



## Highlights of the 2012 Ministry Celebrations

### “Envision!”

#### **Ministerial Association Annual Gathering:**

80 pastors and guests gathered at the Evangelical Covenant Church in Fort Collins, CO, on Friday, April 27, for the Annual Meeting of the Ministerium. Rev. Dennis Anderson from Crossroads Church in Loveland gave a devotion on vision. Along with the annual business session, members heard testimony from the 2012 ordinands; Rev. David McCowan gave an update on Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, report received on Spiritual Direction by Rev. Patty Thompson; Rev. Sharon Nelson shared on “Advocates for Covenant Clergy Women”; Fall Retreat dates given by Rev. John Peterson (October 15-17 in Schuyler, NE, and October 22-24 in Colorado Springs CO); and a special recognition was given to retiring pastor Bob Johnson of Stromsburg, NE, for 25 years of ministry. Rev. Don Holmertz, pastor of the Decorah Covenant Church in Decorah, Iowa, led a continuing education workshop called “Healthy Me/Healthy We.” Both Superintendent Tammy Swanson-Draheim and Alan Forsman led a visioning session to gain input from participants about how to effectively care for pastors, staff and other credentialed clergy.



Alan Forsman



Friday luncheon

#### **Women Ministries Annual Gathering:**

Women Ministries began with a Thursday evening event hosted by women of ECC in Fort Collins showing a documentary movie on human trafficking and modern day slavery. Participants learned more about this form of abuse occurring even in our local communities. Friday morning, women gathered for a celebration of ministry, an outreach project and business session with speaker Meagan Gillan, Executive Minister of Women Ministries for The Evangelical Covenant Church. All conference participants had opportunity to purchase items from the Fair Trade Marketplace.

#### **Midwest Conference Session 1:**



Host Pastor Bert Wright

- Rev. Bert Wright, host pastor from the Evangelical Covenant Church in Fort Collins welcomed delegates to the first business session of the Midwest Conference on Friday afternoon, 3:30 p.m. leading us in devotions and blessing our time together. The ministry celebration was led by Conference Chairperson Brent Thompson, who called the gathering to order with reflections on God’s constancy even in transition. Serving also were Secretary Matt Norlen and Parliamentarian Doug Dumler.
- The Executive board was introduced as were the conference staff and those serving to facilitate this meeting. Special guests in attendance and introduced were: Alan Forsman, President of Performance Potential Professionals; Meagan Gillan, Executive Minister of Women Ministries and Millie Lungren, Director of the Covenant Resource Center, both for The Evangelical Covenant Church in Chicago, IL.

- Superintendent Tammy Swanson-Draheim spoke to delegates about the various staffing changes occurring this year, the resignation of Associate Superintendent and Director of Congregational Vitality Dave Benedict. Dave, in the spring of 2011, received from God a clear sense of release from his call. We thank God for Dave's leadership and greatly appreciate his service during this season of transition. He's been a wise leader, trusted friend and champion of congregational vitality. Both Dave and his wife, Martha, have served our conference and the Kansas City area well. May God bless them in their future ministry!
  - Brent Thompson will assume the position of Director of Church Health beginning August 1, 2012. Brent comes to this position with a rich background in the church vitality movement as well as fruitful ministry experience in both large and small church contexts. Brent and his wife, Patty, look forward to moving to Omaha this summer.
  - Brian Johnson will begin a part-time position as the Director of Church Planting East starting May 1, 2012. Brian brings significant church planting experience to this new role. He has planted three churches and enjoys coaching other church plants. Brian and his wife, Cheryl, live in El Dorado, Kansas, where Brian will continue to pastor Hope Covenant Church with the help of a new staff person there.
  - Associate Superintendent and Director of Church Planting Rick Mylander will remain in his current role but will scale back to a three-quarter-time position. Rick will continue to work in church planting conference wide, but will focus the majority of his efforts in the western half of the conference. We thank God for the ministry and service of both Rick and his wife, Gail.
- Executive Minister Meagan Gillan greeted member churches and gave a denominational update. She also introduced a video greeting and update from President Gary Walter.



Tammy Swanson-Draheim

### **Midwest Conference Session 2:**

At 4:30 p.m., participants moved to the gymnasium for the first ever Ministry Fair. A definite highlight of the weekend, people had opportunity to view displays and visit with leaders of our conference partners in ministry and denominational ministries. Twenty festive display booths were set up in the gymnasium, and as guests viewed the displays, they also enjoyed light appetizers. As one leader stated, "we're already planning for our display 2013!"



### **Eating Together:**



Following a very successful and enjoyable Ministry Fair, participants moved right into an excellent barbeque dinner provided by our host church along with live jazz. Time allowed everyone to sit back, relax and enjoy fellowship with one another and listen to great music.



## Worshipping Together:



Joel and Lisa Russell

Returning to the sanctuary for an evening of worship, the Spirit was evident as worshippers gathered for prayer, song and testimony of God transforming lives. Joel and Lisa Russell shared that our dreams do not always go as planned, but through difficulties in life, we can experience God taking us on a journey filled with blessing. Superintendent Tammy Swanson-Draheim preached from Acts 1.8 and inspired church leaders about the impact of the church in the world.



Dave Benedict and Tammy Swanson-Draheim lead communion

Communion was led by Superintendent Tammy and Associate Superintendent Dave Benedict. This was also the time delegates shared in the “Ask the Lord of the Harvest” and brought their church’s prayer lists to the altar. Prayer for people to come to know the Lord was shared together—these prayer lists will go to the Covenant Annual Meeting in June.

## Midwest Conference Session 3: Saturday, April 28, 2012

- There were 113 voting delegates at the celebration representing 54 churches and 2 fellowship groups (out of a possible 87 churches and 6 fellowships).
- Superintendent Tammy introduced the newest church to be accepted into full Covenant membership at the June 2012 annual meeting of The Evangelical Covenant Church. Those present at the meeting voted in affirmation of **Freedom Covenant Church, Kansas City, Missouri**, recommending it to the 2012 annual meeting in Irvine, CA. Prayer was given on their behalf.
- Delegates were introduced to 4 pastors who will be ordained at the Covenant Annual Meeting in June: **Katherine B. Martinez**, OSM, Associate Pastor of Spiritual Formation and Communications, Crossroads Covenant Church of Loveland, CO; **Michael D. Brown**, OSM, Associate Pastor, Christ Community Covenant Church in Arvada, CO; **Brian Wright**, OWS, Pastor of Outreach and Education, Colorado Ridge Covenant Church, Westminster, CO; **Bruce McGregor**, OWS, Senior Pastor, Freedom Covenant Church of Kansas City, MO (not shown). Lavern Holdeman prayed for these people along with the laying on of hands by members of the conference Committee on Ministerial Standing, affirming them as we send them on to the denominational annual meeting.



Pastors to be ordained in 2012

- Conference Treasurer Dave Cavanaugh gave the treasurer’s financial report. He encouraged churches to be “first fruits” givers to the conference and denomination. Delegates received the report and approved a budget of \$1,020,147 for 2013. This budget includes doubling our church planting efforts in 2013.



Dave Benedict

- Dave Benedict, Associate Superintendent and Director of Congregational Vitality, presented an overview of his work in the Midwest Conference. Committed to making the full ministry of Congregational Vitality available to every church in the Midwest Conference, Dave has served well to introduce the building blocks of the Vitality Pathway, knowing each pathway is unique in every church, ultimately working toward renewal and vitality. Dave is concluding his ministry after 9 years of service to the Conference. He and his wife Martha hope to continue their ministry in the local church setting. We thank God for the work He has done through Dave and pray God's blessing on his future ministry.
- Pastor Larry Linsenmaier of Grace Covenant Church in Lakewood, CO, shared with delegates the revitalization that is ongoing at Grace Covenant. Navigate has been particularly instrumental for this congregation. Grace Covenant has had to make some difficult choices, but on Easter Sunday, they had 25 people come to Christ!

- Church Planting Pastors Victor Guillen of Iglesia Covenant Luz of Hope (sponsored by Christ Community Covenant Church in Arvada) and Ryan Ashley of Restoration Covenant (sponsored by Heritage Community Bible Church in Arvada) shared about their unique ministries as new fellowships.

- **Superintendent Tammy and Alan Forsman** led a **visioning session** with delegates. Tammy shared her enthusiasm for new approaches to congregational health and vitality. She also announced the ramp up of church planting efforts; the goal for church planting has been doubled for 2013. Starting and strengthening churches are core priorities of conference work. In addition, delegates were placed in small groups and asked to give feedback on the following question: *From your perspective as a member of a local congregation, what could the Midwest Conference do to provide you with resources in either of the areas already mentioned (starting and strengthening churches) or in other areas essential to your missional health?* Results will be used to help inform the strategic ministry plan currently being worked on by the Executive Board. Tammy emphasized the need for prayer as conference priorities for the future are discerned.



Group discussions during visioning session

- Two people were elected to serve on our **Conference Executive Board**: *Kristina Cunningham of Christ the Servant Covenant Church in Olathe, KS, and returning board member Dave Scherrer of Christ Community Covenant Church of Arvada, CO.* The **Midwest Covenant Home Board** had two incumbents reelected to their board: *Rod Halstead of Community Covenant Church in Omaha, and Dave Norlen of First Covenant Church in Omaha NE.* Thanks be to God for these willing servants.
- John Smith, Senior Pastor of Crossroads (Loveland) gave an inspiring introduction to the **Covenant Kids Congo** initiative. Delegates watched a compelling video highlighting the needs and inviting churches to be part of making a difference. Churches are encouraged to participate in a Hope Sunday this fall.
- Two new Covenant resolutions were introduced on the important topics of *Generosity and Stewardship* and *Domestic Violence*.
- Brent Thompson was recognized as a retiring Executive Board member for his service to the MWC. Tammy presided over installation of the MWC board members and prayer for those continuing in service to their respective boards.
- Members of Hillcrest Covenant Church in Prairie Village, KS, Roger and Chris Larson, extended **an invitation** to their church for the **127<sup>th</sup> Ministry Celebration of the Midwest Conference, to be held April 26-27, 2013.**
- Conference Board Member, Tracy Hilts, expressed appreciation to the Evangelical Covenant church of Fort Collins for their hospitality in hosting the MWC Celebrations, for opening their church, for giving their time and wonderful talents, for giving us great spaces for meetings, meals, ministry and conversation. Paraphrasing words of Romans 15:28-29 and Deuteronomy 28:8, *“So after we have completed this task and put our seal on this fruit of yours, we will go on by way of you to our home churches. And we know that having come to you we received the extravagant blessing of Jesus Christ. Therefore, may the Lord send a blessing on your storehouses and on everything you put your hand to. May the Lord your God bless you in the land He is giving you.”* Thank you!



Chris and Roger Larson

Additional “fun” photos to highlight the weekend for the 126<sup>th</sup> MWC Ministry Celebration!

