

# LAST ISSUE “A TIME OF CHANGE”

This is the last issue of the *Midwest Covenant Messenger* in printed form. Due to increased costs and procedures to send the newsletter, a decision was made that it is no longer good stewardship to send the newsletter by mail to your home. However, we intend to continue communicating the news and mission of the Midwest Conference in creative ways such as: an electronic newsletter, conference website, or periodic DVD's with short stories of God's transforming work in our local congregations and how He has touched individuals. From a survey sent to our local congregations in January 2009, the results received showed that churches wish to distribute conference communications to their membership either by forwarding it to their membership e-mail list, or adding it to a church newsletter, worship bulletin, etc. The "Prayer Calendar" will continue to be placed on the conference website: [www.midwestcovenant.org](http://www.midwestcovenant.org)

We ask for your understanding as we make this transition and trust with our new communication efforts we will be even better connected to you in the future. If you have thoughts about how we might stay connected feel free to send them to our office: [midcovcon@qwestoffice.net](mailto:midcovcon@qwestoffice.net) It will be exciting to watch how God guides us with our deep desire to stay in touch with all of our Midwest Conference brothers and sisters in Christ. In the process of this transition we thought it would be interesting to share several notes from Volume 1, Number 1 of the conference newsletter.

- *The Midwest Covenant* arrived in homes in April 1948. The newsletter was printed by the Ceresco News, operated by Mr. and Mrs. Otto Olsen, devoted members of the Methodist church in Ceresco and was underwritten by the Sunday Schools and Young People's Association of the Midwest Conference for a cost of \$60 (excluding mailing) to send 1450 copies. Editor of the newsletter was Rev. Ebert Turnquist of Ceresco and Business Manager was Mr. Paul Skoglund of Lincoln NE. Conference Superintendent at that time was Gottfred Anderson.
- Quotes from *The Midwest Covenant* in April 1948, "Blessed are those who have the gift of making friends. It is one of God's richest gifts. It involves many things, but above all, the power of going out of one's self and appreciating whatever is noble and loving in another.—Thos. Hughes" and "Lord, this Thou hast done in spite of me; What couldst Thou have done if I had not hindered Thee?" and "God's part we CANNOT DO; Our part He WILL NOT do."
- From the July 1948 issue; RADIO BROADCASTING—Our conference has undertaken a new venture in broadcasting the gospel. Every Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock a half-hour program is broadcast over KJSK Columbus, Nebr., 900 on your radio dial. Rev. George Schermer of Stromsburg, Nebr., is the broadcast Director. He has the help of good singing talent, from his church and speakers who are available. The broadcast is supported by the free-will offerings of its listeners. The address is "The Covenant Hour," Stromsburg, Nebr.

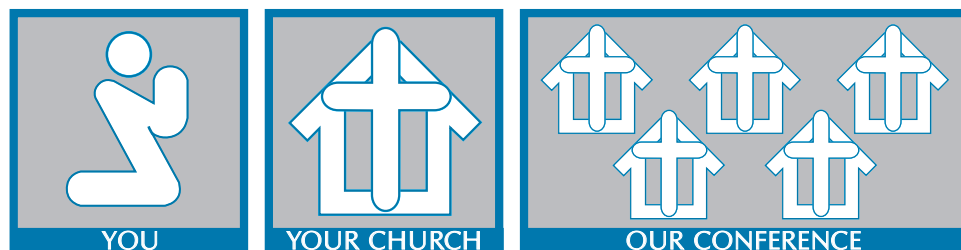
## Ministry Partnership

*Continued from page 1*

Donations were accepted toward a goal of covering a month of air-flighted PB&J, crackers and milk, estimated at \$950. God touched not only the hearts of the people at Brookwood but also their check-books. A total of \$2300 has been sent to the Elwoods!

Brookwood's partnership with Pastor Carl and Marcia Elwood and their "visiting" children continues. Prayer cards, each with the name of an Alaskan child, are now in the homes of the congregation. Also, children's DVDs and videos were collected and shipped to Mountain Village, broadening the viewing choices for afternoon visitors!

Brookwood people know they have the easier half of this partnership, all of the peanut butter and jelly are in the Elwood's living room! But then, the Elwoods are blessed to be with the children!



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Summer 2009

## MIDWEST COVENANT MESSENGER

# Midwest Conference Ministry Partnership with Mountain Village Covenant Church in Alaska

### Teams in place for summer missions!

This month two teams of six people from Midwest Conference churches, will spend a week in Mountain Village, Alaska, constructing a 20 X 20 garage-type building for the church. This structure will be used for working on

snow machines, ATV's and numerous other purposes. As the teams prepare to travel "north" (teams departing July 17 and July 22), let us commit to prayer support for them: for safety and health, completion of the building, good construction weather, and for opportunities to establish warm relationships with the Mountain Village congregation and residents of the village.

There is still a major need for financial support of this summer's mission as the conference executive board committed the necessary funds to order all the building supplies in advance. The denomination has made a substantial contribution of \$10,000 to our village ministry, and our conference has received approximately \$16,500 in individual gifts and contributions from our churches—18 churches have given gifts toward the \$40,000 we need to raise for the building and team support. **Can we count on your support?**

Contributions can be sent to the conference office, designated for the Alaska Partnership (Midwest Conference, Alaska Partnership, 13304 W Center Rd #222, Omaha NE 68144).

As Pastor Carl Elwood shared at our conference annual meeting through pictures and story about his seven years of ministry in Mountain Village, it was easy to see the abundance of opportunities for this partnership to grow as we touch the people of

this community with God's love through relationship and tangible ways. May God bless you as you bless others!

All Alaska partnership correspondence sent to churches may be viewed on the conference website: [www.midwestcovenant.org](http://www.midwestcovenant.org)

### A genuine heartfelt partnership!

**Mountain Village Covenant Church** is located in the remote bush country of Alaska. The first floor of the building pictured left is where the congregation meets for worship. The second floor is home for Pastor Carl Elwood and his wife, Marcia. The Elwood home is a safe, friendly place where school-age children began "visiting" after school. They watch videos, play games, talk and enjoy sticky PB&J on crackers, washing it down with (powdered) milk, all from "Carl's Diner"! The children experience on the second floor the love and care they hear Carl preach about in his sermons on the first floor.

These sticky peanut butter and jelly snacks have connected two Covenant church-

es in a unique partnership! When **Brookwood Covenant Church** in Topeka, Kansas, learned that the Midwest Conference would partner with the Mountain Village church, the match was a natural one because the Elwoods are former members of Brookwood Covenant! When the Brookwood mission's committee heard about "Carl's Diner," the decision was made to open a "branch" of the diner during the January Sunday fellowship times. The committee served the same fare as that served in Alaska, with the addition of coffee!



*PB&J after-school snack*



*Construction site near church and home of Pastor Carl and Marcia Elwood*

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*Midwest Covenant Messenger*



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## Mason City Hosts Annual Meeting

First Covenant Church in Mason City, Iowa, did an outstanding job of hosting delegates and guests to the conference annual meeting, April 24-25.

The Friday evening worship service brought conference participants together for a time of praising God in song and prayer, in hearing a personal witness of God's tremendous power to transform a life, celebrating "Bringing My World to Christ," receiving a message from Rev. David Kersten, and joining together in a service of Holy Communion. What a powerful way to begin the gathering of attendees to the 123rd conference annual meeting.

Please check out the conference website at: [www.midwestcovenant.org](http://www.midwestcovenant.org) for a full detailed summary of the meeting. Several of these highlights were:

- Pastor Tammy Swanson-Draheim welcomed the 97 delegates and guests to First Covenant sharing a devotion describing pursuing Christ's priorities in the world: to love God is to love other people in the world.



*Even the young share in worship*

plant. The larger a church gets, the harder it is to be a parent for a church plant. Church planting may be the sign of the health of the Church. There was a video presentation of a second site church plant by Hillcrest Covenant Church, Prairie Village, Kansas.

- Associate Superintendent Dave Benedict showed slides and shared brief stories regarding some of the Kansas churches. Congregational Vitality is one of Dave's ministry emphases, that every church might become a healthy (pursuing Christ), missional (pursuing Christ's priorities) church. There was also a video clip and two lay witnesses regarding relocation of Community Covenant Church, Osage City, Kansas.

- A special offering of \$1,103 was received for the Mountain Village, Alaska Partnership. Another offering of \$1,192 was received during the Friday worship for the ministers' crisis fund.
- Delegates approved a budget of \$813,793 for 2010.
- Churches will receive stories from the annual meeting on DVD late this summer.



*Prayer for Conference Superintendents*

- Superintendent Ken Carlson shared that New Beginnings Church in Denver became a "Living Legacy" church, closing and using the proceeds of the sale to promote church plants. He also encouraged "first fruits" giving by local churches to the conference. Ken discussed how conference churches need to: rekindle the passion for Christ, renew the vision, and remember to pursue Christ's mission – to be "the aroma of Christ" in the world. Ken invited Pastor Craig Vote to explain the ministry and vision of his church in Harcourt, Iowa, and that **Passion + Vision + Mission = FRUIT!!**

- Associate Superintendent Rick Mylander shared that the healthiest church plants are those planted by parent churches; however, recent church plants have been "pioneer" plants. One hundred percent of parent churches survive; 80% of pioneer churches survive. "Parent" churches grow in spite of giving people to a church



*One of several powerful transformation stories told*

## Decorah Covenant – A Church on the Grow!

Submitted by member, Donalee Burns

Starting with just five families meeting in homes, Decorah Covenant Church in Decorah, Iowa, began public worship as a church plant in the local high school in

December 1998; moving in 1999 to the gym at St. Benedict's School where they are still worshipping 10 years later. On May 14, 2000, they became a chartered church with The Evangelical Covenant Church.



*Building the worship platform*

In the fall of 2005, a building campaign began raising "seed money" in preparation of any eventuality. Beginning with a goal of \$100,000 it finished a year later with a total of \$138,000.

A newly formed facilities committee began praying for God's guidance; the committee was contacted by Decorah Bank & Trust Co. in February 2008 concerning a potential sale of the bank's previous facility. A building committee was then formed to look at the feasibility of purchasing and using the site for a permanent church facility. After much discussion

with members, the church council, and various banking options, the Decorah church membership voted to purchase the building, taking possession in June 2008. The church offices moved into the building at that time.

Members continued to pray for God's guidance and for unity in the church body as they began the next stages of the journey, with special prayers that a building would never take their focus off the mission of the church—to love God and others through responsive obedience to Jesus Christ!

In October 2008, the congregation voted to proceed with the renovation. Work began February 2009 and should be completed by the printing of this newsletter with plans to worship in the facility for the first time in June, followed by a dedication service and open house on July 12, 2009. Members continue to pray for God's guidance to use them and this building to His Glory.



*New home of Decorah Covenant Church*

## Covenant Annual Meeting to Honor Lifetimes of Vocational Ministry

Excerpts taken from ECC website, May 11, 2009

Delegates attending future annual meetings will have the opportunity to celebrate lifetimes of service for women and men involved in vocational ministry in the Evangelical Covenant Church. By tradition, men and women in vocational ministry who are moving into retirement have been honored during the annual meeting of the conference. However, notes the Dept. of the Ordered Ministry, in many cases an individual retires from a conference in which they did not spend the majority of their ministry years, which precludes former ministry colleagues from joining in that celebration.

Because it is the denomination that calls, credentials, and sends men and women into vocational ministry to serve the larger church, the department thought it appropriate that the community of pastors and congregations join together at the denomination's annual meeting to pay tribute to the lifetimes of faithful service and godly obedience of those whom the denomination has called. Additionally, with so many ministers and missionaries continuing to serve rather than retiring from ministry, it seems appropriate that this recognition occur at a landmark birth date rather than waiting for official retirement paperwork to be filed.

"This new practice will embellish, not replace the conferences' continued recognition of pastors at significant points of accomplishment and transition as well as movement into retirement," notes David Kersten, executive minister of the Dept. of

the Ordered Ministry. "It gives us an opportunity to honor selfless men and women publicly, in a theologically appropriate fashion. And this change in venue creates a nice symmetry, bringing events full circle – especially since we are now inviting those being honored for a lifetime of past service to take part in the laying-on-of-hands for those participating in the current Service of Ordination, Commissioning and Consecration."

We wish to recognize pastors residing in the Midwest Conference who will be receiving a Lifetime Service Recognition at this year's ECC annual meeting in Portland, Oregon, June 25-28, 2009:

**Timothy Ek**, currently serving as pastor at Deerbrook Covenant Church, Lee's Summit, MO

**William Holmlund**, retired as chaplain at Exempla Lutheran Medical Center at Collier Hospice Center, residing in Englewood, CO

**Lyle Person**, retired as pastor at Evangelical Covenant Church in Mead, NE, residing in Omaha, NE

**Joan Porter**, currently serving as associate pastor at Brookwood Covenant Church, Topeka, KS

**James Ressegieu**, currently serving as pastor at Faith Evangelical Covenant Church, Essex, IA

**Carol Roth**, retired as associate pastor at Harvest Ridge Evangelical Covenant Church, Shawnee, KS, residing in Overland Park, KS