

Delegate Summary

Introduction

The following is a distillation of the key decisions and highlights of this year's Annual Meeting Celebration 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

- Throughout the weekend, pastors, delegates and attendees heard video and spoken testimony on the topic of hope from a variety of ministry leaders.
- Marti Burger, ECC Director of Vocational and Spiritual Development – Develop Leaders, brought greetings from the Evangelical Covenant Church. “God is doing amazing things in your church. We’ve walked through really tough times, but you’ve stayed healthy and confident, and leaned on the Spirit as you have walked alongside others. Thank you for that partnership,” she shared.
- During her report, Superintendent Kara Stromberg praised delegates, attendees and churches for remaining committed to a shared purpose. Stromberg shared that the NWC Ministry Priorities remain unchanged and are focused on Church Planting, Congregational Vitality and Children, Youth & Family ministry. She explained that while Church Planting remains a high priority, the implementation of an interim Church Planting leadership team is intended to help strengthen new and existing church plants following a difficult few years of ministry.
- Stromberg expressed excitement about leaning into “developing our multi-ethnic mosaic, particularly in leadership development so we can represent the fullness of God’s kingdom here on earth,” and providing new training and resources for lay leaders serving as church or board chairpersons, and finance teams.
- In place of individual reports, this year’s meeting featured a NWC Ministry Staff Panel where Conference staff shared what brings them hope in their areas of ministry oversight throughout the last year.
- Hollis Kim, Director of Pastoral Care & Development, highlighted a lunch meeting he participated in with a cohort group of young leaders in their first lead pastor call that also included a retired pastor and another pastor that completed the cohort a few years earlier. “That gives me great hope because these are all folks who are hard at work, and the work is hard,” Kim said.
- Jeff Olson, Church Planting Associate, shared, “In the last several years I’ve seen a lot of tenacity and hustle out of planters, and that’s given me a lot of hope.”
- Sara Sosa, Director of Children & Family Ministry, said the NWC is a leader among Conferences in the Evangelical Covenant Church. She highlighted LunchBox (lunchbox.group), a new initiative created within the NWC to provide resources, training opportunities, best practices and tools to those serving in ministry to children and families across the denomination.
- Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry, shared startling statistics about high levels of reported adolescent trauma, stress and depression in recent years. “What gives me hope in the midst of this is looking at this last year, with two big events that we did—UNITE

North and MUUUUCE—I watched adult leaders step into the gap and communicate to these kid that they are loved and there is a God who loves them,” Ginny Olson said.

- Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality, pointed to partnerships with Start and Strengthen Churches to train seasoned pastors to serve as coaches to younger pastors, and Oak Hills Christian College and other NWC pastors to provide contextual resources and training to rural and small town churches.
- Mauricio Dell’Arciprete, outgoing Director of Latino Ministry, shared the hope and joy he has found in witnessing the resilience of local pastors.
- At the end of the Ministry Staff Panel, Jon Kramka was honored for 20 years leading the Adventures in Leadership youth program. “Thank you for your faithfulness in investing in this next generation of leaders over more than two decades,” Superintendent Stromberg shared during the tribute.
- Following the afternoon sessions, delegates and attendees had the opportunity to attend continuing education workshops that included: “Your Mission, Your Community: The Six Critical Questions of Context,” Dr. Martin Giese, President of Oak Hills Christian College; “We Love Our Church! How Do We Cultivate Pastoral Fortitude and Fruitfulness as a Church Staff,” Marti Burger, ECC Director of Vocational and Spiritual Development - De-

velop Leaders; “Trauma Informed Youth Work,” Ash SanFilippo, Vice President of Strategic Expansion & Technology, TreeHouse.

- The Bemidji Covenant Church worship team led attendees in worship during the Friday evening worship service. Six Candidates for Ordination were also recognized and prayed for during the service.
- A special offering taken during the service raised \$1,400 to benefit the Bemidji Community Food Shelf.
- The Rev. Colleen Nelson, Pastor of Bethlehem Covenant Church in Minneapolis, shared a message titled, “Rooted in God’s Presence.”
- During Saturday’s Business Session, Minnehaha Academy President Donna Harris shared a presentation from the life of the school that featured recent accomplishments and activities of MA students. Harris highlighted a recent initiative by kindergarten students at Minnehaha Academy that created a phone line to spread joy and uplifting messages throughout the Twin Cities. By calling 612-728-7799, community members can hear a variety of messages of encouragement, Bible verses, a prayer, birthday greetings and even songs from these enthusiastic kindergartners. Each message is designed to uplift and spread kindness.
- Minnehaha Academy continues to see continued growth in its enrollment, and will continue to pursue growth through its ongoing Strategic Plan approved in 2021.

- During Saturday’s Business Session, delegates also approved a ballot that included the election of Nikki Kahoud (Rochester Covenant Church, Rochester, MN) to serve a 1-year term as NWC Executive Board Chairperson, Rev. Dave Hugare (Lakeview Covenant Church, Duluth, MN) and Mike Mrosko (Excelsior Covenant Church, Excelsior, MN) to 5-year terms on the NWC Executive Board, and electing Dave Cairns (Epiphany Covenant Church, Minneapolis), Milton Dodd (Plymouth Covenant Church, Plymouth, MN) and John Schroeder (Restoration Covenant Church, Lakeville, MN) to 3-year terms on the Minnehaha Academy Board of Trustees.
- Delegates approved the NWC budget of \$1,345,560, as well as the budget for Minnehaha Academy.
- Bylaw amendments for both the NWC and MA were also approved.
- On Saturday morning, attendees also heard reports from leaders of Camping Ministry in the NWC, Women Ministries of the NWC, Solid Rock School of Discipleship, Covenant Ability Network, National Covenant Properties, Covenant Trust Company and Covenant Benefits.
- As the meeting was concluding, NWC Board Chair Jim Volling invited the delegates to come to Redeemer Covenant Church in Brooklyn Park, MN, for the 2024 NWC Annual Meeting Celebration next April 25-27.