

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.
- Cyndi Hoffman, Vice President of Finance, brought greetings from the Evangelical Covenant Church. During her report, Hoffman highlighted the One Covenant Community project, which "seeks to cultivate a thriving ecosystem of pastoral leadership across the ECC" by strengthening the "full arc of vocational discernment, theological education, credentialing, and lifelong support" through deep collaboration between a wide variety of Covenant institutions.
- During her report, Superintendent Stromberg highlighted the new Northwest Conference Mission statement: "In the Northwest Conference, we are rooted in Jesus, renewing lives and communities by starting and strengthening churches, investing in the next generation and developing healthy missional leaders."
- Stromberg highlighted the NWC's efforts to build up pastoral pipelines, strengthen rural initiatives, grow into the Evangelical Covenant Church's multiethnic mosaic and help young leaders explore their calls to ministry. She also announced a new Journey to Mosaic youth experience taking shape for fall 2026.
- Stromberg announced that Sara Heacox Sosa will be concluding her time as Director of Children & Family Ministry in May and offered a prayer of blessing. She also shared that Steve Wong is joining the NWC staff as Director of Ministerial Health & Development in the coming weeks.
- Ginny Olson, Director of Next Gen Ministry, highlighted opportunities like MUUUCE, AIL and UNITE as examples of events that enable youth to deepen their relationships with God and others. She also shared that the NWC invests in leaders at all levels (whether full time, co-vocational or volunteer) to help them serve their local church better and is building pathways for young people to take the next steps in their faith journeys.
- "Congregational Vitality is not just a value we embrace, but for us it's also a strategy for our shared mission," said Jon Kramka, Director of Congregational Vitality. "It is not just about strengthening one church, but it's actually about fostering shared movement forward in mission."
- Incoming Director of Ministerial Health & Development Steve Wong shared that he's excited to be called to serve in the Northwest Conference because of the growth that is evident.
- Latino Ministry Coordinator Edith Soto López reflected on recent immigration enforcement efforts in Minnesota and the support provided by the Northwest Conference and its churches.
- "My dream is that we would see more churches opening than closing, more pastors going into ministry than retiring from ministry,"

Associate Superintendent Scott Nelson said. “We need all of us to find the future drivers of the car, and to work together to get them behind the wheel.” In his day-to-day work, Nelson highlighted meeting with churches who have search teams, leading a church chair cohort, and continuing to bolster church planting efforts in the NWC.

- Following the Friday Business Session, delegates and attendees participated in workshops that included: “How Planting Can Change the Culture of Your Church” led by Scott Nelson, NWC Associate Superintendent; “Immigration Stories,” led by Jenny Groen, Willmar Area Program Director for Arrive Ministries; “Informative, Responsible and Ethical Use of AI,” led by Minnehaha Academy President Donna Harris; and “Navigating the World of Church Insurance,” led by Brad Hedberg, President and CEO at Portico Group.
- A team of musicians from throughout the NWC, anchored by Lakeview Covenant Church (Duluth, MN) Pastor of Worship and Arts Ryan Starr, led attendees in worship during the Friday evening worship service.
- Ten Candidates for Ordination were also recognized and prayed for during the service. The Candidates for Ordination to Word and Sacrament include: Maria Francisca Alarcon Gonzalez (Iglesia Unidad, Fridley, MN), Jenny Rae Armstrong (First Covenant Church, Duluth, MN), Bertha Elizabeth Carrillo Sandoval (Nuestra Esperanza Covenant

Church, Brooklyn Center, MN), Jason Samuel Hovis (Karmel Covenant Church, Princeton, MN), Laura Ann Kozamchak (Harbor Crossing, White Bear Lake, MN), Juan Humberto Lopez Perez (LaBendicion Covenant Church, Brooklyn Park, MN), Terri Michelle Russell (Salem Covenant Church, New Brighton, MN), Jamison Robert Staples (Renew Covenant Church, Eau Claire, WI), Elijah Kuich Yuek (South Sudan Covenant Church, Sioux Falls, SD). The Candidate for Ordination to Word and Service is Jennifer Marie Botzet (Sanctuary Covenant Church, Minneapolis).

- Julio and Katie Isaza, Global Personnel with the Evangelical Covenant Church, shared a message entitled “Faithful Witness in God’s Upside-Down Kingdom.”
- Saturday’s Business Session kicked off with worship and transitioned to a Q&A time with NWC staff responding to questions submitted via text. Following the panel, attendees honored the legacy of two churches being deleted from the roster of the NWC and ECC (Calvary Covenant Church in Northome, MN, and Kensington Covenant Church in Kensington, MN), and welcomed two churches joining both rosters (Community Covenant Church in Mankato, MN, and Catalyst Covenant Church in White Bear Lake, MN).
- Minnehaha Academy President Donna Harris shared a presentation from the life of the school that featured recent accomplishments and activities of MA students, cen-

tered around the private school’s core values (Distinctively Christian, Exceptional Academics, Cultivating Potential, Caring Community). She praised Superintendent Stromberg and the staff of the NWC for their support in ministry.

- During Saturday’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, Nikki Kahoud (Rochester Covenant Church) to a 1-year term, and Jenny Aipperspach (Hope Covenant Church, Grand Forks, ND) and Brian Zahasky (Hope Covenant Church, St. Cloud, MN) to 5-year terms on the NWC Executive Board, as well as electing Hector Calvo (New City Covenant Church, Edina, MN), Erica Jensen (Sanctuary Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN) and Jenny Johnson (First Covenant Church, St. Paul, MN) to 3-year terms on the Minnehaha Academy Board of Trustees.
- Delegates also elected Kara Stromberg to serve another 4-year term as Northwest Conference Superintendent.
- Delegates approved the NWC budget of \$1,949,246, as well as the budget for Minnehaha Academy.
- As the meeting was concluding, delegates were invited to come to Cedarbrook Church in Menomonie, WI, for the 2027 NWC Annual Meeting Celebration next April 22-24.