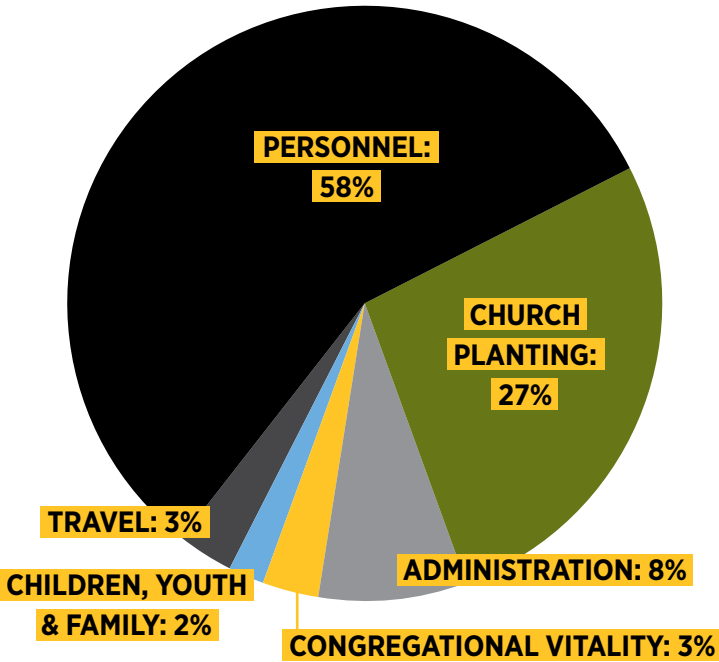
2014/15 INCOME Notes:

**Individual Contributions:** Includes designated and undesignated contributions to the NWC.

**Appropriations:** Money the NWC receives from the ECC for Church Planting. The NWC and ECC invest equally in all new church plants.

**Draw on Available Funds:** The NWC has cash reserves of \$1,455,657 (12-31-14) designated for Congregational Vitality (\$110,811); Church Planting (\$525,549); Children, Youth & Family (\$111,420);

2014/15 NWC BUDGET  
EXPENSE: \$1,406,502



and Unrestricted/Discretionary (\$707,877). Some of these funds are readily available, while some are in dedicated Trust Accounts with Covenant Trust Company and can only be withdrawn at a rate of 5% per year.

2014/15 EXPENSE Notes:

**Personnel:** Compensation for all staff included. Staff time used for direct ministry to churches for Congregational Vitality, Church Planting, Children, Youth & Family and Pastoral Care & Development.

MISSION

The Mission of the Northwest Conference is to engage, empower, and equip healthy missional leaders, as we believe that this is an essential component in growing healthy missional churches.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

- Lowell Peterson**, Chair  
Zion Covenant,  
Ellsworth, WI

**Jan Bros**, Vice Chair  
Abbey Way,  
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**David Brown**, Treasurer  
Brookdale Covenant,  
Brooklyn Center, MN

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Roseville, MN
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Brooklyn Center, MN

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**Mark R. Stromberg**,  
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Northwest Conference

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NWC Women Ministries

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Superintendent

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Assoc. Dir. of Pastoral Care & Development

**Cheryl Theilen**  
Dir. of Administration

**Sandy Norris**  
Dir. of Finance

**Bryan Malley**  
Dir. of Communications

**Jessa Anderson**  
Administrative Coordinator

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Stay connected with news, training opportunities, and stories from around the NWC. Pick up a copy of the quarterly IMPRINTS newsletter at your church, subscribe to the UPDATE e-newsletter, and check our website often for event postings and stories.

3106 47th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406

612.721.4893 or 1.800.756.6692

[northwestconference.org/info@northwestconference.org](http://northwestconference.org/info@northwestconference.org)

SPECIAL GIFTS  
GIVEN

SECOND MILER GRANTS

- True Light Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN - \$2,128
- Solid Rock Discipleship School, Long Prairie, MN - \$2,638
- Brookdale Covenant Church, Brooklyn Center, MN - \$2,204
- Northwest Conference, Minneapolis, MN - \$2,534

THANK YOU!



# CHURCHES IN THE NWC (AS OF 12.31.14)

## IOWA

Grandview, Larchwood

## MINNESOTA

Catalyst Covenant, Alexandria  
Alexandria Covenant, Alexandria  
Evangelical Covenant, Anoka  
Restoration Covenant, Apple Valley  
Evangelical Covenant, Baudette  
Evangelical Covenant, Bemidji  
Evangelical Covenant, Big Falls  
Community Covenant, Big Lake  
Evangelical Covenant, Biwabik  
Good Shepherd Evangelical Covenant, Blaine  
Bloomington Covenant, Bloomington  
Evangelical Covenant, Braham  
Brookdale Covenant, Brooklyn Center  
Laotian Covenant, Brooklyn Center  
Blue Oaks Covenant, Brooklyn Park  
La Bendicion Covenant, Brooklyn Park  
Redeemer Covenant, Brooklyn Park  
Buffalo Covenant, Buffalo  
Faith Covenant, Burnsville  
Big Lake Evangelical Covenant, Cloquet  
Elim Mission, Cokato  
Evangelical Covenant, Cook  
Evangelical Covenant, Crookston  
Evangelical Covenant, Dassel  
Lake Jennie Covenant, Dassel  
Dawson Covenant, Dawson  
Evangelical Covenant, Deer River  
First Covenant, Duluth  
Lakeview Covenant, Duluth  
Salem Covenant, Duluth  
Edina Covenant, Edina  
New City Covenant, Edina  
Calvary Covenant, Evansville  
Excelsior Covenant, Excelsior  
Fairmont Evangelical Covenant, Fairmont  
Maywood Covenant, Foley  
Crossroads Evangelical Covenant, Forest Lake  
Fridley Covenant, Fridley  
Riverwood Covenant, Greenfield  
Harris Covenant, Harris  
Palmyra Covenant, Hector  
Gethsemane Covenant, Hermantown  
Emmaus Road, Hopkins  
Community Covenant, Huntley  
Oak Heights Covenant, Hutchinson  
Evangelical Covenant, International Falls  
Evangelical Mission Covenant, Kennedy  
Kensington Covenant, Kensington

Community Covenant, Lake Bronson  
Lancaster Covenant, Lancaster  
Rice Creek Covenant, Lino Lakes  
Grace Covenant, Little Falls  
Ben Wade Covenant, Lowry  
Mahtowa Covenant, Mahtowa  
Maple Grove Covenant, Maple Grove  
Maplewood Covenant, Maplewood  
Abbey Way Covenant, Minneapolis  
Bethlehem Covenant, Minneapolis  
City of Lakes Covenant, Minneapolis  
Community Covenant, Minneapolis  
Crosstown Covenant, Minneapolis  
First Covenant, Minneapolis  
New Covenant, Minneapolis  
The Sanctuary Covenant, Minneapolis  
True Light Covenant, Minneapolis  
Verbo en Accion Covenant, Minneapolis  
Monticello Covenant, Monticello  
Evangelical Covenant, Moose Lake  
Fairview Covenant, Mound  
MainStreet Covenant, Mound  
Grace Outreach, New Brighton  
Salem Covenant, New Brighton  
Evangelical Covenant, New London  
Vista Evangelical Covenant, New Richland  
Crossview Covenant, North Mankato  
Calvary Covenant, Northome  
Lewis Lake Covenant, Ogilvie  
Christ Community Covenant, Owatonna  
Salem Mission Covenant, Pennock  
Plymouth Covenant + The Extension, Plymouth  
Karmel Evangelical Covenant, Princeton  
First Covenant, Red Wing  
NewDay Covenant, Rochester  
Rochester Covenant, Rochester  
Salem Road Covenant, Rochester  
Nueva Vida Covenant, Rogers  
Evangelical Covenant, Roseau  
Roseville Covenant, Roseville  
Evangelical Covenant, Rush City  
New Life Covenant, Saginaw  
Emmanuel Covenant, Shoreview  
Lake Union Covenant, South Haven  
Hope Covenant, St. Cloud  
Genesis Covenant, St. Louis Park  
Awaken Covenant, St. Paul  
Catalyst Covenant, St. Paul  
The Compass Covenant, St. Paul  
First Covenant, St. Paul  
The Gallery Covenant, St. Paul  
Roots Covenant, St. Paul  
Thomastown Covenant, Staples

Bethany Covenant, Stillwater  
Evangelical Covenant, Thief River Falls  
Evangelical Covenant, Trimont  
Community Covenant, Upsala  
Viking Covenant, Viking  
First Covenant, Virginia  
Evangelical Covenant, Warren  
Real Life Covenant, Waseca  
Oster First Covenant, Waverly  
Bethlehem Covenant, Wheaton  
First Covenant, Willmar  
Winthrop Evangelical Covenant, Winthrop  
Crossroads, Woodbury/Cottage Grove/Eagan  
First Covenant, Worthington  
Linwood Covenant, Wyoming

## NORTH DAKOTA

Teien Covenant, Drayton  
Knollbrook Covenant, Fargo  
Hope Covenant, Grand Forks + Emerado

## SOUTH DAKOTA

Komstad Covenant, Beresford  
Living Springs Covenant, Brandon  
Swedona Evangelical Covenant, Brandon  
Evangelical Covenant, LaBolt  
Evangelical Covenant, Lake Norden  
Prairie Hills Covenant, Sioux Falls  
South Sudan Covenant, Sioux Falls  
Elim Evangelical Covenant, Stockholm

## WISCONSIN

First Covenant, Ashland  
Prairie Lake Covenant, Chetek  
United Covenant, Clear Lake  
Renew Covenant, Eau Claire  
Bethel Covenant, Ellsworth  
Zion Covenant, Ellsworth  
Calvary Evangelical Covenant, Grantsburg  
Cedarbrook, Menomonie  
Prince of Peace Covenant, Mondovi  
Prairieview Covenant, New Richmond  
Mission Covenant, Poplar  
First Covenant, River Falls  
Siren Covenant, Siren  
Calvary Covenant, Stockholm  
Lund Mission Covenant, Stockholm  
First Covenant, Superior



Find a local church using our  
online directory and mapping  
tools at [northwestconference.org](http://northwestconference.org)