



GenZ: On a mission

By Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry, and Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry

While many are still scratching their heads over what to do with Millennials, Generation Z (kids born between 1997-2015) have snuck up on us and now represent nearly 25 percent of the population. This unique generation invites the Church to pay attention so that effective ministry can take place.

When the Millennials came of age, we made the shift from digital immigrants to digital natives. The next generation, GenZ, had a digital footprint from before they were born, thanks to parents posting their sonograms on Facebook.

Whereas generations before GenZ had most of their friendships located in their communities with maybe one or two long-distance

pen pals, these digital natives were born into global citizenship. It's a generation that can have more in common with kids their age around the globe than they do with adults in their own country.

Global citizens

Being a global citizen makes young people more aware of the scale of problems around us. Terrorism, war and climate change rank high as legitimate fears for our kids.

Thankfully, young people deeply desire to be part of the solution. According to a survey by the Brookings Institute, "Two-thirds said they crave the opportunity to make a 'contribution to soci-

ety beyond themselves and their family.'"

Setting politics aside, you can't help but be amazed at the ability of young people to organize a national movement to advocate for reform with our nation's gun laws after the Parkland, FL, shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. This generation sees themselves as leaders, able to organize a national movement through social media. Having been tech-savvy since their nursery days, they are already experienced in knowing how to get a message out in a way that attracts others' attention.

Previous generations of teenagers have advocated





Come and See, Go and Serve

By Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry

In its fifth year, the Go:Serve team is excited to offer an intergenerational, family-friendly service and learning experience to share the love of Christ with our communities. This event draws Covenant families from across our Conference for a day of ministry.

Kids come with the adults who care about them and together, we explore the needs and opportunities in our community. Participants of all ages are then inspired to see and engage with their own communities in a new way.

Go:Serve will be offered as part of Gather, the ECC Annual Meeting held in Minneapolis, June 21-23. Offered as a pre-Gather event, Go:Serve will allow participants to get a taste of some of the ministries Covenant churches are a part of in the Twin Cities metro area. This year, we are partnering with a refugee ministry, an urban ministry that empowers kids and youth, and will enjoy lunch at a unique indoor Hmong-owned shopping mall in East St. Paul.

What's different this year? Go:Serve will be an interactive bus tour! Everyone gets to ride in a coach bus, with stops for food and activities throughout the metro area. Your family vehicle can stay at Sanctuary Covenant, and we'll get you back there safely at the end of the day. This year, Go:Serve is open to individuals as well as families.



**Thursday, June 21
Sanctuary Covenant
Church**

Minneapolis, MN
For ages 5-105
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Cost is \$20/family or \$10/individual. We'll provide some snacks, but you'll need extra money for lunch. If you are also a first-time Annual Meeting delegate, indicate that on your registration and we'll make sure to get you back in time for the meeting.

Go:Serve will inspire kids and adults to see the world around them in a new way, and to be inspired to engage with their communities in a way that brings the love of Jesus to those nearby. We hope you can join us!

Visit the events page at northwestconference.org to register, or contact Kara Stromberg, Director of Children & Family Ministry, for questions.

MUUUCE

By Ginny Olson, Director
of Youth Ministry

**August 2-4, 2018
Crossroads Church
Woodbury, MN**

MUUUCE is an unforgettable high-energy, fast-moving event that's designed to give Northwest Conference middle schoolers and junior highers a chance to connect with Christ and their peers. There is amazing worship, a great speaker, adventures, fun and a sliver of sleep!

MUUUCE stands for "The Most Unbelievable, Ultimate, Urban, Camping Experience" and is designed and hosted by Crossroads Covenant Church in Woodbury, MN.

Questions about MUUUUCE? Email the MUUUUCE team at muuu-ceinfo@crossroadschurch.cc. You can find the latest MUUUUCE updates on the Northwest Conference Youth Ministry Facebook page and www.muuuce.com.

↳ for change, whether here in the U.S. with the Greensboro sit-ins in the 1960s, in South Africa with the anti-apartheid movement, or via the pro-democracy protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. The difference is that this current generation knows how to organize more quickly and more broadly than ever before.

What can we do?

It's urgent that the Church learn how to engage this generation that is globally connected and yearning to make a difference. Here are some ideas:

1. Give children and young people an opportunity to

engage in compassion, mercy and justice-minded issues.

Show them the Church cares about things that matter to them and to the world. Teach and model biblical justice, not in a way that only caves to the pressures of society, but in a way that keeps the incarnate Christ who walked this earth at the center of all we do.

2. Invest in children and youth ministries.

We know families are busy and don't prioritize church. So, take the Church to families. Partner with local schools and community centers, send your kids to CHIC and Go:Serve so they can hear God's invitation to mission and can connect with

other like-minded young people. **3. Engage the home.** Eighty-nine percent of young people still say parents are the greatest source of influence when it comes to values. Equip parents and grandparents, fight for healthy marriages, and advocate for robust intergenerational mentoring so that older generations can love and mentor and learn from the young ones.

Generation Z is our future. They are also our present. The Church needs to take this generation seriously. Believe in them, teach them well, and equip them to bring Christ to the world in both word and deed.

¹ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2017/03/16/digital-natives-are-born-global-citizens/>



The Church has a beautiful opportunity to come alongside families with disability

By Vicki Newendorp, Director of Children's Ministry at Faith Covenant Church in Burnsville, MN

When our son James was just 3, he had his first seizure. That event set in motion a series of challenges and discoveries that we never expectead.

A few days later, he went in for his first brain MRI. We left the next day to celebrate Christmas. As we crossed the state in ice and snow, our phone calls kept dropping. But we managed to hear a few words from the on-call neurologist: "abnormal, have to get back to us."

It was cold, and the wind seemed unfriendly. We pulled up in front of the house. I was the last one inside, carrying the bag with an ivory platter with the word "peace" in metallic gold swished across the top. On the top step by the front door, the bottom fell out of the bag, and that beautiful platter shattered on the icy concrete.

I remember staring at the pieces, and I crumpled to the step—I felt like that platter. Like my "peace" had been shattered.

But that story doesn't end in pieces. Our son eventually (years later) received the diagnosis of Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome, a rare chromosomal disorder. And while the medical and developmental challenges continue to be a part of his life, our little boy is a beautiful picture of God's image.

God gave me His peace. Our family and friends came around us. And our sweet church, a family of families and a family of grace, opened up their arms and their hearts to him and to us. They have been able to love us well—"home" for him and for us. And he, now 11, has seen a picture of God's love and grace in his life poured out through the body of Christ.

This week, James had appointments with a few of his many specialists. I was looking at his sandy brown hair when he huddled in my arms, wrestling with his fears after years of medical appointments and procedures.

"I scared, Mommy," came his little voice.

What tenderness to be able to pull him close and remind him that God is with him, always. Those sandy brown hairs are a reminder of God, who treasures this little boy, knowing every hair on his head—"fearfully and wonderfully made" and knit together with thought and purpose (Psalm 139). This little boy and his precious sister, with their green eyes, who have shown me in ever fresh ways that every person is made intricately, beautifully and wonderfully—image-bearers of God. ➡

Gather: ECC Annual Meeting coming to Minneapolis this summer

By Mark R. Stromberg, Superintendent

The Covenant Annual Meeting—called "Gather"—is coming to the NWC in downtown Minneapolis this June 21-23! In other words, this time around it will be our turn to host this important event.

The theme for the meeting this summer will be "Love Mercy, Do Justice." It will also be a time when a number of important leadership decisions will be made, including the election of a new ECC president.

We want our NWC churches to be strongly represented as, we believe, this will be a very important time in shaping the Covenant



Church in the years ahead. Please make the participation of your church a priority!

Children's volunteers

We are in need of individuals who love Jesus and love kids who can volunteer with children's ministry during the ECC Annual Meeting.

We need volunteers to rock babies, play with preschoolers

and engage with elementary-aged kids for the duration of the meeting, in addition to people who can help set up and tear down the children's ministry rooms. Contact Kara Stromberg at the NWC office if you're interested.

General Volunteers

Volunteers will also be needed for pre-meeting preparation, registration, worship service greeters and ushers, behind the scenes support, and business meeting sergeants-at-arms and tellers. Contact Cheryl Theilen at the NWC office for more information.

➡ Passages like Psalm 139 speak to the value of all people, and later in Ephesians 2:10 people are described as God's "poema" or masterpiece. In John 9, Jesus said that disabilities exist so "that the works of God might be displayed." We, as the Church, have been called to love people.

I read that the largest unreached people group in the world is people affected by disability and their caregivers. The last census indicates that one in five people are touched by disability. Growing numbers of kids and families with special needs are in our churches and communities. They face a unique set of joys and challenges.

The Church has a beautiful opportunity to come alongside these families to offer hope, love

and resources as they navigate this journey. For many, the day-to-day challenges, sorrows and pain feel lonely and overwhelming. The hope of the gospel is the hope that they need—that I need.

As we look forward to what God has for us, I believe that He is calling us to love and minister to individuals and families touched by disability. That's not a one-size-fits-all venture. For some churches, that may mean a formal disability ministry. For others, it will be an informal ministry that comes alongside children and families. God uses both powerfully.

As we trust Him to love families well, we ask God to show us the next best step. Consider these ideas:

1. Pray, asking God for eyes to see people and love them

well, and that the Spirit of God would minister tenderly to the hearts of this people group.

2. Reach out to a family affected by disability/special needs.

Get to know them. Ask their needs. Look for ways to come alongside them.

3. Seek to grow in understanding. Organizations like Joni & Friends and Key Ministries provide free training and resources for churches.

When we see people as treasured image-bearers of God and seek to "do life" with them, we live out the gospel. 1 Thess. 2:8 models, "having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."

NWC Bible camps gearing up for summer

By Jessa Anderson, Administrative Coordinator

The Northwest Conference is the proud home to five incredible Covenant camps. Each camp is unique in what it offers to students, families, churches and individuals. In 2018, our camps are looking forward to new ministry and growth opportunities. Here is a look at what is happening, and what to anticipate.

Covenant Pines Bible Camp

Our mission is to encourage campers to take a next step in Christian faith. Every year we have the pleasure of seeing thousands of campers take their next steps at one of our ministry centers.

One camper that took a next step in 2017 was Anna. Anna came to camp with some relationship baggage. There were people in her life that she harbored negative feelings toward. At CPBC, she felt God tell her that those relationships are redeemable and that He has called her to seek love and forgiveness with those people.

There are a lot of different next steps that campers take. Some decide to follow Jesus for the first time, others decide to make it a habit to spend time with God every morning.



Our prayer is that you and your family would discover your next step with us in 2018. For more information about summer camps, canoe trips and retreats, visit covenantpines.org.

Adventurous Christians

This summer, Adventurous Christians is inviting churches to experience meaningful time in God's creation together as a family in a faith-based environment. Discounted Family Rates are available for both an immediate family or multiple family members



combining with each other. All equipment, food and a Christian guide are provided. With all of the logistics prepared, families will be led through the beautiful wilderness in the Boundary Waters and make memories together.

Why should families choose AC?

- Undivided Time with Kids. No distractions, no electronics, no chores, no work Just meaningful time with the family.
- All Inclusive. All preparation, meals, equipment, permits, planning, stay and guide are included. Families can just arrive and we will take care of the details so that there is more time to enjoy family
- Christian Guide. A solid Christ follower that is with families from the time of arrival until departure back home. Our wilderness guides ensure that everyone has a safe and enjoyable trip. They lead devotions to further relationships with Jesus and to fulfill the AC mission of finding God in a wilderness setting.

Bluewater Covenant Bible Camp

Bluewater Covenant Bible Camp enters its 52nd summer of ministry with a theme of "Living The Life." The power of camp is to transform young people to be examples in speech, love, conduct, faith and purity.



We minister to families and youth of northwestern Minnesota. Owned by 12 churches, Bluewater's programming and facility provide adventurous experiences for over 900 youth and 850 family members.

Our spring project will include the building of a new youth cabin, followed by a new cooks/speakers cabin, which will allow us to remodel our original chapel into an outdoor pavilion.

Ministry opportunities have increased in the fall and winter through our Retreat Center. We have built a relationship with three schools and their 5th grade classes to provide a team building and outdoor education day. We have also added archery, a sling-shot course, crate stacking, and paddle boards to the activities that campers can enjoy.

Covenant Park Bible Camp

Covenant Park is in the midst of an amazing season of new life. It is exciting to experience not only spiritual renewal in the lives of campers and guests each year, but new opportunities within our facility and program recently as well.

In 2018, we are continuing the vision to offer more rustic camping opportunities with a backpacking trip



on the Superior Hiking Trail. From sleeping in hammocks, to the small group atmosphere, to getting to experience a new level of God's beautiful creation, this camp week will be uniquely special!

The construction for the second cabin/room of our Lakeside Cabin-plex project will begin this spring, and we are working on the final steps to get a climbing wall and zip-line funded and completed.

We continue to be amazed at how God works in ways bigger than we can even ask and imagine at Covenant Park. We look forward to the coming year of ministry as He continually draws us closer together and stretches our faith to greater depth in Him.



Lake Beauty Bible Camp

Lake Beauty is looking forward to a solid 2018 Summer Camp season, with our theme being "Discover the Truth." The theme is bringing us back to the one and only Truth being the Word of God.

We are also excited to invite several staff from the Bible Society of Jordan to come to camp this June for a month—to be a part of staff training and to see camp at work. The Evangelical Covenant Church, the Association of Covenant Camps and Conference Centers, and Lake Beauty are working together with BSoJ to start a Bible Camp with the purpose of reaching out to both Christian/Muslim Jordanians and Syrian Refugees.

The BSoJ has been given land on top of a mountain just outside of Jerash, Jordan, for the camp. Now we will begin with training their staff this summer. Please pray with us for this new opportunity.

**COVENANT
CAMPS**
in the northwest conference



Theological Symposium draws nearly 200 pastors, church staff and lay leaders

Nearly 200 people gathered on March 13 at Salem Covenant Church in New Brighton, MN, for a Theological Symposium sponsored by the Northwest Conference Ministerial Association. Among the attendees were pastors, church staff members and lay leaders.

The broad purpose of the day was to help people better understand the interaction between the Covenant's commitment to the authority of Scripture and our cherished value of freedom.

Flowing from that broader perspective was a desire to help people see the biblical and theological bases for three specific

positions which the Covenant has adopted over the years: our openness on baptism, our affirmation of women in ministry, and our commitment to a biblical understanding of human sexuality. Each of those three positions is independent and distinct from the others, yet each reflects the twin poles of biblical authority and theological freedom.

Morning sessions on freedom and biblical authority were presented by Northwest Conference pastor Rich Theilen and North Park Seminary professor Steven Chester respectively. The afternoon sessions on baptism, women in ministry, and human sexuality

were led by Conference pastor Kyliah Clarke Villa, retired North Park professor Klyne Snodgrass, and North Park's Dean of Faculty, Dwight Perry.

In addition to the primary sponsorship by the Ministerial Association, both Solid Rock School of Discipleship and Minnehaha Academy played significant roles in supporting the event, with administrative and other support provided by the Northwest Conference office.

Possibilities for future events will be considered based on the response to and evaluations from the March symposium.

Interim Pastor's Connection supports those serving churches in transition

By Jeff Burton, Director of Pastoral Care & Development

The newest ministerial affinity group in the Northwest Conference is the Interim Pastor's Connection. The Covenant, along with many other denominations, is experiencing unprecedented numbers of pastoral transitions. In the NWC we are seeing more than double the number of pastoral transitions than have been typical in years past.

When such transitions occur, the Conference staff becomes involved in walking with both churches and pastors. Such times are filled with a mixture of emotions—grieving what is being lost and also anticipating what is to come.

Such liminal moments are unsettling and at times vulnerable. In most cases, before we ever begin to help guide the process of finding the next pastor, we are called on to help fill an immediate need for what we have traditionally called an "interim pastor."

Such pastors can be full-time or part-time, and their roles can be quite different based on the unique church setting and place. We currently have 10 pastors actively serving in interim roles in our Conference. They are a very diverse group of pastors, each with unique skills and stories.

It might surprise you to know that only three of those 10 are pastors who are serving in retirement. Some are serving as interim pastor but have other jobs as well. Others are serving churches in transition while they themselves



are in transition from one assignment to the next. Some are very experienced at the role of interim, having served in many churches in that role, and others are serving in that role for the first time—and even serving for the first time as a lead or solo pastor.

Because of the large number and diversity of experiences in the role, we have started an Interim Pastor's Connection. We meet monthly at the Conference office for the purpose of providing support, encouragement and connection.

At the most recent Midwinter Conference, the Covenant piloted a training program for "Transi-

tional Pastors," the newer term being used to describe the role. This training identifies three broad categories that transitional pastors operate in:

- Those called to maintain
- Those called to maintain and do some remodeling of systems and ministries
- Those called to maintain, remodel and to guide in critical moment discussions about the future

We are blessed to have such a deep pool of possible servants for these key roles.



Rural community churches transforming to become regional churches

By Jessa Anderson, Administrative Coordinator

The Northwest Conference is comprised of roughly 140 churches, ranging from rural to urban, big to small. As generations change, churches continue to seek out new approaches to ministry rooted in the unchanging fundamental of God’s desire for His Church to be fruitful.

One trend among rural churches in the NWC has been an emphasis on moving their ministry reach beyond just the local community, out into the broader region.

Dawson Covenant Church in Dawson, MN, and Mission Covenant Church in Poplar, WI are two examples of churches that have experienced this shift over the past decades. Their pastors, the Rev. Erik Carlson and the Rev. Darrell Nelson, recently shared insights from their experience.

How and when did you move from a community church to a regional church?

Nelson: We transitioned from a community church to a regional church in the early 1990s. As a result of our church’s music ministry, strong preaching and good youth and children’s programming, we started to experience growth to the point of needing a new church building.

In 1996, we transitioned from our old building to the new building and continued to add on in the following years as the church continued to grow.

Carlson: Our church has had members from nearby towns for decades, but in the past five years there has been significant growth from outside our immediate community. I don’t think we did anything intentional to target regional

growth at the outset. Our focus was to be a healthy missional church that welcomed visitors and demonstrated God’s love.

Over time, we noticed more people coming from different communities on verbal recommendation. Any assessment, however, of how we became a regional church would not be fair without recognizing the larger demographic/church declining trends in our surrounding area. We are the only Covenant church in about an hour’s drive, and one of the few “evangelical” churches in the region.

Transitioning to a regional church happened to us, we weren’t directly striving to make it happen. Yet, what our church did recognize was God’s movement. We’ve hoped to cooperate with these changes as faithfully as possible.

What does ministry at your church look like as you have moved toward becoming a regional church?

Nelson: Our facility has really enabled us to host many large-sized events to love, serve and share our faith with those in our community and region. We host weekly children’s playgroups, day care programs, sporting events, Boy Scouts, a Karate club, a monthly food-share program to help feed families in our region and much more in support of our greater community.

The average person attending our church drives 13 miles one way. As a result, we try to do everything really well in short blocks of time. We only offer one youth and one adult Bible study on Sunday mornings. Confirmation is offered on Sunday morning or Wednesday night, whichever meets the parents and families’ schedules and travel needs. We have a full hour Children’s Church and three Sunday morning worship services.

One of the real draws is the fellowship time between and during services in the fellowship hall. Coffee and refreshments are served and people just enjoy being together in community. We also have a variety of small groups located geographically in the regional communities for people who attend our church from further away.

Carlson: Over the church’s 125+ years, we have gone from ministering to Swedish immigrants in the township, to people from a variety of backgrounds from two counties. The church has always been tasked with making disciples. Our mission has just expanded

from sending disciples into one community to many.

Recognizing that people were hearing about the church and were willing to drive a distance led us to make changes. Some of our events like ‘Lucia’ were beloved, but did not speak to the growing numbers of people that didn’t grow up in the Covenant and had no Swedish heritage. We transformed that fellowship event so that it invites people to bring whatever heritage foods they like.

We also had to rethink how we were making a broad spectrum of decisions based on a multi-community rather than a single-community model.



What is unique about the ministry that you are doing?

Nelson: We have the only youth pastor in the region (rural churches). I believe also the only full-time youth pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church in America in this small of a community—the Village of Poplar—603 people. Our youth programs draws youth from around the region.

Our Children’s Ministry, Mission Kidz!, is also really a huge focus in our church. We do not do Sunday School for our young children anymore, but strictly put all of our efforts into Mission Kidz! Children’s Church as we have a

greater opportunity to reach non-churched, non-Christian families that way.

In addition, we have Individual Education Plans for any special needs children and will pair up a highly skilled personal attendant to work with them alongside of the class. This ministry has had a powerful influence in our region and community.

Carlson: The church also took a leap of faith in hiring a full time youth pastor (the first additional pastoral staff in the church’s history) and building an addition focused on reaching the youth in the region. My understanding is that we are the only church in a 40-mile radius with full-time youth staff and regular weekly gathering.

What is your hope/vision for the future of your church and your region?

Nelson: Our area is in serious economic and social decline as people regularly leave for employment, schooling, opportunities, etc. The opioid/drug epidemic has also hit our county and neighboring county hard.

Certainly, we need revival and we need to faithfully continue all of our outreaches with the gospel and our ministries to our community. We want to continue to love God and love our neighbor!

Carlson: It is my hope that our church will continue to be a loving and welcoming place, and that God can use us to form mature disciples who will go on to make more disciples. I believe God wants to use our church to sustain and minister to the surrounding region for generations to come.

Covenant Enabling Residences celebrate anniversaries, new beginnings

By Patricia K. Peres

This year Covenant Enabling Residences of Minnesota is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the opening of Our Place, the 15th anniversary of North Place, and the 10th anniversary of Friendship Place. Each location was an answer to many prayers.

The parents of special need children send up many prayers, especially as their young adult children graduate from school and the question looms, "What now?" As easily swayed—and as trusting—as their children are, they want those who will be concerned with the health of their bodies and minds to be just as concerned with the health of their souls.

In short, they don't want their children separated from Christian care. CER-MN is the answer to those prayers.

Speaking as a member of the committee responsible for the establishment of Our Place, it was also the answer to our prayers for wisdom, perseverance and "Help!" For a year or two after Our Place was built, I never pulled into the parking lot without thanking God for the miracles He worked to make it happen. I'm certain committee members who worked for the other two residences had the same experience.

The staff of CER-MN continue to see God answering prayers. When Anoka County asked if CER-MN would take over a three-bed home in Lino Lakes for residents with challenging behaviors who were being under-served, their immediate response was negative. But as the county persisted, the staff prayed for God's direction and

definitely felt His leading to accept.

Lake Place, which opened April 1, is now a full-fledged member of the CER-MN family. The staff would be happy to have your prayers for them as they move forward with this difficult responsibility.

In honor of the three anniversaries happening this year, please consider donating for the home you support: \$20 for Our Place, \$15 for North Place, or \$10 for Friendship Place. Send your checks to CER-MN, 322 N. 60th Ave. W., Duluth, MN 55807. And rejoice with us that our God is faithful to answer the prayers of His people!

NWC Calendar

- 4.26-27 » Ministerial Association Annual Meeting** – Buffalo Covenant Church
- 4.27-28 » Northwest Conference Annual Meeting** – Buffalo Covenant Church
- 6.16-23 » Adventures in Leadership** – Adventurous Christians, Grand Marais, MN
- 6.21 » Go:Serve** – Twin Cities, MN
- 6.21-23 » Gather '18** – Minneapolis Marriott City Center
- 7.15-20 » CHIC 2018** – University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN
- 8.2-4 » MUUUCE** – Crossroads Church, Woodbury, MN
- 10.8-10 » Ministerial Association Fall Retreat** – Pier B Resort, Duluth, MN

NWC Staff

Mark Stromberg

Superintendent

Jon Kramka

Director of Congregational Vitality

Mike Brown

Director of Church Planting

Ginny Olson

Director of Youth Ministry

Kara Stromberg

Director of Children & Family Ministry

Jeff Burton

Director of Pastoral Care & Development

Sandy Norris

Director of Finance

Cheryl Theilen

Director of Administration

Bryan Malley

Director of Communications

Jessa Anderson

Administrative Coordinator

Greg Ellis

Coordinator of CHET Northwest Conference

The Northwest Conference

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

northwestconference.org

Phone: 612.721.4893 // 1.800.756.6692

Fax: 612.721.4895