



To Midwest Conference Churches Gathered in Annual Meeting 2009/2010

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! It is always a privilege to greet you and share how the Spirit is moving throughout our conference and its 83 churches, 4 fellowship groups, 3 camps and 2 retirement centers. The Holy Spirit is actively engaged in guiding and leading congregations and individuals in the process of transformation and revitalization. This is an exciting time to be serving our growing association of churches as we launch into our 124th year of ministry partnership with local churches and the Covenant.

This letter is one of many ways our conference tries to communicate our mission and message to you our constituents. We have made some major changes this year which we hope will help you better understand the breadth of our ministry. In September we sent out a DVD, **midWest video-connect**, to each conference church with two 3-minute stories about congregations who are doing unique and creative ministries which God is blessing and which the conference has been involved with through coaching pastors and guiding church leadership teams. If you haven't seen these DVD's, ask your pastor(s) or church chair about them. The next DVD will arrive in a similar format early in 2010. After much discussion and prayer, we discontinued our printed newsletter, The Midwest Messenger, and replaced it with an electronic **midWest e-connect** newsletter; the first issue was sent out October 8th to all pastors, staff and church chairs. We are asking each church, at minimum, to distribute it to their leadership teams; we would also ask, if they are willing, that they forward it to their entire membership, and consider making a few paper copies for their non-email-connected members to pick up at the church.

Congregational Vitality, assisting each of our churches to become more healthy and more missional, has emerged as a fundamental goal for our conference executive board and our staff. Dave Benedict, our passionate Director of Congregational Vitality, has been quite energized by the number of conversations he is having with church leadership teams about the status of their congregational health and the strength of their mission. The discussions have emerged after two waves of seminars, Veritas and Epic, throughout our conference. God is doing transforming work in the life of some congregations and other congregations are taking major steps toward having honest conversations about the state of life and ministry in their churches. This is such a broad topic for discussion and we pray it will be on the agenda of every local church leadership team.

The Conference has partnered with host churches in sponsoring the **Veritas and Epic seminars**; and recently supported in eastern Nebraska, the **new evangelism seminar "One Step Closer"** offered through the Covenant Dept. of Church Growth and Evangelism – definitely something we hope many other clusters of churches will promote and host in the near future.

Church Planting is always a major priority in our conference, and the vision and focus for it is led by our gifted Director of Church Planting Rick Mylander. Our conference goal is a minimum of two or three new church plants each year. Although we have officially planted only one new church so far in 2009, in Fort Collins, CO, we are in the final preparation stages to initiate a second mission in Olathe, KS, the first of the year. Amazingly, our staff is in conversation with over a dozen church planters, potential parenting churches and possible affiliations, so it is an exciting time for church development as we see what the Lord will bring about. Many of these conversations take years to develop, so keep this in your prayers. Financially, our conference church planting ministries received a huge boost from the sale of the New Beginnings/First Covenant property in Denver, CO. This congregation voted to close in 2008 and become a "Living Legacy" church, with proceeds from the sale to help plant many new churches. We are grateful to God for the foresight of this church, and for the increased pace it will allow.

Thank you for your faithful prayer and financial support of all our conference ministries. We praise God that even in the face of economic hardship in the past year, we ended 2008 in the black, and for his provision in numerous ways; we are also very grateful for a small but growing base of individuals who are partnering with us in financial support. We know that 2009 continues to present many challenges and the support from our local churches reflects that trend as we are receiving about the same amount that we did last year from our congregations – thank you for remaining faithful to our shared partnership!

May God bless your congregation in your pursuit of becoming healthier and more missional!

Your partner in the gospel,

Kenneth P. Carlson
Superintendent

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Compelled by the love of Jesus Christ, the Midwest Covenant Conference exists to strengthen the mission of each of its member churches, and to assist them in the planting of other churches of like spirit.