

Delegate Summary

Introduction

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

- Throughout the weekend, pastors, delegates and attendees heard video and spoken testimony of celebration and challenge from a variety of ministry leaders.
- President Tammy Swanson-Draheim brought greetings from the Evangelical Covenant Church. "We are all here to serve you, the pastors and churches and affiliates that are on the front lines of ministry," Swanson-Draheim said.
- During her report, Superintendent Stromberg began by announcing a new missional focus for the NWC—being rooted in Jesus, renewing lives and communities by starting and strengthening churches, investing in the next generation and developing missional leaders. "Our three mission priorities around planting, vitality and children, youth and family have turned into four as we bring more intentional focus around that final priority—developing missional leaders," Stromberg said. "In everything we do, we are all about strengthening the local church and its leaders for mission."
- Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality, shared with attendees signs of God's movement and activity throughout the NWC. Kramka shared that the annual Rural Impact Leadership Conference is having a deep impact in rural congregations in the Covenant and beyond. He also highlighted the recent Strategic Ministry Grant Initiative which awarded \$140,000 in grant funding to 27 NWC churches to use for outreach and capacity building efforts.
- Stromberg went on to highlight the NWC's efforts to intentionally develop new leaders. "We're in our third cycle of offering the church chair cohort, nearing almost 100 church chairs that have been through this training, in addition to financial training seminars offered in partnership with National Covenant Properties," she said. "We've realized that these are two areas of lay leadership that don't really come with a handbook for how to do it, so we want to come alongside to help equip lay leaders."
- The Northwest Conference is also walking alongside churches that are experiencing pastoral transition, cultivating future leaders via new learning experiences and the Equip Cohort, coordinating efforts like the Luke 10:2 Prayer Initiative, and offering the Exploring Call Retreat, Oct. 24-25 at Lakeview Covenant in Duluth, MN, for those who "feel the nudge toward some kind of pastoral ministry and want to explore with others."
- Stromberg also highlighted the work of the NWC to build a stronger church planting framework. Stromberg then called on Scott Nelson, Associate Superintendent, to provide an update on recent NWC Church Planting efforts.
- Nelson went on to explain that to be saved is to be sent, because "our God is a sending God. We live on a mission field. Different people need different churches, and we can be a part of that, friends," Nelson said. "The harvest is plentiful. Let's get into the plentiful world of Jesus."



- Ginny Olson, Director of Youth Ministry, shared that her team of leaders is focused on three areas: Deeper discipleship, a stronger leadership pipeline for students, and supporting youth workers as they seek to reach youth in their communities. “We have poured more and more energy into MUUUCE, our middle school event that happens every August. This three-day event really brings the gospel to light for students.” Adventures in Leadership continues to form resilient leaders from churches throughout the Conference through experiential learning in a wilderness setting.”
- Sara Sosa, Director of Children & Family Ministry, challenged attendees to ask: “How can we form our children better to look and love like Jesus?”
- 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.
- Minnehaha Academy President Donna Harris shared a presentation via video from the life of the school that featured recent accomplishments and activities of MA students. She praised Superintendent Stromberg and the staff of the NWC for their support in ministry.
- During Friday’s Business Session, delegates also approved a ballot that included the election of Dave Hugare (Lakeview Covenant Church, Duluth, MN) to serve a 1-year term as NWC Executive Board Chairperson, Sharon Ardon Morales (En Su Presencia Covenant Church, Rochester, MN) and Gary Gilkinson (Winthrop Evangelical Covenant Church, Winthrop, MN) to 5-year terms on the NWC Executive Board, as well as electing Matt Kennedy (Roseville Covenant Church, Roseville, MN) to a 3-year term on the Minnehaha Academy Board of Trustees.
- Delegates approved the NWC budget of \$1,552,036, as well as the budget for Minnehaha Academy.
- As the meeting was concluding, Senior Pastor Chris Pappenfus invited the delegates to come to First Covenant Church in Willmar, MN, for the 2026 NWC Annual Meeting Celebration next April 23-25.
- A team of musicians from throughout the NWC led attendees in worship during the Friday evening service.
- Five Candidates for Ordination and Commissioning were also recognized and prayed for during the service. The Candidates for Ordination include: Michele Ann Arndt (Roseville Covenant Church, Roseville, MN), Erika Brodin Clauson (M Health Fairview, Minneapolis, MN), Kohl Michael Hanson (Karmel Covenant Church, Princeton, MN) and Cynthia Marie Jones (Catalyst Covenant Church, White Bear Lake, MN). The Candidate for Commissioning is Nathan LaVerne Nelson (Mission Covenant Church, Poplar, WI).
- Tammy Swanson-Draheim, President of the ECC, shared a message centered around 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. “I love Jesus and I love His Church,” Swanson-Draheim said. “We have the hope of the world as a Church.”
- Saturday morning’s Leadership Development event opened with a brief panel discussion featuring representatives of Covenant Trust Company and National Covenant Properties, sponsors of the day’s coffee and lunch.
- The rest of the day featured author Dr. Tod Bolsinger presenting “Leadership Matters: Practicing Change in a Time of Upheaval and Disruption.” Throughout the day, Bolsinger focused on four areas of leadership: “How to not waste a crisis,” “The mission always wins,” “Invest in transformation,” and “Leading through resistance.”
- He challenged attendees, when facing a new problem, to pause and ask themselves: “What kind of problem is this (technical problem vs adaptive challenge)?” Bolsinger focused on the “shift” in attitudes, values and habits of behavior that adaptive challenges require to be solved.
- Attendees also had opportunity to learn about a variety of Conference and denominational ministries and organizations at display tables, and through one-on-one conversations throughout the weekend.