

Attendance Up 56 Percent in 10 Years

The Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) reports record attendance following its 13th consecutive year of growth. Local church attendance on any given Sunday is now more than 156,000 in the 750 congregations of the ECC, reflecting a strong 5.4 percent increase over the previous year. In the past decade, attendance is up 56 percent, making the Covenant one of the fastest growing denominations.

Gary Walter, executive minister of church growth and evangelism, identifies four components contributing to the Covenant's momentum. The first is the strength of the base of established churches. "Year in and year out, our established churches faithfully reach out," he notes. "We have a missional heart."

Second, church planting remains a critical component of the Covenant's mission at home. "New churches allow us to reach into new populations," says Dave Olson, director of church planting. At any given time, 40-50 new churches are under development. More than 55,000 individuals attend churches that are new to the Covenant during the last decade. Associate director Don Davenport focuses on church planting efforts east of the Mississippi and urban church planting throughout the denomination.

The rapid growth of ethnic ministries is a third factor in the overall growth in the United States and Canada, including African-American, Hispanic, Native Alaskan, Asian-American, Korean, South Sudanese, Chinese, Haitian, Mien, Filipino, Laotian and Vietnamese populations. Twenty percent of all congregations in the Covenant are ethnic or multiethnic.

A fourth factor is the trend of large churches growing larger. There are now 16 churches with an average attendance of 1,000 or more. Forty churches report an attendance of more than 600.

Evangelism is the driving motivation for all of this activity, Walter believes—approximately 15,000 commitments to Christ were reported by ECC churches last year. Covenant congregations benefit from resources such as "Bringing

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120 Years and Counting...

During this 120th anniversary year of the founding of the Evangelical Covenant Church, the spirit of shared ministry that brought the founders together to form the denomination appears to be as alive and vibrant as it was in 1885.

The dual focus on evangelism and compassion that has characterized the Covenant during past decades is reflected in two areas in particular—the continued expansion throughout the church both numerically and multiculturally, and the phenomenal charity of Covenanters this past year as reflected not only in support of local church ministries, but in support of ministries shared with conferences and the denomination.

Attendance at local Covenant churches set a record for the 13th consecutive year, with more than 156,000 individuals attending a Covenant church on a given Sunday. During the past decade, attendance has increased 56 percent, making the Covenant one of the fastest-growing denominations. And, for the first time in its history, the number of ethnic and multiethnic congregations in the Covenant passed the 20 percent mark, considered by many to be a benchmark for defining a truly multicultural organization. The growth of the Covenant also is reflected in another set of numbers—the increasing level of support for the compassionate outreach of the Covenant around the globe.

More than \$1.7 million was distributed on behalf of Covenanters last year to hurting people world-

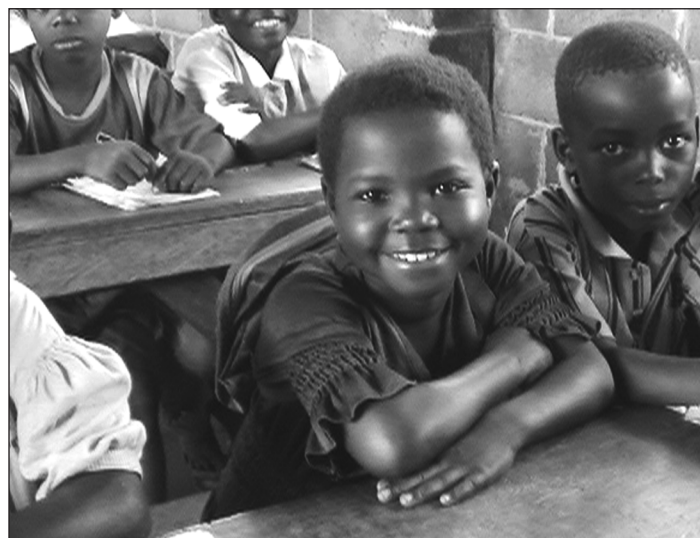
wide through three high-profile compassionate outreach efforts—Covenant World Relief (CWR), the medical work of the Paul Carlson Partnership (PCP) and support given to victims of December's tsunami disaster that devastated portions of 12 countries. The total climbs even higher when taking into consideration a multitude of small, lesser known projects that occur during the year.

Perhaps the better known of the three, Covenant World Relief distributed \$946,000 during the year (not including tsunami relief) in response to a number of disasters. One of the defining characteristics of CWR is its dual nature—it can respond immediately to provide relief, but it remains committed to an effort for longer periods than the majority of "first responder" relief agencies that, by design, respond quickly, but

are forced by need to move on to address other disasters and needs. As one observer puts it, CWR will not only be one of the first to respond with the necessities for life—food, water and clothing—but it will be there a year later continuing to help victims rebuild their lives.

The Paul Carlson Partnership has already spent more than \$500,000 in a variety of projects to help rebuild the northwestern area of Congo where the Covenant has partnered with the Congo Covenant Church (CEUM). Some \$282,000 was spent in health-related projects, \$212,000 was distributed to relieve poverty in a variety of ways, around \$57,000 was given to other projects (many related to rebuilding infrastructure), and some \$87,000 was provided to missionaries and others already in place who are engaged in the deliv-

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120 and Counting

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ery of relief services. Through creative fund-raising efforts, \$448,000 in matching funds was secured last year from two large organizations.

World Relief International publicly thanked the Covenant for quickly making available \$50,000 in emergency funding that allowed the international relief organization to immediately respond to tsunami victims with food, clothing and temporary shelter. More than \$156,000 has already been spent, including work in India and Thailand and other efforts channeled through World Relief International. The money helped tsunami victims in practical ways such as food, clothing and shelter as well as the purchase of fishing nets to allow villagers to rebuild their own livelihoods and support their families and communities. Additional funds will be disbursed in the months ahead to support longer term projects CWR is undertaking in many of these areas.

“We often talk about the generous nature of Covenanters and the high levels of their contributions to various causes—and for that we are grateful,” notes Jim Sundholm, CWR director. “But, it is even more important to talk about the ways in which together, through our shared ministry efforts, we use those dollars to touch the lives of people throughout the world in profound ways. It reflects the living out of our faith in obedience to the Great Commandment and Great Commission, which are cornerstones of our shared Covenant experience.”

Attendance

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My World to Christ” materials and seminars, Alpha evangelism training courses and a network of volunteer evangelism associates.

Growth creates demands on facilities, notes Steve Dawson, director of technical services, who works with associate director Rob Hall on land and facility issues—an unprecedented \$100 million of activity is in the pipeline. Don Fensterman is available to help coach churches through fund-raising campaigns.

For more information on available resources, contact Church Growth and Evangelism by telephone at 773-784-3000 or by email at cge@covchurch.org.

Covenanters' Gifts Already Rebuilding Congo

The Paul Carlson Partnership's Congo Project has quickly found a place in the hearts of Covenanters across North America. The partnership, an affiliate of the Evangelical Covenant Church, works closely with the Department of World Mission and Covenant World Relief.

As an international aid and development organization, it seeks to address needs of the poorest of the poor, from providing medical care to supplying food, clothing and shelter. The Congo Project focuses on an area in the northwest portion of the Democratic Republic of Congo where the Covenant, in partnership with the Congo Covenant Church (CEUM) has worked for decades.

Having survived six years of brutal civil war, the people of Congo are beginning to rebuild the foundations of their lives. Working together with church leaders, the Paul Carlson Partnership is helping in three crucial areas: health, poverty and education.

The response has been tremendous. A church in Minnesota with 66 attendees sent a Christmas offering of \$2,400. A Sunday school in California gave more than \$1,200 and carefully designated a list of items to



Covenant World Mission and the Paul Carlson Partnership are working on rebuilding bridges in northwestern Congo.

benefit the children of Congo. Three children in an Ohio family decided to give up one Christmas present each, donating that money instead to Congo projects. Two churches and one individual donor have each stepped forward to adopt one of four hospitals operated by CEUM, providing for all the needs for a three-year period. Three women in another family have adopted one of the 73 clinics.

These gifts are already at work in Congo. Hospital beds arrived

last fall and two additional shipping containers filled with medical equipment and supplies have since arrived. Three trucks have been purchased to do heavy hauling. Seven bridges have been repaired. Work is continuing in other areas, including repairs to the country's badly damaged infrastructure including roads and water systems.

The Congo Project will continue for three years. Future projects will focus on other areas yet to be identified, with priorities assigned to Africa, Asia and South America.

For more information, contact the partnership by email at paulcarlson@covchurch.org or by telephone at 773-907-3302. To offer assistance and share ideas, contact either Jim Sundholm, partnership director by email at jim.sundholm@covchurch.org, or the partnership's president, Curt Peterson, at curt.peterson@covchurch.org.

DID YOU KNOW? National Covenant Properties (NCP) disbursed \$46.4 million in loan funds covering 58 projects for local Evangelical Covenant churches and other ministries during 2004. Loans for ministry purposes are made possible by individuals who invest funds with NCP—\$27.3 million in new investments were recorded last year. National Covenant Properties currently manages \$223.8 million in assets representing an increase of 5.9%, or \$12.5 million, over a year ago. It is expected another \$45 million in new loans will be approved during 2005.

Affirming Faith and Mission in Keystone, CO

Affirming Faith & Mission” is the theme of this year's Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church to be held June 22-24 in Keystone, Colorado. The event immediately follows The Feast, which is expected to attract more than 1,000 people for a time of prayer and praise.

A complete schedule of events will be available online at the Covenant website as details are confirmed, as will information on registration and lodging.

Among the highlights are a presentation of the revised Covenant

Affirmations document, a report by Covenant World Relief on support for tsunami victims and others around the world, and the unveiling of a new adult curriculum prepared by the Christian Action Commission called “Faith in Action: Reflections on Covenant Resolutions.” The material provides a format for biblically based discussion in 10 areas of public discipleship, designed to help Covenanters better understand how faith connects to actions in social venues.

Attendees also will hear progress reports on several visionary minis-

tries, including the Paul Carlson Partnership and its medical work in Congo, new church planting initiatives and the impact of the Lilly Endowment grant that is funding the new Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program as part of the Department of the Ordered Ministry.

And, of course, all will join in powerful worship and music, led by Covenant pastors and staff, that will lift our hearts to God.

Registration material, scholarship information and details on events will be sent to Covenant churches this spring.

Deferred Gift Disbursements Exceed \$10 Million in 2004

More than \$10 million in deferred gifts were distributed to various ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church last year by Covenant Estate Planning Services (CEPS) and Covenant Trust Company (CTC)—the first time that gifts have exceeded that level.

Since the inception of Covenant Estate Planning Services in 1978 (Covenant Trust Company was founded in 1988), more than \$137 million has been distributed to Covenant ministries, reports President Chuck Wallis. Of that amount, more than \$13 million has been distributed to local Covenant churches, conferences and conference ministries. Known current “expectancies” for Covenant ministries exceed \$223 million, of which nearly \$38 million is designated for ministries at the local level, Wallis notes.

“These are extraordinary numbers for a church of our size,” he adds, “and have already made it possible for the Covenant to accomplish so much for the kingdom at both the local and denominational levels.”

A newly implemented change promises to broaden the positive impact on various ministries even more. Until recently, a trust agreement called for 25 percent of an estate to be left to Covenant ministries, with 60 percent of that amount directed to one or more of just three key entities—the denomination, North Park University and Covenant Ministries of Benevolence (these entities pay all operating costs of the planning and trust services).

The new plan allows the entire Covenant portion of any estate planning agreement to be designated to any Covenant ministry of the donor’s choice, including local churches, camps, conferences and conference ministries. CEPS/CTC will continue to charge a 15 percent fee at the time of any trust distribution to those ministries that do not share in the operating costs for the estate planning and trust services. This fee at distribution is the only cost for all the service and benefits provided by Covenant Estate Planning Services and Covenant Trust Company.

There are two annual Covenant-wide emphases on estate and financial planning. May is Charitable Gift Annuities Month—more than \$4.8 million in future dollars for Covenant ministries was designated through charitable gift annuities written in 2004.

October is Estate Planning Month, with emphasis on various types of estate planning tools and their benefits for both individuals and Covenant ministries.

Covenant Trust Company continues to serve both individuals and Covenant ministries with trustee and investment management services, now managing more than \$347 million in assets in more than 1,600 individual accounts.

For more information or to schedule a workshop or request publicity materials, call Covenant Estate Planning Services at 800-483-2177 or visit them at the Covenant website.

Our Growing Covenant: Attendance and Giving, 1995-2004

| | Attendance | Giving | |
|------|------------|-------------|---|
| 1995 | 103,318 | \$5,852,315 | Footnote: Over this ten-year period, church attendance increased 51.8% and church giving to the denomination increased 44.8%. The compound annual growth rate for attendance has been 4.8% and for church giving 4.27% |
| 1996 | 108,090 | 6,106,750 | |
| 1997 | 113,763 | 6,402,756 | |
| 1998 | 117,314 | 6,790,633 | |
| 1999 | 123,912 | 7,292,608 | |
| 2000 | 128,542 | 7,624,377 | |
| 2001 | 135,343 | 7,912,060 | |
| 2002 | 140,617 | 8,187,547 | |
| 2003 | 148,296 | 8,266,256 | |
| 2004 | 156,794 | 8,475,323 | |

*Local church giving to the denomination.

Children’s Home Expands Services, Adds Clinical Building

Ambitious plans by Covenant Ministries of Benevolence (CMB) continue a tradition of compassionate outreach central to the Evangelical Covenant Church’s mission, including full-service acute care hospitals, retirement communities, services for children and families, victims of domestic violence and developmentally disabled adults.

Plans this year include addition of a new clinical building at Children’s Home in Cromwell, Connecticut, as part of a project to develop private rooms to serve children with severe mental health problems. The Children’s Home offers residential treatment, a special education school, outpatient services and an extended day treatment program.

Services available through its Family Treatment Center include individual, family and group therapy; psychiatric services; medication monitoring, and educational programs. Through these programs, The Children’s Home touches the lives of more than 600 families each year. It also is negotiating a contract for a group home to serve girls ages 14 to 21—it is hoped that the group

home can open yet this spring.

In Princeton, Covenant Children’s Home and Family Services is exploring ways to provide low-cost multigenerational housing on 19 acres of its campus, as well as continuing new partnerships with local agencies. This ministry had similar roots to The Children’s Home of Cromwell, offering residential service for more than 75 years. Today however, it focuses on serving the local community by partnering with other local social service agencies.

One such organization is 20-year-old Freedom House, a refuge for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. By partnering with Covenant Children’s Home and Family Services and moving onto campus, Freedom House provides secure crisis shelter and transitional living services to more than twice as many clients. An inner campus

courtyard offers a safe playground for small children. The Bureau County Health & Wellness Center experienced similar growth when it moved from a storefront to the renovated school building on the Princeton campus. Fourteen volunteer doctors and nurses provide primary care

for more than 750 patients.

CMB also is seeking a location that will allow WellSpring, a resource for victims of domestic violence, to expand its services with short-term and transitional housing. WellSpring assists more than 300 clients each month with counseling, referrals, job skill training, food, shelter and emergency care. WellSpring was started by a Covenant church on the south side of Chicago.

A number of Covenant churches have expressed interest in sponsoring adult enabling residences, sim-

ilar to three in Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota already operated by CMB that promote independence, security and a fulfilling lifestyle for those with developmental disabilities. The residences offer a Christ-centered environment, teaching life skills that enable residents to live as independently as possible. Sixty-six residents currently live at the Covenant Enabling Residences.

The nationwide need for similar residences is enormous, reports Harold Spooner, CMB vice president of Outreach Ministries. “The technical, operational and developmental resources CMB acquired while growing these residences are available to any Covenant church interested in pursuing a similar ministry,” Spooner notes.

“Our mission is to work with the conferences as they help churches develop ministries beyond their four walls,” Spooner continues. “In everything from tutoring programs to residential services, we bring resources and expertise so local churches can develop the faith-based initiatives that are the backbone of our country’s social service network.”



World Mission Honors Martyr's Heritage, Continues Work

It was a day that words cannot adequately describe as family members of Covenant medical missionary Dr. Paul Carlson gathered last November at his gravesite in Karawa to commemorate the 40th anniversary of his death.

An 11-member delegation representing the Evangelical Covenant Church was led by Lois Carlson Bridges, whose husband, Paul, was killed by rebel forces in 1964. The Carlsons were serving the Covenant medical missions in Wasolo and Karawa when civil unrest forced the evacuation of Covenant missionaries.

Paul Carlson stayed behind, intending to remain only a few days to care for critically ill patients and then rejoin his family and other colleagues. Instead, he was seized, imprisoned and fatally wounded when Belgian paratroopers attempted a rescue at Stanleyville. Carlson's story was featured on the December 1964 covers of both *Time* and *Life* magazines.

Other family members included in the delegation were Carlson's son, Wayne, along with his wife, Rebecca, and their son, Paul, and Carlson's

as "a celebration of God's work and his call to mission and service—a celebration of the faithfulness to that call as demonstrated in the lives and sacrifice of Congolese and missionaries." The partnership has been instrumental in sending hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical supplies and other infrastructure funding in support of the Congo Covenant Church (CEUM) and the people of northwestern Congo.

Covenant World Mission remains active in many regions of the world, as reflected in the following updates.

AFRICA

Burkina Faso. Elikia Johnson, daughter of Galen and Jill Johnson, was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes in late February and twice was evacuated to the United States. Her diabetes is now stabilized and the Johnsons have returned to Burkina Faso. The Johnsons' work with the Fulani and others who are involved in development work with the Fulani.

Cameroon. Five short-term missionaries, two families and another individual returned last year for an-



One of the wards at the CEUM hospital in Karawa, Congo.

Central African Republic (CAR). Roy and Aleta Danforth continue to work in western CAR directing village garden projects, teaching health and nutrition and studying the Scriptures with the Fulani, many of whom have been forced to leave their homes and businesses and live in the bush rather than give up their new-found faith. In one village, the chief's sons are talking about being baptized, the Danforths report. "While there is much teaching to do, there also are many physical needs. Karen Benson plans to locate in Bangui this summer where she will minister in villages in areas of community health and discipleship. We hope that Ron and Janet Ziegelbaur will be able to return this year to provide technical and support services," they add, noting that Bob and Karen Andrews continue to serve in Bangui, providing administrative and support services such as importing medicines and supplies for Christian health work in CAR.

Congo. Newly elected Congo Covenant Church (CEUM) President Mossai Sanguma has been visiting all of the CEUM's regions (conferences) along with the heads of each of the CEUM's departments, seeking to understand on a deeper level the vitality and/or problems represented throughout the CEUM. He preaches on the theme of reconciliation, which was the theme of this year's pastors' conference in March. Sanguma is challenging the people "to look at their lives in a new way. Look what God has done for us. We need to each make changes in our lives." The Paul Carlson Partnership, along with Covenant World Mission and Covenant World Relief,

continues to work with the CEUM to improve services in areas of health, education, poverty and economic development.

Kenya. Alberto and Lisa Zepeda and their three children began their short-term mission service in Kenya last July, involved in leadership training, education, and advising the Evangelical Covenant Church of Kenya national council.

Sudan/Ethiopia. The January signing of a peace treaty between two factions in the 21-year civil war in Sudan should allow Covenant ministries of compassion and training to continue with greater freedom, report Pete and Cindy Ekstrand, regional coordinators for Africa. In the Bentiu Conference, a new non-Muslim school has been started with financial support from local churches of the Evangelical Covenant Church of South Sudan and Covenant World Relief. The school, staffed by volunteers, serves 2,500 students.

ASIA

Bangladesh. For more than 20 years there has been a growing movement among Muslims to become followers of Jesus. Communities of believers now exist in most of the 64 national districts with various business enterprises created to provide financial support for ministry operating expenses. Covenant World Relief has been an important source of funding in helping to set up a fish hatchery, which not only provides ministry funding, but serves as an important source of protein for the poor.

Central Asia. Covenant project missionaries in Central Asia have



Wayne Carlson (right) and son Paul, visit Paul Carlson's grave in Congo.

brother, Dwight. (To read more of the November commemoration, visit the news archive on the Covenant website at www.covchurch.org).

"Paul never could have imagined this," Lois told those gathered at Karawa. "I am overwhelmed and deeply touched. I thank God for all of you who are carrying on the work." Curt Peterson, executive minister of world mission who also serves as president of the Paul Carlson Partnership, described the visit

other term of service at Rain Forest International School (RFIS), a secondary school in Cameroon that educates children of Covenant missionaries serving in Central Africa. All had previously served in Congo for 10 years. Short-term teachers are needed each year, notes Lana Heinrich who manages the short-term program. Interested individuals should contact her by email at lana.heinrich@covchurch.org or by telephone at 773-907-3350.

New Name, Paradigm Re-shapes Future of Women Ministries

Its new name reflects its new focus as Women Ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church moves from a membership-based organization to one seeking to engage and encourage women in a wide range of ministries at the local church, conference and denominational levels.

The new direction was approved at last August's Triennial XI in Portland, attended by more than 1,330 women, making it the second largest triennial ever. The new constitution calls for a board, including denominationally elected members and conference advisors (presidents and directors), to manage the ministry. Policy changes will be entrusted to women attending Triennials, the largest gathering of women in the denomination.

"We were proposing a radical shift in women ministries," notes Ruth Hill, executive minister, in reflecting on Triennial XI. "We really didn't know how it would be received. The spontaneous applause for the proposed name was a welcome interruption. But it was the vote and their enthusiastic applause when it was projected on the screens that indicated to me it was a new day in women ministries."

The worship band, led by Adrienne Reedy and Cherlyn Johnson and supported by drama and dance teams, prepared the audience for the powerful messages of keynote speakers Judy Howard Peterson and Brenda Salter McNeil. In response to one of Judy's messages, hundreds

of women streamed forward to place paper cups on the platform—in an upright position to signify a prayer request for spiritual filling and on the side to signify a desire to empty one's self of whatever burdens weighed them down.

"Hotel staff asked me what I wanted to do with the cups," said Hill. "I had them left (for the remaining services) as a visual reminder of the Spirit's presence in our midst." Brenda spoke on reconciliation with God and also with each other. Her second message was devoted to racial reconciliation. "Again the response was incredible," said Hill, "as women stood to their feet, indicating a desire to be a bridge builder."

Twenty-six international guests representing 11 countries attended the event. The Newsboys' song "Our God Reigns" and a video of the worldwide Covenant mission effort provided a moving conclusion to the International Celebration. World mission was also the theme of the Paul Carlson remembrance where Lois Carlson Bridges greeted the women and World Mission Executive Minister Curt Peterson introduced the video "Monganga." A revision of the rolled bandage ministry—appropriately labeled "Rip n' Roll"—was introduced by a hilarious bandage-rolling contest involving teams of women ministry leaders.

Bob Stromberg opened an evening concert by Christian artists, another triennial innovation, charming old and young alike with his wit, and Sara Groves followed. "One of the funniest moments of the conference for me was when we finally opened the doors for the concert," commented Hill. "Women—adult women—were literally stampeding to the front to get the best seats!"

The number 500 appeared often—500-plus used online registration, 500-plus women arrived early to enjoy one of the tours in the area (including kayaking), and 500-plus participated in the River Run benefiting Congo Women Ministries.

The multigenerational, multicultural conference was prepared by a 10-member planning committee led by Teresa Boyce of Bellingham, Washington. "Excellence in everything was their motto and they achieved it," Hill observed. "I think the best evaluation came from one woman who said, 'I came to Triennial XI for my mother's sake—I'm going to Triennial XII for my own!'"

Editor's note: Women will find helpful online resources to assist in understanding and implementing the organization's transition from membership to ministry, including "From Organization to Ministry: Questions and Answers on Changes," by visiting the Covenant website home page at www.covchurch.org, selecting the Women Ministries link and then the Coordinators Connection link.

AVA Helps Abuse Victims

THE NEW ADVOCACY FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE (AVA) initiative offered by Women Ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church seeks to provide resources to bring healing to victims of abuse, equip the church to minister to victims of abuse, and promote preventative measures to combat abuse.

AVA, under the leadership of Aleese Moore-Orbih, partners with North Park Theological Seminary, Covenant Ministries of Benevolence and the Department of the Ordered Ministry, to achieve these goals. Moore-Orbih assumed her new responsibilities following her installation during Triennial XI last August.

She served as associate pastor of missions and evangelism at South Bay Community Church, Fremont, California, from 1997 until her appointment in August. She previously served as interim pastor of Greater Faith Baptist Church in Berkeley, California; worked with materials management for American President Lines Program in Oakland, California; and was administrator for Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

New Program Encourages, Invests in Pastoral Excellence

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence is a new program launched by the Department of the Ordered Ministry, funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. and directed by Dan Pietrzyk.

The program is designed to encourage and support pastors through a variety of means as part of an ongoing effort to sustain a high level of pastoral excellence. It provides grants to pastors to help develop vital, authentic, growing and transformational pastoral leaders. "Supplementing the work of the church, these resources are a proactive way to promote ministerial health," Pietrzyk says.

"One of the greatest challenges those in pastoral and missionary

ministry face in a demanding, complex, and swiftly changing world is to keep their focus on what is most essential—continuing to develop a deep love relationship with the one who created them," Pietrzyk adds. "Remaining vital in a relationship with Jesus Christ is non-negotiable for retaining vitality."

Pastoral excellence is marked by a deep, authentic, growing relationship with God, the new director believes. Such excellence is cultivated through a deepened friendship with God, the establishment of habits that nurture Christ-centered transformations and patterns that are open to the voice of the Holy Spirit. This program promotes these habits and patterns through three areas of

emphasis—character development through spiritual direction, biblical and theological training that is practitioner based, and restorative/renewal activity for self-care.

The new program has partnered with North Park Theological Seminary to develop a Center for Spirit-

tual Direction to train ministers as spiritual directors, expected to begin its ministry this summer.

For more information, call Pietrzyk at 773-583-3211 or visit the Covenant website, select the Ordered Ministry link and the pastoral excellence link.

NEW THIS SUMMER is the Center for Spiritual Direction, developed in consultation with the Evangelical Covenant Church and funded by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence grant received last year. This program will train spiritual directors for Covenant pastors and others. A curriculum is currently being developed under the auspices of the seminary spiritual formation faculty and the Department of Christian Formation in consultation with other Covenant pastors and educators. Additional information about this program may be obtained from the seminary or the Covenant website.

Covenant Children Give Thousands for Central Asian Orphans

A special service project will provide children in North American Evangelical Covenant churches an opportunity to improve the lives of some of the world's neediest children—Central Asian orphans.

In the last two years, children have contributed tens of thousands of dollars to provide children in Congo with school supplies, as well as safe places for children in destitute neighborhoods in Colombia to learn and be nourished. A partnership involving the departments of Christian Formation, World Relief and World Mission is coordinating

these special projects.

Services for Central Asian children are meager due to the breakup of the Soviet Union 13 years ago. Significant programs for orphans and other disadvantaged children were in place during the Soviet era, but since independence in 1991, state support is negligible.

Bob and Grace Shim, Covenant missionaries in Central Asia, are working with a man named Akul who has a heart for children—especially orphans. He and his wife have adopted five children as a result of this passion. This family loves God and desires to extend God's love to

children, notes Steve Burger. Near the center of their town is a kindergarten building that is still operational, but not profitable because few children live in that section of the city. The owner is willing to sell the building, which is in great condition and ready for Akul to turn it into "The Family Orphan Home." The government has approved permits to care for the children, but has provided no assistance.

Through the Covenant children's offerings this year, we hope to raise enough money to purchase the building, pay for outfitting it with furniture, bedding, and kitchen

supplies, and pay for wages and operational needs for the orphanage for the first year, Burger says. Food will be grown locally on Akul's own farmland. They hope clothing and toys will be donated.

Many stories have surfaced in the last two years of North American children who have made financial sacrifices in order to extend the love of Christ to children in need throughout the world. This year they will have an opportunity to help again. Materials were sent to all churches at the end of 2004. The 24-week project lasts through May this year.

World Mission

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ministry partners. In Vologda, Covenanters are partnering with local churches to provide a camp ministry serving orphans and church youth as well as developing a children's ministry.

Spain. In La Coruña, the New Life (Vida Nueva) Covenant Church (where Rob and Nancy Reed serve) has had a weekly attendance of 100 people, more than half of them meeting in small groups during the week. Many churches in Spain are small, averaging 20 people. The alpha course has been an effective tool for outreach. In Málaga, where Covenant missionaries Eugenio and Pia Restrepo serve, a ministry to gypsies continues to develop. Eugenio meets with two groups of gypsy pastors. Project missionaries Andy and Carol Larsen will work in Spain with the Mosaics Project, an outreach to disenfranchised immigrants. Leah Brederhof and Jerry and Nancy Reed serve as short-term missionaries in La Coruña as well.

LATIN AMERICA

Colombia. The Colombian Covenant Church's growth plan includes planting new churches, a missions school, formation of a national evangelism and discipleship department and formation of a national social and holistic ministries department. Pray for the Colombian leadership to stay firm and visionary in this task. Jorge Julian Perez, president of the Colombian Covenant Church, has been invited to spend April, May and June in the United States to further develop evangelistic ministry partnerships between the North

American Covenant Church and the Colombia Covenant Church. He also will update churches concerning ministries of the Colombian Covenant Church, including a visit to the June Annual Meeting in Keystone, Colorado.

Ecuador. Career missionary Jon Robertson ministers in the area of theological education for Ecuadorian pastors, while his wife, Erin,

aging discipleship among workers and neighbors. Herb and Elaine Clauson, who coordinate service teams from North America for the Covenant Church and for Covenant Bible College, also disciple workers and neighbors

Mexico. In the midst of political, social, economic and religious turmoil in Mexico's southern state of Oaxaca, Cindy Hoover and other

Project Down, which reaches out to children with Down's syndrome and to their families—this project grew in one year from 15 families to 47. Missionaries Lisandro and Patricia Restrepo note the foundation was one of 250 volunteer agencies participating in a citywide fair recruiting volunteers for agencies working in Monterrey.

Among the fourteen churches that comprise the Mexican Covenant's Central District, there are many signs of life and growth. A team of youth from churches in Mexico City and the states of Mexico and Morelos spent a week in Monterrey with a youth team from the Covenant church in Springfield, Massachusetts, doing building maintenance and neighborhood evangelism. The Central Mexican District (comprised of 14 churches) hosted a biennial national youth camp attracting 150 participants. The annual Covenant Women drew 85 participants. Another major district undertaking is the church-planting project under the supervision of the Missions Commission.

Church Relations. More than 500 local Covenant church visits were facilitated last year by World Mission church relations personnel, connecting churches with missionaries and World Mission representatives. Facilitators Keith Tungseth and Rose Cornelious accompanied coordinator David Stockamp on a four-country European tour to encourage missionary staffs and learn first-hand what God is doing in those areas. To learn more mission highlights, visit the "World Mission" link on the Covenant website at www.covchurch.org.



Patricia Restrepo at the Foundation for Family Development in Mexico

ministers as a speech pathologist to missionary children at Alliance Academy. Two short-term missionaries teach at the Academy—Yonchu Song in English as a Second Language, and Kurt Peterson in high school chemistry. Cheryl Clark copastors a Covenant Church with her husband, Moises, in Guayaquil. Margie and Baxter Swenson teach at Covenant Bible College in La Merced and do counseling and speaking in Covenant churches. Andy and Jenell Plum work in administration at Covenant Bible College, encour-

mission staff continue to develop outreach efforts, including "Semillas de Salud" ("Seeds of Health"), a community health program now operating among members and friends of four Covenant churches in the isthmus area of southeastern Oaxaca. Jo Ellen Reaves continues to develop a ministry that offers Covenanters from the United States and Canada an opportunity to work with Mexican Covenanters in various areas of the country. In Monterrey, the Covenant's Foundation for Family Development offers

Churches Adopt Holistic Ministry Approach

Evangelical Covenant churches are making three distinctive shifts as they seek to help children, youth and adults grow continuously into the likeness of Jesus Christ, says Doreen Olson, executive minister of Christian formation.

They emphasize personal and community transformation over programming. They understand that while programs are a necessary dimension of congregational life, they are a means toward the end and not the end itself.

“Christian formation is about turning believers into disciples of Jesus Christ, so that we are formed in Christ, both personally and as a community,” Olson adds.

These churches emphasize a holistic head, heart and hand approach to formation. “Information

or knowledge alone will not support the kind of radical transformation we are seeking,” Olson notes. Christian formation includes Christian education, but it is not limited to the goal of learning facts. “It is about whole-person learning. It is a way of life.

“They emphasize an integrated and holistic approach, understanding that Christian formation is not about accomplishing a series of tasks, nor does it happen only in the church building,” Olson continues. “It happens at home, at school, at work, and throughout our lives.”

Growing together toward wholeness in Christ requires that we be “border crossers” when it comes to generational, class, gender, home/church, work/church, clergy/lay, and racial, cultural and ethnic boundar-

ies, Olson believes.

Christian Formation is sending local churches a mailing containing new ideas and various resources, scheduled to arrive by the end of May.

To assist Spanish-speaking members of the church family pursue discipleship, Christian Formation has developed the CRECER bible study series.

Participants explore life-long elements of Christian formation, including growing in relationship with God and each other and responding to God’s love through service and obedient living.

Additional information is also available by contacting Covenant Resource Center at 800-338-4332 or by email at resource.center@covchurch.org.

New Seminar Encourages Discussion of Racial Issues

The continued growth in areas of ethnic and multiethnic ministries with the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) reflects in part the denomination’s continued pursuit of racial righteousness. That emphasis helped nurture the newly created School of Racial Righteousness that is available to local churches throughout the Covenant.

The purpose of the School of Racial Righteousness is to expose participants to issues surrounding race and ethnicity and to challenge them to create personal and corporate change based on righteousness principles. Participants work toward developing a vision and personal motivation for ethnic diversity, developing greater cultural understanding of people who are racially or ethnically different, deepening their awareness and analysis of racial and ethnic issues in society, exploring and affirming their own ethnic identity, and identifying and committing to practical action steps to advance racial and ethnic reconciliation within the ECC.

The program is the culmination of three years of developmental work involving focus groups of pastors and leaders who were asked to address three key questions:

- What do you see God doing in the ECC in regards to racial and ethnic issues?

- What attempts has the ECC made to improve ethnic diversity in congregations and within the denomination in the past?

- What do we want to see happen as a result of people and churches going through the School of Racial Righteousness?

Responses to these questions were as varied as the focus group participants in their exploration of developing a practical tool on racial righteousness for the local church. Three years later, a team of regional facilitators have been trained and deployed to bring this experience to local churches.

To obtain more information or to schedule a School of Racial Righteousness, contact the Department of Christian Formation by telephone at 773-583-0220 or by email at christian.formation@covchurch.org.

New Facilities Welcome Students at CBC

New facilities at two of Covenant Bible College’s (CBC) three campuses proved to be timely additions to help accommodate the 165 men and women who enrolled in the fall, representing eight conferences of the Evangelical Covenant Church and the Alaska region.

At CBC-Colorado in Windsor, a new chapel and classroom building as well as a 44-bed dormitory were completed in August, valued in ex-

cess of \$1.4 million and donated by two families.

At CBC-Ecuador, following a year of renovation and new construction, the eight-acre campus in La Merced increased its capacity to 72 students. Much of the work was completed by volunteer work teams from throughout the Covenant.

Although there were no new major construction projects at the Strathmore campus in Alberta, Canada, students continue their focus on

volunteer community activities and outreach ministries.

“While there was indeed a great deal of ‘new’ at CBC in 2004, what remains constant is our passion to see young men and women better equipped to live as disciples of Jesus Christ,” says CBC President Neil Josephson. More information about CBC can be obtained by visiting its website at www.covenantbiblecollege.com.

CHET Turns Fifteen, Installs First Chaplains

Liria and Diego Cerne are serving as the first chaplains for CHET, the Hispanic Center for Theological Studies with offices in Los Angeles, reflecting the culmination of a training process that had its roots in the area where the main campus is located, according to Ed Delgado, dean and vice president.

The couple was installed during CHET graduation ceremonies that awarded degrees to 80 individuals who completed various programs offered by CHET. More than 300 guests were on hand to join in the 15th anniversary celebration.

The Cernes are founding members of the Covenant Hispanic church of Eagle Rock and are graduates of CHET’s Ministerial Program. Born in Argentina, they recently retired from a family owned business

that repairs European automobiles. According to Delgado, more than 200 persons made commitments for Christ while having their cars serviced.

The center has grown from 35 to more than 400 students since 1989. About 27 percent of those being educated at CHET have Covenant backgrounds, says Delgado, with the student body representing 16 denominations coming from 17 countries. Approved by the Evangelical Covenant Church Board of the

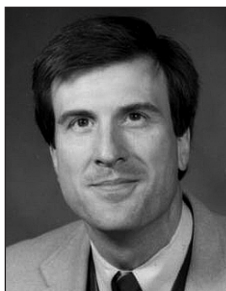
Ordered Ministry, CHET serves as a subsidiary of North Park University and is endorsed by the Association for Hispanic Theological Education, the International Faculty of Theological Education, and the Latin American Association of Advising and Familiar Pastoral Counseling.

To learn more about CHET and its programs, call Delgado at 562-806-8325 or email him at efdeldgado@chet.org. More information is also available by visiting the school’s website at www.chet.org.

DID YOU KNOW? Churches Planting Ministries provides up to \$30,000 in matching grant funds to ECC conferences. A local church may apply to its conference for a one-time grant for ministry outreach to the poor or those at risk. Contact a conference office or visit Churches Planting Ministries at www.covchurch.org.

New Strategic Giving Director to Emphasize Shared Ministry

In 2004 the Evangelical Covenant Church committed to an enhanced process of securing major gift donations for ministries of missions and outreach, both domestically and abroad. In August of last year, Bill Clark accepted a call to become director of strategic giving, focusing primarily in four areas of ministry: church planting, the Paul Carlson Partnership, Covenant World Relief and other special world mission initiatives.



Bill Clark

“The Covenant has long been blessed through gifts by individual donors to its shared ministry,” observes Clark. “Some of these con-

tributors have the interest and capability to give larger gifts. We are also discovering new donors within the Covenant family who have a heart for the missional reach of the church. These major gifts are pivotal in building momentum by boosting significantly our available resources, or by serving as matching gifts for contributions of other faithful givers.”

The impact of those efforts is reflected in the work of the Paul Carlson Partnership—gifts given in support of vital work in Congo are presently being doubled through this matching program.

“We pray for a similar possibility for our church planting efforts,” says Clark.

“The Covenant is a clear pace setter in the formation of new churches—churches of all kinds and styles, throughout the great sweep of our present constituency and beyond. New churches are proven to be catalytic in the formation of new believers and in the involvement of reactivated servants for the Lord’s church. Obviously, new churches also provide added strength to the

Covenant in every area of our shared life, including the funding of future ministries. This new stream of revenue is needed to accelerate the growth of the kingdom.”

The work of strategic giving is coordinated through the office of Donn Engebretson, executive vice president, who also is responsible for overall development of the Covenant’s stewardship program. Those desiring more information about donating to support various ministries may call Clark at 918-688-5276.

DID YOU KNOW? There are 1,689 participants in the Evangelical Covenant Church pension plan? For information on the pension program, visit the new website page at www.covchurch.org.

Communication Office Connects Churches to ECC Ministries

Did you know that on an average day, between 8,000 and 10,000 pages of information are accessed from the Evangelical Covenant Church website at www.covchurch.org?

One of the attractions is the daily online news report covering everything from interesting ministries taking place in local Covenant churches and conferences to breaking news on major disasters worldwide and in-depth features on World Mission and World Relief outreach efforts.

One event that drew considerable attention was the trip last fall to Congo by Lois Carlson Bridges and other family members to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the death of Covenant medical missionary Dr. Paul Carlson, who was killed by Congo rebels in 1964.

The online news report followed the group each day with numerous stories and photographs.

Another news development was the Covenant response to December’s tsunami disaster that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people in 12 countries. For the first time, individuals were able to donate to the relief effort online through the Covenant website.

News is not the only attraction, however, with more than 5,000 pages of all kinds of resources available. The newly redesigned home page also makes navigation of the website more user friendly, helping users to find desired material more quickly.

A five-member Communications team will provide daily online news coverage of this year’s Annual

Meeting in Keystone, Colorado, including live Internet broadcasts of the evening worship services with unlimited video and audio access for the second consecutive year. Additional coverage will appear in the August issue of *The Covenant Companion*, which continues to receive key awards for excellence in content and presentation from Associated Church Press.

The awards are important as they reflect the considered judgment on the part of publishing professionals that *The Covenant Companion* is an excellent magazine and worthy of recognition. The Communications team is pleased to be able to provide a publication of such high quality to our Covenant constituency, an accomplishment especially noteworthy given the small staff size.

The *Companion* and *Covenant Home Altar* are available for subscription online by visiting the Covenant website at www.covchurch.org.

The book publishing arm of the Communications department produced a revised and updated reprinting of *Monganga Paul* by Lois Carlson Bridges as part of the larger effort to commemorate the death of Paul Carlson.

The online Covenant Bookstore continues to help churches in smaller markets that lack a good Christian bookstore resources and supplies. With the convenience of secure online credit card payment, orders are processed and shipped quickly.

The Communications team was pleased to welcome a new member to the staff—Stan Friedman, who serves as a news reporter and writer for Covenant News Service as well as a contributor to *The Covenant Companion*.

Churches and other ministries interested in having news considered for publication online or in the *Companion* should send it by email to newsdesk@covchurch.org.

Newswire is a free service for busy people who cannot visit the online news report every day. Individuals may select the Newswire link on the Covenant home page, fill in their email address and begin receiving each day a single email message containing the headlines for all online news stories published during the previous 24-hour period.

Got Questions? Call the Resource Center

WHEN YOU DON’T KNOW exactly who to call, the place to go is the Covenant Resource Center headed by Millie Lungren and her team. The Resource Center fields a wide range of questions, directing inquirers to the various offices and ministry centers that can best provide assistance.

The center is a partnership of seven ministry areas of the denomination: Christian Formation, Church Growth & Evangelism, Communications, Women Ministries, World Mission, Stewardship and World Relief

One of the strengths of the Resource Center is its ability to consult with local churches and other ministries concerning appropriate curriculum and other resources to use in various programming. During 2004, the center’s staff responded to more than 1,400 requests for consultation and more than 1,200 requests for material, distributing some 171,000 pieces of information.

“When we don’t know an answer, we’ll research the question to provide a response, or link you with someone who may be of more help,” says Lungren. To request consultation or obtain various resource materials, call the center at 800-338-IDEA (4332) or email the staff at resource.center@covchurch.org. More information also is available at the Covenant website at www.covchurch.org.