

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 joy from a variety of ministry leaders.
- Paul Lessard, ECC Vice President of Mission Priorities, brought greetings from the Evangelical Covenant Church. "Every one of your Conference personnel is on one of the Denominational boards and teams, so you're well represented at that level," Lessard said. "The Lord continues to call gifted people to serve."
- During her report, Superintendent Kara Stromberg reiterated the NWC ministry priority areas of Congregational Vitality, Church Planting and Children, Youth & Family, with supplemental support in areas of pastoral support and development.
- Stromberg went on to highlight the NWC's work in walking with churches through pastoral transition, facilitating cohorts of pastors serving in various capacities (church planting, vitality, children, youth and family, interim pastors, those serving in their first call, etc.), equipping lay leaders through events like last fall's Church Chair Training, as well as offering financial and real estate training and "continuing to grow in our understanding of racial righteousness and living into the multiethnic mosaic."
- During her report, Stromberg called on several members of the NWC staff to provide updates from their ministry priority areas, beginning with Scott Nelson, Associate Superintendent, who will oversee Church Planting, among other things, going forward. "I think that sometimes as Christians we forget that we are a sent people," Nelson said. "I think God has called us to a mission, and I think the world is actually longing for God's people to see them, and to reach out to them, and to love them. I want us to have a vision for sending leaders. Thank you for living into the call as sent people, together."
- Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality, encouraged attendees to consider how their church can embrace change while on a journey toward renewal.
- Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry, pointed to studies that suggest about one million people are leaving the church every year. She highlighted the work the NWC is doing in partnership with Fuller Youth Institute and others, to address this new challenge as it relates to younger generations. "It's an honor to work with those who work with these younger generations," Olson said. "We're seeing God at work in some amazing, amazing ways."
- Sara Sosa, Director of Children & Family Ministry, pointed to the many ways the NWC can be a resource, support and encouragement to those serving emerging generations in our churches. Sosa went on to highlight LunchBox (lunchbox.group), an 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. She also mentioned the many events that happen outside of NWC churches, to serve the people inside the churches, including: MUUUCE, UNITE East and Adventures in Leadership.

- Hollis Kim, Director of Ministerial Health & Connections, explained his role as a “pastor to the pastors.” He highlighted the work of resourcing and encouraging pastors and their families, serving churches of all sizes—especially in more remote rural regions—connecting pastors with Denominational resources and in cohorts, and serving pastors in their moments of personal need.
- “I want to encourage us to live into the Covenant we aspire to be,” Stromberg said as she concluded the business session. “Lean into our six Covenant Affirmations that ground us theologically and relationally, the six-fold test that propels us forward toward being the beloved community, the full affirmation of women and men serving alongside one another with mutual-ity, our commitments to discipleship and evangelism—especially with these next generations—our insistence on asking both ‘where is it written?’ and ‘how goes your walk?’ All of this is for God’s glory and neighbor’s good.”
- Following the afternoon sessions, delegates and attendees had the opportunity to attend workshops that included: “Living with Joy. Leading with Joy.,” led by Jon Kramka, NWC Director of Congregational Vitality; “Gen Z and Gen

Alpha – Who are these Kids and Why Does it Matter for Your Ministry?,” led by Ginny Olson, NWC Director of Youth Ministry; “Breaking the Silo of Faith Formation,” led by Dave Cairns, Executive Director of Covenant Pines Ministries, Phil Tolbert, Executive Director, Lake Beauty Bible Camp, Kaela Stano, Director, Covenant Park Bible Camp, Chadwick Persons, Camp Director, Bluewater Covenant Bible Camp.

- Courtland Pickens and the Known MPLS (<https://www.knownmpls.com>) choir led attendees in worship during the Friday evening worship service.
- Five Candidates for Ordination were also recognized and prayed for during the service.
- A special offering taken during the service raised \$1,700 to benefit the students attending UNITE East this summer.
- Kevin Farmer, Lead Pastor of Epiphany Covenant Church in Minneapolis, shared a message titled, “With Joy.”
- 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 the many ways the Minnehaha community is challenging itself to live out the 2023-24 theme verse of Colossians 3:12-15 through prayer initiatives, vibrant chapel experiences, “teaching for transformation,” the Minnehaha Leadership

Institute and many other academic initiatives.

- During Saturday’s Business Session, delegates also approved a ballot that included the election of Nikki Kahoud (Rochester Covenant Church, Rochester, MN) to serve another 1-year term as NWC Executive Board Chairperson, Dr. Jacob A. Gayle (Sanctuary Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN), and Rev. Terri Russell (Salem Covenant Church, New Brighton, MN) to 5-year terms on the NWC Executive Board, and Rev. Jonathan Wilson (Salem Covenant Church, Pennock, MN) to a 1-year term on the NWC Executive Board, as well as electing Katie Craig (Bethlehem Covenant Church, Minneapolis), Sean Mahoney (Plymouth Covenant Church, Plymouth, MN) and Todd O’Bert (Bethlehem Covenant Church, Minneapolis) to 3-year terms on the Minnehaha Academy Board of Trustees.
- Delegates approved the NWC budget of \$1,361,434, as well as the budget for Minnehaha Academy.
- On Saturday morning, attendees also heard reports from leaders of Camping Ministry in the NWC, Women Ministries of the NWC, the NWC Ministerial Association, Covenant Ability Network, National Covenant Properties, Covenant Trust Company and Covenant Benefits.
- As the meeting was concluding, Lead Pastor Matt Kennedy invited the delegates to come to Roseville Covenant Church in Roseville, MN, for the 2025 NWC Annual Meeting Celebration next May 1-3.