

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

- Al Tizon, the new Executive Minister of Serve Globally (formerly World Mission) for the Evangelical Covenant Church and featured speaker for the meetings, asked churches to consider what it means to be a “witnessing, reconciling and worshipping Church” moving toward God’s future. Tizon also brought greetings and a ministry update from the ECC to delegates at both the Ministerial Association and Northwest Conference Annual Meetings.
- Throughout the weekend, pastors, delegates and attendees heard video and spoken testimony of God’s activity around the world from various Covenant missionaries, including Nils and Erika Clauson (Mexico), Julio and Katie Isaza (Colombia), and Randy Bevis, Special Assignment Missionary with Serve Globally.
- NWC Superintendent Mark R. Stromberg shared about the impact that churches can have when united together in service. Stromberg highlighted an upcoming Evangelism Cohort pilot program that will be facilitated by the ECC in the NWC, and the new Covenant Community Bible Experience offered to all churches in the Denomination in the fall of 2016 and beyond.
- Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality, emphasized the “deeper faith and renewed faithfulness” he’s witnessed within NWC churches in the 10 years since the ECC named Congregational Vitality a ministry priority.
- Mike Brown, Director of Church Planting, shared that since launching “50 by ’25: Our Mission to Plant” at the 2014 Annual Meeting, the NWC has seen seven new churches started—one new church about every 2.5 months. Brown introduced three new church fellowship groups, which are The Door Covenant Church (Blaine, MN), Seeds Covenant Church (SE Minneapolis), and The Story Covenant Church (Powderhorn, Minneapolis, MN). He also introduced Vong Luangkhamdeng, new pastor of Laotian Covenant Church (Brooklyn Center, MN), who will be leading the 14-year-old church plant following the departure of founding pastor, Soudinh Penkhay, who has become a Covenant missionary in Thailand.
- Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry, highlighted 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 referenced 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 two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting. MOVE 2016 featured a Light Rail train community exploration tour addressing justice issues in the urban context. She also highlighted other NWC youth events like MUUCE and Adventures in Leadership, which call students to closer relationships with Christ, and the NWC's strong representation at CHIC 2015.
- Jeff Burton, Director of Pastoral Care & Development, gave a report of the work to support the "personal and professional growth of our pastors and ministry staff." Burton highlighted the many challenges of pastoral service in today's ministry environment. The ministry area of PC&D in the NWC supports over 500 church staff and other leaders, spread over four states.
- Greg Ellis, the new Coordinator of CHET NWC, shared the vision of CHET to transform communities with the good news of Jesus Christ through Latino and Latina leaders. Ellis shared that he will soon travel to CHET LA to meet with Manuel Valencia, Dean of CHET, to discuss specifics of CHET's Ministerial Program. The Ministerial Program builds on the foundation of the Pre-Ministerial Program and the ECC considers graduates of this program ready to begin the process of ordination.
- Minnehaha Academy President Donna Harris shared many highlights from the life and activities of the school, including renovation plans for Upper School science spaces, team awards in art, athletics and academics, student involvement in local outreach and ministry efforts, and the undertaking of a new Spiritual Formation Assessment through Arbor Research Group.
- Delegates also heard reports from leaders of the Ministerial Association of the NWC, and the Solid Rock School of Discipleship at Lake Beauty Bible Camp. Attendees participated in companion Mission Experience and Ministry Fair events where they had opportunity to learn about a variety of Conference and Denominational missionaries, ministries and organizations.
- First Covenant (Duluth) hosted the dinner and Communion Service for the Ministerial Association on Thursday evening. The First Covenant/Crossroads Worship Band led the pastors in worship.
- The Lakeview Covenant Worship Band led attendees in worship during the Friday evening worship service. The 2016 Candidates for Ordination & Commissioning (15) were also recognized and prayed for during the service.
- A special offering taken during the service raised over \$5,100 to support the Rev. Soudinh Penkhay, who is now serving as a Covenant missionary in Thailand.
- The Compass Covenant Church (St. Paul, MN) and True Light Covenant Church (Minneapolis, MN) were honored with a special Living Legacy Litany. Both churches held their final services in 2015.
- During Saturday's Business Session, delegates approved a ballot that included: electing Jim Volting (Excelsior Covenant Church, Excelsior, MN) to serve another term as NWC Executive Board Chairperson, Barb Dusek (Faith Covenant, Burnsville, MN) and Mark Hovestol (Roseville Covenant, Roseville, MN) to 5-year terms on the NWC Executive Board, and electing John Ahlquist (Maple Grove Covenant, Maple Grove, MN), Erik Anderson (Crossroads Church, Woodbury, MN), Tom Johnson (Roseville Covenant, Roseville, MN), Keith Meyer (Hope Covenant, St. Cloud, MN) and Kathy Parten (Bethlehem Covenant, Minneapolis, MN) to terms of various lengths on the Minnehaha Academy Board of Trustees.
- Delegates approved the MA budget of \$12,499,100, as well as the NWC budget of \$1,528,598—which includes a designated Church Planting budget of \$423,817—at the meeting's second Business Session on Saturday morning.
- During that meeting, attendees also heard verbal reports from leaders of Covenant Trust Company, Covenant Enabling Residences of MN, Camping Ministry in the NWC, and Women Ministries of the NWC.