

MWC 124th Annual Ministry Celebration

The annual meetings of the Midwest Conference were held at the Evangelical Covenant Church in Lindsborg, Kansas, April 23-24, 2010. Events began Thursday evening for those involved with **Women Ministries**. The **Ministerial Association** met Friday at the church followed by an **afternoon workshop** sponsored by the Midwest Conference.

Delegates and friends gathered at the **Smoky Valley Auditorium in Lindsborg Friday evening** and enjoyed time together, not only with great hymn singing and songs by both the adult and children's choir from the Evangelical Covenant Church in Lindsborg, but a wonderful evening with Bob Stromberg was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone! Bob entertained us with his unique style of storytelling, causing us to laugh together, reflecting on the things that matter in life!

The 125th Annual Meeting of the Midwest Conference will be held in Omaha, Nebraska, hosted by First Covenant Church, on April 29-30, 2011. Mark your calendars now! As a delegate or guest to these meetings, you will find that a "business meeting" as you've known it in the past, is no longer just a meeting! The time spent together is one of ministry celebration, hearing personal witness of how ministries in your conference are truly sharing the gospel of Christ. You'll hear the stories of how God is working in personal lives and in your churches--both in your conference and denomination! This 125th conference will offer many highlights that you and your churches will want to be a part of. See you in 2011!

Highlights of the 2010 MWC Annual Ministry Celebration—"Looking Back Pressing Forward!"

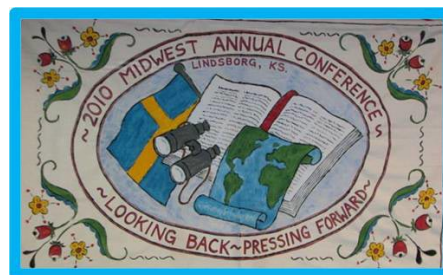


Photo: Banner created by host church

- 78 pastors and guests gathered at the Evangelical Covenant Church in Lindsborg, Kansas, on Friday, April 23, for the **Annual Meeting of the Ministerium**. Dr. Jules Glanzer, President of Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas, spoke on the topic "Emotional Intelligence—The X Factor in Pastoral Leadership." Along with the annual business gathering, members met the 2010 ordinands, and heard the good news of ministries going on in the conference.



- Featured speaker Ginger Millermon, also a dynamic musician, spoke on "Love Notes" at the **Women Ministries Annual gathering**. New this year was a Thursday evening gathering which offered two workshops, "Praying the Scripture and Journaling" and "Greeting Card Making." Friday morning, women prepared food for a local shelter and also held two presentations, "AVA" and "Break the Chains."

Photo: Ginger Millermon

- Rev. Doreen Olson, Executive Minister of Christian Formation for The Evangelical Covenant Church in Chicago, IL, conducted the **Friday afternoon workshop**. She spoke on "Looking Back Pressing Forward—an exploration of our enduring commitments." Before moving to Chicago, Doreen served the Midwest Conference as associate superintendent. It was good to have her back in our conference.



Photo: Doreen Olson



- Rev. Jeff Waugh **welcomed delegates** to the Lindsborg church, and **shared devotions** from Isaiah 63:7, reflecting on the blessings of the past, reminding us of what God has done for us in order for us to press forward. Al Eklund, the oldest gentleman in the Lindsborg church and community, reflected on memories of the past and giving us insights as to how his family came to this area from Sweden, sharing also his favorite scripture verse, John 5:24. Together we shared in the celebration of **Holy Communion**.

Photo: Al Eklund

- The celebration was led by **Conference Chairperson Garr Hintz**, who called the gathering to order with the reading of Hebrews 12:1-4 and prayer. Serving also were Secretary Taryn Vetter and Parliamentarian Jeff Houston.
- The Executive board was introduced as were the conference staff and those serving to facilitate this meeting.
- **Special guests** were introduced; Mary Miller – North Park, Millie Lundgren – Covenant Resource Center, and Doreen Olson - representing the Evangelical Covenant Church.
- Delegates voted on an amendment to the **conference bylaws**. The proposed amendment changes the term of office for MWC executive board members to two year terms with the potential of serving up to three terms.
- 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 unopposed.
- Doug Ferguson prayed with us, sharing to “see Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, and follow Thee more nearly.”
- There were 122 **voting delegates** at the celebration representing 56 churches (out of a possible 83 churches), along with representatives from fellowship groups (5 of the 8 groups were represented), camps, executive board, institutions and organizations for the Midwest Conference.
- **Superintendent Ken Carlson:** Ken focused on our theme “Looking Back, Pressing Forward” emphasizing that looking back gives reason for praise and trust. It also provides insights into the passionate faith and ministry priorities the pioneers of the conference had that have helped bring the conference to where it is today. He also shared how the organizational structure of our conference immersed. Ken spoke of previous superintendents Gottfred Anderson, Loyd Johnson, Warren Swanson and K. Wesley Olson, concluding with our present superintendent staff. He celebrated the increase in church planting since 1995: 23 churches, 7 affiliations and 4 fellowship groups, today with 92 churches and fellowship groups in the Midwest Conference. In expanding staff seven years ago with a second associate not only did we focus on church planting, but also strengthening our existing churches. He concluded his discussion of pressing forward by using the illustration of the transformed lives at Hope Covenant Church, a church plant in El Dorado, Kansas. 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.



Photo: Ken and Nancy Carlson with board member Bill Croasmun



Photo: Prayer for new church's joining the Covenant 1000 church planting prayer partners. Prayer was given for Rick and the church planting ministry to which he is involved.

- **Associate Superintendent Rick Mylander:** Rick presented “What’s Your One Step,” the Covenant’s new annual evangelism tool, encouraging congregations to use this material. 96% of the world’s population has access to the knowledge of Christ but only a third have heard meaningfully of Christ. Prayer, Care, and Share is the emphasis of “What’s Your One Step.” Our lists were brought forward and the people on them prayed for. Later in the meeting, Rick spoke about church planting. He talked about the slow down that the conference experienced in recent years related to church planting, but in the last two years, church planting has ramped up again, due in large part to the generous offering given from the closing of the church in Denver. A new start just began in Olathe, Kansas, and there is a potential number of other places and states. He spoke about

- **Associate Superintendent Dave Benedict:** Dave presented a slide show of the churches of the Blue Valley and Smoky Valley districts of Kansas. He describes this past year as a harvest time in the area of congregational vitality. He attributes the denomination's Veritas program in part for this present forward movement. Dave explained briefly the concept of Veritas. If you want to know more about Veritas, contact Dave. Other resources include a visioning workshop, an EPIC workshop on how to lead toward change, and Pulse, which is a church assessment tool assisting the local church to move toward being a healthy missional church. A video about how to make a Behavioral Covenant was presented, this video is a gift created by the conference and will be sent to each church in the near future. It has to do with determining how to communicate effectively with one another, even when we don't see eye to eye, moving us forward toward becoming a healthy missional church. This is another of the important tools being used in the revitalization of existing churches. Prayer was given for Dave. Contact him for all of your revitalization needs.
- **Rev. Doreen Olson**, Executive Minister of Christian Formation for The Evangelical Covenant Church, gave greetings from the denomination and from North Park University and Theological Seminary. Over a million dollars has been given for relief in Haiti through Covenant World Relief. Her question: are we creating environments of grace allowing us to disciple those of our culture today? Yes, she responded. She encouraged us to keep on doing this.

- Delegates were introduced to 4 ordinands who will be ordained at the Covenant Annual Meeting in June: *Robert W. Johnson*, OWS (*City Church, Kansas City MO*), *Mark Nelson*, OWS (*First Covenant Church, Salina KS*), *Joyce Norman*, OSM (*Countryside Covenant Church, McPherson KS*), *Wuifor Portillo*, OWS (*Alfa y Omega Covenant Church, Carthage MO*). Ken Carlson prayed for these people, affirming them as we send them on to the denominational annual meeting. We also recognized the retirement of Rev. Mike Weyeneth. He and his wife, Sue, were unable to attend due to visiting their first grandson! Reva Neal was recognized for 20 years of service as our conference office manager.



Photo: Ken Carlson speaks to Tom via skype

- **Scott Larsen**, Executive Director at Twin Lakes Christian Center and **Dan Buhr**, Executive Director of Covenant Cedars Bible Camp gave updates about activities and ministry at their camps. **Tom Cousineau**, Executive Director, Covenant Heights Camp and Retreat Center, who recently returned to his home in Colorado to continue recuperation after a serious accident in Thailand while training Thai people about camping, was connected to delegates using the technology of skype. This was a special moment. Dan reported on Cedar's 60th anniversary. Dan shared some of the "miracles" of the past year. He spoke of Cedar's long range plan and new building projects. Scott began with Colossians 2:19: the problem, the church has lost connection with Jesus. Camp helps us cut through and clear out obstacles and helps us reconnect to Christ. He shared some camp testimonies. Tom shared about his experience with his accident in Thailand, and how much he appreciated the prayers and being a part of the larger Covenant circle. He shared briefly about the good things happening at Cov. Heights, and brought greetings from the missionaries in Thailand. Prayer was then given for all three camp directors and the camps.

- **A special offering** was received for the minister's crisis fund.
- **Shelly Carlson**, member of the Lindsborg church, gave a personal testimony, "The Prayers of God's People." She shared about their family's tumultuous trials related to her husband Calvin's illnesses and near death experience, and how the church lifted them up in prayer—"The stakes of faith that go down into the ground are deep, and we have been lifted up in prayer by the faithful people of God." The stakes can be held onto in times of crisis. Calvin stood before us at the meeting giving praise to God, sharing his favorite hymn, "It is Well With My Soul." They read Hebrews 4:16, Romans 8:26 and I Thessalonians 5:16-18. An article about their experiences will be coming out in a future issue of the Covenant Companion.

- Conference **Treasurer Brent Thompson** gave the treasurer's **financial report**. Looking good was his response! We were called to notice that we were able to end the year in the black for the second year in a row. We were able to put back into the reserve over \$50,000.00! Brent presented the budget. This would include added expense for the search process for the new Superintendent. The 2009 financial report was approved. **Delegates approved a budget of \$874,728 for 2011.**



- **Rick Mylander introduced three new churches** to be accepted into full Covenant membership at the June 2010 annual meeting of The Evangelical Covenant Church. These three churches shared their stories. Those present at the meeting voted in affirmation of these three churches, recommending them to the 2010 annual meeting in St. Paul. 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.
 - Ecclesia of Denver, Colorado
 - Crossroads Community Church of Halstead, Kansas
 - La Miel Covenant Church of Salina, Kansas

- **Melvin Cole** shared a testimony regarding the good things happening at Freedom Covenant Church of Kansas City, Missouri, a new church plant begun in 2009, particularly about working in the government housing projects and how they are reaching families. Women, men, small groups and youth groups are growing!
- With the retirement of Superintendent Ken Carlson in 2011, the search process for the next superintendent was explained to delegates. The conference executive board will meet with Covenant President Gary Walter in June. They are the search committee and will be seeking input from the churches in the months ahead.



- **Christopher Young**, administrator at the **Midwest Covenant Home** shared about their ministry to seniors and his appreciation for the conference's commitment to them, giving thanks to the Lord for his blessings.

Photo: Midwest Covenant Home

- **Gary Carlson** of Clyde, KS, and member of Brantford Covenant Church, shared his experience with the two teams who went to **Mountain Village Covenant Church** in Mountain Village, Alaska. Last summer these teams built a shed for use by the church and community. This ministry is part of a partnership the Midwest Conference has with this Alaska community.



Photo: Completed building

- A short video presentation from LifeSpring Covenant Church in Loveland, Colorado, was shown, sharing their ministry, **Club 182**, to children who attend the elementary school across the street. The church has built a partnership with this school, working with kids each week (Kids Hope USA). The name, Club 182, is a reflection of Psalm 18:2.
- Rev. David McCowan spoke on the denominational ministry, **Sustaining Pastoral Excellence**. He shared about the availability of revisioning retreats and the importance for pastors to learn self-care as well as churches learning to care for their pastors and families conference-wide.
- Four people were elected to new terms on our **Conference Executive Board**: *Bill Croasmun from Hillcrest Blue Valley Covenant in Blue Valley KS; Doug Ferguson from Celebration Covenant Church in Omaha NE; Brent Thompson from The Journey Covenant Church in Wichita KS; and Taryn Vetter, Countryside Covenant Church in McPherson KS.* The **Midwest Covenant Home Board** also had two elected to their board: *Lyle Person, Community Covenant Church, Omaha NE and David Norlen, First Covenant Church, Omaha NE.* Thanks be to God for these willing servants.
- Ministerial Association Chair John Peterson encouraged churches to send their pastoral staff to one of the **two Fall Retreats** (Eastern – October 11-13 and Western – November 8-10).
- Members of First Covenant Church in Omaha, NE, extended **an invitation** to attend their church in 2011 for the **125th annual meeting of the Midwest Conference**. Delegates now look forward to gathering in Omaha next year, **April 29-30, 2011.**