

# MWC 125<sup>th</sup> Annual Ministry Celebration

The annual ministry celebrations of the Midwest Conference were held April 15-16, 2011, in Omaha, Nebraska, hosted by First Covenant Church. Participants to these meetings are discovering that a "business meeting" as known from the past, are no longer just your typical business meetings! The time spent together is one of ministry celebration, hearing personal witness of how ministries in our conference are truly sharing the gospel of Christ. Both delegates and guests heard the stories of how God is working in personal lives--both in our conference churches and denomination!

This 125<sup>th</sup> conference offered many highlights that delegates can take back home and share with their congregations! One significant highlight was a Friday evening banquet, held at the Georgetown Club in Omaha. The President of The Evangelical Covenant Church, Gary Walter, challenged delegates and guests in attendance to embrace our call as a healthy, missional church. Retiring Superintendent Ken Carlson and his wife, Nancy, and their families were recognized for 24 years of service to the Midwest Conference and Superintendent Elect Tammy Swanson-Draheim and her husband, Kelly, and their family were graciously welcomed as Tammy prepares to begin her service to the conference August 1. A dessert reception was sponsored by Covenant Village of Colorado and was enjoyed by nearly 400 in attendance! We pray God's continued blessing as we celebrate 125 years of ministry and look forward to "A Bold Mission and Bright Future!"



Gary Walter



Lois Christiansen  
and Nancy Carlson

One way to celebrate our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary was at a Saturday morning breakfast for those early birds! Members of First Covenant Church provided a delicious breakfast and Pastor Dave Scherrer, member of the conference executive board led us through a fun morning of remembering our past. Associate Superintendent Dave Benedict presented a video, taking us back to our beginnings, and Nancy Carlson and Lois Christiansen shared a fun witness, remembering those who came before us. A history book, written by Pastor John Peterson of Faith Covenant in Omaha NE was on display and available for purchase. Copies can still be ordered by contacting the Conference Office ([midcovcon@qwestoffice.net](mailto:midcovcon@qwestoffice.net)).

## Highlights of the 2011 MWC Annual Ministry Celebration—"Bold Mission – Bright Future!"

- 97 pastors and guests gathered at First Covenant Church in Omaha, Nebraska, on Friday, April 15, for the **Annual Meeting of the Ministerium**. The President of The Evangelical Covenant Church, Gary Walter, shared with attendees a continuing education workshop and also held a time of discussion joined by Superintendent Nominee Tammy Swanson-Draheim. Along with the annual business gathering, members met the 2011 ordinands, and heard the good news of ministries going on in the conference.



Ordinands Interviewed

- The latest national news from our denomination highlighting its 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Ruth Hill's retirement as Executive Director of Women Ministries for The Evangelical Covenant Church, and the India PACE Trip along with local news from our Midwest Conference were just part of the informative pieces at the **Women Ministries Annual gathering**. Guest speaker for the 2011 meeting was Patty Thompson, Associate Pastor of The Journey in Wichita, Kansas. A dessert reception honoring Nancy Carlson took place at the close of the gathering.



Women Ministries Luncheon



Chairman Thompson

- Rev. Wes Gibson from First Covenant Church in Omaha **welcomed delegates** to the first business session of the Midwest Conference on Friday afternoon, 3 p.m. 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, the reading of Joshua 1:1-9, 16-18 and prayer. Serving also were Secretary Taryn Vetter and Parliamentarian Tim McIvor.

- The Executive board was introduced as were the conference staff and those serving to facilitate this meeting. **Special guests** in attendance and introduced were: Gary Walter, President of The Evangelical Covenant Church; Doreen Olson, Executive Minister of Christian Formation for The Evangelical Covenant; Paul Koptak – North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago; Stan Friedman, Covenant News Service; Karl Noren, Covenant



Special Guests Gary  
Walter & Doreen Olson

missionary on home assignment; along with pastors from fellowship groups Jose Sanchez and Jeff Grote, and representatives from churches joining the Covenant this year, Matt Kim and guest from Logos Central Chapel in Denver, CO, and Lee and Ruby Lindblad from Crossroads Church in Greeley, CO.



- **Superintendent Ken Carlson:** Hebrews 12:1-2 and Psalm 90:1-2 were the scriptural foundation for Ken's Conference Ministry Update. He reminded us of the *passion, patience, and perseverance* of the founders of our conference. The establishment of three Bible Camps and the Covenant Retirement Home was evidence of the passion of early Midwest Covenanters. The MWC encourages and supports ministry in town and country as well as urban settings and has more recently focused on church planting and adoptions. This has broadened the MWC constituency to include 9 ethnic churches. De-centralization of conference offices and specialization of the superintendent and associate superintendents has allowed more effective leadership. He challenged us to ask two important questions: How do we embrace change in healthy ways? How do we deal with change in healthy ways? The men at Lindsborg, KS, provide car care to members of their community and were presented as an example of contemporary ministry. Ken finished his presentation thanking the congregations, his partner superintendents and especially, his wife, Nancy, for supporting Him in His ministry. We prayed together for Ken, Nancy, and their family as they transition into retirement after July 31, 2011.

- The **ballot** was presented without any further nominations for Administrative and Institutional board members. As there was only one nominee for each position, these people were elected unanimously.
- Conference Chair Brent Thompson described the process of selecting Tammy Swanson-Draheim as Superintendent Nominee. Delegates spent time praying for the MWC to be healthy and missional; the leadership transition; and Rev. Doug Fergusson's health. Delegates affirmed Tammy as Superintendent with their vote.
- The MWC partnership with Mountain Village, AK, was presented by Gary Carlson, Alaska Coordinator. The partnership includes meeting needs by completing projects, prayer and developing on-going relationships. Churches were encouraged to consider ways to participate in this mission.
- Church Planting Pastor Jose Sanchez of Iglesia Evangelica Siloe Covenant Church, Kansas City, KS reported that much of their ministry is to families who are dealing with difficulties and dysfunction. They value the support of the ECC and invite MW Covenanters to pray for them and come to minister along side them.



**Newly Elected Supt.  
Tammy Swanson-Draheim**

## Saturday, April 16, 2011

- Chris Young, Midwest Covenant Home administrator, gave an update. Their mission is to provide a Christian environment where residents can live with dignity while receiving quality care. He shared the story of a woman whose family benefited from their care in the last days of life.
- Denomination Ministry Update from Gary Walter noted the significance of this moment in time and season of time for the MWC. The Covenant has experienced 19 years of growth, doubling in that time. The denomination is starting a new church every 2-3 weeks. The Covenant is a denomination of people finding faith in Christ and working as partners in Christ to do the work of Christ in the world.
- Doreen Olson, Executive Minister of Christian Formation for the Evangelical Covenant Church observed that strong leaders are being developed in the MWC. The Feast, a worship and renewal event for all ages, will be June 25-28 in Estes Park, CO. The theme will be "Play for the Kid in All of Us."
- There were 137 **voting delegates** at the celebration representing 61 churches (out of a possible 86 churches), along with representatives from fellowship groups (5 of the 7 groups were represented), camps, executive board, institutions and organizations for the Midwest Conference.



- **Associate Superintendent Rick Mylander introduced "What's Your One Step"**. Good ministry in our churches is about intentionality. Members of Covenant Churches are encouraged to consider people in their realm of influence to pray for, care for, and with whom to share the gospel.

**Assoc. Supt. Rick Mylander**

- **Darcy Ruka, witness of New Life in Christ, member of First Covenant Church, Omaha NE**, works with youth in the Omaha FCC. She shared her journey of faith. She was raised in the church but turned her back on Christ through high school and early adult years. She experienced the transforming grace of God that dramatically changed her life.



**Witness Darcy Ruka**



- **Scott Larsen**, Executive Director at Twin Lakes Bible Camp told of their waterfront renovation and work on debt reduction. **Dan Buhr**, Executive Director of Covenant Cedars Bible Camp reported they have completed the first two parts of their 20-year plan. This is allowing service to more campers and allowing new ways to serve campers and churches. **Tom Cousineau**, Executive Director, Covenant Heights Camp and Retreat Center gave updates about activities and ministry at their camp including the completion of a new pavilion. The directors shared stories of eternal life change in campers and summer staff. Prayer was requested for kids to come to

camp, for salvation and other significant spiritual decisions to be made at camp, and for impact after returning home; for the ability to effectively communicate the vitality of and importance of camping; and for those dealing with the death of a child who was in the process of an international adoption. Ken offered prayer for the camps.

- **Rick Mylander introduced two new churches** to be accepted into full Covenant membership at the June 2011 annual meeting of The Evangelical Covenant Church. These churches shared their stories. Those present at the meeting voted in affirmation of these two churches, recommending them to the 2011 annual meeting in Estes Park, CO. Hands were laid on the members of these churches present, and prayer was given on their behalf. This was truly one of the highlights of the meeting.
  - Logos Central Chapel of Denver, Colorado
  - Crossroads Church of Greeley, Colorado



- La Miel Covenant Church of Salina, KS, was recognized as a church that has become self-supporting.
- Delegates were introduced to 6 ordinands who will be ordained at the Covenant Annual Meeting in June: *Dorothy (Dori) Brown, OWS (Hillcrest Covenant Church, Prairie Village KS), both Christopher and Sharon Nelson, OWS (Oberlin Covenant Church, Oberlin KS), Tracy Nelson-Welker (absent due to the nearness of the birth of her baby), OWS (Life House Church, Longmont CO), Promise Lee, OWS Transfer of Ordination (Relevant Word Ministries, Colorado Springs CO) and Patricia Thompson, OSM (The Journey Church, Wichita KS)*, Ken Carlson prayed for these people, affirming them as we send them on to the denominational annual meeting.
- Conference **Treasurer Garr Hintz** 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 \$917,240 for 2012.**



- **Dave Benedict is Associate Superintendent and Director of Congregational Vitality** presented an update on the Veritas movement in the Covenant. Congregations are seeking and finding renewed vitality. "Veritas" involves telling ourselves the truth, a culture of candor and climate of trust with the goal of being a healthy, missional church. He warned that stability can mask a downward trajectory of congregational life. Behavioral covenants are agreed upon "holy manners" for a faith community. "EPIC" is empowering people, inspiring change for the gospel's sake. "Pulse" is an assessment tool that provides an accurate evaluation of congregational health. "The Vision intersection profile" offers a way to find God's preferred future for a church. "Navigate" is a partnership between the ECC, the conference and local churches.

- **Pastor Vann Trapp of Heartland Covenant Church in Springfield, Missouri**, shared a witness of revitalization. He participated in a pastoral assessment. They were financially over extended and tired but have utilized the congregational vitality tools and are moving toward health. They have seen the truth of revitalization being like a remodeling project – it usually involves move work, time and investment that expected.
- **The closing of a church:** When First Covenant Church of Kansas City, MO merged with their daughter church, Hillcrest Covenant and First Covenant City Church was formed and met in the FCC building. First Covenant City Church had vital ministry but determined the ministry should end. Delegates affirmed their ministry prayed for Rev. Robert and Eunice Johnson, thanking God for them, their ministry and asking for God's direction for the future.

- Superintendent Ken Carlson told about **needs in the Southeast Conference**. Dave Benedict will be assisting them with congregational vitality and gift of \$5,000 will be sent to them. Superintendent Robert Owen of the Southeast Conference has expressed his gratitude.
- A **CHIC** update was given by the Midwest Conference Coordinator, Jim Eaton. Covenant High in Christ will be in Knoxville, TN, July 15-20, 2012. The conference CHIC team is working on bus transportation. Online registration is available.

**Jim has fun encouraging CHIC participation**



- Ken, Dave, and Rick will be the MWC delegates to the **ECC annual meeting** in Colorado in June.
- Six people were elected to serve on our **Conference Executive Board**: *David Cavanaugh of Brookwood Covenant in Topeka KS, Brian Frable of Evangelical Covenant in Fort Collins CO, Tracy Hilts of Faith Evangelical Covenant in Colorado Springs CO, Steve Jones of Evangelical Covenant in Des Moines IA (incumbent), Matthew Norlen of Evangelical Covenant in Wausa NE and Lisa Smith of Community Covenant in Omaha NE (incumbent)*. The **Midwest Covenant Home Board** had one incumbent reelected to their board: *Ruby Andersen of Evangelical Covenant in Aurora NE*. Thanks be to God for these willing servants.
- Garr Hintz, Diane Borden, and Bill Croasmun were recognized as retiring Executive Board members for their service to the MWC. Ken presided over installation of the MWC board members.
- Ministerial Association Chair John Peterson encouraged churches to send their pastoral staff to one of the **two Fall Retreats** (Eastern – October 3-5 and Western – October 17-19).
- Members of the Evangelical Covenant Church in Fort Collins CO, extended **an invitation** to their church for the **126<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Midwest Conference, to be held April 27-28, 2012**.
- Appreciation was expressed to FCC Omaha for their hospitality in hosting the MWC Annual meeting.
- During corporate worship, Superintendent-Elect Tammy Swanson-Draheim's message was from Philippians 2:5-11. She encouraged us to become like Jesus in life style and attitude so we are prepared to bring hope and reflect Jesus to those we encounter. We celebrated Holy Communion.

**Additional photos highlight an eventful weekend for the 125<sup>th</sup> MWC Ministry Celebration!**

